

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTES and Other Writings of Historical Interest



Sri Aurobindo

VOLUME 36
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Autobiographical Notes

and Other Writings of Historical Interest



Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry, August 1911

Publisher's Note

This volume consists of (1) notes in which Sri Aurobindo corrected statements made by biographers and other writers about his life and (2) various sorts of material written by him that are of historical importance. The historical material includes personal letters written before 1927 (as well as a few written after that date), public statements and letters on national and world events, and public statements about his ashram and system of yoga. Many of these writings appeared earlier in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (1953) and *On Himself: Compiled from Notes and Letters* (1972). These previously published writings, along with many others, appear here under the new title *Autobiographical Notes and Other Writings of Historical Interest*.

Sri Aurobindo alluded to his life and works not only in the notes included in this volume but also in some of the letters he wrote to disciples between 1927 and 1950. Such letters have been included in *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.

The autobiographical notes, letters and other writings included in the present volume have been arranged by the editors in four parts. The texts of the constituent materials have been checked against all relevant manuscripts and printed texts.

The Note on the Texts at the end contains information on the people and historical events referred to in the texts.

On account of the documentary nature of the items making up this book, they have been transcribed verbatim, or as close to verbatim as possible. Problems of transcription are discussed on the next page.

Guide to Editorial Notation

Some of the contents of this book were transcribed from unrevised manuscripts or from handwritten or typed copies of lost originals. The texts published here are as far as possible verbatim transcripts of these materials. Problems encountered in reproducing them are indicated by means of the notation shown below.

Notation Textual Problem

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| [.....] | Word(s) lost through damage to the manuscript. |
| [] ¹ | Superfluous word(s), often duplicating what immediately precedes; a footnote shows the word(s) as they occur in the manuscript. |
| [?] | Word(s) omitted by the author that could not be supplied by the editors. |
| [word] | Word(s) omitted by the author or lost through damage to the manuscript that are required by grammar or sense, and that could be supplied by the editors. |
| [?word] | Doubtful reading. |
| [word] ¹ | Emendation required by grammar or sense or correcting a factual slip; a footnote gives the manuscript reading. Documentary justifications for corrections of factual slips are given on pages 564–69. |
| wor[d] | Letter(s) supplied by the editors. |
| [<i>note</i>] | Textual situation requiring brief explanation. Longer explanations are provided in editorial footnotes, which are printed in italics followed by “— <i>Ed.</i> ” (All footnotes printed in roman type were written by Sri Aurobindo.) |

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Part One

Autobiographical Notes

Section One

Life Sketches and Other Autobiographical Notes

Sri Aurobindo: A Life Sketch

Sri Aurobindo was born in Calcutta on August 15, 1872. In 1879, at the age of seven, he was taken with his two elder brothers to England for education and lived there for fourteen years. Brought up at first in an English family at Manchester, he joined St. Paul's School in London in [1884]¹ and in 1890 went from it with a senior classical scholarship to King's College, Cambridge, where he studied for two years. In 1890 he passed also the open competition for the Indian Civil Service, but at the end of two years of probation failed to present himself at the riding examination and was disqualified for the Service. At this time the Gaekwar of Baroda was in London. Aurobindo saw him, obtained an appointment in the Baroda Service and left England in [January],² 1893.

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.³ At Baroda he made up the deficiency, learned Sanskrit and several modern Indian languages,

¹ MS 1885. See *Table 1*, page 565. — *Ed.*

² MS February. See *Table 1*, page 565. — *Ed.*

³ 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

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.

The political action of Sri Aurobindo covered eight years, from 1902 to 1910. During the first half of this period he worked behind the scenes, preparing with other co-workers the beginnings of the Swadeshi (Indian Sinn Fein) movement, till the agitation in Bengal furnished an opening for the public initiation of a more forward and direct political action than the moderate reformism which had till then been the creed of the Indian National Congress. In 1906 Sri Aurobindo came to Bengal with this purpose and joined the New Party, an advanced section small in numbers and not yet strong in influence, which had been recently formed in the Congress. The political theory of this party was a rather vague gospel of Non-cooperation; in action it had not yet gone farther than some ineffective clashes with the Moderate leaders at the annual Congress assembly behind the veil of secrecy of the "Subjects Committee". Sri Aurobindo persuaded its chiefs in Bengal to come forward publicly as an All-India party with a definite and challenging programme, putting forward Tilak, the popular Maratha leader at its head, and to attack the then dominant Moderate (Reformist or Liberal) oligarchy of veteran politicians and capture from them the Congress and the country. This was the origin of the historic struggle between the Moderates and the Nationalists (called by their opponents Extremists) which in two years changed altogether the face of Indian politics.

The new-born Nationalist party put forward Swaraj (independence) as its goal as against the far-off Moderate hope of

and obtained record marks in Greek and Latin in the examination for the Indian Civil Service.) [*Sri Aurobindo's note; see pages 12–13.*]

colonial self-government to be realised at a distant date of a century or two by a slow progress of reform; it proposed as its means of execution a programme which resembled in spirit, though not in its details, the policy of Sinn Fein developed some years later and carried to a successful issue in Ireland. The principle of this new policy was self-help; it aimed on one side at an effective organisation of the forces of the nation and on the other professed a complete non-cooperation with the Government. Boycott of British and foreign goods and the fostering of Swadeshi industries to replace them, boycott of British law courts and the foundation of a system of Arbitration courts in their stead, boycott of Government universities and colleges and the creation of a network of National colleges and schools, the formation of societies of young men which would do the work of police and defence and, wherever necessary, a policy of passive resistance were among the immediate items of the programme. Sri Aurobindo hoped to capture the Congress and make it the directing centre of an organised national action, an informal State within the State, which would carry on the struggle for freedom till it was won. He persuaded the party to take up and finance as its recognised organ the newly-founded daily paper, *Bande Mataram*, of which he was at the time acting editor. The *Bande Mataram*, whose policy from the beginning of 1907 till its abrupt winding up in 1908 when Aurobindo was in prison was wholly directed by him, circulated almost immediately all over India. During its brief but momentous existence it changed the political thought of India which has ever since preserved fundamentally, even amidst its later developments, the stamp then imparted to it. But the struggle initiated on these lines, though vehement and eventful and full of importance for the future, did not last long at the time; for the country was still unripe for so bold a programme.

Sri Aurobindo was prosecuted for sedition in 1907 and acquitted. Up till now an organiser and writer, he was obliged by this event and by the imprisonment or disappearance of other leaders to come forward as the acknowledged head of the party in Bengal and to appear on the platform for the first time as a

speaker. He presided over the Nationalist Conference at Surat in 1907 where in the forceful clash of two equal parties the Congress was broken to pieces. In May, 1908, he was arrested in the Alipur Conspiracy Case as implicated in the doings of the revolutionary group led by his brother Barindra; but no evidence of any value could be established against him and in this case too he was acquitted. After a detention of one year as undertrial prisoner in the Alipur Jail, he came out in May, 1909, to find the party organisation broken, its leaders scattered by imprisonment, deportation or self-imposed exile and the party itself still existent but dumb and dispirited and incapable of any strenuous action. For almost a year he strove single-handed as the sole remaining leader of the Nationalists in India to revive the movement. He published at this time to aid his effort a weekly English paper, the *Karmayogin*, and a Bengali weekly, the *Dharma*. But at last he was compelled to recognise that the nation was not yet sufficiently trained to carry out his policy and programme. For a time he thought that the necessary training must first be given through a less advanced Home Rule movement or an agitation of passive resistance of the kind created by Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa. But he saw that the hour of these movements had not come and that he himself was not their destined leader. Moreover, since his twelve months' detention in the Alipur Jail, which had been spent entirely in the practice of Yoga, his inner spiritual life was pressing upon him for an exclusive concentration. He resolved therefore to withdraw from the political field, at least for a time.

In February, 1910, he withdrew to a secret retirement at Chandernagore and in the beginning of April sailed for Pondicherry in French India. A third prosecution was launched against him at this moment for a signed article in the *Karmayogin*; in his absence it was pressed against the printer of the paper who was convicted, but the conviction was quashed on appeal in the High Court of Calcutta. For the third time a prosecution against him had failed. Sri Aurobindo had left Bengal with some intention of returning to the political field under more favourable circumstances; but very soon the magnitude

of the spiritual work he had taken up appeared to him and he saw that it would need the exclusive concentration of all his energies. Eventually he cut off connection with politics, refused repeatedly to accept the Presidentship of the National Congress and went into a complete retirement. During all his stay at Pondicherry from 1910 to the present moment⁴ he has remained more and more exclusively devoted to his spiritual work and his sâdhanâ.

In 1914 after four years of silent Yoga he began the publication of a philosophical monthly, the *Arya*. Most of his more important works, those published since in book form, the Isha Upanishad, the Essays on the Gita, and others not yet published, the Life Divine, the Synthesis of Yoga,⁵ appeared serially in the *Arya*. These works embodied much of the inner knowledge that had come to him in his practice of Yoga. Others were concerned with the spirit and significance of Indian civilisation and culture, the true meaning of the Vedas, the progress of human society, the nature and evolution of poetry, the possibility of the unification of the human race. At this time also he began to publish his poems, both those written in England and at Baroda and those, fewer in number, added during his period of political activity and in the first years of his residence at Pondicherry. The *Arya* ceased publication in 1921 after six years and a half of uninterrupted appearance.

Sri Aurobindo lived at first in retirement at Pondicherry with four or five disciples. Afterwards more and yet more began to come to him to follow his spiritual path and the number became so large that a community of sâdhaks had to be formed for the maintenance and collective guidance of those who had left everything behind for the sake of a higher life. This was the foundation of the Sri Aurobindo Asram which has less been created than grown around him as its centre.

Sri Aurobindo began his practice of Yoga in 1905. At first gathering into it the essential elements of spiritual experience

⁴ This "Life Sketch" was written in 1930 and published in 1937. Sri Aurobindo's retirement lasted until his passing in December 1950. — Ed.

⁵ These two works, and many others, have since been published in book form. — Ed.

that are gained by the paths of divine communion and spiritual realisation followed till now in India, he passed on in search of a more complete experience uniting and harmonising the two ends of existence, Spirit and Matter. Most ways of Yoga are paths to the Beyond leading to the Spirit and, in the end, away from life; Sri Aurobindo's rises to the Spirit to redescend with its gains bringing the light and power and bliss of the Spirit into life to transform it. Man's present existence in the material world is in this view or vision of things a life in the Ignorance with the Inconscient at its base, but even in its darkness and nescience there are involved the presence and possibilities of the Divine. The created world is not a mistake or a vanity and illusion to be cast aside by the soul returning to heaven or Nirvâna, but the scene of a spiritual evolution by which out of this material Inconscience is to be manifested progressively the Divine Consciousness in things. Mind is the highest term yet reached in the evolution, but it is not the highest of which it is capable. There is above it a Supermind or eternal Truth-consciousness which is in its nature the self-aware and self-determining light and power of a Divine Knowledge. Mind is an ignorance seeking after Truth, but this is a self-existent Knowledge harmoniously manifesting the play of its forms and forces. It is only by the descent of this supermind that the perfection dreamed of by all that is highest in humanity can come. It is possible by opening to a greater divine consciousness to rise to this power of light and bliss, discover one's true self, remain in constant union with the Divine and bring down the supramental Force for the transformation of mind and life and body. To realise this possibility has been the dynamic aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga.

APPENDIX

Letters on “Sri Aurobindo: A Life Sketch”

[1]

I understand from Ratikanto Nag that you have very nearly finished reading through my manuscript.

I have read through most of the MS. — but the narrative portion of the account of my life is full of inaccuracies of fact. I hope to write about this shortly. 1928

[2]

I do not know where you got the facts in your account of my life; but after starting to correct it I had to give up the attempt in despair. It is chock-full of errors and inaccuracies: this cannot be published. As for the account of my spiritual experience, I mean of the Bombay affair, somebody must have inflicted on you a humorous caricature of it. This too cannot go. The best will be to omit all account or narrative and say — at not too much length, I would suggest — what you think it necessary to say about me. 16 March 1930

[3]

I see that you have persisted in giving a biography — is it really necessary or useful? The attempt is bound to be a failure, because neither you nor anyone else knows anything at all of my life; it has not been on the surface for man to see.

You have given a sort of account of my political action, but the impression it makes on me and would make, I believe, on your public is that of a fiery idealist rushing furiously at an impossible aim (knocking his head against a stone wall, which is not a very sensible proceeding) without any grasp on realities

and without any intelligible political method or plan of action. The practical peoples of the West could hardly be well impressed by such a picture and it would make them suspect that, probably, my yoga was a thing of the same type! 25 March 1930

[4]

No, certainly not.¹ If you gave my name, it would be as if I were advertising myself in your book. I did not care to have anything of the kind written, as I told you, because I do not think these things are of any importance. I merely wrote, in the end, a brief summary of the most outward facts, nothing inward or personal, because I have seen that many legends and distortions are afloat, and this will at least put things in the straight line. If you like, you can mention that it is a brief statement of the principal facts of Sri Aurobindo's public life from an authoritative source.

Necessarily I have mentioned only salient facts, leaving out all mere details. As for an *estimate* of myself I have given none. In my view, a man's value does not depend on what he learns or his position or fame or what he does, but on what he is and inwardly becomes, and of that I have said nothing. I do not want to alter what I have written. If you like you can put a note of your own to the "occidental education" stating that it included Greek and Latin and two or three modern languages, but I do not myself see the necessity of it or the importance. June 1930

[5]

I would prefer another form more in keeping with the tone of the text, — eg

"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

¹ *The question was whether the correspondent could publish the "Life Sketch" over Sri Aurobindo's signature. — Ed.*

in Greek and Latin, | passed the Tripos in Cambridge in the first division, obtained record marks in Greek and Latin in the examination for the Indian Civil Service |. He had learned French from his childhood in Manchester and studied for himself Italian and German sufficiently to read Dante and Goethe in the original tongue.”²

I have left the detail about the Tripos and the record marks, though I do not find these trifles in place here; the note would read much better with the omission of the part between the vertical lines.

(But what is Beachcroft doing here? He butts in in such a vast and spreading parenthesis that he seems to be one of “these ancient languages” and in him too, perhaps, I got record marks! Besides, any ingenious reader would deduce from his presence in your note that he acquitted me out of fellow-feeling over the two “examinations” and out of university camaraderie, — which was far from being the case. I met him only in the I.C.S classes and at the I.C.S examinations and we never exchanged two words together. If any extralegal consideration came in subconsciously in the acquittal, it must have been his admiration for my prose style to which he gave fervent expression in his judgment. Don’t drag him in like this — let him rest in peace in his grave.)

27 June 1930

² The passage within inverted commas is Sri Aurobindo’s correction of a note that had been submitted to him by the correspondent. The final version of the note appears as footnote 3 on pages 5–6. — Ed.

Incomplete Life Sketches

Incomplete Life Sketch in Outline Form, c. 1922

Born 1872.

Sent to England for education 1879.

Studied at St Paul's School, London, and King's College,
Cambridge.

Returned to India. February, 1893.

Life of preparation at Baroda 1893–1906

Political life — 1902–1910

[The “Swadeshi” movement prepared from 1902–5 and started definitely by Sri Aurobindo, Tilak, Lajpatrai and others in 1905. A movement for Indian independence, by non-cooperation and passive resistance and the organisation (under a national Council or Executive, but this did not materialise,) of arbitration, national education, economic independence, (especially handloom industry including the spinning-wheel, but also the opening of mills, factories and Swadeshi business concerns under Indian management and with Indian capital,) boycott of British goods, British law-courts, and all Government institutions, offices, honours etc. Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement was a repetition of the “Swadeshi”, but with an exclusive emphasis on the spinning-wheel and the transformation of passive resistance, (“Satyagraha”) from a political means into a moral and religious dogma of soul-force and conquest by suffering. The running of the daily paper, “Bande Mataram”, was only one of Sri Aurobindo's political activities.]¹

Imprisonment —

Thrice prosecuted; first for sedition and acquitted

then in 1908 along with his brother

Barindra, (one of the chief leaders of the revolutionary move-

¹ *The square brackets are Sri Aurobindo's. — Ed.*

ment) on a charge of conspiracy to wage war against the established Government. Acquitted after a year's detention as an under-trial prisoner, mostly in a solitary cell

last; in his absence in 1910, for sedition. This case also failed on appeal.

After 1909 carried on the political (Swadeshi) movement alone (the other leaders being in prison or in exile) for one year. Afterwards on receiving an inner intimation left politics for spiritual lifework. The intimation was that the Swadeshi movement must now end and would be followed later on by a Home Rule movement and a Non-cooperation movement of the Gandhi type, under other leaders.

Came to Pondicherry 1910.

Started the "Arya". 1914

Fragmentary Life Sketch, c. 1928

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 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 Aurobindo grew up in entire ignorance of India, her people, her religion and her culture.

Other Autobiographical Notes

A Day in Srinagar

Cashmere. Srinagar.

Saturday. [30 May 1903]

In the morning Sardesai dropped in and we went together to Dhond, where I arranged with Rajaram to mess with him; the dinner consisted of the usual Brahminic course, dal & rice, two chupatties with potatoes & greens and amthi, — the whole to be seasoned liberally by a great square of clarified butter at one side of the tray. Fortunately the dishes were not very pungent and, with this allowance, I have made myself sufficiently adaptable to be a Brahmin with the Brahmins

*

Dinner in the morning from Rajaram, who put me au courant with zenana politics. Not having his son to quarrel with, H.H has filled up the gap with his wife; they have been at it hammer & tongs since the Maharani joined him at Murree, chiefly, it seems, about dhobies & other such highly unroyal topics. To spite his wife H.H has raised the subject of Tarabai Ghadge's carriage allowance, which she has been taking very placidly without keeping any carriage; for neglect in suffering this "payment without consideration", Mohite, Raoji Sirgavkar & the Chitnis are each to be fined 105 Rs. Note that Mohite alone is to blame, having signed the usual declaration that he had assured himself the recipient had her own conveyance; but this sort of thing is becoming too common to be wondered at. Quicquid delirant reges, plectuntur officials. The order adds that if any of the stricken has objections to make, he may make them and, if found satisfactory, the fine will be withdrawn. This is perilously like hanging a man first and trying him afterwards

—or to put it accurately, I throw my shoe in your face and then permit you to prove that the salutation was causeless, in which case I shall be graciously pleased to put my shoe on my foot again. Another characteristic order is that degrading Savant back from Naib Khangi Karbhariship to Chitnishood & ordering Mohite to make a tippan as to whether his allowance should be continued or not. “His Highness thinks it should not, but still the K.K. should make a tippan about it.” Again if translated this might run, “I sentence the criminal in the dock to six months’ hard labour and the jury may now consider whether he should have been sentenced or not.” The latest trouble is about “unnecessary tongas” from Murree to Srinagar; yet the Maharaja was assured that if he insisted upon starting at once, there was no other course open, and at the time he promised to sanction any expense entailed. Now that he has had his own convenience satisfied, he chooses not to remember that he ever promised anything of the sort, so that he may have the pitiful satisfaction of venting his illtemper on innocent people. He has also ordered that no one shall receive special bhutta at a hill-station, unless the matter is brought to his notice and he is personally satisfied that prices are higher than in Baroda. Where will all this shopkeeping unprinceliness & petty-fogging injustice end?

Ashudada sent Visvas’ son Hemchandra with a note to me; the lad is a young Hercules five foot ten in height & monstrous in muscle with a roaring voice and continual outbursts of boisterous laughter over anything in the shape of a joke good or bad — a fine specimen of the outlander Bengali. His companion, a Kavi-raj, rejoices in the name of Satyendranath Banerji Kobirunjun and is something of an ass & much of a coward, but not a bad fellow withal. We adjourned in a body, Sardesai, Ambegavkar, D^r Balabhai, myself & the two Bengalis to the Maharaja’s green-cushioned boat & set out on the broad bosom of Lake Dal and through the lock & a canal into the Jhelum. The boatman swore that we should get drowned if we shot the lock, but Hem Babu though he admitted there might be a little danger, insisted on having it done. In the result we only shipped a little water which sought the left leg of my trousers as naturally as a bird seeks

its nest, but the Kaviraj was in a terrible fright & clamoured protestation till we were right in the swirl of the waters. The water was lined with houseboats of the ogre-monkeys in some of which there were marvellous specimens of Cashmeri beauty. After a visit to Ashu & then to the hospital, — where I found I turned the scale at 113, my old weight, and reached the height of 5 ft 5 in my shoes — we adjourned through the rain to Hem Babu's house. There we [met]¹ his father, the genial & hearty Reception Officer, tall & robust in build, with a fine largely cut jovial face and a venerable beard, and several other Bengalis — let me see if I can remember their names, Chunilal Ray of the Foreign Office, with a face of pure Indo-Afghan type looking more the Punjabi or Cashmeri than a Babu, Gurucharan Dhar, a pleader, Bhabani Babu of the Commissariat, another of the Commissariat, and a certain Lolit Babu, of I know not where. No, I shall never be any good at remembering names. The tea was execrable but the cigarettes & the company were good.

Afterwards the carriage took us through the streets of the town & then, the coachman being unable or unwilling to find his way out, back the same way. The streets are very narrow and the houses poor & rickety, though occasionally picturesque, being built impartially of bricks, stones or other material imposed & intersticed irregularly & without cement, cobbled in fact rather than built. The windows are usually plastered with paper — for the sake of privacy, I suppose, — but it must make the rooms very dingy & gloomy. The roofs are often grown over with a garden of grasses & wildflowers, making a very pretty effect. The Maharaja's palace by the river in the true quaint Hindu way of building was the one building which struck me in Srinagar, — how much superior to the pretentious monstrosities of architecture at Luxmivilas Palace! This drive has finally completed and confirmed my observations of Cashmeri beauty. The men in the country parts are more commonly handsome than the town people & the Hindus than the Mohamedans.

¹ MS might

 Information Supplied to the *King's College Register*

[1]

[Answers (on right) to questions in a form received in 1903]

KING'S COLLEGE REGISTER

| PARTICULARS DESIRED. | INFORMATION. |
|---|---|
| Name. | Ghose |
| Christian name or names. | Aravind. Acroyd. |
| Any additional title (e.g. The Reverend) if any. | None |
| Name and address of Father living or deceased. | D ^r Krishnadhan Ghose. Civil Surgeon deceased |
| Name of School or where educated before University. School Honours. | St Paul's School |
| (a) In Athletics | |
| (b) In Learning | |
| University and College athletic distinctions with dates. | None. |
| University and College prizes and scholarships with dates. | Senior Classical Scholarship 1884 College Prizes for Greek Iambics and Latin Hexameters. 1890 (?) |
| Cambridge University triposes and degrees, and dates thereof. | Classical Tripos 1892. First Class Third Division |
| Other degrees and dates thereof. | None |
| College fellowship and offices (if any) with dates. | None |

| | |
|---|---|
| Short particulars of career from date of first degree to present time with business, profession, particulars of publications, political and other honours. etc. | Entered H.H. the Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda's service Feb [1893]. ² For the greater part of the time on special duty. Lecturer in French for three years and Assistant Professor of English for two years in the Baroda College [April] ³ 1901. Mrinalini Bose. |
| Date of marriage (if any) and maiden name of Wife. | |
| Present occupation (if any). | H.H the Maharaja Gaekwar's Service, at present Secretary (acting). Racecourse Road. Baroda |
| Present permanent address. | Baroda Officer's Club. |
| Clubs. | Baroda Gymkhana |
| | <i>Signed</i> Aravind. A. Ghose |
| | <i>Date</i> 16 th Sept. 1903. |
| | Srinagar. Cashmere. |

² MS 1903. See Table 1, page 565. — Ed.

³ MS June. See Table 1, page 565. — Ed.

[2]

[*Corrections made in 1928 to the printed entry of 1903*]

KING'S COLLEGE REGISTER.

Old Entry

Ghose, Aravinda Acroyd: son of Dr. Krishnadhan Ghose, late of Khulna, Bengal, India.

School, St Paul's.

Admitted 11 Oct. 1890; Scholar; Prizeman; 1st

Class Classical Tripos, Part I., 1892;

in H.H. the Maharajah Gaekwar of Baroda's service

~~*since Feb. 1903; now acting secretary.~~

Married, June 1901, Mrinalini Bose.

~~*Address*: Racecourse Road, Baroda.~~

Corrections of above Entry.

*from Feb 1893 to 1905; Professor of English and Vice-Principal, Baroda College.

Additional Information up to Date.

Principal, National College, Calcutta, from 1906 to 1908. Editor philosophical monthly, *Arya*; (1914–1921).

Present Permanent Postal Address and designation (e.g. *The Rev.*)

Sri Aurobindo Ghose
28 Rue François Martin
Pondicherry

Signature Aurobindo Ghose.

Date August 31. 1928.

Section Two

Corrections of Statements Made in Biographies and Other Publications

Corrections

1

Page 18. Sri Aurobindo never went to Nicholas
Grammar School. His two brothers attended there but
he himself was educated privately by Mr. and Mrs. Draveth.
Draveth was an accomplished Latin scholar; he did
not teach him Greek, but grounded him so well in
Latin that the headmaster of St. Paul's school took
up Aurobindo himself to ground him in Greek and then
pushed him rapidly into the higher classes of the school.

Page 18. Another Englishman, not Purohit that
time; the Purohit's name was Prithvi

" Aurobindo gave his attention to the classics
at Radley, outside Saint Paul's; but even at
Radley, in the last two years, he simply went along,
his sole course of instruction being his reading
English and French etc. French literature and
grammar. He also spent some time over

classical studies and an occasional Spanish. His
specialty was mainly poetry. He during during
his period engaged in little of the latter; he was already
at home in them and did not think it necessary to labour
over them any longer. Still he was able to win
the prize in King's College in one year for Greek
and Latin verse.

King's Radley was graduated at Leamington. He passed
the first part of the Tripos (first class), and took
the degree of B.A. of the small group; but by the end
of two years at the hospital, he passed with second
class at Leamington and the first part giving the degree
of it is taken in the third year. He sat for the
second year, owing to the fact that he sent for the
first year to qualify for the degree. He sought
the degree of his had made an official
for, but he did not care to do so. It is given
English is not a matter of course to be put
in a ceremonial cover.

2

Early Life in India and England 1872 – 1893

Language Learning

He may have known a smattering of Bengali till he was five years of age. Thereafter till twenty-one he spoke only English.

In my father's house only English and Hindustani were spoken. I knew no Bengali.

*

Quite early he was sent to St. Paul's School at Darjeeling, and then, when he showed unusual promise, to King's College, Cambridge. . . .

. . . His chosen medium of expression is English.

Another error is worth correcting. The reviewer seems to assume that Sri Aurobindo was sent straight from India to King's College, Cambridge, and that he had [to] learn English as a foreign language. This is not the fact; Sri Aurobindo in his father's house already spoke only English and Hindustani, he thought in English from his childhood and did not even know his native language, Bengali. At the age of seven he was taken to England and remained there consecutively for fourteen years, speaking English and thinking in English and no other tongue. He was educated in French and Latin and other subjects under private tuition in Manchester from seven to eleven and studied afterwards in St Paul's School London for about seven years. From there he went to King's College. He had never to study English at all as a subject; though it was not his native language, it had become by force of circumstances from the very first his natural language.

At Manchester

He was sensitive to beauty in man and nature. . . . He watched with pain the thousand and one instances of man's cruelty to man.

The feeling was more abhorrence than pain; from early childhood there was a strong hatred and disgust for all kinds of cruelty and oppression, but the term pain would not accurately describe the reaction.

*

There was no positive religious or spiritual element in the education received in England. The only personal contact with Christianity (that of Nonconformist England) was of a nature to repel rather than attract. The education received was mainly classical and had a purely intellectual and aesthetic influence; it did not stimulate any interest in spiritual life. My attention was not drawn to the spirituality of Europe of the Middle Ages; my knowledge of it was of a general character and I never underwent its influence.

School Studies

Between 1880 and 1884 Sri Aurobindo attended the grammar school at Manchester.

I never went to the Manchester Grammar school, never even stepped inside it. It was my two brothers who studied there. I was taught privately by the Drewetts. M^r Drewett who was a scholar in Latin (he had been a Senior Classic at Oxford)¹ taught me that language (but not Greek, which I began at Saint Paul's, London), and English History etc.; M^{rs} Drewett taught me French, Geography and Arithmetic. No Science; it was not in fashion at that time.

*

¹ See Table 2, page 567. — Ed.

Aurobindo studied in the Manchester Grammar School for a period of about five years. . . . The Head Master of St. Paul's from the first entertained a very high opinion of Aurobindo's character and attainments.

[*First sentence altered to:*] Aurobindo studied at home, learning Latin, French and other subjects from M^r and M^{rs} Drewett.

Sri Aurobindo never went to Manchester Grammar School, it was his two brothers who went there. He himself studied privately with M^r and M^{rs} Drewett. M^r Drewett was a very fine classical scholar and taught him Latin and grounded him so firmly that the Head Master of St. Paul's after teaching him personally the elements of Greek which he had not yet begun to learn, put him at once from the lower into the higher school. There was no admiration expressed about his character.

[*Another version:*] Sri Aurobindo never went to Manchester Grammar School. His two brothers studied there, but he himself was educated privately by M^r and M^{rs} Drewett. Drewett was an accomplished Latin scholar; he did not teach him Greek, but grounded him so well in Latin that the headmaster of St. Paul's school took up Aurobindo himself to ground him in Greek and then pushed him rapidly into the higher classes of the school.

*

[At St. Paul's Aurobindo made the discovery of Homer.]

The Head Master only taught him the elements of Greek grammar and then pushed him up into the Upper School.

In London

[He was sent to boarding school in London.]

St. Paul's was a day school. The three brothers lived in London for some time with the mother of Mr. Drewett but she left them after a quarrel between her and Manmohan about religion. The old Mrs. Drewett was fervently Evangelical and she said she

would not live with an atheist as the house might fall down on her. Afterwards Benoybhusan and Aurobindo occupied a room in the South Kensington Liberal Club where Mr. J. S. Cotton, brother of Sir Henry Cotton, for some time Lieutenant Governor of Bengal,² was the secretary and Benoy assisted him in his work. Manmohan went into lodgings. This was the time of the greatest suffering and poverty. Subsequently Aurobindo also went separately into lodgings until he took up residence at Cambridge.

*

Aurobindo now turned the full fury of his attention to classical studies . . .

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.

Young Aurobindo had thus achieved rare academic distinctions at a very early age. He had mastered Greek and Latin and English, and he had also acquired sufficient familiarity with continental languages like German, French and Italian. . . .

[*Altered to:*] He had mastered Greek and Latin, English and French, and he had also acquired some familiarity with continental languages like German and Italian.

² See Table 2, page 567. — Ed.

Early Poetry

No doubt the derivative element is prominent in much of his early verse. Not only are names and lineaments and allusions foreign in their garb, but the literary echoes are many and drawn from varied sources.

Foreign to what? He knew nothing about India or her culture etc. What these poems express is the education and imaginations and ideas and feelings created by a purely European culture and surroundings — it could not be otherwise. In the same way the poems on Indian subjects and surroundings in the same book express the first reactions to India and Indian culture after the return home and a first acquaintance with these things.

*

Like Macaulay's *A Jacobite's Epitaph*, [Aurobindo's] *Hic Jacet* also achieves its severe beauty through sheer economy of words; Aurobindo's theme, the very rhythm and language of the poem, all hark back to Macaulay; . . .

If so, it must have been an unconscious influence; for after early childhood Macaulay's verse (*The Lays*) ceased to appeal. The "Jacobite's Epitaph" was perhaps not even read twice; it made no impression.

At Cambridge

It is said that the Provost of King's College, Mr. Austen Leigh, quickly recognized Aurobindo's unusual talent and rich integrity.

[*Altered to:*] Aurobindo's unusual talents early attracted the admiration of Oscar Browning, then a well-known figure at Cambridge.

Austen Leigh was not the name of the Provost; his name was Prothero.³ It was not he but Oscar Browning, a scholar and

³ See Table 2, page 567. — Ed.

writer of some contemporary fame, who expressed admiration for Sri Aurobindo's scholarship, — there was nothing about integrity. He expressed the opinion that his papers, for the Scholarship examination, were the best he had ever seen and quite remarkable.

*

Aurobindo now turned the full fury of his attention to classical studies and in the fullness of time, graduated from King's College in 1892, with a First Class in Classical Tripos.

Sri Aurobindo did not graduate; he took and passed the Tripos in his second year; to graduate one had to take the Tripos in the third year or else pass a second part of the Tripos in the fourth year. Sri Aurobindo was not engrossed in classical studies; he was more busy reading general literature and writing poetry.

[*Another version:*] He did not graduate at Cambridge. He passed high in the First Part of the Tripos (first class); it is on passing this First Part that the degree of B.A. is usually given; but as he had only two years at his disposal, he had to pass it in his second year at Cambridge, and the First Part gives the degree only if it is taken in the third year. If one takes it in the second year, one has to appear for the second part of the Tripos in the fourth year to qualify for the degree. He might have got the degree if he had made an application for it, but he did not care to do so. A degree in England is valuable only if one wants to take up an academical career.

The Riding Examination

At the end of the period of probation, however, he did not appear for the departmental Riding examination and he was consequently disqualified for the Civil Service. Aurobindo was now able to turn the full fury of his attention to Classical studies.

These studies were already finished at that time.

*

After a couple of years of intense study, he graduated from King's College in 1892, with a First Class in Classical Tripos.

This happened earlier, not after the Civil Service failure.

At the end of the period of probation, however, he did not choose to appear for the departmental Riding examination; a something within him had detained him in his room. . . .

[*The last phrase altered to:*] prevented his arriving in time.

Nothing detained him in his room. He felt no call for the I.C.S. and was seeking some way to escape from that bondage. By certain manoeuvres he managed to get himself disqualified for riding without himself rejecting the Service, which his family would not have allowed him to do.

*

[According to Aurobindo's sister Sarojini, Aurobindo was playing cards at his London residence when he was to have gone to appear for the writing examination.]

Sarojini's memory is evidently mistaken. I was wandering in the streets of London to pass away time and not playing cards. At last when I went to the grounds I was too late. I came back home and told my elder brother, Benoybhusan, that I was chucked. He with a philosophic attitude proposed playing cards and so we [sat]⁴ down playing cards. [Manmohan]⁵ came [later]⁶ and on hearing about my being chucked began to shout at our playing cards when such a calamity had befallen [us].

Political Interests and Activities

[In England at an early age, Aurobindo took a firm decision to liberate his own nation.]

Not quite that; at this age Sri Aurobindo began first to be

⁴ MS (*dictated*) set

⁵ MS (*dictated*) Manomohan

⁶ MS (*dictated*) latter

interested in Indian politics of which previously he knew nothing. 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.

*

[Aurobindo's writing a poem on Parnell shows that Parnell influenced him.]

It only shows that I took a keen interest in Parnell and nothing more.

*

While in London he used to attend the weekly meetings of the Fabian Society.

Never once!

*

[Aurobindo formed a secret society while in England.]

This is not correct. 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. 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. In India itself Aurobindo's maternal grandfather Raj Narayan Bose formed once a secret society of which Tagore, then a very young man, became a member, and also set up an institution for national and revolutionary propaganda, but this finally came to nothing. Later on there was a revolutionary spirit in Maharashtra and a secret society was started in Western India with a Rajput noble as the head and this had a Council of Five in Bombay with several prominent Mahratta politicians as its members. This society was contacted and joined by Sri Aurobindo somewhere in 1902-3, sometime after he had already started secret revolutionary work in Bengal on his own account. In Bengal he found some very small secret societies recently started and acting separately without any clear direction and tried to unite them with a common programme. The union was never complete and did not last but the movement itself grew and very soon received an enormous extension and became a formidable factor in the general unrest in Bengal.

The Meeting with the Maharaja of Baroda

He obtained, with the help of James Cotton, Sir Henry's son, an introduction to H.H. the late Sayaji Rao, Gaekwar of Baroda, during his visit to England.

James Cotton was Sir Henry's brother not his son.

Sir Henry Cotton was much connected with Maharshi Raj Narayan Bose — Aurobindo's maternal grandfather. His son James Cotton was at this time in London. As a result of these favourable circumstances a meeting came about with the Gaekwar of Baroda.

Cotton was my father's friend — they had made arrangements for my posting in Bengal; but he had nothing to do with my meeting with the Gaekwar. James Cotton was well acquainted with my eldest brother, because C was secretary of the South Kensington Liberal Club where we were living and my brother was his assistant. He took great interest in us. It was he who arranged the meeting.

*

Sri Aurobindo was first introduced to H.H. Sri Sayajirao, the great, Maharaja of Baroda by Mr. Khaserao Jadhav in England.

Not true. Sri Aurobindo became acquainted with Khaserao two or three years after his arrival in Baroda, through Khaserao's brother, Lieutenant Madhavrao Jadhav. [It was]⁷ James Cotton, brother of Sir Henry (who was a friend of D^r K.D. Ghose) who introduced Sri Aurobindo to the Gaekwar. Cotton became secretary of the South Kensington Liberal Club where two of the brothers were living; Benoybhusan was doing some clerical work for the Club for 5 shillings a week and Cotton took him as his assistant; he took a strong interest in all the three brothers and when Sri Aurobindo failed in the riding test, he tried to get another chance for him (much against the will of Sri Aurobindo who was greatly relieved and overjoyed by his release from the I.C.S) and, when that did not succeed, introduced him to the Gaekwar so that he might get an appointment in Baroda. Cotton afterwards came on a visit to Baroda and saw Sri Aurobindo in the College.

Departure from England

For fourteen years he had lived in England, divorced from the culture of his forefathers; he had developed foreign tastes and tendencies and he had been de-nationalised like his own country itself and Aurobindo was not happy with himself.

⁷ Sri Aurobindo cancelled "It was" during revision but left "who" uncanceled. — Ed.

He should begin all again from the beginning and try to re-nationalise himself; . . .

There was no unhappiness for that reason, nor at that time any deliberate will for renationalisation — which came, after reaching India, by natural attraction to Indian culture and ways of life and a temperamental feeling and preference for all that was Indian.

*

He was leaving, he wished to leave, and yet there was a touch of regret as well at the thought of leaving England. . . . He felt the flutter of unutterable misgivings and regrets; he achieved escape from them by having recourse to poetic expression.

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.

*

Aurobindo was going back to India to serve under the Gaekwar of Baroda; he cast one last look at his all but adopted country and thus uttered his “Envoi”.

No, the statement was of a transition from one culture to another. 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.

*

The steamer by which Aurobindo was to have left England was wrecked near Lisbon. The news came to Dr. Krishnadhan [Ghose] as a stunning blow. He concluded that all his three sons were lost to him for ever.

There was no question of the two other brothers starting. It was only Aurobindo's death that was [reported]⁸ and it was while uttering his name in lamentation that the father died.

*

After his father's demise the responsibility of supporting the family devolved on him and he had to take up some appointment soon.

There was no question of supporting the family at that time. That happened some time after going to India.

*

[The name "Aurobindo Acroyd Ghose"]

Sri Aurobindo dropped the "[Acroyd]"⁹ from his name before he left England and never used it again.

⁸ MS reposed

⁹ MS (*dictated*) Ackroyd

Life in Baroda, 1893–1906

Service in Baroda State

Sri Aurobindo was first introduced to H.H. Sri Sayajirao, the great, Maharaja of Baroda by Mr. Khaserao Jadhav in England.

Not true. Sri Aurobindo made the acquaintance of Khaserao two or three years after reaching Baroda. Cotton introduced him to the Gaekwar.

Struck by the brilliance and the learning of the young Ghose, the Maharaja invited him to be his reader and in that capacity Sri Aurobindo came to Baroda.

Reader. Nothing of the kind. There was no such invitation and this post did not exist. Sri Aurobindo joined the Settlement Department, afterwards went to the Revenue and then to the College.

Sri Aurobindo used to read voluminously and make valuable notes for H.H. with whom he had free and illuminating discussions on various subjects.

Not at all. There were no such discussions.

The Maharaja . . . made him Naib Khangi Kamgar i.e. Asst. Private Secretary.

He had nothing to do with the Khangi Department and was never appointed Private Secretary. He was called very often for the writing of an important letter, order, despatch, correspondence with [the] British Government or other document; he assisted the Maharaja in preparing some of his speeches. At one time he was asked to instruct him in English grammar by

giving exact and minute rules for each construction etc. It was only miscellaneous things like this for which he was called for the occasion, but there was no appointment as Secretary except once in Kashmir.

In this office Sri Aurobindo had to study many important affairs of the administration and though still very young and quite new to the post, he acquitted himself with marvellous keenness and precision, and boldly expressed his views in a straight-forward manner, whether H.H. agreed with him or not. The Maharaja appreciated this frankness, and admired him all the more. Sometimes his drafts used to fix many authorities into a puzzle, as they were invulnerable in reason and clear and thrusting in style.

The whole of this para is pure fancy.

The Maharaja had taken him on tour to places like Kashmir, Ooty and Mahabaleshwar.

Sri Aurobindo was sent for to Ooty in order to prepare a précis of the whole Bapat case and the judicial opinions on it. He was at Naini Tal with the Maharaja. In the Kashmir tour he was taken as Secretary, for the time of the tour only.

Sri Aurobindo always loved a plain and unostentatious life and was never dazzled by the splendour of the court. Invariably he declined invitations to dinners and banquets at the palace though he received them repeatedly.

Sri Aurobindo had nothing to do with the Court; he does not remember to have received any such invitations.

Among his brother officers the most intimate with him were Khaserao Jadhav and Barrister Keshavrao Deshpande, with whom he discussed the problems of Philosophy, Spiritual life and the reconstruction of India.

The most intimate friend at Baroda was Khaserao's brother,

Lieutenant Madhavrao Jadhav who was associated with him in his political ideas and projects and helped him whenever possible in his political work. He lived with M. in his house most of the time he was at Baroda. There was no such discussion of problems; Sri Aurobindo took no interest in philosophy at all at that time; he was interested in the sayings and life of Ramakrishna and the utterances and writings of Vivekananda, but that was almost all with regard to spiritual life; he had inner experiences, from the time he stepped on to the shores of India, but did not associate them at that time with Yoga about which he knew nothing. Afterwards when he learned or heard something about it from Deshpande and others, he refused to take it up because it seemed to him a retreat from life. There was never any talk about the reconstruction of India, only about her liberation.

He played cricket well.

Never. He only played cricket as a small boy in M^r Drewett's garden at Manchester and not at all well.

It was at Sardar Majumdar's place that he first met Yogi Lele and got some help from him in spiritual Sadhana.

No. Lele came from Gwalior in answer to a wire from Barin and met Sri Aurobindo at the Jadhavs' house; Lele took him to Majumdar's house for meditation on the top floor.

*

Shri Arvind Ghosh . . . joined Baroda State Service in February 1893 as an extra professor of English in the Baroda College . . .

Incorrect.

. . . on a salary of Rs. 300/- a month.

It was 200/ not 300/.

His age as recorded in State papers on 31st July 1899 was 26 years, 2 months and 22 days.

Incorrect. 11 months, 16 days

In 1900 his transfer to some other department was under consideration but was postponed. . . . On 17-4-1901 he was transferred to the Revenue Department. . . . Next year (1904) in April, H.H. ordered that Shri Ghosh should work from 1st June as his Asst. Private Secretary . . .

All this certainly incorrect. I did not start with service in the College. I was put at first in the Settlement Department, not on any post, but for learning work. Afterwards I was put in the Revenue-Stamps Department, then in the Secretariat (not as Private Secretary). There were some episodes, I believe, of learning work in the Vahivatdar's office. My first work in the College was as Lecturer in French, but this was for an hour only, the rest of the time being given to other work. I have no recollection of being *appointed* Assistant "Private" Secretary. When I became English Professor in the College (which was after a long time) it was a permanent appointment and I went on in it uninterruptedly till I was appointed Vice-Principal, until, in fact, I left Baroda.¹ This is what I remember. Perhaps by Private Secretary is meant an appointment in the Secretariat; but the English term does not mean that, it would mean work directly with the Maharaja. What work I did directly for the Maharaja was quite irregular and spasmodic, though frequent and I used to be called for that from my house, not from the office.

*

1901. Transfer to Revenue Department 17.4.1901 (not in college) par Rs. 360/-. Chairman of Debating Society and College Union President.

At what time of the year was this? If I was in the Revenue Department, I could not at the same time be occupying []² these posts.

If I was in the Revenue Department from 1901-1904, what

¹ See Table 2, page 568. — Ed.

² MS be occupying

was my post and what was I doing there?³ The only thing I recollect was special work studying a sort of official history of the Administration (Guzerati manuscript) perhaps for summary in English. I don't remember the dates.

1902. Service lent to College for six hours in the week for French (6th August 1902).

My own recollection is that my first connection with the College was as lecturer in French, other duties being added afterwards. There must have been a first lending of services (for French) which was not recorded. There is nothing about the first years outside the College; but I remember very well learning work in the Revenue Department (immediately after the term in the Survey Settlement Office) and also in the Secretariat (without any final appointment in these earlier posts).

He was also given the work of compiling administrative report.

This might be [the] affair I refer to above. I had nothing to do with any current administrative report so far as I can remember. There was however private work at the Palace this time, compilation of a book (supposed to be by the Maharaja about his travels in Europe).

*

Sri Aurobindo's appointments at Baroda. He was first put in the Land Settlement Department, for a short time in the Stamps Office, then in the central Revenue Office and in the Secretariat. Afterwards without joining the College and while doing other work he was lecturer in French at the College and finally at his own request was appointed there as Professor of English. All through, the Maharaja used to call him whenever something had to be written which needed careful wording; he also employed him to prepare some of his public speeches and in other work

³ See Table 2, page 568. — Ed.

of a literary or educational character. Afterwards Sri Aurobindo became Vice-Principal of the College and was for some time acting Principal. Most of the personal work for the Maharaja was done in an unofficial capacity; he was usually invited to breakfast with the Maharaja at the Palace and stayed on to do this work.

*

Aurobindo was appointed Private Secretary to H.H. the Maharaja of Baroda. . . . Whether as the Maharaja's Private Secretary or as an officer in the Revenue Department or as Professor of English and later as Vice-Principal in the Baroda College, Sri Aurobindo always conscientiously "delivered the goods".

Appointed Private Secretary not the fact. He was first sent to the Settlement Department, the idea being to train him for Revenue work. For the same reason he spent some time in the Stamps and other Departments or in the Secretariat, but for training, not with a firm appointment.

[*Another version:*] Sri Aurobindo was never appointed to the post of Private Secretary. He was put first in the Settlement Department, not as an officer but to learn the work; then in the Stamps and Revenue Departments; he was for some time put to work in the Secretariat for drawing up dispatches etc; finally he oscillated towards the College and entered it at first as part-time lecturer in French, afterwards as a regular Professor teaching English and was finally appointed Vice-Principal. Meanwhile, whenever he thought fit, the Maharaja would send for him for writing letters, composing speeches or drawing up documents of various kinds which needed special care in the phrasing of the language. All this was quite informal; there was no appointment as Private Secretary. Once H.H. took Sri Aurobindo as Secretary on his Kashmir tour, but there was much friction between them during the tour and the experiment was not repeated.

*

He was diligent and he was serious and he had, so it might have

seemed to many, really settled down to a career of meritorious service.

“diligent, serious, etc.” This valuation of Sri Aurobindo’s qualities was not the Maharaja’s. He gave him a certificate for ability and intelligence but also for lack of punctuality and regularity. If instead of “diligent and serious” and “a career of meritorious service” it were said that he was brilliant and quick and efficient in work, it would be more accurate. The description, as it is, gives an incorrect picture.

Language Study at Baroda

[When he arrived in India, Sri Aurobindo knew no Indian language except a smattering of Bengali, which was one of the subjects he had to study for the I.C.S. examination.]

Bengali was not a subject for the competitive examination for the I.C.S. It was after he had passed the competitive examination that Sri Aurobindo as a probationer who had chosen Bengal as his province began to learn Bengali. The course of study provided was a very poor one; his teacher, a retired English Judge from Bengal was not very competent, but what was learnt was more than a few words. Sri Aurobindo for the most part learnt Bengali for himself afterwards in Baroda.

*

In Baroda, Sri Aurobindo engaged Pundits and started mastering both Bengali and Sanskrit.

A teacher was engaged for Bengali, a young Bengali littérateur — none for Sanskrit.

*

[Sri Aurobindo took regular lessons in Bengali from Dinendra Kumar Roy at Baroda.]

No, there were no regular lessons. Dinendra lived with Sri Aurobindo as a companion and his work was rather to help him to correct and perfect his knowledge of the language and

to accustom him to conversation in Bengali than any regular teaching.

[*Another version:*] Sri Aurobindo was not a pupil of Dinendra Kumar; he had learnt Bengali already by himself and only called in Dinendra to help him in his studies.

Sri Aurobindo . . . engaged a teacher — a young Bengali littérateur — and started mastering Bengali. . . .

About the learning of Bengali, it may be said that before engaging the teacher, Sri Aurobindo already knew enough of the language to appreciate the novels of Bankim and the poetry of Madhusudan. He learned enough afterwards to write himself and to conduct a weekly in Bengali, writing most of the articles himself, but his mastery over the language was not at all the same as over English and he did not venture to make speeches in his mother tongue.

*

[He studied Hindi at Baroda.]

Sri Aurobindo never studied Hindi; but his acquaintance with Sanskrit and other Indian languages made it easy for him to pick up Hindi without any regular study and to understand it when he read Hindi books or newspapers. He did not learn Sanskrit through Bengali, but direct in Sanskrit itself or through English.

*

In Baroda after making a comparative study of all literatures, history, etc., he began to realise the importance of the Veda.

No. Started study of V. at Pondicherry.

Poetry Writing at Baroda

[Five of the poems in the book *Songs to Myrtila*, were written in England, the rest in Baroda.]

It is the other way round; all the poems in the book were written

in England except five later ones which were written after his return to India.

*

Vidula . . . originally appeared in the Weekly *Bandemataram* of June 9, 1907; *Baji Prabhou* appeared serially in the Weekly *Karmayogin* in 1910. It is not, however, unlikely that they had been actually written, or at least mentally sketched, during Sri Aurobindo's last years in Baroda.

No, these poems were conceived and written in Bengal during the time of political activity.

Meetings with His Grandfather at Deoghar

I was at Deoghar several times and saw my grandfather there, first in good health and then bedridden with paralysis. As I was not in the College, I must have gone on privileged leave.

*

[In Deoghar, he stayed with his in-laws (*beaux-parents*).]

Sri Aurobindo always stayed at Deoghar with the family of his maternal grandfather Raj Narayan Bose. The *beaux-parents* did not live at Deoghar.

*

[Sri Aurobindo owed his views on Indian Nationalism to the influence of Rajnarayan Bose. His turn towards philosophy may be attributed to the same influence.]

I don't think my grandfather was much of a philosopher; at any rate he never talked to me on that subject. My politics were shaped before I came to India; he talked to me of his Nationalist activities in the past, but I learned nothing new from them. I admired my grandfather and liked his writings "Hindu Dharmer [Sresthata]⁴" and "Se Kal ar E Kal"; but it is a mistake to think that he exercised any influence on me. I had gone in England far

⁴ MS Sreshtatwa

beyond his stock of ideas which belonged to an earlier period. He never spoke to me of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.

*

[His meetings with his grandfather were for political purposes.]

This is not correct. In these visits he was not concerned with politics. It was some years afterwards that he made a journey along with Devabrata Bose, Barin's co-adjutor in the Yugantar, partly to visit some of the revolutionary centres already formed, but also to meet leading men in the districts and find out the general attitude of the country and the possibilities of the revolutionary movement. His experience in this journey persuaded him that secret action or preparation by itself was not likely to be effective if there were not also a wide public movement which would create a universal patriotic fervour and popularise the idea of independence as the ideal and aim of Indian politics. It was this conviction that determined his later action.

Political Life, 1893–1910

A General Note on Sri Aurobindo's Political Life

There were three sides to Sri Aurobindo's political ideas and activities. First, there was the action with which he started, a secret revolutionary propaganda and organisation of which the central object was the preparation of an armed insurrection. Secondly, there was a public propaganda intended to convert the whole nation to the ideal of independence which was regarded, when he entered into politics, by the vast majority of Indians as unpractical and impossible, an almost insane chimera. It was thought that the British Empire was too powerful and India too weak, effectively disarmed and impotent even to dream of the success of such an endeavour. Thirdly, there was the organisation of the people to carry on a public and united opposition and undermining of the foreign rule through an increasing non-cooperation and passive resistance.

At that time the military organisation of the great empires and their means of military action were not so overwhelming and apparently irresistible as they now are: the rifle was still the decisive weapon, air power had not developed and the force of artillery was not so devastating as it afterwards became. India was disarmed, but Sri Aurobindo thought that with proper organisation and help from outside this difficulty might be overcome and in so vast a country as India and with the smallness of the regular British armies, even a guerrilla warfare accompanied by general resistance and revolt might be effective. There was also the possibility of a great revolt in the Indian army. At the same time he had studied the temperament and characteristics of the British people and the turn of their political instincts, and he believed that although they would resist any attempt at self-liberation by the Indian people and would at the most only concede very slowly such reforms as would not weaken their

imperial control, still they were not of the kind which would be ruthlessly adamant to the end: if they found resistance and revolt becoming general and persistent they would in the end try to arrive at an accommodation to save what they could of their empire or in an extremity prefer to grant independence rather than have it forcefully wrested from their hands.

In some quarters there is the idea that Sri Aurobindo's political standpoint was entirely pacifist, that he was opposed in principle and in practice to all violence and that he denounced terrorism, insurrection etc. as entirely forbidden by the spirit and letter of the Hindu religion. It is even suggested that he was a forerunner of the gospel of Ahimsa. This is quite incorrect. Sri Aurobindo is neither an impotent moralist nor a weak pacifist.

The rule of confining political action to passive resistance was adopted as the best policy for the National Movement at that stage and not as a part of a gospel of Non-violence or pacific idealism. Peace is a part of the highest ideal, but it must be spiritual or at the very least psychological in its basis; without a change in human nature it cannot come with any finality. If it is attempted on any other basis (moral principle or gospel of Ahimsa or any other) it will fail, and even may leave things worse than before. He is in favour of an attempt to put down war by international agreement and international force, what is now contemplated in the "New Order", if that proves possible, but that would not be Ahimsa, it would be a putting down of anarchic force by legal force, and even then one cannot be sure that it would be permanent. Within nations this sort of peace has been secured, but it does not prevent occasional civil wars and revolutions and political outbreaks and repressions, sometimes of a sanguinary character. The same might happen to a similar world-peace. Sri Aurobindo has never concealed his opinion that a nation is entitled to attain its freedom by violence, if it can do so or if there is no other way; whether it should do so or not, depends on what is the best policy, not on ethical considerations. Sri Aurobindo's position and practice in this matter was the same as Tilak's and that of

other Nationalist leaders who were by no means Pacifists or worshippers of Ahimsa.¹

For the first few years in India, Sri Aurobindo abstained from any political activity (except the writing of the articles in the *Indu Prakash*) and studied the conditions in the country so that he might be able to judge more maturely what could be done. Then 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 which he thought might occupy a period of 30 years before fruition could become possible. As a matter of fact it has taken 50 years for the movement of liberation to arrive at fruition and the beginning of complete success. 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. This was to be done among the youth of the country while sympathy and support and financial and other assistance were to be obtained from the older men who had advanced views or could be won over to them. Centres were to be established in every town and eventually in every village. Societies of young men were to be established with various ostensible objects, cultural, intellectual or moral and those already existing were to be won over for revolutionary use. Young men were to be trained in activities which might be helpful for ultimate military action, such as riding, physical training, athletics of various kinds, drill and organised movement. As soon as the idea was sown it attained a rapid prosperity; already existing small groups and associations of young men who had not yet the clear idea or any settled programme of revolution began to turn in this direction and a few who had already the revolutionary aim were contacted and soon developed activity on organised lines; the few rapidly became many. Meanwhile Sri Aurobindo had met a member of the Secret Society in Western India, and taken the oath of the Society and had been introduced

¹ *This and the preceding paragraph were inserted here when this note was first published in 1948. They incorporate, with some changes, most of a previously written note published on pages 72–73. — Ed.*

to the Council in Bombay. His future action was not pursued under any directions by this Council, but he took up on his own responsibility the task of generalising support for its objects in Bengal where as yet it had no membership or following. He spoke of the Society and its aim to P. Mitter and other leading men of the revolutionary group in Bengal and they took the oath of the Society and agreed to carry out its objects on the lines suggested by Sri Aurobindo. The special cover used by Mitter's group was association for lathi play which had already been popularised to some extent by Sarala Ghoshal in Bengal among the young men; but other groups used other ostensible covers. Sri Aurobindo's attempt at a close organisation of the whole movement did not succeed, but the movement itself did not suffer by that, for the general idea was taken up and activity of many separate groups led to a greater and more widespread diffusion of the revolutionary drive and its action. Afterwards there came the partition of Bengal and a general outburst of revolt which favoured the rise of the extremist party and the great nationalist movement. Sri Aurobindo's activities were then turned more and more in this direction and the secret action became a secondary and subordinate element. He took advantage, however, of the Swadeshi movement to popularise the idea of violent revolt in the future. At Barin's suggestion he agreed to the starting of a paper, *Yugantar*, which was to preach open revolt and the absolute denial of the British rule and include such items as a series of articles containing instructions for guerrilla warfare. Sri Aurobindo himself wrote some of the opening articles in the early numbers and he always exercised a general control; when a member of the sub-editorial staff, Swami Vivekananda's brother, presented himself on his own motion to the police in a search as the editor of the paper and was prosecuted, the *Yugantar* under Sri Aurobindo's orders adopted the policy of refusing to defend itself in a British Court on the ground that it did not recognise the foreign Government and this immensely increased the prestige and influence of the paper. It had as its chief writers and directors three of the ablest younger writers in Bengal, and it at once acquired an immense influence throughout Bengal. It

may be noted that the Secret Society did not include terrorism in its programme but this element grew up in Bengal as a result of the strong repression and the reaction to it in that province.

The public activity of Sri Aurobindo began with the writing of the articles in the *Indu Prakash*. These [nine]² articles written at the instance of K. G. Deshpande, editor of the paper and Sri Aurobindo's Cambridge friend, under the caption "New Lamps for Old" vehemently denounced the then congress policy of pray, petition and protest and called for a dynamic leadership based upon self-help and fearlessness. But this outspoken and irrefutable criticism was checked by the action of a Moderate leader who frightened the editor and thus prevented any full development of his ideas in the paper; he had to turn aside to generalities such as the necessity of extending the activities of the Congress beyond the circle of the bourgeois or middle class and calling into it the masses. Finally, Sri Aurobindo suspended all public activity of this kind and worked only in secret till 1905, but he contacted Tilak whom he regarded as the one possible leader for a revolutionary party and met him at the Ahmedabad Congress; there Tilak took him out of the pandal and talked to him for an hour in the grounds expressing his contempt for the Reformist movement and explaining his own line of action in Maharashtra.

Sri Aurobindo included in the scope of his revolutionary work one kind of activity which afterwards became an important item in the public programme of the Nationalist party. He encouraged the young men in the centres of work to propagate the Swadeshi idea which at that time was only in its infancy and hardly more than a fad of the few. One of the ablest men in these revolutionary groups was a Mahratta named Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar who was an able writer in Bengali (his family had been long domiciled in Bengal) and who had written a popular life of Shivaji in Bengali in which he first brought in the name of Swaraj, afterwards adopted by the Nationalists as their word for independence, — Swaraj became one item of the fourfold

² 1948 edition seven. See Table 1, page 565. — Ed.

Nationalist programme. He published a book entitled *Deshar Katha* describing in exhaustive detail the British commercial and industrial exploitation of India. This book had an immense repercussion in Bengal, captured the mind of young Bengal and assisted more than anything else in the preparation of the Swadeshi movement. Sri Aurobindo himself had always considered the shaking off of this economic yoke and the development of Indian trade and industry as a necessary concomitant of the revolutionary endeavour.

As long as he was in the Baroda service, Sri Aurobindo could not take part publicly in politics. Apart from that, he preferred to remain and act and even to lead from behind the scenes without his name being known in public; it was the Government's action in prosecuting him as editor of the *Bande Mataram* that forced him into public view. And from that time forward he became openly, what he had been for sometime already, a prominent leader of the Nationalist party, its principal leader in action in Bengal and the organiser there of its policy and strategy. He had decided in his mind the lines on which he wanted the country's action to run: what he planned was very much the same as was developed afterwards in Ireland as the Sinn Fein movement; but Sri Aurobindo did not derive his ideas, as some have represented, from Ireland, for the Irish movement became prominent later and he knew nothing of it till after he had withdrawn to Pondicherry. There was moreover a capital difference between India and Ireland which made his work much more difficult; for all its past history had accustomed the Irish people to rebellion against British rule and this history might be even described as a constant struggle for independence intermittent in its action but permanently there in principle; there was nothing of this kind in India. Sri Aurobindo had to establish and generalise the idea of independence in the mind of the Indian people and at the same time to push first a party and then the whole nation into an intense and organised political activity which would lead to the accomplishment of that ideal. His idea was to capture the Congress and to make it an instrument for revolutionary action instead of a centre of a timid constitutional agitation which

would only talk and pass resolutions and recommendations to the foreign Government; if the Congress could not be captured, then a central revolutionary body would have to be created which could do this work. It was to be a sort of State within the State giving its directions to the people and creating organised bodies and institutions which would be its means of action; there must be an increasing non-cooperation and passive resistance which would render the administration of the country by a foreign Government difficult or finally impossible, a universal unrest which would wear down repression and finally, if need be, an open revolt all over the country. This plan included a boycott of British trade, the substitution of national schools for the Government institutions, the creation of arbitration courts to which the people could resort instead of depending on the ordinary courts of law, the creation of volunteer forces which would be the nucleus of an army of open revolt, and all other action that could make the programme complete. The part Sri Aurobindo took publicly in Indian politics was of brief duration, for he turned aside from it in 1910 and withdrew to Pondicherry; much of his programme lapsed in his absence, but enough had been done to change the whole face of Indian politics and the whole spirit of the Indian people, to make independence its aim and non-cooperation and resistance its method, and even an imperfect application of this policy heightening into sporadic periods of revolt has been sufficient to bring about the victory. The course of subsequent events followed largely the line of Sri Aurobindo's idea. The Congress was finally captured by the Nationalist party, declared independence its aim, organised itself for action, took almost the whole nation minus a majority of the Mohammedans and a minority of the depressed classes into acceptance of its leadership and eventually formed the first national, though not as yet an independent, Government in India and secured from Britain acceptance of independence for India.³

At first Sri Aurobindo took part in Congress politics only

³ *This sentence, unlike the final one in this "General Note" (see page 66), was not revised before publication in 1948. — Ed.*

from behind the scenes as he had not yet decided to leave the Baroda service; but he took long leave without pay in which, besides carrying on personally the secret revolutionary work, he attended the Barisal Conference broken up by the police and toured East Bengal along with Bepin Pal and associated himself closely with the forward group in the Congress. It was during this period that he joined Bepin Pal in the editing of the *Bande Mataram*, founded the new political party in Bengal and attended the Congress session at Calcutta at which the Extremists, though still a minority, succeeded under the leadership of Tilak in imposing part of their political programme on the Congress. The founding of the Bengal National College gave him the opportunity he needed and enabled him to resign his position in the Baroda service and join the college as its Principal. Subodh Mullick, one of Sri Aurobindo's collaborators in his secret action and afterwards also in Congress politics, in whose house he usually lived when he was in Calcutta, had given a lakh of rupees for this foundation and had stipulated that Sri Aurobindo should be given a post of professor in the college with a salary of Rs. 150; so he was now free to give his whole time to the service of the country. Bepin Pal, who had been long expounding a policy of self-help and non-cooperation in his weekly journal, now started a daily with the name of *Bande Mataram*, but it was likely to be a brief adventure since he began with only Rs. 500 in his pocket and no firm assurance of financial assistance in the future. He asked Sri Aurobindo to join him in this venture to which a ready consent was given, for now Sri Aurobindo saw his opportunity for starting the public propaganda necessary for his revolutionary purpose. He called a meeting of the forward group of young men in the Congress and [they] decided then to organise themselves openly as a new political party joining hands with the corresponding group in Maharashtra under the proclaimed leadership of Tilak and to join battle with the Moderate party which was done at the Calcutta session. He also persuaded them to take up the *Bande Mataram* daily as their party organ and a *Bande Mataram* Company was started to finance the paper, whose direction Sri Aurobindo undertook during the absence of

Bepin Pal who was sent on a tour in the districts to proclaim the purpose and programme of the new party. The new party was at once successful and the *Bande Mataram* paper began to circulate throughout India. On its staff were not only Bepin Pal and Sri Aurobindo but some other very able writers, Shyam Sundar Chakravarty, Hemendra Prasad Ghose and Bejoy Chatterji. Shyam Sundar and Bejoy were masters of the English language, each with a style of his own; Shyam Sundar caught up something like Sri Aurobindo's way of writing and later on many took his articles for Sri Aurobindo's. But after a time dissensions arose between Bepin Pal on one side and the other contributors and the directors of the Company because of temperamental incompatibility and differences of political view especially with regard to the secret revolutionary action with which others sympathised but to which Bepin Pal was opposed. This ended soon in Bepin Pal's separation from the journal. Sri Aurobindo would not have consented to this departure, for he regarded the qualities of Pal as a great asset to the *Bande Mataram*, since Pal, though not a man of action or capable of political leadership, was perhaps the best and most original political thinker in the country, an excellent writer and a magnificent orator: but the separation was effected behind Sri Aurobindo's back when he was convalescing from a dangerous attack of fever. His name was even announced without his consent in *Bande Mataram* as editor but for one day only, as he immediately put a stop to it since he was still formally in the Baroda service and in no way eager to have his name brought forward in public. Henceforward, however, he controlled the policy of the *Bande Mataram* along with that of the party in Bengal. Bepin Pal had stated the aim of the new party as complete self-government free from British control but this could have meant or at least included the Moderate aim of colonial self-government and Dadabhai Naoroji as President of the Calcutta session of the Congress had actually tried to capture the name of Swaraj, the Extremists' term for independence, for this colonial self-government. Sri Aurobindo's first preoccupation was to declare openly for complete and absolute independence as the aim of political action in India and to

insist on this persistently in the pages of the journal; he was the first politician in India who had the courage to do this in public and he was immediately successful. The party took up the word Swaraj to express its own ideal of independence and it soon spread everywhere; but it was taken up as the ideal of the Congress much later on at the [Lahore]⁴ session of that body when it had been reconstituted and renovated under Nationalist leadership. The journal declared and developed a new political programme for the country as the programme of the Nationalist Party, non-cooperation, passive resistance, Swadeshi, Boycott, national education, settlement of disputes in law by popular arbitration and other items of Sri Aurobindo's plan. Sri Aurobindo published in the paper a series of articles on passive resistance, another developing a political philosophy of revolution and wrote many leaders aimed at destroying the shibboleths and superstitions of the Moderate Party, such as the belief in British justice and benefits bestowed by foreign government in India, faith in British law courts and in the adequacy of the education given in schools and universities in India and stressed more strongly and persistently than had been done the emasculation, stagnation or slow progress, poverty, economic dependence, absence of a rich industrial activity and all other evil results of a foreign government; he insisted especially that even if an alien rule were benevolent and beneficent, that could not be a substitute for a free and healthy national life. Assisted by this publicity the ideas of the Nationalists gained ground everywhere especially in the Punjab which had before been predominantly moderate. The *Bande Mataram* was almost unique in journalistic history in the influence it exercised in converting the mind of a people and preparing it for revolution. But its weakness was on the financial side; for the Extremists were still a poor man's party. So long as Sri Aurobindo was there in active control, he managed with great difficulty to secure sufficient public support for running the paper, but not for expanding it as he wanted, and when he was arrested and held in jail

⁴ 1948 edition Karachi. See Table 1, page 565. — Ed.

for a year, the economic situation of *Bande Mataram* became desperate: finally, it was decided that the journal should die a glorious death rather than perish by starvation and Bejoy Chatterji was commissioned to write an article for which the Government would certainly stop the publication of the paper. Sri Aurobindo had always taken care to give no handle in the editorial articles of the *Bande Mataram* either for a prosecution for sedition or any other drastic action fatal to its existence; an editor of *The Statesman* complained that the paper reeked with sedition patently visible between every line but it was so skilfully written that no legal action could be taken. The manoeuvre succeeded and the life of the *Bande Mataram* came to an end in Sri Aurobindo's absence.

The Nationalist programme could only achieve a partial beginning before it was temporarily broken by severe government repression. Its most important practical item was Swadeshi plus Boycott; for Swadeshi much was done to make the idea general and a few beginnings were made, but the greater results showed themselves only afterwards in the course of time. Sri Aurobindo was anxious that this part of the movement should be not only propagated in idea but given a practical organisation and an effective force. He wrote from Baroda asking whether it would not be possible to bring in the industrialists and manufacturers and gain the financial support of landed magnates and create an organisation in which men of industrial and commercial ability and experience and not politicians alone could direct operations and devise means of carrying out the policy; but he was told that it was impossible, the industrialists and the landed magnates were too timid to join in the movement, and the big commercial men were all interested in the import of British goods and therefore on the side of the status quo: so he had to abandon his idea of the organisation of Swadeshi and Boycott. Both Tilak and Sri Aurobindo were in favour of an effective boycott of British goods — but of British goods only; for there was little in the country to replace foreign articles: so they recommended the substitution for the British of foreign goods from Germany and Austria and America so that the fullest pressure might be

brought upon England. They wanted the Boycott to be a political weapon and not merely an aid to Swadeshi; the total boycott of all foreign goods was an impracticable idea and the very limited application of it recommended in Congress resolutions was too small to be politically effective. They were for national self-sufficiency in key industries, the production of necessities and of all manufactures of which India had the natural means, but complete self-sufficiency or autarchy did not seem practicable or even desirable since a free India would need to export goods as well as supply them for internal consumption and for that she must import as well and maintain an international exchange. But the sudden enthusiasm for the boycott of all foreign goods was wide and sweeping and the leaders had to conform to this popular cry and be content with the impulse it gave to the Swadeshi idea. National education was another item to which Sri Aurobindo attached much importance. He had been disgusted with the education given by the British system in the schools and colleges and universities, a system of which as a professor in the Baroda College he had full experience. He felt that it tended to dull and impoverish and tie up the naturally quick and brilliant and supple Indian intelligence, to teach it bad intellectual habits and spoil by narrow information and mechanical instruction its originality and productivity. The movement began well and many national schools were established in Bengal and many able men became teachers, but still the development was insufficient and the economical position of the schools precarious. Sri Aurobindo had decided to take up the movement personally and see whether it could not be given a greater expansion and a stronger foundation, but his departure from Bengal cut short this plan. In the repression and the general depression caused by it, most of the schools failed to survive. The idea lived on and it may be hoped that it will one day find an adequate form and body. The idea of people's courts was taken up and worked in some districts, not without success, but this too perished in the storm. The idea of volunteer groupings had a stronger vitality; it lived on, took shape, multiplied its formations and its workers were the spearhead of the movement of direct action which broke

out from time to time in the struggle for freedom. The purely political elements of the Nationalist programme and activities were those which lasted and after each wave of repression and depression renewed the thread of the life of the movement for liberation and kept it recognisably one throughout nearly fifty years of its struggle. But the greatest thing done in those years was the creation of a new spirit in the country. In the enthusiasm that swept surging everywhere with the cry of *Bande Mataram* ringing on all sides men felt it glorious to be alive and dare and act together and hope; the old apathy and timidity were broken and a force created which nothing could destroy and which rose again and again in wave after wave till it carried India to the beginning of a complete victory.

After the *Bande Mataram* case, Sri Aurobindo became the recognised leader of Nationalism in Bengal. He led the party at the session of the [district]⁵ Conference at Midnapore where there was a vehement clash between the two parties. He now for the first time became a speaker on the public platform, addressed large meetings at Surat and presided over the Nationalist conference there. He stopped at several places on his way back to Calcutta and was the speaker at large meetings called to hear him.⁶ He led the party again at the session of the Provincial Conference at Hooghly. There it became evident for the first time that Nationalism was gaining the ascendant, for it commanded a majority among the delegates and in the Subjects Committee Sri Aurobindo was able to defeat the Moderates' resolution welcoming the Reforms and pass his own resolution stigmatising them as utterly inadequate and unreal and rejecting them. But the Moderate leaders threatened to secede if this was maintained and to avoid a scission he consented to allow the Moderate resolution to pass but spoke at the public session explaining his decision and asking the Nationalists to acquiesce in it in spite of their victory so as to keep some unity in the political forces of Bengal. The Nationalist delegates, at first

⁵ 1948 edition Bengal Provincial. See Table 1, page 565. — Ed.

⁶ See Table 2, page 568. — Ed.

triumphant and clamorous, accepted the decision and left the hall quietly at Sri Aurobindo's order so that they might not have to vote either for or against the Moderate resolution. This caused much amazement and discomfiture in the minds of the Moderate leaders who complained that the people had refused to listen to their old and tried leaders and clamoured against them, but at the bidding of a young man new to politics they had obeyed in disciplined silence as if a single body.

About this period Sri Aurobindo had decided to take up charge of a Bengali daily, *Nava Shakti*, and had moved from his rented house in Scott's Lane, where he had been living with his wife and sister, to rooms in the office of this newspaper, and there, before he could begin this new venture, early one morning while he was still sleeping, the police charged up the stairs, revolver in hand, and arrested him. He was taken to the police station and thence to Alipore Jail where he remained for a year during the magistrate's investigation and the trial in the Sessions Court at Alipore. At first he was lodged for some time in a solitary cell but afterwards transferred to a large section of the jail where he lived in one huge room with the other prisoners in the case; subsequently, after the assassination of the approver in the jail, all the prisoners were confined in contiguous but separate cells and met only in the court or in the daily exercise where they could not speak to each other. It was in the second period that Sri Aurobindo made the acquaintance of most of his fellow-accused. In the jail he spent almost all his time in reading the Gita and the Upanishads and in intensive meditation and the practice of Yoga. This he pursued even in the second interval when he had no opportunity of being alone and had to accustom himself to meditation amid general talk and laughter, the playing of games and much noise and disturbance; in the first and third periods he had full opportunity and used it to the full. In the Sessions Court the accused were confined in a large prisoners' cage and here during the whole day he remained absorbed in his meditation attending little to the trial and hardly listening to the evidence. 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. During this period his view of life was radically changed; he had taken up Yoga with the original idea of acquiring spiritual force and energy and divine guidance for his work in life. But now the inner spiritual life and realisation which had continually been increasing in magnitude and universality and assuming a larger place took him up entirely and his work became a part and result of it and besides far exceeded the service and liberation of the country and fixed itself in an aim, previously only glimpsed, which was world-wide in its bearing and concerned with the whole future of humanity.

When he came out from jail, Sri Aurobindo found the whole political aspect of the country altered; most of the Nationalist leaders were in jail or in self-imposed exile and there was a general discouragement and depression, though the feeling in the country had not ceased but was only suppressed and was growing by its suppression. He determined to continue the struggle; he held weekly meetings in Calcutta, but the attendance which had numbered formerly thousands full of enthusiasm was now only of hundreds and had no longer the same force and life. He also went to places in the districts to speak and at one of these delivered his speech at Uttarpara in which for the first time he spoke publicly of his Yoga and his spiritual experiences. He started also two weeklies, one in English and one in Bengali, the *Karmayogin* and *Dharma*, which had a fairly large circulation and were, unlike the *Bande Mataram*, easily self-supporting. He attended and spoke at the Provincial Conference at [Hooghly]⁷ in 1909: for in Bengal owing to the compromise at [Pabna]⁸ the two parties had not split altogether apart and both joined in the Conference, though there could be no representatives of the Nationalist party at the meeting of the Central Moderate Body which had taken the place of the Congress. Surendra Nath

⁷ 1948 edition Barisal. See Table 1, page 566. — Ed.

⁸ 1948 edition Hooghly. See Table 1, page 566. — Ed.

Banerji had indeed called a private conference attended by Sri Aurobindo and one or two other leaders of the Nationalists to discuss a project of uniting the two parties at the session in [Lahore]⁹ and giving a joint fight to the dominant right wing of the Moderates; for he had always dreamt of becoming again the leader of a united Bengal with the Extremist party as his strong right arm: but that would have necessitated the Nationalists being appointed as delegates by the Bengal Moderates and accepting the constitution imposed at Surat. This Sri Aurobindo refused to do; he demanded a change in that constitution enabling newly formed associations to elect delegates so that the Nationalists might independently send their representatives to the All-India session and on this point the negotiations broke down. Sri Aurobindo began however to consider how to revive the national movement under the changed circumstances. He glanced at the possibility of falling back on a Home Rule movement which the Government could not repress, but this, which was actually realised by Mrs. Besant later on, would have meant a postponement and a falling back from the ideal of independence. He looked also at the possibility of an intense and organised passive resistance movement in the manner afterwards adopted by Gandhi. He saw however that he himself could not be the leader of such a movement.

At no time did he consent to have anything to do with the sham Reforms which were all the Government at that period cared to offer. He held up always the slogan of “no compromise” or, as he now put it in his Open Letter to his countrymen published in the *Karmayogin*, “no co-operation without control”. It was only if real political, administrative and financial control were given to popular ministers in an elected Assembly that he would have anything to do with offers from the British Government. Of this he saw no sign until the proposal of the Montagu Reforms in which first something of the kind seemed to appear. He foresaw that the British Government would have to begin trying to meet the national aspiration half-way, but

⁹ 1948 edition Benares. See Table 1, page 566. — Ed.

he would not anticipate that moment before it actually came. The Montagu Reforms came nine years after Sri Aurobindo had retired to Pondicherry and by that time he had abandoned all outward and public political activity in order to devote himself to his spiritual work, acting only by his spiritual force on the movement in India, until his prevision of real negotiations between the British Government and the Indian leaders was fulfilled by the Cripps' proposal and the events that came after.

Meanwhile the Government were determined to get rid of Sri Aurobindo as the only considerable obstacle left to the success of their repressive policy. As they could not send him to the Andamans they decided to deport him. This came to the knowledge of Sister Nivedita and she informed Sri Aurobindo and asked him to leave British India and work from outside so that his work would not be stopped or totally interrupted. Sri Aurobindo contented himself with publishing in the *Karmayogin* a signed article in which he spoke of the project of deportation and left the country what he called his last will and testament; he felt sure that this would kill the idea of deportation and in fact it so turned out. Deportation left aside, the Government could only wait for some opportunity for prosecution for sedition and this chance came to them when Sri Aurobindo published in the same paper another signed article reviewing the political situation. The article was sufficiently moderate in its tone and later on the High Court refused to regard it as seditious and acquitted the printer. Sri Aurobindo one night at the *Karmayogin* office received information of the Government's intention to search the office and arrest him. While considering what should be his attitude, he received a sudden command from above to go to Chandernagore in French India. He obeyed the command at once, for it was now his rule to move only as he was moved by the divine guidance and never to resist and depart from it; he did not stay to consult with anyone but in ten minutes was at the river ghat and in a boat plying on the Ganges, in a few hours he was at Chandernagore where he went into secret residence. He sent a message to Sister Nivedita asking her to take up the editing of the *Karmayogin* in his absence. This was the end of his active

connection with his two journals. At Chandernagore he plunged entirely into solitary meditation and ceased all other activity. Then there came to him a call to proceed to Pondicherry. A boat manned by some young revolutionaries of Uttarpara took him to Calcutta; there he boarded the *Dupleix* and reached Pondicherry on April 4, 1910.

At Pondicherry, from this time onwards Sri Aurobindo's practice of Yoga became more and more absorbing. He dropped all participation in any public political activity, refused more than one request to preside at sessions of the restored Indian National Congress and made a rule of abstention from any public utterance of any kind not connected with his spiritual activities or any contribution of writings or articles except what he wrote afterwards in the *Arya*. For some years he kept up some private communication with the revolutionary forces he had led through one or two individuals, but this also he dropped after a time and his abstention from any kind of participation in politics became complete. As his vision of the future grew clearer, he saw that the eventual independence of India was assured by the march of Forces of which he became aware, that Britain would be compelled by the pressure of Indian resistance and by the pressure of international events to concede independence and that she was already moving towards that eventuality with whatever opposition and reluctance. He felt that there would be no need of armed insurrection and that the secret preparation for it could be dropped without injury to the nationalist cause, although the revolutionary spirit had to be maintained and would be maintained intact. His own personal intervention in politics would therefore be no longer indispensable. Apart from all this, the magnitude of the spiritual work set before him became more and more clear to him, and he saw that the concentration of all his energies on it was necessary. Accordingly, when the Ashram came into existence, he kept it free from all political connections or action; even when he intervened in politics twice afterwards on special occasions, this intervention was purely personal and the Ashram was not concerned in it. The British Government and numbers of people besides could not believe that Sri Aurobindo

had ceased from all political action and it was supposed by them that he was secretly participating in revolutionary activities and even creating a secret organisation in the security of French India. But all this was pure imagination and rumour and there was nothing of the kind. His retirement from political activity was complete, just as was his personal retirement into solitude in 1910.

But this did not mean, as most people supposed, that he had retired into some height of spiritual experience devoid of any further interest in the world or in the fate of India. It could not mean that, for the very principle of his Yoga was not only to realise the Divine and attain to a complete spiritual consciousness, but also to take all life and all world activity into the scope of this spiritual consciousness and action and to base life on the Spirit and give it a spiritual meaning. In his retirement Sri Aurobindo kept a close watch on all that was happening in the world and in India and actively intervened whenever necessary, but solely with a spiritual force and silent spiritual action; for it is part of the experience of those who have advanced far in Yoga that besides the ordinary forces and activities of the mind and life and body in Matter, there are other forces and powers that can act and do act from behind and from above; there is also a spiritual dynamic power which can be possessed by those who are advanced in the spiritual consciousness, though all do not care to possess or, possessing, to use it, and this power is greater than any other and more effective. It was this force which, as soon as he had attained to it, he used, at first only in a limited field of personal work, but afterwards in a constant action upon the world forces. He had no reason to be dissatisfied with the results or to feel the necessity of any other kind of action. Twice however he found it advisable to take in addition other action of a public kind. The first was in relation to the second World War. At the beginning he did not actively concern himself with it, but when it appeared as if Hitler would crush all the forces opposed to him and Nazism dominate the world, he began to intervene. He declared himself publicly on the side of the Allies, made

some financial contributions in answer to the appeal for funds and encouraged those who sought his advice to enter the army or share in the war effort. Inwardly, he put his spiritual force behind the Allies from the moment of Dunkirk when everybody was expecting the immediate fall of England and the definite triumph of Hitler, and he had the satisfaction of seeing the rush of German victory almost immediately arrested and the tide of war begin to turn in the opposite direction. This he did, because he saw that behind Hitler and Nazism were dark Asuric forces and that their success would mean the enslavement of mankind to the tyranny of evil, and a set-back to the course of evolution and especially to the spiritual evolution of mankind: it would lead also to the enslavement not only of Europe but of Asia, and in it India, an enslavement far more terrible than any this country had ever endured, and the undoing of all the work that had been done for her liberation. It was this reason also that induced him to support publicly the Cripps' offer and to press the Congress leaders to accept it. He had not, for various reasons, intervened with his spiritual force against the Japanese aggression until it became evident that Japan intended to attack and even invade and conquer India. He allowed certain letters he had written in support of the war affirming his views of the Asuric nature and inevitable outcome of Hitlerism to become public. He supported the Cripps' offer because by its acceptance India and Britain could stand united against the Asuric forces and the solution of Cripps could be used as a step towards independence. When negotiations failed, Sri Aurobindo returned to his reliance on the use of spiritual force alone against the aggressor and had the satisfaction of seeing the tide of Japanese victory, which had till then swept everything before it, changed immediately into a tide of rapid, crushing and finally immense and overwhelming defeat. He had also after a time the satisfaction of seeing his previsions about the future of India justify themselves so that she stands independent with whatever internal difficulties.

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The *Indu Prakash* Articles

Sri Aurobindo revolved these things in his mind, and read, wrote and thought incessantly. Could not something be done? Could he not find an opportunity for service in the larger life of Bengal, — of the Indian nation itself?

He had already in England decided to devote his life to the service of his country and its liberation. He even began soon after coming to India to write on political matters (without giving his name) in the daily press, trying to awaken the nation to the ideas of the future. But these were not well received by the leaders of the time, they succeeded in preventing farther publication and he drew back into silence. But he did not abandon either his ideas or his hope of an effective action.

*

[*New Lamps for Old*, the series of articles he published in the *Indu Prakash*, was on Indian civilisation.]

This title did not refer to Indian civilisation but to Congress politics. It is not used in the sense of the Aladdin story, but was intended to imply the offering of new lights to replace the old and faint reformist lights of the Congress.

*

It is said that Sri Aurobindo was persuaded to discontinue his contribution to *Indu Prakash* by the late Mahadeo Govind Ranade.

The facts are: After the first two articles, Ranade called the proprietor [saying] that these articles were revolutionary and dangerous and a case for sedition might be brought against the paper. The proprietor alarmed told the editor K. G. Deshpande that this series must be discontinued. It was finally concluded that the tone should be moderated, the substance made more academic and the thus moderated articles could then continue. Sri Aurobindo lost interest in these muzzled productions, sent in numbers at long intervals and finally dropped the whole affair.

Sri Aurobindo saw Ranade at this time, his only contact; Ranade advised him to take some special subject and write about [it], he recommended Jail Reform, perhaps thinking that this writer would soon have personal experience of jails and thus become an expert on his subject!

[*Another version:*] The facts about the articles in the Indu Prakash were these. They were begun at the instance of K. G. Deshpande, Aurobindo's Cambridge friend, who was editor of the paper, but the first two articles made a sensation and frightened Ranade and other Congress leaders. Ranade warned the proprietor of the paper that, if this went on, he would surely be prosecuted for sedition. Accordingly the original plan of the series had to be dropped at the proprietor's instance. Deshpande requested Sri Aurobindo to continue in a modified tone and he reluctantly consented, but felt no farther interest and the articles were published at long intervals and finally dropped of themselves altogether.

*

[The authorities objected to his patriotic activities.]

Is the reference to the Baroda authorities? Sri Aurobindo is not aware that his utterances or writings were ever objected to by them. His articles in the Indu Prakash were anonymous, although many people in Bombay knew that he was the writer. Otherwise, except for a few speeches at functions in the Palace itself such as the reception of Dr. S. K. Mullick which had nothing to do [with]¹⁰ politics, he spoke mainly as Chairman of the Baroda College Union, there was no objection made at any time and he continued to preside over some of these debates until he left Baroda. It was in England while at Cambridge that he made revolutionary speeches at the meetings of the Indian Majlis which were recorded as a black mark against him by the India Office.

¹⁰ MS (*dictated*) at

Beginnings of the Revolutionary Movement

During his stay at Baroda Sri Aurobindo got into touch with men that counted, groups that counted. He went to Bengal “to see what was the hope of revival, what was the political condition of the people, and whether there was the possibility of a real movement”.

It might be added that he had begun a work that was still nameless; and it was in the course of that work that he went to Bengal “to see what was the hope of revival etc.”

*

He found that in Bengal “the prevailing mood was apathy and despair”. There was no other go except to bide his time.

It should be added, “and continue his political work behind the scenes in silence. The moment for public work had not yet come.”

Once his work was started he continued it until circumstances made it possible to join in a public movement.

*

Even his own intrepid province of Bengal was in no mood to be persuaded by Sri Aurobindo and his gospel of virile nationalism.

It was anything but intrepid at the time; it was the mantra of *Bande Mataram* and the leap into revolutionary action that changed the people of the province.

*

[He sent some of his friends from Baroda and Bombay to Bengal to prepare for the revolutionary movement.]

It was not any of his friends at Baroda and in Bombay who went to Bengal on his behalf. His first emissary was a young Bengali who had by the help of Sri Aurobindo’s friends in the Baroda Army enlisted as a trooper in a cavalry regiment in spite of the prohibition by the British Government of the enlistment of any

Bengali in any army in India. This man who was exceedingly energetic and capable, formed a first group in Calcutta which grew rapidly (afterwards many branches were established); he also entered into relations with P. Mitter and other revolutionaries already at work in the province. He was joined afterwards by Barin who had in the interval come to Baroda.

*

[Among the leading lights of the day was P. Mitter who was a positivist.]

P. Mitter had a spiritual life and aspiration of his own and a strong religious feeling; he was like Bepin Pal and several other prominent leaders of the new nationalist movement in Bengal, a disciple of the famous Yogi Bejoy Goswami, but he did not bring these things into his politics.

*

[At this time there was at Bombay a secret society headed by a Rajput prince of Udaipur.]

This Rajput leader was not a prince, that is to say a Ruling Chief but a noble of the Udaipur State with the title of Thakur. The Thakur was not a member of the council in Bombay; he stood above it as the leader of the whole movement while the council helped him to organise Maharashtra and the Mahratta States. He himself worked principally upon the Indian Army of which he had already won over two or three regiments. Sri Aurobindo took a special journey into Central India to meet and speak with Indian sub-officers and men of one of these regiments.

*

Since 1902 Sri Aurobindo wished to enter the political fray and to contribute his mite to the forces that were seriously working for the country's redemption and rehabilitation. He held private talks, he corresponded, he put pressure on front-rank leaders; but as yet he could do little.

This does not give a correct idea. He had already joined with some of the more advanced leaders to organise bodies for political action which would act when the time for action came;¹¹ it was only in public as yet that he could do little.

Attitude towards Violent Revolution

[Sri Aurobindo did not believe in, nor did he like, violent revolution.]

This is incorrect. If Sri Aurobindo had not believed in the efficacy of violent revolution or had disliked it, he would not have joined the secret society whose whole purpose was to prepare a national insurrection. His historical studies had not taught him the lesson indicated here. On the contrary, he had studied with interest the revolutions and rebellions which led to national liberation, the struggle against the English in mediaeval France and the revolts which liberated America and Italy. He took much of his inspiration from these movements and their leaders, especially Jeanne d'Arc and Mazzini. In his public activity he took up non-cooperation and passive resistance as a means in the struggle for independence but not the sole means and so long as he was in Bengal he maintained a secret revolutionary activity as a preparation for open revolt, in case passive resistance proved insufficient for the purpose.

¹¹ The programme of this organisation was at first Swaraj, Swadeshi, Boycott — Swaraj meaning to it complete independence. The word Swaraj was first used by the Bengali-Maratha publicist, Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar, writer of *Desher Katha*, a book compiling all the details of India's economic servitude which had an enormous influence on the young men of Bengal and helped to turn them into revolutionaries. The word was taken up as their ideal by the revolutionary party and popularised by the vernacular paper *Sandhya* edited by Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya; it was caught hold of by Dadabhai Naoroji at the Calcutta Congress as the equivalent of colonial self-government but did not long retain that depreciated value. Sri Aurobindo was the first to use its English equivalent "independence" and reiterate it constantly in the *Bande Mataram* as the one and immediate aim of national politics. [*Sri Aurobindo's note.*]

General Note
(referring especially to the Alipur Case and
Sri Aurobindo's politics)

There seems to be put forth here and in several places the idea that Sri Aurobindo's political standpoint was entirely pacifist, that he was opposed in principle and in practice to all violence and that he denounced terrorism, insurrection etc. as entirely forbidden by the spirit and letter of the Hindu religion. It is even suggested that he was a forerunner of Mahatma Gandhi and his gospel of Ahimsa. This is quite [incorrect]¹² and, if left, would give a wrong idea about Sri Aurobindo. He has given his ideas on the subject, generally, in the Essays on the Gita, First Series (Chapter IV?) where he supports the Gita's idea of *dharmya yuddha* and criticises, though not expressly, the Gandhian ideas of soul-force. If he had held the pacifist ideal, he would never have supported the Allies (or anybody else) in this War, still less sanctioned some of his disciples joining the Army as airmen, soldiers, doctors, electricians etc. The declarations and professions quoted in the book are not his, at the most they may have been put forward by his lawyers or written, more prudentially than sincerely, by colleagues in the *Bande Mataram*. The rule of confining political action to passive resistance was adopted as the best policy for the National Movement at that stage and not as part of a gospel of Non-violence or Peace. Peace is part of the highest ideal, but it must be spiritual or at the very least psychological in its basis; without a change in human nature it cannot come with any finality. If it is attempted on any other basis (mental principle, or gospel of Ahimsa or any other) it will fail, and even may leave things worse than before. He is in favour of an attempt to put down war by international agreement and international force, — what is now contemplated in the "New Order", — if that proves possible, but that would not be Ahimsa, it would be a putting down of anarchic force by legal force, and one cannot be sure that it would be permanent.

¹² MS correct

Within nations this sort of peace has been secured, but it does not prevent occasional civil wars and revolutions and political outbreaks and repressions, sometimes of a sanguinary character. The same might happen to a similar world-peace. Sri Aurobindo has never concealed his opinion that a nation is entitled to attain its freedom by violence, if it can do so or if there is no other way; whether it should do so or not, depends on what is the best policy, not on ethical considerations of the Gandhian kind. Sri Aurobindo's position (and practice) in this matter was the same as Tilak's and that of other Nationalist leaders who were by no means Pacifists or worshippers of Ahimsa. Those of them who took a share in revolutionary activities, kept a veil over them for reasons which need not be discussed now. Sri Aurobindo knew of all these things and took his own path, but he has always remained determined not to lift the veil till the proper time comes.

It follows that the passages which convey the opposite idea must be omitted in the interests of Truth or rewritten. Nothing need be said about the side of the Nationalist activities of that time in connection with Sri Aurobindo.

Sister Nivedita

[Sister Nivedita was invited to Baroda in 1904 by the Maharaja of Baroda.]

I do not remember whether she was invited but I think she was there as a State guest. Khaserao and myself went to receive her at the station.

*

[Sri Aurobindo had talks with Nivedita about Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.]

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]¹³ and its

¹³ MS buildings

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 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. That is all I remember.

*

[Sri Aurobindo was influenced by the patriotic fervour of Swami Vivekananda's utterances, such as his "Mission of the Vedanta" speech.]

Sri Aurobindo was not aware of this speech or of any political action by Vivekananda. He had only heard casually of Vivekananda's intense patriotic feelings which inspired Sister Nivedita.

Bhawani Mandir

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

*

[An attempt was made to find a site where the Bhawani Mandir idea could be put into operation; later the plan was dropped.]

Sri Aurobindo does not remember anything of this kind nor of any formal decision to abandon the Bhawani Mandir idea. This selection of a site and a head of the monastery must have been

simply an idea of Barin. He had travelled among the hills trying to find a suitable place but caught hill-fever and had to abandon his search and return to Baroda. Subsequently he went back to Bengal, but Sri Aurobindo did not hear of any discovery of a suitable place. Sakaria Swami was Barin's Guru: he had been a fighter in the Mutiny on the rebel side and he showed at the breaking of the Surat Congress a vehement patriotic excitement which caused his death because it awoke the poison of the bite of a mad dog which he had reduced to inactivity by a process of his Yogic will; but Sri Aurobindo would not have chosen him for any control of the political side of such an institution. The idea of Bhawani Mandir simply lapsed of itself. Sri Aurobindo thought no more about it, but Barin who clung to the idea tried to establish something like it on a small scale in the Maniktala Garden.

The Indian National Congress: Moderates and Extremists

[Allan Hume founded the Indian National Congress to act as an intermediary between the élite of the English and Indian peoples.]

This description of the Congress as an intermediary etc. would hardly have been recognised or admitted by the Congress itself at that time. The British Government also would not have recognised it. It regarded the institution with dislike and ignored it as much as possible. Also, Sri Aurobindo was totally opposed to making any approach on behalf of the nation to the British Government; he regarded the Congress policy as a process of futile petition and protest and considered self-help, non-cooperation and organisation of all forces in the nation for revolutionary action as the sole effective policy.

*

Sri Aurobindo, like all his countrymen, had great respect for Gokhale; . . .

[*Altered to:*] Sri Aurobindo, like all his countrymen, did not fail

to recognise the finer elements in Gokhale's mind and character; . . .

Alter as indicated. After an hour's conversation with Gokhale in the train between Ahmedabad and Baroda it was impossible for Sri Aurobindo to retain any great respect for Gokhale as a politician, whatever his merits as a man.

*

[In 1904 an extremist section was formed in the Congress; its members were waiting for the December 1904 session in Bombay in order to make themselves felt.]

It is not clear to what this refers. In 1904 the Extremist party had not been publicly formed, although there was an advanced section in the Congress, strong in Maharashtra but still small and weak elsewhere and composed mostly of young men; there were sometimes disputes behind the scenes but nothing came out in public. These men of extremer views were not even an organised group; it was Sri Aurobindo who in 1906 persuaded this group in Bengal to take [a] public position as a party, proclaim Tilak as their leader and enter into a contest with the Moderate leaders for the control of the Congress and of public opinion and action in the country. The first great public clash between the two parties took place in the sessions of the Congress at Calcutta where Sri Aurobindo was present but still working behind the scenes, the second at the [district]¹⁴ Conference at Midnapur where he for the first time acted publicly as the leader of the Bengal Nationalists, and the final break took place at Surat in 1907.

The Barisal Conference and the Start of the *Yugantar*

[At the Barisal Conference (April 1906)]

Sri Aurobindo took part in the Barisal Conference and was in the front row¹⁵ of three persons in the procession which was

¹⁴ MS Bengal Provincial. See Table 1, page 566. — Ed.

¹⁵ See Table 2, page 568. — Ed.

dispersed by the police charge. After the breaking up of the Conference he accompanied Bepin Pal in a tour of East Bengal where enormous meetings were held, — in one district in spite of the prohibition of the District Magistrate.

*

Besides Sri Aurobindo, there were also other fiery propagators of the new gospel of Nationalism — notably Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya, Bhupendranath Dutt and Sri Aurobindo's younger brother, Barindra Kumar Ghose. . . .

Bhupendranath Dutt.

In the interests of truth this name should be omitted. Bhupen Dutt was at the time only an obscure hand in the *Yugantar* office incapable of writing anything important and an ordinary recruit in the revolutionary ranks quite incapable of leading anybody, not even himself. When the police searched the office of the newspaper, he came forward and in a spirit of bravado declared himself the editor, although that was quite untrue. Afterwards he wanted to defend himself, but it was decided that the *Yugantar*, a paper ostentatiously revolutionary advocating armed insurrection, could not do that and must refuse to plead in a British court. This position was afterwards maintained throughout and greatly enhanced the prestige of the paper. Bhupen was sentenced, served his term and subsequently went to America. This at the time was his only title to fame. The real editors or writers of *Yugantar* (for there was no declared editor) were Barin, Upen Banerji (also a subeditor of the *Bande Mataram*) and Debabrata Bose who subsequently joined the Ramakrishna Mission (being acquitted in the Alipur case) and was []¹⁶ prominent among the Sannyasis at Almora and as a writer in the Mission's journals. Upen and Debabrata were masters of Bengali prose and it was their writings and Barin's that gained an unequalled popularity for the paper. These are the facts, but it will be sufficient to omit Bhupen's name.

¹⁶ MS a

Principal of the Bengal National College

The Bengal National College was . . . founded and Sri Aurobindo became its Principal. . . . But [his nationalistic activities were] not to the liking of the management, and Sri Aurobindo therefore resigned his position.

At an early period he left the organisation of the college to the educationist Satish Mukherjee and plunged fully into politics. When the *Bande Mataram* case was brought against him, he resigned his post in order not to embarrass the College authorities but resumed it again on his acquittal. During the Alipur Case he resigned finally at the request of the College authorities.

Now [after resigning from the Bengal National College] Sri Aurobindo was free to associate himself actively with the Nationalist Party and its accredited organ, *Bandematararam*.

It was done long before that as the above account will show.

*

It appears that, when he was in full charge of the College, he used to lecture for ten hours per week, and he taught, in addition to English Literature, British, Greek and Roman History also.

Not correct, should be omitted.

Start of the *Bande Mataram*

Sri Aurobindo was now in Calcutta — and he was in his element. He had given up his Baroda job, its settled salary and its seductive prospects; was he taking a blind leap into the dangerous unknown? . . .

Sri Aurobindo was present at the Congress in 1904 and again in 1906 and took a part in the counsels of the extremist party and in the formation of its fourfold programme — “Swaraj, swadeshi, boycott, national education” — which the Moderate leaders after a severe tussle behind the scenes were obliged to

incorporate in the resolutions of 1906. Bepin Pal had just started a daily paper *Bande Mataram* with only 500 Rs in his pocket. Sri Aurobindo took up joint editorship of the journal, edited the paper during Bepin Pal's absence and induced the Nationalist party to take it up as their organ and finance it. He called a meeting of the party leaders at which it was decided at his instance to give up the behind the scenes jostlings with the Moderates, and declare an open war on Moderatism and place before the country what was practically a revolutionary propaganda. He gave up his Baroda job some time after this; he had taken indefinite leave without pay; for this reason he did not take up officially and publicly the editorship of the *Bande Mataram* although after Bepin Pal left that post, he was practically in full control of the policy of the paper.

*

[The *Bande Mataram* was started on 7 August 1906. The joint stock company was declared on 18 October 1906. From August to October 1906 Bepin Pal was the editor.]

Bepin Pal started the *Bande Mataram* with 500 Rs in his pocket donated by Haridas Halder. He called in my help as assistant editor and I gave it. I called a private meeting of the Nationalist leaders in Calcutta and they agreed to take up the *Bande Mataram* as their party paper with Subodh and Nirod Mullick as the principal financial supporters. A company was projected and formed, but the paper was financed and kept up meanwhile by Subodh. Bepin Pal who was strongly supported by C. R. Das and others remained as editor. Hemprasad Ghose and Shyamsundar Chakrabarti joined the editorial staff but they could not get on with Bepin Babu and were supported by the Mullicks. Finally Bepin Pal had to retire, I don't remember whether in November or December, probably the latter. I was myself very ill, almost to death, in my father-in-law's house in [Mott's]¹⁷ Lane and did not know what was going on. They put my name as editor on the paper without my consent, but I spoke to the Secretary

¹⁷ MS Serpentine. See Table 1, page 566. — Ed.

pretty harshly and had the insertion discontinued. I also wrote a strong letter on the subject to Subodh. From that time Bepin Pal had no connection with the *Bande Mataram*. Somebody said or wrote that he resumed his editorship after I was arrested in the Alipur Case. I never heard of that. I was told by Bejoy Chatterji after I came out from jail that he, Shyamsundar and Hemprasad had carried on somehow with the paper, but the finances became impossible, so he deliberately wrote an article which made the Govt come down on the paper and stop its publication, so that the *Bande Mataram* might end with some éclat and in all honour.

The Policy of the *Bande Mataram*

In other ways also Sri Aurobindo sought to appeal to the hearts of the Indian and British peoples. . . . *Vidula* . . . appeared in the second issue of the Weekly *Bandemataram*, which also contained “An Unreported Conversation” in verse between a Briton and Ajit Singh on the eve of his arrest. Another inspiring item in the issue was . . .

As a politician it was part of Sri Aurobindo’s principles never to appeal to the British people; that he would have considered as part of the mendicant policy. These articles and other items (satiric verse, parodies, etc.) referred to in these pages (not of course *Vidula* and *Perseus*) were the work of Shyamsundar Chakrabarti, not of Sri Aurobindo. Shyamsundar was a witty parodist and could write with much humour, as also with a telling rhetoric; he had caught some imitation of Sri Aurobindo’s style and many could not distinguish between their writings. In Aurobindo’s absences from Calcutta it was Shyamsundar who wrote most of the *Bande Mataram* editorials, those excepted which were sent by Aurobindo from Deoghar.

*

He was able to contemplate politics purged of all rancour . . .

Sri Aurobindo never brought any rancour into his politics. He

never had any hatred for England or the English people; he based his claim for freedom for India on the inherent right to freedom, not on any charge of misgovernment or oppression; if he attacked persons even violently, it was for their views or political action, not from any other motive.

The *Bande Mataram* Sedition Case

Earlier in the year [1907] he had been prosecuted in connection with his editorship of *Bandemataram* and the series of articles he wrote for the paper under the heading, "The New Path".

No — the prosecution was for a letter written by somebody to the Editor and for the publication of articles included in the Jugantar case but not actually used by the prosecution. The *Bande Mataram* was never prosecuted for its editorial articles. The editor of the Statesman complained that they were too diabolically clever, crammed full of sedition between the lines, but legally unattackable because of the skill of the language. The Government must have shared this view, for they never ventured to attack the paper for its editorial or other articles, whether Sri Aurobindo's or from the pen of his three editorial colleagues. There is also the fact that Sri Aurobindo never based his case for freedom on racial hatred or charges of tyranny or misgovernment, but always on the inalienable right of the nation to independence. His stand was that even good government could not take the place of national government, — independence.

*

He had been acquitted then, but the prosecution had succeeded, if anything, only in putting Sri Aurobindo to the fore-front and making the Indian intelligentsia only more than ever eager to read and con the columns of the one and only *Bandemataram*.

Sri Aurobindo had confined himself to writing and leadership

behind the scenes, not caring to advertise himself or put forward his personality, but the imprisonment and exile of other leaders and the publicity given to his name by the case compelled him to come forward and take the lead on the public platform.

The Surat Congress

This version does not represent accurately the facts as Sri Aurobindo remembers them. So far as he knows there was no attempt at fire. The session of the Congress had first been arranged at Nagpur, but Nagpur was predominantly a Mahratta city and violently extremist. Gujerat was at that time predominantly moderate, there were very few Nationalists and Surat was a stronghold of Moderatism though afterwards Gujerat became, especially after Gandhi took the lead, one of the most revolutionary of the provinces. So the Moderate leaders decided to hold the Congress at Surat. The Nationalists however came there in strength from all parts, they held a public conference with Sri Aurobindo as president and for some time it was doubtful which side would have the majority, but finally in this moderate city that party was able to bring in a crowd of so-called delegates up to the number of 1300 while the Nationalists were able by the same method to muster something over 1100. It was known that the Moderate leaders had prepared a new constitution for the Congress which would make it practically impossible for the extreme party to command a majority at any annual session for many years to come. The younger Nationalists, especially those from Maharashtra, were determined to prevent this by any means and it was decided by them to break the Congress if they could not swamp it; this decision was unknown to Tilak and the older leaders but it was known to Sri Aurobindo. At the sessions Tilak went on to the platform to propose a resolution regarding the presidentship of the Congress; the president appointed by the Moderates refused to him the permission to speak but Tilak insisted on his right and began to read his resolution and speak. There was a tremendous uproar, the young Gujerati volunteers lifted up chairs over the head of Tilak to beat him.

At that the Mahrattas became furious, a Mahratta shoe came hurtling across the pavilion aimed at the President Dr. Rash Behari Ghose and hit Surendra Nath Banerji on the shoulder. The young Mahrattas in a body charged up to the platform, the Moderate leaders fled and after a short fight on the platform with chairs the session broke up not to be resumed. The Moderate leaders decided to suspend the Congress and replace it by a national conference with a constitution and arrangement which would make it safe for their party. Meanwhile Lajpatrai came to Tilak and informed him that the Government had decided, if the Congress split, to crush the Extremists by the most ruthless repression. Tilak thought, and the event proved that he was right, that the country was not yet ready to face successfully such a repression and he proposed to circumvent both the Moderate plan and the Government plan by the Nationalists joining the conference and signing the statement of adhesion to the new constitution demanded by the Moderates. Sri Aurobindo and some other leaders were opposed to this submission; they did not believe that the Moderates would admit any Nationalists to their conference (and this proved to be the case) and they wanted the country to be asked to face the repression. Thus the Congress ceased for a time to exist; but the Moderate conference was not a success and was attended only by small and always dwindling numbers. Sri Aurobindo had hoped that the country would be strong enough to face the repression, at least in Bengal and Maharashtra where the enthusiasm had become intense and almost universal; but he thought also that even if there was a temporary collapse the repression would create a deep change in the hearts and minds of the people and the whole nation would swing over to nationalism and the ideal of independence. This actually happened and when Tilak returned from jail in Burma after 6 years he was able in conjunction with Mrs Besant not only to revive the Congress but to make it representative of a nation pledged to the nationalist cause. The Moderate party shrank into a small body of liberals and even these finally subscribed to the ideal of complete independence.

After the Surat debacle, Sri Aurobindo did not return to Bengal immediately, as he had originally intended; impelled by an inner urge, he undertook a political tour instead in the Bombay presidency and the Central Provinces.

There was no tour. Sri Aurobindo went to Poona with Lele and after his return to Bombay went to Calcutta. All the speeches he made were at this time (except those at Bombay and at Baroda) at places on his way wherever he stopped for a day or two.

The Alipore Bomb Case

The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* asked editorially: “. . . but why were they (Aurobindo and others) pounced upon in this mysterious manner, handcuffed and then dragged before the Police Commissioner. . . .”

No, tied with a rope;¹⁸ this was taken off on the protest of Bhupen Bose, the Congress Moderate leader.

*

The hands were not tied, the cord was put round his waist, but before leaving the house it was removed on the remonstrance of Bhupendra Nath [Bose],¹⁹ the Moderate leader, who on hearing of the arrest had come to question the police about its motive.

*

[Earth from Dakshineswar was found in Sri Aurobindo’s room when the police searched his house in May 1908.]

The earth was brought to me by a young man connected with the Ramakrishna Mission and I kept it; it was there in my room when the police came to arrest me.

*

The case commenced before the Alipore Magistrate’s Court on the 19th May, 1908 and continued intermittently for a

¹⁸ See Table 2, page 568. — Ed.

¹⁹ MS (dictated) Dutt

whole year. Mr. Beachcroft, the magistrate, had been with Sri Aurobindo in Cambridge. . . . The case in due course went up to the Sessions Court and the trial commenced there in October 1908.

[*Sri Aurobindo indicated that the last sentence should be placed before “Mr. Beachcroft”, changed “magistrate” to “Judge in the Sessions Court”, and wrote:*] The preliminary trial (a very long one) took place before Birley, a young man unknown to Sri Aurobindo. Beachcroft was not “magistrate” but Judge in the Sessions Court.

*

In his dignified statement to the court, Sri Aurobindo pointed out that it was perfectly true that he had taught the people of India the meaning and the message of national independence. . . .

Sri Aurobindo never made a public statement in the Court. When asked by the Court, he said he would leave the case to his lawyers, they would speak for him; he himself did not wish to make any statement or answer the Court’s questions. If any such statement as the one spoken of was made, it must have been drawn up by the lawyers on his behalf, not made by himself.

[While in the Alipore jail Sri Aurobindo became ill.]

Sri Aurobindo did not fall ill while in prison; he was in normal health except for a superficial ailment for some time which was of no consequence.

A year’s seclusion and meditation in the Alipore jail no doubt worked a great transformation in Sri Aurobindo. . . . Once again — now as ever — “service” was Sri Aurobindo’s urge to action.

The idea was “work” for the country, for the world, finally for the Divine, *nishkama karma*, rather than an ideal of service.

The Open Letters of July and December 1909

[Sri Aurobindo's "Open Letter to My Countrymen" of July 1909 and the second open letter dated December 1909]

There is some confusion here and generally with regard to the two letters. Sri Aurobindo was not relying upon any change in Government policy for the effect of the first letter.²⁰ He writes clearly that the proposed reforms were false and unreal and not acceptable. All he says is that if real reforms giving real power or control were offered, even if they gave only partial and not complete self-government then the Nationalist Party might accept them as the means towards complete Self-Government. Till then the Nationalists would maintain the struggle and their policy of non-cooperation and passive resistance. He relied not upon this but upon an intuitive perception that the Government would not think it politic or useful to deport him if he left a programme which others could carry out in his absence. Also the considerations about Home Rule and complete passive resistance had no connection with the first letter, because they did not occur to Sri Aurobindo at the time. It was afterwards about the period of the second signed letter²¹ that he weighed the circumstances and the situation in the country and considered whether it would not be necessary for a time to draw back a little in order to make a continued political action possible, reculer pour mieux sauter, as the national movement seemed otherwise threatened with a complete pause. A Home Rule movement or a movement of the South African type suggested themselves to him and he foresaw that they might be resorted to in the near future; but he decided that such movements were not for him to lead and that he must go on with the movement for independence as it was. In the second letter also he rejects the reforms as inadequate and advocates a continuance and reorganisation of

²⁰ "An Open Letter to My Countrymen", Karmayogin, 31 July 1909; reproduced in Karmayogin: Political Writings and Speeches 1909–1910, Volume 8 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 150–60.

²¹ "To My Countrymen", Karmayogin, 25 December 1909; reproduced in Karmayogin: Political Writings and Speeches 1909–1910, pp. 372–76. — Ed.

the Nationalist movement.²² This was on December 25th, five months after the first letter. Sri Aurobindo does not understand the reference to the coup de force and the stratagem; if by the coup de force is meant the proposed search and arrest, that was undertaken in connection with and as a result of the second letter which was to be made the subject of a prosecution. As Sri Aurobindo went to Chandernagore and disappeared from view the search was not made and the warrant was held back and the prosecution postponed till he should again reappear. This happened in February, a month or more after the appearance of the second letter. Sri Aurobindo wanted the police to disclose their hand and act and the stratagem he wrote about was an answer to a letter forwarded to him at Chandernagore which he knew to be from a police spy asking him to reappear and face his trial. He replied that he had no reason to do so as there was no public warrant against him and no prosecution had been announced; he thought this would have the effect of the police coming out into the open with a warrant and prosecution and in fact it had this effect.

The *Karmayogin* Case

[The police, unable to serve their warrant against Sri Aurobindo in the *Karmayogin* case, arrested the printer, a simple artisan.]

The printer was in fact only someone who took that title in order to meet the demand of the law for someone who would be responsible for what was printed. He was not always the actual printer.

²² Sri Aurobindo would have accepted Diarchy as a step if it had given a genuine control. It was not till Provincial Autonomy was conceded that he felt a real change in the British attitude had begun; the Cripps offer he accepted as a further progress in that change and the final culmination in the Labour Government's new policy as its culmination. [*Sri Aurobindo's note.*]

The Departure from Calcutta, 1910

To Charu Chandra Dutt

Charu

This is my answer to the questions arising from your letter.¹ Except on one point which calls for some explanation, I confine myself to the plain facts.

(1) I was the writer of the series of articles on the “Passive Resistance” published in April 1907 to which reference has been made; Bipin Pal had nothing to do with it. He ceased his connection with the paper towards the end of 1906 and from that time onward was not writing any editorials or articles for it. I planned several series of this kind for the *Bande Mataram* and at least three were published of which “Passive Resistance” was one.

(2) The articles published in *Dharma* during February and March 1910 were not written by me. The actual writer was a young man on the subeditorial staff of the paper. This is well known to all who were then in the office or connected with it, e.g. Nalini Kanta Gupta who was with me then as he is now still with me here.

(3) I did not go to the Bagbazar Math on my way to Chandernagore or make pranam to Sri Saradamani Devi. In fact I never met or even saw her in my life. It was not from Bagbazar but from another ghat (Ganga ghat) that I went straight by boat to Chandernagore.

(4) Neither Ganen Maharaj nor Nivedita saw me off at the ghat. Neither of them knew anything about my going; Nivedita learned of it only afterwards when I sent a message to her asking her to conduct the *Karmayogin* in my absence. She consented

¹ *Charu Chandra Dutt wrote to Sri Aurobindo in regard to certain points contained in a letter from Swami Sundarananda to Girijashankar Raychaudhuri dated 11 February 1944 and published in the Bengali journal Udbodhan. — Ed.*

and from that time to its cessation of publication was in control of the paper; the editorials during that period were hers.

(5) I did not take my wife for initiation to Sri Saradamani Devi; I was given to understand that she was taken there by Sudhira Bose, Debabrata's sister. I heard of it a considerable time afterwards in Pondicherry. I was glad to know that she had found so great a spiritual refuge but I had no hand in bringing it about.

(6) I did not go to Chandernagore on Sister Nivedita's advice. On a former occasion when she informed me that the Government had decided to deport me, she did urge me to leave British India and do my work from outside; but I told her I did not think it necessary, I would write something that would put a stop to this project. It was in these circumstances that I wrote the signed article "My Last Will and Testament". Nivedita afterwards told me that it had served its purpose; the Government had abandoned the idea of deportation. No occasion arose for her to repeat the advice, nor was it at all likely that I would have followed it: she knew nothing beforehand of the circumstances that led to my departure to Chandernagore.

(7) These are the facts of that departure. I was in the Karma-yogin office when I received word, on information given by a high-placed police official, that the office would be searched the next day and myself arrested. (The office was in fact searched but no warrant was produced against me; I heard nothing more of it till the case was started against the paper later on, but by then I had already left Chandernagore for Pondicherry.) While I was listening to animated comments from those around on the approaching event, I suddenly received a command from above in a Voice well known to me, in the three words; "Go to Chandernagore." In ten minutes or so I was in the boat for Chandernagore. Ramchandra Majumdar guided me to the Ghat and hailed a boat and I entered into it at once along with my relative Biren Ghosh and Mani (Suresh Chandra Chakrabarti) who accompanied me to Chandernagore, not turning aside to Bagbazar or anywhere else. We reached our destination while it was still dark and they returned in the morning to Calcutta.

I remained in secret entirely engaged in Sadhana and my active connection with the two newspapers ceased from that time. Afterwards, under the same "sailing orders", I left Chandernagore and reached Pondicherry on April 4th 1910.

I may add in explanation that from the time I left Lele at Bombay after the Surat Congress and my stay with him in Baroda, Poona and Bombay, I had accepted the rule of following the inner guidance implicitly and moving only as I was moved by the Divine. The spiritual development during the year in jail had turned this into an absolute law of the being. This accounts for my immediate action in obedience to the adesh received by me.

You can on the strength of this letter cite my authority for your statements on these points to the editor of the Udbodhan.

December 15, 1944

Sri Aurobindo

To the Editor, *Sunday Times*

I am authorised by Sri Aurobindo to contradict the statement quoted in your issue of the 17th instant from the *Hindusthan Standard* that he visited Sri Saradamani Devi on the day of his departure to Pondicherry (?) and received from her some kind of diksha.² There was a story published in a Calcutta monthly some time ago that on the night of his departure for Chandernagore in February 1910 Sri Aurobindo visited her at Bagbazar Math to receive her blessings, that he was seen off by Sister Nivedita and a Brahmachari of the Math and that he took this step of leaving British India at the advice of Sister Nivedita. All these statements are opposed to the facts and they were contradicted on Sri Aurobindo's behalf by Sri Charu Chandra Dutt in the same monthly.

Sri Aurobindo's departure to Chandernagore was the result of a sudden decision taken on the strength of an *adesh* from

² On 17 June 1945 the *Sunday Times of Madras* reproduced a letter written by K. Ghose to the editor of the *Hindusthan Standard* that had been published in that newspaper on 6 June. This reply by Sri Aurobindo was published in the *Sunday Times* on 24 June with an introductory note stating that the information was provided by his secretary, Nolini Kanta Gupta. — Ed.

above and was carried out rapidly and secretly without consultation with anybody or advice from any quarter. He went straight from the Dharma office to the Ghat — he did not visit the Math, nobody saw him off; a boat was hailed, he entered into it with two young men and proceeded straight to his destination. His residence at Chandernagore was kept quite secret; it was known only to Sriji Motilal Roy who arranged for his stay and to a few others. Sister Nivedita was confidentially informed the day after his departure and asked to conduct the Karmayogin in place of Sri Aurobindo to which she consented. In his passage from Chandernagore to Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo stopped only for two minutes outside College Square to take his trunk from his cousin and paid no visit except to the British Medical Officer to obtain a medical certificate for the voyage. He went straight to the steamship *Dupleix* and next morning was on his way to Pondicherry.

It may be added that neither at this time nor any other did Sri Aurobindo receive any kind of initiation from Sarada Devi; neither did he ever take any formal diksha from anyone. He started his sadhana at Baroda in 1904 on his own account after learning from a friend the ordinary formula of Pranayama. Afterwards the only help he received was from the Maharashtrian Yogi, Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, who instructed him how to reach complete silence of the mind and immobility of the whole consciousness. This Sri Aurobindo was able to achieve in three days with the result of lasting and massive spiritual realisations opening to him the larger ways of Yoga. Lele finally told him to put himself entirely into the hands of the Divine within and move only as he was moved and then he would need no instructions either from Lele himself or anyone else. This henceforward became the whole foundation and principle of Sri Aurobindo's sadhana. From that time onward (the beginning of 1909) and through many years of intensive experience at Pondicherry he underwent no spiritual influence from outside.

published 24 June 1945

On an Article by Ramchandra Majumdar

In his reply to Suresh Chakravarty's article my old friend Ramchandra Majumdar congratulates himself on the strength of his memory in old age.³ His memory is indeed so strong that he not only recollects, very inaccurately, what actually happened, but recalls also and gives body to what never happened at all. His account is so heavily crammed with blunders and accretions that it may provide rich material for an imaginative and romantic biography of Sri Aurobindo in the modern manner but has no other value. It is a pity to have to trample on this fine garden of flowers but historical and biographical truth has its claim. I shall correct some of the most flagrant errors in this narrative.

First of all, Suresh Chakravarty's article about the journey to Chandernagore confined itself to inaccurate statements of the facts and denied the story of a visit to Sri Sarada Devi in the course of that journey. This point has now been practically conceded for we see that the alleged visit has been transferred to another date a few days earlier. I may say that Suresh's narrative of the facts was brought to the notice of Sri Aurobindo who certified that it was true both as a whole and in detail.

But now another story has been brought up which is full of confusions and unrealities and is a good example of how a myth can be established in place of the truth. Sri Aurobindo never spoke with Sister Nivedita about any case intended to be brought against him by the Government in connection with the murder of Shamsul Alam, for the good reason that no such intention was ever reported to him by anybody. Sister Nivedita never directed or advised him to go into hiding. What actually happened had nothing to do with the departure to Chandernagore. What happened was this: Sister Nivedita on a much earlier occasion informed Sri Aurobindo that the Government intended to deport him and advised him "not to hide" but to leave British India and work from outside; Sri Aurobindo did not accept the advice. He

³ *This statement, dictated by Sri Aurobindo in response to an article written in Bengali by Ramchandra Majumdar and published in Prabasi in 1945, was used by Nolini Kanta Gupta as the basis of a rejoinder published in the same journal. — Ed.*

said that he would write an “Open Letter” which he thought would make the Government give up its idea; this appeared in the Karmayogin under the title “My Last Will and Testament”. Afterwards Sister Nivedita told him that it had had the desired effect and there was no more question of deportation.

Sri Aurobindo did not see Sister Nivedita on his way to Chandernagore; this is only a relic of the now abandoned story of his visit to the Math at Baranagar on that occasion in which it was related that she had seen him off at the Ghat. She knew nothing whatever of his departure for Chandernagore until afterwards when he sent her a message asking her to take up the editing of the Karmayogin in his absence. Everything happened very suddenly. Sri Aurobindo, as he has himself related, while at the Karmayogin Office, heard of an approaching search and his intended arrest: he suddenly received an *adesh* to go to Chandernagore and carried it out immediately without informing or consulting anybody — even his colleagues and co-workers. Everything was done in fifteen minutes or so and in the utmost secrecy and silence. He followed Ram Majumdar to the Ghat, Suresh Chakravarty and Biren Ghose following at a little distance; a boat was hailed and the three got in and went off immediately. His stay in Chandernagore also was secret and known only to a few like his later departure to Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo never asked Ram Majumdar to arrange for a hiding place; there was no time for any such arrangement. He went unannounced, relying on some friends in Chandernagore to arrange for his stay. Motilal Roy received him first in his own house, then arranged in other places, allowing only a few to know. This is the true account of what happened according to Sri Aurobindo’s own statement.

The new story now told that Devabrata Bose and Sri Aurobindo both asked to be admitted into the Ramakrishna Mission and Devabrata was accepted but Swami Brahmananda refused to accept Sri Aurobindo is another myth. Sri Aurobindo never even dreamed of taking Sannyas or of entering into any established order of Sannyasis. It ought to be well known to everybody that Sannyas was never accepted by him as part of his

yoga; he has founded an Asram in Pondicherry but its members are not Sannyasis, do not wear the ochre garb or practise complete asceticism but are sadhaks of a yoga of life based on spiritual realisation. This has always been Sri Aurobindo's idea and it was never otherwise. He saw Swami Brahmananda only once when he went on a boat trip to visit the Belur math; he had then about fifteen minutes' conversation with Swami Brahmananda but there was no talk about spiritual things. The Swami was preoccupied with a communication from the Government and consulted Sri Aurobindo as to whether there was any need of an answer. Sri Aurobindo said no and the Swami agreed. After seeing the math Sri Aurobindo came away and nothing else happened. He never by letter or otherwise communicated with Swami Brahmananda before or afterwards and never directly or indirectly asked for admission or for Sannyas.

There have been hints or statements about Sri Aurobindo taking or asking for initiation from certain quarters about this time. Those who spread these legends seem to be ignorant that at this time he was not a spiritual novice or in need of any initiation or spiritual direction by anybody. Sri Aurobindo had already realised in full two of the four great realisations on which his yoga and his spiritual philosophy are founded. The first he had gained while meditating with the Maharashtrian Yogi Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, at Baroda in January 1908; it was the realisation of the silent spaceless and timeless Brahman gained after a complete and abiding stillness of the whole consciousness and attended at first by an overwhelming feeling and perception of the total unreality of the world, though this feeling disappeared after his second realisation which was that of the cosmic consciousness and of the Divine as all beings and all that is, which happened in the Alipore jail and of which he has spoken in his speech at Uttarpara. To the other two realisations, that of the supreme Reality with the static and dynamic Brahman as its two aspects and that of the higher planes of consciousness leading to the Supermind, he was already on his way in his meditations in Alipore jail. Moreover, he had accepted from Lele as the principle of his sadhana to rely wholly on the Divine and his guidance

alone both for his sadhana and for his outward actions. After that it was impossible for him to put himself under any other guidance and unnecessary to seek help from anyone. In fact Sri Aurobindo never took any formal initiation from anyone; he started his Sadhana on his own account by the practice of pranayama and never asked for help except from Lele.

One or two less important points have to be mentioned to show how little reliance can be placed on the details of Ramchandra's narrative. His statement about the automatic writing is only an imaginative inference and in fact quite groundless. Sri Aurobindo totally denies that he used the automatic writing for any kind of moral or other edification of those around him; that would have meant that it was spurious and a sort of trick, for no writing can be automatic if it is dictated or guided by the writer's conscious mind. The writing was done as an experiment as well as an amusement and nothing else. I may mention here the circumstances under which it was first taken up. Barin had done some very extraordinary automatic writing at Baroda in a very brilliant and beautiful English style and remarkable for certain predictions which came true and statements of fact which also proved to be true although unknown to the persons concerned or anyone else present: there was notably a symbolic anticipation of Lord Curzon's subsequent unexpected departure from India and, again, of the first suppression of the national movement and the greatness of Tilak's attitude amidst the storm; this prediction was given in Tilak's own presence when he visited Sri Aurobindo at Baroda and happened to enter just when the writing was in progress. Sri Aurobindo was very much struck and interested and he decided to find out by practising this kind of writing himself what there was behind it. This is what he was doing in Calcutta. But the results did not satisfy him and after a few further attempts at Pondicherry he dropped these experiments altogether. He did not give the same high value to his efforts as Ramchandra seems to have done, for they had none of the remarkable features of Barin's writings. His final conclusion was that though there are sometimes phenomena which point to the intervention of beings of another plane not always or often of a

high order the mass of such writings comes from a dramatising element in the subconscious mind; sometimes a brilliant vein in the subliminal is struck and then predictions of the future and statements of things [unknown]⁴ in the present and past come up, but otherwise these writings have not a great value. I may add that Ramchandra's details are incorrect and there was no guide named Theresa, in fact no guide at all, though someone calling himself Theramenes broke in from time to time. The writings came haphazard without any spirit mentor such as some mediums claim to have.

A smaller but more amazing myth presents Sri Aurobindo as a poet in Tamil — and this apparently after only a few days of study. Far from writing Tamil poetry Sri Aurobindo never wrote a single sentence even of Tamil prose and never spoke a single phrase in the Tamil language. He listened for a few days to a Nair from Malabar who read and explained to him articles in a Tamil newspaper; this was a short time before he left Bengal. At Pondicherry he took up the study of Tamil, but he did not go very far and his studies were finally interrupted by his complete retirement.

R's whole account is crammed with reckless inaccuracies and unreal details. Srish Goswami has pointed out in a letter that the astrological writings of Sri Aurobindo of which R speaks were only some elementary notes and had no importance. Sri Aurobindo drew them up at Baroda to refresh his memory when he was studying the subject with the idea of finding out for himself what truth there might be in astrology. He had never any intention of figuring as an astrologer or a writer on astrology. These notes did not form a book and no book of Sri Aurobindo's on this subject appeared from the A. P. [*Arya Publishing*] House.

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

⁴ MS (*dictated*) are known

One is unable to understand the meaning of the saying attributed to Sri Aurobindo that he was a man rising to humanity unless we suppose that he was only the animal man rising towards the status of a thinking being; certainly Sri Aurobindo never composed such a resonant and meaningless epigram. If it had been to a Divine Humanity it might have had some meaning but the whole thing sounds unlike what Sri Aurobindo could have said. In fact all that Ramchandra puts into Sri Aurobindo's mouth is of a character foreign to his habits of speech e.g. his alleged Shakespearean and Polonius-like recommendation to Ramchandra himself while departing to Chandernagore. He may have enjoined silence on Ramchandra but not in that flowery language.

This should be enough; it is unnecessary to deal with all the inaccuracies and imaginations. But I think I have said enough to show that anyone wanting the truth about Sri Aurobindo would do well to avoid any reliance on Ramchandra's narrative. It can be described in the phrase of Goethe "Poetic fictions and truths" for the element of truth is small and that of poetic fiction stupendous. It is like the mass of ale to the modicum of bread in Falstaff's tavern bill. In fact it is almost the whole. 1945

To Pavitra (Philippe Barbier Saint Hilaire)

Pavitra,

The account which seems to have been given to Lizelle Reymond and recorded by her on pages 318–319 of her book⁵ is, I am compelled to say, fiction and romance with no foundation in actual facts. I spent the first part of my imprisonment in Alipore jail in a solitary cell and again after the assassination of Noren Gosain to the last days of the trial when all the Alipore case prisoners were similarly lodged each in his own cell. In between for a short period we were all put together. There is no truth behind the statement that while I was meditating they gathered around me, that I recited the Gita to them and they sang the verses, or that they put questions to me on spiritual

⁵ Nivedita: Fille de l'Inde (*Paris and Neuchâtel: Editions Victor Attinger, 1945*).

matters and received instructions from me; the whole description is quite fanciful. Only a few of the prisoners had been known to me before I met them in prison; only a few who had been with Barin had practised sadhana and these were connected with Barin and would have turned to him for any help, not to me. I was carrying on my yoga during these days learning to do so in the midst of much noise and clamour but apart and in silence and without any participation of the others in it. My yoga begun in 1904 had always been personal and apart; those around me knew I was a sadhak but they knew little more as I kept all that went on in me to myself. It was only after my release that for the first time I spoke at Uttara para publicly about my spiritual experiences. Until I went to Pondicherry I took no disciples; with those who accompanied me or joined me in Pondicherry I had at first the relation of friends and companions rather than of a guru and disciples; it was on the ground of politics that I had come to know them and not on the spiritual ground. Afterwards only there was a gradual development of spiritual relations until the Mother came back from Japan and the Ashram was founded or rather founded itself in 1926. I began my yoga in 1904 without a guru; in 1908 I received important help from a Mahratta yogi and discovered the foundations of my sadhana; but from that time till the Mother came to India I received no spiritual help from anyone else. My sadhana before and afterwards was not founded upon books but upon personal experiences that crowded on me from within. But in the jail I had the Gita and the Upanishads with me, practised the yoga of the Gita and meditated with the help of the Upanishads; these were the only books from which I found guidance; the Veda which I first began to read long afterwards in Pondicherry rather confirmed what experiences I already had than was any guide to my sadhana. I sometimes turned to the Gita for light when there was a question or a difficulty and usually received help or an answer from it, but there were no such happenings in connection with the Gita as are narrated in the book. 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, circumstances that never took place, nor had it anything to do with the Gita. 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.

Then about my relations with Sister Nivedita — they were purely in the field of politics. 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. The whole account about my staying with her for 24 hours and all that is said to have passed between us then is sheer romance and does not contain a particle of fact. 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. 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. 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 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. The departure to Chandernagore happened later and there was no connection between the two incidents which have been hopelessly confused together in the account in the book. The incidents related there have no foundation in fact. It was not Gonen Maharaj who informed me of the impending search and arrest, but a young man on the staff of the *Karmayogin*, Ramchandra Mazumdar, whose father had been warned that in a day or two the *Karmayogin* office would be searched and myself arrested. There [have]⁶ been many legends spread about on this matter and it was even said that I was to be prosecuted for participation in the murder in the High Court of Shamsul Alam, a prominent member of the C.I.D. and that Sister Nivedita sent for me and informed me and we discussed what was to be done and my disappearance was the result. I never heard of any such proposed prosecution and there was no discussion of the kind; the prosecution intended and afterwards

⁶ *MS (typed copy)* has

started was for sedition only. Sister Nivedita knew nothing of these new happenings till after I reached Chandernagore. I did not go to her house or see her; it is wholly untrue that she and Gonen Maharaj came to see me off at the Ghat. There was no time to inform her; for almost immediately I received a command from above to go to Chandernagore and within ten minutes I was at the Ghat, a boat was hailed and I was on my way with two young men to Chandernagore. It was a common Ganges boat rowed by two boatmen, and all the picturesque details about the French boat and the disappearing lights are pure romance. 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. There was no arrangement for my staying in Chandernagore at a place selected by Nivedita. I went without previous notice to anybody and was received by Motilal Roy who made secret arrangements for my stay; nobody except himself and a few friends knew where I was. The warrant of arrest was suspended, but after a month or so I used a manoeuvre to push the police into open action; the warrant was launched and a prosecution commenced against the printer in my absence which ended in acquittal in the High Court. I was already on my way to Pondicherry where I arrived on April 4. There also I remained in secrecy in the house of a prominent citizen until the acquittal, after which I announced my presence in French India. These are all the essential facts and they leave no room for the alleged happenings related in the book. 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 in a future edition and remove this wrong information which would otherwise seriously detract from the value of her life of Nivedita.

13 September 1946

Life in Pondicherry, 1910–1950

Meeting with the Mother

Fate had just then brought him into contact with a remarkable Frenchman and his wife, Paul and Mirra Richard. They had for years been in search of a Master. . . .

[*Altered to:*] . . . with a remarkable Frenchman and his wife, Paul Richard and she who is now known as Sri Mira Devi. They had for years been in search of a Master in whom they could recognize a World-Teacher. . . .

*

Mirra Richard was no less overwhelmed by this vision — this reality — of the new Man.

[*Altered to:*] Mira Devi who had already gone far in spiritual realisation and occult vision and experience, was no less overwhelmed by this vision . . .

The *Arya*

The magazine [*Arya*] was presumably not a financial success. It was, in fact; it paid its way with a large surplus.

The Development of the Ashram

Sri Aurobindo thought that the time had come to establish in Pondicherry an “ashram”, a rallying centre of aspiration and realization, the nucleus of a new community.

This is hardly the fact. There was no Asram at first, only a few people came to live near Sri Aurobindo and practise Yoga. It was only some time after the Mother came from Japan that it took

the form of the Asram, more from the wish of the sadhaks who desired to entrust their whole inner and outer life to the Mother than from any intention or plan of hers or of Sri Aurobindo.

*

In the meantime, Mirra Richard, after her recent visit to France, returned to Pondicherry on the 24th April, 1920. The number of disciples now showed a tendency to increase rather rapidly and Sri Aurobindo decided to entrust Mirra, the Mother, with the task of organizing the “ashram” on a wider basis. . . .

The facts are In the meantime, the Mother, after a long stay in France and Japan, returned to Pondicherry on the 24th April, 1920. The number of disciples then showed a tendency to increase rather rapidly. When the Asram began to develop, it fell to the Mother to organise it; Sri Aurobindo soon retired into seclusion and the whole material and spiritual charge of it devolved on her.

*

[On a section of a biography in which the writer dwelt at length on the Mother.]

Section V of this Chapter is better omitted. Up till now Sri Aurobindo has prohibited any public propaganda of the idea of his personal divinity and that of the Mother or of certain aspects of the Asram life; these things have been kept private for the Asram itself, and its inmates and the disciples — especially anything in the English language. In later pages of the book all that can be fruitfully said about the life of the Asram and the position of the Mother in the eyes of the disciples and in their life has been said and that should be sufficient.

Support for the Allies

[A telegram was sent to the Secretary of the Viceroy.]

The only telegram to the Secretary of the Viceroy was one

accompanying a donation of Rs.1000/-to the War Fund which was meant as a mark of Sri Aurobindo's adhesion to the cause of the Allies against the Axis. There was also a letter to the Governor of Madras forwarding another contribution along with a statement of his views about the war which was published. Besides this, other contributions were made direct to France. Later on, letters supporting the war were made public. As for the Cripps' offer, it was supported in a long telegram sent not to the Viceroy's Secretary but to Cripps himself after his broadcast in which he announced the offer.

*

[The telegram was a "political gesture".]

Sri Aurobindo does not know whether this can be described as a public political gesture. The interest of your chapters is historical and biographical rather than concerned with the present course of politics or any new intervention in it. At any rate Sri Aurobindo did not intend these notes as constituting any such public intervention or gesture.

Muslims and the 1947 Partition of Bengal

Muslims, the descendants of foreigners, favoured the partition of Bengal.

This would seem to indicate that all the Mohammedans in India are descendants of foreigners, but the idea of two nationalities in India is only a new-fangled notion invented by Jinnah for his purposes and contrary to the facts. More than 90% of the Indian Mussulmans are descendants of converted Hindus and belong as much to the Indian nation as the Hindus themselves. This process of conversion has continued all along; Jinnah is himself a descendant of a Hindu converted in fairly recent times named Jinnabhai and many of the most famous Mohammedan leaders have a similar origin.

*

Assam had a majority of Muslims.

The majority in Assam is made up of the Hindus and the tribal peoples; in Assam proper the Mussulmans are only 20% of the population. The balance has been altered by the inclusion of Sylhet, a Bengali district in Assam, but even so the non-Mussulmans predominate. At present [1946] a Congress Government is in power in Assam elected by a large majority and Assam is vehemently refusing to be grouped with Mussulman Bengal in the new constitution.

Early Spiritual Development

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.

Beginnings of Yoga at Baroda

Sri Aurobindo was preoccupied, even when he was but a conscientious teacher or an accomplished poet . . . with the problem of service and of sacrifice. . . . From the very first the idea of personal salvation or of individual felicity was utterly repugnant to him.

This is a little too strong. It was rather that it did not seem anything like a supreme aim or worth being pursued for its own sake; a solitary salvation leaving the world to its fate was felt as almost distasteful.

*

Sri Aurobindo had acquired a measure of intellectual pre-eminence as a result of his stay in England; but that was not enough, and he was certainly not happy. His deeper perplexities remained; he did not know what exactly he should do to make himself useful to his countrymen or how he should set about doing it. He turned to yoga so that he might be enabled to clarify his own floating ideas and impulses and also, if possible, perfect the hidden instrument within.

There was no unhappiness. “Perplexities” also is too strong: Sri Aurobindo’s habit in action was not to devise beforehand and plan, but to keep a fixed purpose, watch events, prepare forces and act when he felt it to be the right moment. His first organised work in politics (grouping people who accepted the idea of independence and were prepared to take up an appropriate action) was undertaken at an early age, but took a regular shape in or about 1902; two years later he began his practice of Yoga — not to clarify his ideas, but to find the spiritual strength which would support him and enlighten his way.

*

Thus it may be said that Aravind Babu started taking interest in Yoga from 1898–99.

No. I did not start Yoga till about 1904.

*

Such guidance as he received from his earliest gurus and such partial realisation as he was then able to achieve only reinforced his faith in yoga as the sole cure for his own “rooted sorrow” and for the manifold ills of humanity.

[*Sri Aurobindo put a question mark against the word “gurus”, and wrote:*] There was no resort to Yoga as a cure for sorrow;

there was no sorrow to cure. He had always in him a considerable equanimity in his nature in face of the world and its difficulties, and after some inward depression in his adolescence (not due to any outward circumstances, and not amounting to sorrow or melancholy, for it was only a strain in the temperament), this became fairly settled.

*

Aravind Babu used to attend the lectures of the Swami [*Paramhansa Maharaj Indraswarup*] with much interest . . . and personally met him and learnt about *āsanas* and *prāṇāyāma*.

Only heard his lecture at the Palace, did not go to see him, did not practise Pranayam till long afterwards.

*

He met the saint Madhavadas at Malsar on the banks of the Narmada and learnt about Yoga-āsanas.

Visited, probably with Deshpande, one or two places on the banks of the Narmada, but no recollection of Malsar or Madhavadas, certainly no effect of the meeting, if it happened at all.

*

Sri Aurobindo met, one by one, Sri Hamsa Swarupa Swami, Sri Sadguru Brahmanand and Sri Madhavadas. . . .

He had momentary contacts with Brahmanand, but as a great Yogin, not as a Guru — only darshan and blessing. There was no contact with the others.

*

[He met Brahmananda on the banks of the Narmada for advice on national education activities.]

Sri Aurobindo saw Brahmananda long before there was any question of national education activities. Brahmananda never gave him any counsel or advice nor was there any conversation

between them; Sri Aurobindo went to his monastery only for *darshan* and blessings. Barin had a close connection with Ganganath and his Guru was one of the Sannyasins who surrounded Brahmananda, but the connection with Ganganath was spiritual only.

*

As yet, however, Sri Aurobindo was wavering between Yoga and public life. . . . He established some connection with a member of the Governing Body of Naga Sannyasis. . . .

All this was before he left Baroda, some years before he met Lele.

*

We do not quite know what exactly happened to Sri Aurobindo during the first four years of his retirement in Pondicherry. This was a period of "silent yoga". . . . Sri Aurobindo experimented earnestly and incessantly in the delectable laboratory of his soul; he presently outgrew the instructions that had been given to him by Lele and his predecessors.

That was done long before the sojourn in Pondicherry.

There were no predecessors. Sri Aurobindo had some connection with a member of the governing body of the Naga Sannyasis who gave him a mantra of Kali (or rather a stotra) and conducted certain Kriyas and a Vedic Yajna, but all this was for political success in his mission and not for Yoga.

Meeting with Vishnu Bhaskar Lele

. . . Lele also advised Sri Aurobindo, in the final resort, to trust only to his own inner spiritual inclinations.

[*Last phrase altered to:*] to trust only to the guidance of the Divine within him if once he could become aware of that guidance.

*

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]¹ 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]²; 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.

Sadhana 1908–1909

Under the auspices of the Bombay National Union, Sri Aurobindo addressed a large gathering on the 19th January 1908.

¹ MS Sulemani

² MS Ganga Math

He went to the meeting almost in a mood of inexplicable vacancy. . . .

Not inexplicable certainly; it was the condition of silence of the mind to which he had come by his meditation for 3 days with Lele in Baroda and which he kept for many months and indeed always thereafter, all activity proceeding on the surface; but at that time there was no activity on the surface. Lele told him to make namaskar to the audience and wait and speech would come to him from some other source than the mind. So in fact, the speech came, and ever since all speech, writing, thought and outward activity have so come to him from the same source above the brain-mind.

*

The passage bracketed should be omitted.³ It tends to give an incorrect impression about the nature of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and of what was happening in him at the time. The Yoga was going on in him all the time even during all his outward action but he was not withdrawn into himself or "dazed" as some of his friends thought. If he did not reply to questions or suggestions it was because he did not wish to and took refuge in silence.

*

Sri Aurobindo now [*in Alipore jail*] started reading the *Gita* and learning to live its *sadhana*; he fully apprehended the true inwardness and glory of *Sanatana Dharma*.

It should rather be said that he had long tried to apprehend the true inwardness and glory of the Indian religious and spiritual tradition, *Sanatana Dharma*, and to accept it in its entirety.

³ The passage referred to cannot now be identified. — Ed.

Philosophy and Writings

Sources of His Philosophy

Sri Aurobindo's intellect was influenced by Greek philosophy.

Very little. I read more than once Plato's Republic and Symposium, but only extracts from his other writings. It is true that under his impress I rashly started writing at the age of 18 an explanation of the cosmos on the foundation of the principle of Beauty and Harmony, but I never got beyond the first three or four chapters. I read Epictetus and was interested in the ideas of the Stoics and the Epicureans; but I made no study of Greek philosophy or of any of the [?]. I made in fact no study of metaphysics in my school and College days. What little I knew about philosophy I picked up desultorily in my general reading. I once read, not Hegel, but a small book on Hegel, but it left no impression on me. Later, in India, I read a book on Bergson, but that too ran off "like water from a duck's back". I remembered very little of what I had read and absorbed nothing. German metaphysics and most European philosophy since the Greeks seemed to me a mass of abstractions with nothing concrete or real that could be firmly grasped and written in a metaphysical jargon to which I had not the key. I tried once a translation of Kant but dropped it after the first two pages and never tried again. In India at Baroda I read a "Tractate" of Schopenhauer on the six centres and that seemed to me more interesting. In sum, my interest in metaphysics was almost null, and in general philosophy sporadic. I did not read Berkeley and only [?] into Hume; Locke left me very cold. Some general ideas only remained with me.

As to Indian Philosophy, it was a little better, but not much. I made no study of it, but knew the general ideas of the Vedanta philosophies, I knew practically nothing of the others except what I had read in Max Muller and in other general accounts.

The basic idea of the Self caught me when I was in England. I tried to realise what the Self might be. The first Indian writings that took hold of me were the Upanishads and these raised in me a strong enthusiasm and I tried later to translate some of them. 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.

My philosophy was formed first by the study of the Upanishads and the Gita; the Veda came later. They were the basis of my first practice of Yoga; I tried to realise what I read in my spiritual experience and succeeded; in fact I was never satisfied till experience came and it was on this experience that later on I founded my philosophy, not on ideas by themselves. I owed nothing in my philosophy to intellectual abstractions, ratiocination or dialectics; when I have used these means it was simply to explain my philosophy and justify it to the intellect of others. The other source of my philosophy was the knowledge that flowed from above when I sat in meditation, especially from the plane of the Higher Mind when I reached that level; they [*the ideas from the Higher Mind*] came down in a mighty flood which swelled into a sea of direct Knowledge always translating itself into experience, or they were intuitions starting from experience and leading to other intuitions and a corresponding experience. This source was exceedingly catholic and many-sided and all sorts of ideas came in which might have belonged to conflicting philosophies but they were here reconciled in a large synthetic whole.

Perseus the Deliverer

Polydaon realises his failure — Poseidon's failure; . . . he now supplicates to the new "brilliant god", and falls back dead. It is left to Perseus, the new god, to sum up the career and destiny of Polydaon. . . .

[Sri Aurobindo struck through “the new god” and wrote:] The new brilliant god is the new Poseidon, Olympian and Greek, who in Polydaon’s vision replaces the terrible old-Mediterranean god of the seas. Perseus is and remains divine-human throughout.

Essays on the Gita

[Dharma = *devoir* (duty)]

Devoir is hardly the meaning of the [word]¹ Dharma. Performing disinterested[ly] one’s duty is a European misreading of the teaching of the Gita. Dharma in the Gita means the law of one’s own essential nature or is described sometimes as action governed by that nature, *swabhava*.

*

[The asuric and divine natures complement each other.]

This is not in the teaching of the Gita according to which the two natures are opposed to each other and the Asuric nature has to be rejected or to fall away by the power and process of the yoga. Sri Aurobindo’s yoga also insists on the rejection of the darker and lower elements of the nature.

The Future Poetry

The . . . articles that Sri Aurobindo contributed to *Arya* under the general caption, *The Future Poetry*, [were] initially inspired by a book of Dr. Cousins’s: in the fullness of time, however, the review became a treatise of over three hundred pages of *Arya*.

[*Altered to:*] . . . started initially with a review of a book of Dr. Cousins’s; but that was only a starting point for a treatise . . .

It was not the intention to make a long review of Cousins’ book, that was only a starting point; the rest was drawn from Sri Aurobindo’s own ideas and his already conceived view of art and life.

¹ MS (*dictated*) phrase

The Mother

Many of the letters that deal mainly with Yoga have now been edited and published in book form. *The Riddle of This World*, *Lights on Yoga*, *Bases of Yoga*, and *The Mother* . . . are all the fruits of the Ashram period.

The Mother had not the same origin as the other books mentioned. The main part of this book describing the four Shaktis etc. was written independently and not as a letter, so also the first part.

Some Philosophical Topics

These discernable slow gradations — steps in the spiral of ascent — are, respectively, Higher Mind, Intuition (or Intuitive Mind) and Overmind.

No, what is called intuitive Mind is usually a mixture of true Intuition with ordinary mentality — it can always admit a mingling of truth and error. Sri Aurobindo therefore avoids the use of this phrase. He distinguishes between Intuition proper and an intuitive human mentality.

*

When war at last becomes a mere nightmare of the past, peace will indeed reign in our midst, and even our dream of the Life Divine will then become an actuality in the fullness of time.

It is not Sri Aurobindo's view that the evolution of the Life Divine depends on the passing away of war. His view is rather the opposite.

*

He has caught indeed a vision, a vision of the Eternal, a vision of triune glory, a vision in the furthest beyond of transformed Supernature; but the vision is not a reality yet [1944].

Better write “not, on its highest peaks, a concrete embodied reality as yet: something has come down of the power or the influence but not the thing itself, far less its whole.”

APPENDIX

Notes of Uncertain Origin

During a whole year a slice or two of sandwich, bread and butter and a cup of tea in the morning and in the evening a penny saveloy formed the only food.

*

These invitations [*by the Maharaja*] were usually for some work to be done and could not be refused.

*

Sri Aurobindo's policy in India was not based on Parnellism. It had more resemblance to Sinn Fein but was conceived before the Sinn Fein movement and was therefore not inspired by it.

*

Sri Aurobindo began practising Yoga on his own account, starting with *prāṇāyāma* as explained to him by a friend, a disciple of Brahmananda. Afterwards faced with difficulties, he took the help of Lele who was called for the purpose from Gwalior by Barindra — this was after the Surat Congress in 1908.

*

There was no difference of opinion [*with the College authorities*]; the resignation was because of the *Bande Mataram* case, so as not to embarrass the authorities. After the acquittal, the College recalled him to his post. The final resignation was given from the Alipur jail.

*

The Nationalists wanted to propose Lajpatrai as President, not Tilak.

No Nationalist leader was seated on the dais.

Part Two

Letters of Historical Interest

Section One

Letters on Personal, Practical
and Political Matters
1890–1926

Family Letters, 1890–1919

Extract from a Letter to His Father

Last night I was invited to coffee with one of the Dons and in his rooms I met the Great O.B. otherwise Oscar Browning, who is the feature par excellence of King's. He was extremely flattering; passing from the subject of cotillions to that of scholarships he said to me "I suppose you know you passed an extraordinarily high examination. I have examined papers at thirteen examinations and I have never during that time [seen] such excellent papers as yours (meaning my classical papers at the scholarship examination). As for your essay it was wonderful." In this essay (a comparison between Shakespeare and Milton) I indulged in my Oriental tastes to the top of their bent; it overflowed with rich and tropical imagery; it abounded in antitheses and epigrams and it expressed my real feelings without restraint or reservation. I thought myself that it was the best thing I had ever done, but at school I would have been condemned as extraordinarily Asiatic & bombastic. The Great O.B. afterwards asked me where my rooms were & when I had answered he said "That wretched hole!" then turning to Mahaffy "How rude we are to our scholars! we get great minds to come down here and then shut them up in that box! I suppose it is to keep their pride down."

1890

To His Grandfather

Gujaria
Vijapur Taluka
N. Gujerat.
Jan 11. 1894.

My dear Grandfather

I received your telegram & postcard together this afternoon. I am at present in an exceedingly out of the way place, without any post-office within fifteen miles of it; so it would not be easy to telegraph. I shall probably be able to get to Bengal by the end of next week. I had intended to be there by this time, but there is some difficulty about my last month's salary without which I cannot very easily move. However I have written for a month's privileged leave & as soon as it is sanctioned shall make ready to start. I shall pass by Ajmere & stop for a day with Beno. My articles are with him; I will bring them on with me. As I do not know Urdu, or indeed any other language of the country, I may find it convenient to bring my clerk with me. I suppose there will be no difficulty about accommodating him.

I got my uncle's letter inclosing Soro's, the latter might have presented some difficulties, for there is no one who knows Bengali in Baroda — no one at least whom I could get at. Fortunately the smattering I acquired in England stood me in good stead, and I was able to make out the sense of the letter, barring a word here and a word there.

Do you happen to know a certain Akshaya Kumara Ghosha, resident in Bombay who claims to be a friend of the family? He has opened a correspondence with me — I have also seen him once at Bombay — & wants me to join him in some very laudable enterprises which he has on hand. I have given him that sort of double-edged encouragement which civility demanded, but as his letters seemed to evince some defect either of perfect sanity or perfect honesty, I did not think it prudent to go farther than that, without some better credentials than a self-introduction.

If all goes well, I shall leave Baroda on the 18th; at any rate

it will not be more than a day or two later.

Believe me
Your affectionate grandson
Aravind A. Ghose

To His Sister

[Baroda Camp
25 August 1894]

My dear Saro,

I got your letter the day before yesterday. I have been trying hard to write to you for the last three weeks, but have hitherto failed. Today I am making a huge effort and hope to put the letter in the post before nightfall. As I am now invigorated by three days' leave, I almost think I shall succeed.

It will be, I fear, quite impossible to come to you again so early as the Puja, though if I only could, I should start tomorrow. Neither my affairs, nor my finances will admit of it. Indeed it was a great mistake for me to go at all; for it has made Baroda quite intolerable to me. There is an old story about Judas Iscariot, which suits me down to the ground. Judas, after betraying Christ, hanged himself and went to Hell where he was honoured with the hottest oven in the whole establishment. Here he must burn for ever and ever; but in his life he had done one kind act and for this they permitted him by special mercy of God to cool himself for an hour every Christmas on an iceberg in the North Pole. Now this has always seemed to me not mercy, but a peculiar refinement of cruelty. For how could Hell fail to be ten times more Hell to the poor wretch after the delicious coolness of his iceberg? I do not know for what enormous crime I have been condemned to Baroda but my case is just parallel. Since my pleasant sojourn with you at Baidyanath, Baroda seems a hundred times more Baroda.

I dare say Beno may write to you three or four days before he leaves England. But you must think yourself lucky if he does as much as that. Most likely the first you hear of him, will be

a telegram from Calcutta. Certainly he has not written to me. I never expected and should be afraid to get a letter. It would be such a shocking surprise that I should certainly be able to do nothing but roll on the floor and gasp for breath for the next two or three hours. No, the favours of the Gods are too awful to be coveted. I dare say he will have energy enough to hand over your letter to Mano as they must be seeing each other almost daily. You must give Mano a little time before he answers you. He too is Beno's brother. Please let me have Beno's address as I don't know where to send a letter I have ready for him. Will you also let me have the name of Bari's English Composition Book and its compiler? I want such a book badly, as this will be useful for me not only in Bengalee but in Guzerati. There are no convenient books like that here.

You say in your letter "all here are quite well"; yet in the very next sentence I read "Bari has an attack of fever". Do you mean then that Bari is nobody? Poor Bari! That he should be excluded from the list of human beings, is only right and proper; but it is a little hard that he should be denied existence altogether. I hope it is only a slight attack. I am quite well. I have brought a fund of health with me from Bengal, which, I hope it will take me some time to exhaust; but I have just passed my twenty-second milestone, August 15 last, since my birthday and am beginning to get dreadfully old.

I infer from your letter that you are making great progress in English. I hope you will learn very quickly; I can then write to you quite what I want to say and just in the way I want to say it. I feel some difficulty in doing that now and I don't know whether you will understand it.

With love,

Your affectionate brother,
Auro

P.S. If you want to understand the new orthography of my name, ask uncle.

A.

Extract from a Letter to His Brother

Only a short while ago I had a letter from you — I cannot lay my hands on the passage, but I remember it contained an unreserved condemnation of Hindu legend as trivial and insipid, a mass of crude and monstrous conceptions, a [lumber-room]¹ of Hindu banalities. The main point of your indictment was that it had nothing in it simple, natural, passionate and human, that the characters were lifeless patterns of moral excellence.

I have been so long accustomed to regard your taste and judgment as sure and final that it is with some distrust I find myself differing from you. Will you permit me then to enter into some slight defence of what you have so emphatically condemned and explain why I venture to dedicate a poem on a Hindu subject, written in the Hindu spirit and constructed on Hindu principles of taste, style and management, to you who regard all these things as anathema maranatha? I am not attempting to convince you, only to justify, or at least define my own standpoint; perhaps also a little to reassure myself in the line of poetical art I have chosen.

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

¹ MS (*typed*) lumber-loom

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. Often as the romantic temperament stumbles and creates broken and unsure work, sometimes it scores one of those signal triumphs which subject new art forms to the service of poetry or open up new horizons to poetical experience. What judgment would such a temperament, seeking its good where it can find it, but not grossly indiscriminating, not ignobly satisfied, pronounce on the Hindu legends?

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. Let us leave this type aside then as beyond the field of fruitful discussion.

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.

But you are right. 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.² 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

² O fostering Sun, who hast hidden the face of Truth with thy golden shield, displace that splendid veil from the vision of the righteous man, O Sun.

O fosterer, O solitary traveller, O Sun, O Master of Death, O child of God, dissipate thy beams, gather inward thy light; so shall I behold that splendour, thy goodliest form of all. For the Spirit who is there and there, He am I.

of today may and do worthily cherish. To accomplish a similar duty in a foreign tongue is a more perilous endeavour.

I have attempted in the following narrative to bring one of our old legends before the English public in a more attractive garb than could be cast over them by mere translation or by the too obvious handling of writers like Sir Edwin Arnold;—preserving its inner spirit and Hindu features, yet rejecting no device that might smooth away the sense of roughness and the bizarre which always haunts what is unfamiliar, and win for it the suffrages of a culture to which our mythological conventions are unknown and our canons of taste unacceptable. The attempt is necessarily beset with difficulties and pitfalls. If you think I have even in part succeeded, I shall be indeed gratified; if otherwise, I shall at least have the consolation of having failed where failure was more probable than success.

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 Urvasio and founder of the Lunar or Ilian dynasty whose princes after the great civil wars of the Mahabharata became Emperors of India. Chyavan'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.

I have ventured in this poem to combine, as far as might be, the two temperaments, the Greek pathetic and the Hindu mystic; yet I have carefully preserved the essence of the Hindu spirit and the Hindu mythological features. The essential idea of these Hindu legends, aiming, as they do, straight and sheer at the sublime and ideal, gives the writer no option but to attempt epic tone and form,—I speak of course of those which are

not merely beautiful stories of domestic life. In the choice of an epic setting I had the alternative of entirely Hellenising the myth or adopting the method of Hindu Epic. I have preferred the course which I fear, will least recommend itself to you. 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. 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.

The second essential feature of the Hindu epic model is one which you have selected for especial condemnation and yet I have chosen to adhere to it in its entirety. The characters of Hindu legend are, you say, lifeless patterns of moral excellence. Let me again distinguish. 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. Such at least is the conception of the poem; whether I have contrived even faintly to execute it, do you judge.

But when Hindu canons of taste, principles of epic writing and types of thought and character are assimilated there are still serious difficulties in Englishing a Hindu legend. There is the danger of raising around the subject a jungle of uncouth words and unfamiliar allusions impenetrable to English readers. Those who have hitherto made the attempt, have succumbed to the passion for “local colour” or for a liberal peppering of Sanscrit

words all over their verses, thus forming a constant stumbling-block and a source of irritation to the reader. Only so much local colour is admissible as comes naturally and unforced by the very nature of the subject; and for the introduction of a foreign word into poetry the one valid excuse is the entire absence of a fairly corresponding word or phrase in the language itself. Yet a too frequent resort to this plea shows either a laziness in invention or an unseasonable learning. There are very few Sanscrit words or ideas, not of the technical kind, which do not admit of being approximately conveyed in English by direct rendering or by a little management, or, at the worst, by coining a word which, if not precisely significant of the original, will create some kindred association in the mind of an English reader. A slight inexactness is better than a laborious pedantry. I have therefore striven to avoid all that would be unnecessarily local and pedantic, even to the extent of occasionally using a Greek expression such as Hades for the lord of the underworld. I believe such uses to be legitimate, since they bring the poem nearer home to the imagination of the reader. On the other hand, there are some words one is loth to part with. I have myself been unable or unwilling to sacrifice such Indianisms as Rishi; Naga, for the snake-gods who inhabit the nether-world; Uswuttha, for the sacred fig-tree; chompuc (but this has been made familiar by Shelley's exquisite lyric); coil or Kokil, for the Indian cuckoo; and names like Dhurma (Law, Religion, Rule of Nature) and Critanta, the ender, for Yama, the Indian Hades. These, I think, are not more than a fairly patient reader may bear with. Mythological allusions, the indispensable setting of a Hindu legend, have been introduced sparingly, and all but one or two will explain themselves to a reader of sympathetic intelligence and some experience in poetry.

Yet are they, in some number, indispensable. The surroundings and epic machinery must necessarily be the ordinary Hindu surroundings and machinery. Properly treated, I do not think these are wanting in power and beauty of poetic suggestion. Ruaru, the grandson of Bhrigou, takes us back to the very beginnings of Aryan civilisation when our race dwelt and warred

and sang within the frontier of the five rivers, Iravatie, Chundrobhaga, Shotodrou, Bitosta and Bipasha, and our Bengal was but a mother of wild beasts, clothed in the sombre mystery of virgin forests and gigantic rivers and with no human inhabitants save a few savage tribes, the scattered beginnings of nations. Accordingly the story is set in times when earth was yet new to her children, and the race was being created by princes like Pururavas and patriarchal sages or Rishies like Bhrigou, Brihuspati, Gautama. The Rishi was in that age the head of the human world. He was at once sage, poet, priest, scientist, prophet, educator, scholar and legislator. He composed a song, and it became one of the sacred hymns of the people; he emerged from rapt communion with God to utter some puissant sentence, which in after ages became the germ of mighty philosophies; he conducted a sacrifice, and kings and peoples rose on its seven flaming tongues to wealth and greatness; he formulated an observant aphorism, and it was made the foundation of some future science, ethical, practical or physical; he gave a decision in a dispute and his verdict was seed of a great code or legislative theory. In Himalayan forests or by the confluence of great rivers he lived as the centre of a patriarchal family whose link was thought-interchange and not blood-relationship, bright-eyed children of sages, heroic striplings, earnest pursuers of knowledge, destined to become themselves great Rishies or renowned leaders of thought and action. He himself was the master of all learning and all arts and all sciences. 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. These were great and shining beings who preserved the established cosmos against the Asuras, or Titans, spirits of disorder between whom and the Hindu Olympians there was ever warfare. Yet their hostility did not preclude occasional unions. Sachi herself, the Queen of Heaven, was a Titaness, daughter of the Asura, Puloman; Yayati, ally of the Gods, took to himself a Daitya maiden Surmishtha, child of imperial Vrishopurvan (for the Asuras or Daityas, on the [terrestrial]³ plane, signified the adversaries of

³ MS (typed) territorial

Aryan civilisation), and Bhrigou's wife, Puloma, was of the Titan blood. Chief of the Gods were Indra, King and Thunderer, who came down when men sacrificed and drank the Soma wine of the offering; Vaiou, the Wind; Agni, who is Hutaashon, devourer of the sacrifice, the spiritual energy of Fire; Varouna, the prince of the seas; Critanta, Death, the ender, who was called also Yama (Government) or Dhurma (Law) because from him are all order and stability, whether material or moral. And there were subtler presences; Cama, also named Modon or Monmuth, the God of desire, who rode on the parrot and carried five flowery arrows and a bow-string of linked honey-bees; his wife, Ruthie, the golden-limbed spirit of delight; Saruswatie, the Hindu Muse, who is also Vach or Word, the primal goddess — she is the unexpressed idea of existence which by her expression takes visible form and being; for the word is prior to and more real, because more spiritual, than the thing it expresses; she is the daughter of Brahma and has inherited the creative power of her father, the wife of Vishnou and shares the preservative energy of her husband; Vasuqie, also, and Seshanaga, the great serpent with his hosts, whose name means finiteness and who represents Time and Space; he upholds the world on his hundred colossal hoods and is the couch of the Supreme who is Existence. There were also the angels who were a little less than the Gods; Yukshas, the Faery attendants of Kuvere, lord of wealth, who protect hoards and treasures and dwell in Ullaca, the city of beauty,

the hills of mist

Golden, the dwelling place of Faery kings,

And mansions by unearthly moonlight kissed: —

For one dwells there whose brow with the young moon

Lightens as with a marvellous amethyst —

Ullaca, city of beauty, where no thought enters but that of love, no age but that of youth, no season but that of flowers. Then there are the Gundhurvas, beautiful, brave and melodious beings, the artists, musicians, poets and shining warriors of heaven; Kinnaries, Centaureses of sky and hill with voices of Siren melody; Opsaras, sky-nymphs, children of Ocean, who

dwell in Heaven, its songstresses and daughters of joy, and who often mingle in love with mortals. Nor must we forget our own mother, Ganges, the triple and mystic river, who is Mundaquinie, Ganges of the Gods, in heaven, Bhagirathie or Jahnavie, Ganges of men, on earth, and Boithorinie or coiling Bhogavatie, Ganges of the dead, in Patala, the grey under-world and kingdom of serpents, and in the sombre dominions of Yama. Saraswatie, namesake and shadow of the Muse, preceded her in her sacredness; but the banks of those once pure waters have long passed to the barbarian and been denounced as unclean and uninhabitable to our race, while the deity has passed to that other mysterious underground stream which joins Ganges and Yamouna in their tryst at Proyaga.

Are there not here sufficient features of poetical promise, sufficient materials of beauty for the artist to weave into immortal visions? I would gladly think that there are, that I am not cheating myself with delusions when I seem to find in this yet untrodden path,

via . . . qua me quoque possim

Tollere humo victorque virum volitare per ora.

Granted, you will say, but still *Quorsum haec putida tendunt?* or how does it explain the dedication to me of a style of work at entire variance with my own tastes and preferences? But the value of a gift depends on the spirit of the giver rather than on its own suitability to the recipient. Will you accept this poem as part-payment of a deep intellectual debt I have been long owing to you? Unknown to yourself, you taught and encouraged me from my childhood to be a poet. From your sun my farthing rush-light was kindled, and it was in your path that I long strove to guide my uncertain and faltering footsteps. If I have now in the inevitable development of an independent temperament in independent surroundings departed from your guidance and entered into a path, perhaps thornier and more rugged, but my own, it does not lessen the obligation of that first light and example. It is my hope that in the enduring fame which your calmer and more luminous genius must one day

bring you, on a distant verge of the skies and lower plane of planetary existence, some ray of my name may survive and it be thought no injury to your memory that the first considerable effort of my powers was dedicated to you.

To His Uncle

c/o Rao Bahadur K.B. Jadhava
Near Municipal Office
Baroda
15th August 1902

My dear Boromama,

I am sorry to hear from Sarojini that Mejdada has stopped sending mother's allowance and threatens to make the stoppage permanent unless you can improvise a companion to the Goddess of Purulia. This is very characteristic of Mejdada; it may even be described in one word as Manomaniac. Of course he thinks he is stopping your pension and that this will either bring you to reason or effectually punish you. But the main question is What is to be done now? Of course I can send Rs 40 now and so long as I am alone it does not matter very much, but it will be rather a pull when Mrinalini comes back to Baroda. However even that could be managed well enough with some self-denial and an effective household management. But there is a tale of woe behind.

Sarojini suggests that I might bring her or have her brought to Baroda with my wife. I should have no objection, but is that feasible? In the first place will she agree to come to the other end of the world like that? And if she does, will not the violent change and the shock of utterly unfamiliar surroundings, strange faces and an unintelligible tongue or rather two or three unintelligible tongues, have a prejudicial effect upon her mind? Sarojini and my wife found it intolerable enough to live under such circumstances for a long time; how would mother stand it? This is what I am most afraid of. Men may cut themselves off from home and everything else and make their own atmosphere

in strange places, but it is not easy for women and I am afraid it would be quite impossible for a woman in her mental condition. Apart from these objections it might be managed. Of course I could not give her a separate house, but she might be assured that whenever a Boro Bou came, she should have one to receive her in; I daresay that would satisfy her. In case however it does not or the experiment should be judged too risky, I must go on sending Rs 40 as long as I can.

But there comes the tale of woe I have spoken of. We have now had three years of scarcity, the first of them being a severe famine. The treasury of the State is well nigh exhausted—a miserable 30 or 40 lakhs is all that remains, and in spite of considerable severity and even cruelty in collection the revenues of the last year amount simply to the tail of the dog without the dog himself. This year there was no rain in Baroda till the first crop withered; after July 5th about 9 inches fell, just sufficient to encourage the cultivators to sow again. Now for want of more rain the second crop is withering away into nothingness. The high wind which has prevented rain still continues, and though there is a vague hope of a downpour after the 15th, one cannot set much store by it. Now in case there should be a severe famine this year, what may happen is something like this; either we shall all be put on half pay for the next twelve months,—in other words I who can only just manage to live on Rs 360 will have to do it on Rs 180—or the pay will be cut down permanently (or at least for some years) by 25 per cent, in which case I shall rejoice upon Rs 270; or thirdly (and this may Heaven forbid) we shall get our full pay till December and after that live on the munificent amount of nothing a month. In any case it will be impossible to bring mother or even Mrinalini to Baroda. And there is worse behind. The Ajwa reservoir after four years of drought is nearly exhausted. The just-drinkable-if-boiled water in it will last for about a month; the nondrinkable for still two months more. This means that if there is no rain, there will be a furious epidemic of cholera before two months are out and after three months this city, to say nothing of other parts of the Raj, will be depopulated by a water famine. Of course the old

disused wells may be filled up, but that again means cholera in excelsis. The only resource will be for the whole State to go and camp out on the banks of the Narmada and the Mahi.

Of course if I get half pay I shall send Rs 80 to Bengal, hand over Rs 90 as my contribution to the expenses to Khaserao and keep the remaining 10 for emergencies; but supposing the third course suggested should be pursued? I shall then have to take a third class ticket to Calcutta and solicit an 150 Rs place in Girish Bose's or Mesho's College — if Lord Curzon has not abolished both of them by that time. Of course I could sponge upon my father-in-law in Assam, becoming a *ghor jamai* for the time being, but then who would send money to Deoghur and Benares? To such a pass have an allwise Providence and the blessings of British rule brought us! However let us all hope that it will rain.

Please let me know whether Mejdada has sent any money by the time this reaches you. If he has not, I suppose I must put my shoulder to the burden. And by the way if you have found my MS of verse translations from Sanscrit, you might send it to me "by return of post". The Seeker had better remain with you instead of casting itself on the perilous waters of the Post-Office.

My health has not been very good recently; that is to say, although I have no recognised doctor's illness, I have developed a new disease of my own, or rather a variation of Madhavrao's special brand of nervous debility. I shall patent mine as A.G's private and particular. Its chief symptom is a ghastly inability to do any serious work; two hours' work induces a feverish exhaustion and a burning sensation all over the body as well as a pain in the back. I am then useless for the rest of the day. So for some time past I have had to break up the little work I have done into half an hour here, half an hour there and half an hour nowhere. The funny thing is that I keep up a very decent appetite and am equal to any amount of physical exercise that may be demanded of me. In fact if I take care to do nothing but kasrat and croquet and walking and rushing about, I keep in a grand state of health, — but an hour's work turns me again into

an invalid. This is an extremely awkward state of things and if you know any homoeopathic drug which will remove it, I will shut my eyes and swallow it.

Of course under such circumstances I find it difficult to write letters. I do not know how many letters to Sarojini & my wife I have begun, written two lines and left. The other day, however, there was a promising sign. I began to write a letter to you and actually managed to finish one side and a half. This has encouraged me to try again and I do believe I shall finish this letter today — the second day of writing.⁴ The improvement, which is part of a general abatement of my symptoms, I attribute to a fortnight's determined and cynical laziness. During this time I have been to Ahmedabad with our cricket eleven and watched them get a jolly good beating; which happy result we celebrated by a gorgeous dinner at the refreshment room. I believe the waiters must have thought us a party of famine-stricken labourers, dressed up in stolen clothes, perhaps the spoils of massacred famine officers. There were six of us and they brought us a dozen plentiful courses; we ate them all and asked for more. As for the bread we consumed — well, they brought us at first a huge toast-rack with about 20 large pieces of toast. After three minutes there was nothing left except the rack itself; they repeated the allowance with a similar result. Then they gave up the toast as a bad job, and brought in two great plates each with a mountain of bread on it as large as Nandanpahad. After a short while we were howling for more. This time there was a wild-eyed consultation of waiters and after some minutes they reappeared with large trays of bread carried in both hands. This time they conquered. They do charge high prices at the refreshment rooms but I don't think they got much profit out of us that time. Since then I have been once on a picnic to Ajwa with the District Magistrate and Collector of Baroda, the second Judge of the High Court and a still more important and solemn personage whom you may have met under the name of M^r. Anandrao Jadhav. A second picnic was afterwards organized in which some dozen rowdies, not to

⁴ I didn't after all.

say Hooligans, of our club — the worst among them, I regret to say, was the father of a large family and a trusted officer of H.H. the Maharajah Gaekwar, — went down to Ajwa and behaved in such a manner that it is a wonder we were not arrested and locked up. On the way my horse broke down and so four of us had to get down and walk three miles in the heat. At the first village we met a cart coming back from Ajwa and in spite of the carters' protests seized it, turned the bullocks round and started them back — of course with ourselves in the cart. The bullocks at first thought they were going to do the journey at their usual comfortable two miles an hour, but we convinced them of their error with the ends of our umbrellas and they ran. I don't believe bullocks have ever run so fast since the world began. The way the cart jolted, was a wonder; I know the internal arrangements of my stomach were turned upside down at least 300 times a minute. When we got to Ajwa we had to wait an hour for dinner; as a result I was again able to eat ten times my usual allowance. As for the behaviour of those trusted pillars of the Baroda Raj at Ajwa, a veil had better be drawn over it; I believe I was the only quiet and decent person in the company. On the way home the carriage in which my part of the company installed itself, was the scene of a remarkable tussle in which three of the occupants and an attendant cavalier attempted to bind the driver, (the father of a large family aforesaid) with a horse-rope. As we had been ordered to do this by the Collector of Baroda, I thought I might join in the attempt with a safe conscience. Paterfamilias threw the reins to Providence and fought — I will say it to his credit — like a Trojan. He scratched me, he bit one of my coadjutors, in both cases drawing blood, he whipped furiously the horse of the assistant cavalier, and when Madhavrao came to his assistance, he rewarded the benevolent intention by whipping at Madhavrao's camel! It was not till we reached the village, after a six-miles conflict, and got him out of the carriage that he submitted to the operation. The wonder was that our carriage did not get upset; indeed, the mare stopped several times in order to express her entire disgust at the improper and turbulent character of these proceedings. For the greater part of the way

home she was brooding indignantly over the memory of it and once her feelings so much overcame her that she tried to upset us over the edge of the road, which would have given us a comfortable little fall of three feet. Fortunately she was relieved by this little demonstration and her temper improved wonderfully after it. Finally last night I helped to kidnap D^r Cooper, the Health Officer of the State, and make him give us a big dinner at the Station with a bottle and a half of sherry to wash it down. The Doctor got so merry over the sherry of which he drank at least two thirds himself, that he ordered a *special-class* dinner for the whole company next Saturday. I don't know what M^{rs} Cooper said to him when he got home. All this has had a most beneficial effect upon my health, as the writing of so long a letter shows.

I suppose you have got Anandrao's letter; you ought to value it, for the time he took to write it is, I believe, unequalled in the history of epistolary creation. The writing of it occupied three weeks, fair-copying it another fortnight, writing the address seven days and posting it three days more. You will see from it that there is no need to be anxious about his stomach: it righted itself the moment he got into the train at Deoghur Station. In fact he was quite lively and warlike on the way home. At Jabalpur we were unwise enough not to spread out our bedding on the seats and when we got in again, some upcountry scoundrels had boned Anandrao's berth. After some heated discussion I occupied half of it and put Anandrao on mine. Some Mahomedans, quite inoffensive people, sat at the edge of this, but Anandrao chose to confound them with the intruders and declared war on them. The style of war he adopted was a most characteristically Maratha style. He pretended to go to sleep and began kicking the Mahomedans, in his "sleep" of course, having specially gone to bed with his boots on for the purpose. I had at last to call him off and put him on my half-berth. Here, his legs being the other way, he could not kick; so he spent the night butting the upcountryman with his head; next day he boasted triumphantly to me that he had conquered a foot and half of territory from the intruder by his brilliant plan of campaign. When the Boers rise

once more against England, I think we shall have to send them Anandrao as an useful assistant to Generals Botha and Delarey.

No rain as yet, and it is the 15th of August. My thirtieth birthday, by English computation! How old we are all getting!

Your affectionate nephew
Aurobind Ghose.

P.S. There is a wonderful story travelling about Baroda, a story straight out of Fairyland, that I have received Rs 90 promotion. Everybody seems to know all about it except myself. The story goes that a certain officer rejoicing in the name of Damn-you-bhai wanted promotion, so the Maharaja gave him Rs 50. He then proceeded to remark that as this would give Damn-you-bhai an undue seniority over M^r Would-you-ah! and M^r Manoeu(vre)bhai, the said Would-you-ah and Manoeu(vre)bhai must also get Rs 50 each, and “as M^r Ghose has done good work for me, I give him Rs 90”. The beautiful logical connection of the last bit with what goes before, dragging M^r Ghose in from nowhere & everywhere, is so like the Maharaja that the story may possibly be true. If so, it is very satisfactory, as my pay will now be — Famine permitting — Rs 450 a month. It is not quite so good as Mejdada’s job, but it will serve. Rs 250 promotion after ten years’ service does not look very much, but it is better than nothing. At that rate I shall get Rs 700 in 1912 and be drawing about Rs 1000 when I am ready to retire from Baroda either to Bengal or a better world. Glory Halleluja!

Give my love to Sarojini and tell her I shall write to her — if I can. Don’t forget to send the MS of translations. I want to typewrite and send to England.

To His Wife

c/o K.B. Jadhav Esq
Near Municipal Office
Baroda
20th August 1902

Dearest Mrinalini,

I have not written to you for a long time because I have not been in very good health and had not the energy to write. I went out of Baroda for a few days to see whether change and rest would set me up, and your telegram came when I was not here. I feel much better now, and I suppose there was nothing really the matter with me except overwork. I am sorry I made you so anxious; there was no real cause to be so, for you know I never get *seriously* ill. Only when I feel out of sorts, I find writing letters almost impossible.

The Maharajah has given me Rs 90 promotion — this will raise my pay to Rs 450. In the order he has made me a lot of compliments about my powers, talent, capacity, usefulness etcetera, but also made a remark on my want of regularity and punctual habits. Besides he shows his intention of taking the value of the Rs 90 out of me by burdening me with overwork, so I don't feel very grateful to him. He says that if convenient, my services can be utilized in the College. But I don't see how it will be convenient, just now, at least; for it is nearly the end of the term. Even if I go to the College, he has asked the Dewan to use me for writing Annual Reports etc. I suppose this means that he does not want me to get my vacations. However, let us see what happens.

If I join the College now and am allowed the three months' vacation, I shall of course go to Bengal and to Assam for a short visit. I am afraid it will be impossible for you to come to Baroda just now. There has been no rain here for a month, except a short shower early this morning. The wells are all nearly dried up; the water of the Ajwa reservoir which supplies Baroda is very low and must be quite used up by next November; the crops in the

fields are all parched and withering. This means that we shall not only have famine; but there will be no water for bathing and washing up, or even, perhaps for drinking. Besides if there is famine, it is practically sure that all the officers will be put on half-pay. We are hoping, rather than expecting, that there may be good rain before the end of August. But the signs are against it, and if it comes, it will only remove the water difficulty or put it off for a few months. For you to come to Baroda and endure all the troubles & sufferings of such a state of things is out of the question. You must decide for yourself whether you will stay with your father or at Deoghur. You may as well stay in Assam till October, and then if I can go to Bengal, I will take you to Deoghur where you can stop for the winter at least. If I cannot come then, I will, if you like, try and make some arrangement for you to be taken there.

I am glad your father will be able to send me a cook when you come. I have got a Maratha cook, but he can prepare nothing properly except meat dishes. I don't know how to get over the difficulty about the *jhi*. Sarojini wrote something about a Mahomedan *ayah*, but that would never do. After so recently being readmitted to Hindu society, I cannot risk it; it is all very well for Khaserao & others whose social position is so strong that they may do almost anything they like. As soon as I see any prospect of being able to get you here, I shall try my best to arrange about a maid-servant. It is no use doing it now.

I hope you will be able to read and understand this letter; if you can't, I hope it will make you more anxious to learn English than you have been up to now. I could not manage to write a Bengali letter just now — so I thought I had better write in English rather than put off writing.

Do not be too much disappointed by the delay in coming to Baroda; it cannot be avoided. I should like you to spend some time in Deoghur, if you do not mind, Assam somehow seems terribly far off; and besides, I should like you to form a closer intimacy with my relatives, at least those among them whom I especially love.

Your loving husband

To His Father-in-Law

[1]

Calcutta
June 8th 1906.

My dear father-in-law,

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

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.

Barin has again fallen ill, and I have asked him to go out to some healthier place for a short visit. I was thinking he might go to Waltair, but he has set his heart on going to Shillong — I don't quite know why, unless it is to see a quite new place and at the same time make acquaintance with his sister-in-law's family. If he goes, I am sure you will take good care of him for the short time he may be there. You will find him, I am afraid, rather wilful & erratic, — the family failing. He is especially fond of

knocking about by himself in a spasmodic and irregular fashion when he ought to be sitting at home and nursing his delicate health, but I have learnt not to interfere with him in this respect; if checked, he is likely to go off at a tangent & makes things worse. He has, however, an immense amount of vitality which allows him to play these tricks with impunity in a good climate, and I think a short stay at Shillong ought to give him another lease of health.

Your affectionate
son-in-law
Aurobindo Ghose

[2]

Pondicherry
19 February 1919

My dear father-in-law,

I have not written to you with regard to this fatal event in both our lives; words are useless in face of the feelings it has caused, if even they can ever express our deepest emotions. God has seen good to lay upon me the one sorrow that could still touch me to the centre. He knows better than ourselves what is best for each of us, and now that the first sense of the irreparable has passed, I can bow with submission to His divine purpose. The physical tie between us is, as you say, severed; but the tie of affection subsists for me. Where I have once loved, I do not cease from loving. Besides she who was the cause of it, still is near though not visible to our physical vision.

It is needless to say much about the matters of which you write in your letter. I approve of everything that you propose. Whatever Mrinalini would have desired, should be done, and I have no doubt this is what she would have approved of. I consent to the chudis being kept by her mother; but I should be glad if you would send me two or three of her books, especially if there are any in which her name is written. I have only of her her letters and a photograph.

Aurobindo

Pondicherry
19 February 1919

My dear father-in-law,

I have not written to you with regard to this fatal event in both our lives; words are useless in face of the feelings it has caused, if even they can ever express our deepest emotions. God has seen good to lay upon me the one sorrow that could still touch me to the centre. He knows better than ourselves what is best for each of us, and now that the first sense of the irrefragable has passed, I can bow with submission to His divine purpose. The physical tie between us is, as you say, severed; but the tie of affection subsists for me. When I have once loved, I do not cease from loving. Besides, she who was the cause of it, still is near though not visible to our physical vision.

It is needless to say much about the matters of which you write in your letter. I approve of everything that you propose. Whatever Kamalini would have desired, should

Sri Aurobindo's letter to his father-in-law, 19 February 1919

19
be done, and I have no doubt this is what she
would have approved of. I consent to the
chests being kept by her mother; but I should
be glad if you would send me two or three of
her books, especially if there are any in which
her name is written. I have only of her her
letters and a photograph.

Annoyance

Letters Written as a Probationer in the Indian Civil Service, 1892

To Lord Kimberley

[1]

To
the Right Hon the Earl of
Kimberley
Secretary of State
for
India.

6 Burlington Rd
Bayswater W
Monday. Nov. 21. 1892

May it please your Lordship

I was selected as a probationer for the Indian Civil Service in 1890, and after the two years probation required have been rejected on the ground that I failed to attend the Examination in Riding.

I humbly petition your Lordship that a farther consideration may, if possible, be given to my case.

I admit that the Commissioners have been very indulgent to me in the matter, and that my conduct has been as would naturally lead them to suppose me negligent of their instructions; but I hope your Lordship will allow me to lay before you certain circumstances that may tend to extenuate it.

I was sent over to England, when seven years of age, with my two elder brothers and for the last eight years we have been thrown on our own resources without any English friend to help or advise us. Our father, D^r K. D. Ghose of Khulna, has been unable to provide the three of us with sufficient for the most necessary wants, and we have long been in an embarrassed position.

It was owing to want of money that I was unable always to report cases in London at the times required by the Commissioners, and to supply myself with sufficiently constant practice in Riding. At the last I was thrown wholly on borrowed resources and even these were exhausted.

It was owing to difficulty in procuring the necessary money, that I was late at my appointment on Tuesday Nov 15. I admit that I did not observe the exact terms of the appointment; however I went on to Woolwich by the next train, but found that the Examiner had gone back to London.

If your Lordship should grant me another chance, an English gentleman, M^r Cotton, (editor of the Academy) of 107 Abingdon Road, Kensington. W. has undertaken that want of money shall not prevent me from fulfilling the exact instructions of the Commissioners.

If your Lordship should obtain this for me, it will be the object of my life to remember it in the faithful performance of my duties in the Civil Service of India.

I am
Your Lordship's obedient
servant
Aravinda. Acroyd. Ghose

[2]

6 Burlington Rd
Bayswater W
Monday Dec 12 1892

May it please your Lordship

As the Civil Service Commissioners have decided that they cannot give me a Certificate of qualification for an appointment to the Civil Service of India, I beg to apply to your Lordship for the remainder of the allowance that would have been due to me as a Probationer.

I am fully aware that I have really forfeited this sum by my failure in the Final Examination but in consideration of my bad

pecuniary circumstances, I hope your Lordship will kindly listen to my petition.

I enclose the required Certificate as to residence and character at the University.

I am
Your Lordship's obedient
servant
A. A. Ghose

Letters Written While Employed
in the Princely State of Baroda
1895 – 1906

To the Sar Suba, Baroda State

Ootacamund.
June 1. 1895

Sir

I have the honour to report that I arrived at Ootacamund on Thursday the 30th instant & that I saw H.H. the Maharaja Saheb yesterday (Friday). It appears that His Highness wishes to keep me with him for some time farther, I have also the honour to state that as I desired a peon rather at Ootie than on the journey & even so it was not *absolutely* necessary, I did not think myself justified in taking advantage of your kind permission to engage one at Bombay as far as Ootie.

I beg to remain,
Sir,
Your most obedient servant,
Aravind. A. Ghose.

To
Rao Bahadur
the Sar Suba Saheb
Baroda State.

To Bhuban Babu

[June 1901]

Dear Bhuban Babu,

I have been here at Nainital with my wife & sister since the 28th of May. The place is a beautiful one, but not half so cold as I expected. In fact, in the daytime it is only a shade less hot than Baroda, except when it has been raining. The Maharaja will probably be leaving here on the 24th, — if there has been rain at Baroda, — but as he will stop at Agra, Mathura & Mhow, he will not reach Baroda till the beginning of July. I shall probably be going separately & may also reach on the 1st of July. If you like, you might go there a little before & put up with Deshpande. I have asked Madhavrao to get my new house furnished, but I don't know what he is doing in that direction.

Banerji is, I believe, in Calcutta. He came up to see me at Deoghur for a day.

Yours sincerely
Aurobind Ghose

To an Officer of the Baroda State

Baroda.
14th Feb 1903.

My dear Sir,

I shall be very much obliged if you can kindly arrange for the letter to the Residency¹ to be seen by His Highness and approved tomorrow, Sunday, so that I may be able to leave Baroda tomorrow night. I am sending the draft to the Naib Dewan Saheb for his perusal and approval. I am obliged to make this request because it will put me in serious difficulties if the arrangements I have made are upset.

Yours sincerely
Aravind. A. Ghose

¹ See "Draft of a Reply to the Resident on the Curzon Circular" on the next page. — Ed.

Draft of a Reply to the Resident on the Curzon Circular

My dear Sir,

In reference to your letter of the 11th February last, conveying the remarks and views of the Government of India on the representation of His Highness' Government dated the 19th December 1902, I am to express to you His Highness' extreme disappointment that the Government of India has not seen its way to give a more favourable consideration to the representation, I had the honour to submit in December last. That letter expresses a hope that His Highness will now withdraw his objections to the provisions of the circular. It further makes certain remarks on the delay in sending the protest, the absence of His Highness from Baroda and its results on the administration of the State.

I am anxious therefore to place before the Government of India certain facts and circumstances relating to those matters and in explanation of His Highness' objections to the circular.

It must be admitted that the protest reached the Government of India more than 2 years after the circular was issued but in explanation of that circumstance I have to state in the first instance that no copy of the circular has ever been formally and officially communicated to His Highness' Government and even now any knowledge they may have of the contents of the circular is that which they share with the general public and which is drawn from the portion extracted in the Government Gazette and the public prints of the country. It was indeed His Highness' wish to disregard the absence of a formal intimation and submit a protest forthwith but I may perhaps be allowed to say that as things are constituted it is naturally felt as no light thing to appeal to the Government of India against its own orders. This course was therefore abandoned under the advice of His Highness' responsible officers that it would be inadvisable and might be thought premature and uncalled for to submit any protest before the circular was officially communicated to this Government or it became clear on occasions arising that what would involve in the case of the Baroda State an important

change of procedure was really intended to apply to this State. Such occasion first arose in 1902 when in answer to this Government's intimation of His Highness' wish to proceed to Europe on account of ill health the Government of India required His Highness to conform to the provisions of the circular for the first time. This was in May 1902 about 2 years after the circular had been issued. Thereupon the protest was forwarded in December last. This explanation of the apparent delay in sending the protest will it is hoped serve to dispel the doubt which seems to be conveyed in your letter as to the strength of His Highness' feelings on the subject of the circular.

The next point which calls for an explanation is the implication clearly conveyed in the letter that no efficient administration of the State is possible during the absence of H.H. from Baroda. With reference to this I beg to submit that the administration of the Baroda State has been systematically regulated by H.H. so that it can be worked by his officers even when he is not present in person at the Capital. It stands therefore on a very different footing from unregulated administrations in which every detail is dependent on the personal will of the ruler. Further His Highness when going to a hill station during the hot months of the year takes with him his staff & office & the supervision of administrative work goes on with the same regularity as at Baroda. Indeed it is a fact that owing to better health & greater freedom from harassment more work is done by H.H. outside than at Baroda.

In the case of absences in Europe efficient control is no doubt more difficult but on such occasions H.H. has to delegate some of his powers & those matters which require reference to him can in these days of easy communication be answered in a comparatively short space of time & in urgent cases orders can even be obtained by wire. Incidentally it may be remarked here that in making arrangements for the conduct of administration during the absence of H.H. in Europe H.H. is not allowed a free hand which his close knowledge of the administration & the people & the intimate & permanent manner in which his interests are bound up with the good government of the State

would seem to require. If greater freedom of action were allowed H.H. feels that more satisfactory arrangements could be made than are now possible.

It may be added that the administration of a Native State when regularized is largely a matter of routine; no new & considerable problems are to be apprehended & such questions as do arise, can with the thorough knowledge of the administration which H.H. possesses be easily grasped by him even when he is not on the spot.

With regard to the discontent consequent on the injury to the administration referred to in your letter, I wish to state that His Highness' Government is not aware of any genuine dissatisfaction which has resulted from his absence from Baroda. It must be remembered that there are grievance mongers everywhere especially in a Native State where there is the representative of the paramount power to whom they can prefer their complaints whether imaginary or real. The amount of credence given to them must in the nature of things depend on the judgment and discretion of the individual officer who for the time being represents the *paramount power*. From the reports of that officer, the Government of India derives its information whilst His Highness' Government has generally hardly any occasion to give its own version of the contents of those reports. This is an inevitable disadvantage of the position in which Native States are at present placed, but as I have said so far as His Highness' Government is aware no real injury has up to now resulted to the administration by the absence of His Highness from Baroda much less any discontent consequent on such injury.

It is true that in 1894 considerable agitation was created in the State against its land policy, but this was due in His Highness' opinion entirely to the policy itself and not to his absence and the agitation would have soon subsided if the Resident had not unfortunately taken a position of active hostility to that policy which eventually turned out to be an unjustifiable attitude.

Further in regard to these trips to Europe it has always to be borne in mind that there is such worry & difficulty in making arrangements for them that they can never be undertaken except

under the strongest necessity. Even were it otherwise the deep interest which H.H. takes in the administration of his state — an interest which has been testified to by more than one Resident — who have warned him against an excess of zeal rather than its deficiency, would not admit of his frequent absence from India. Thus it happens that H.H. has not been out of India for more than 4 years during the 22 years of his active rule & his trips have always been necessitated by considerations of health.

It need hardly be stated that in sending the protest nothing was further from His Highness' mind than either to challenge the policy of Government or to question their authority. What His Highness intended was to place before the Government of India his feelings and present for their consideration the effect which the Circular was calculated to produce on his status and dignity as a Ruler. The Circular it is stated in itself establishes no new principle and that the Government of India always exercises the right to give advice on the subject of His Highness' trips to Europe. But such advice both by its form and the rare occasions on which it is given is more suited to the position and dignity of His Highness whilst the necessity now imposed of an application for permission in every instance leaves no independent power of movement out of India & gives room for the inference that in the estimation of the Government of India H.H. if left to himself cannot be trusted to enjoy this privilege in a reasonable & judicious manner. At least this is the view which would be taken by the public at large. The advice again was given & received confidentially so that the public had no authentic means of knowing whether the trip was given up because vetoed by the Government of India or by the Prince himself of his own motion.

It fell in with the policy of the Government of India to maintain the prestige of Indian Chiefs by allowing their public acts to bear the appearance of having proceeded from the Chiefs themselves rather than by direction of the Government of India. It may be that some Princes fell short of their responsibilities but a general rule which applies equally to all is calculated to discourage those who may have been devoting their whole time and energy to the welfare and good Government of their subjects.

Your letter no doubt contains an assurance that there is no idea of curtailing the judicious & moderate enjoyment by Native Chiefs of the privilege of absenting themselves from their States. What is a moderate enjoyment, however, would in the nature of things have to be determined by the Resident in the first instance & ultimately by the Government of India. In your letter you calculate the absences of H.H. from Baroda at $7\frac{1}{2}$ years since 1886, thereby probably implying that they were not moderate. Of these only 4 years were spent out of India & that too during the course of the 22 years of his rule. It would seem to H.H. that this was not an immoderate exercise of the privilege but possibly it is thought otherwise by the Government of India.

In the same way though previous absences may not have been frequent still a particular trip may not be considered to be judicious and as it is not possible to define the requirements of a judicious trip, no definite meaning is conveyed to the mind as to the extent to which the privilege will hereafter be allowed.

These are some of the objections to the Circular which still hold good. His Highness therefore can only express his regret that the Government of India could not see their way to alter its provisions.

**To the Dewan, on the Government's Reply
to the Letter on the Curzon Circular**

Confidential

Gulmarg
Aug 14. 1903.

My dear Sir,

In reference to the answer of the Government of India to our protest dated the 2^d May, 1903, His Highness directs me to write that you must think over the whole matter and consider what is to be done. You must clearly understand that it is not because His Highness wishes to go to Europe often, as is popularly supposed, that he stands by his protest, for he does not care about the matter in that light, but because he is bound to defend a natural right

which is being hedged in with humiliating conditions and that without rhyme or reason. It is under such circumstances your part as Minister to consult with M^r Bhandarkar, M^r Samarth and other officers on whose abilities and devotion His Highness places confidence, and if they merit that confidence, they should surely be able to suggest some course which would meet the peculiar difficulties of the situation, and advise His Highness in a wise and fruitful manner.

Yours sincerely
Aravind. A. Ghose
Secretary

P.S. His Highness wishes you to consult M^r Pheroazshah Mehta *very confidentially* on the point, paying him his fees, as to what action he would advise the Maharaja to take.

A. A. G.

H.E.

R. V. Dhamnaskar
Dewan Saheb
Baroda

Re Gov^t answer to protest against the Circular about visits to Europe.

To the Naib Dewan, on the Infant Marriage Bill

Rao Bahadur
V. Y. Bhandarkar
Naib Dewan
Baroda

Gulmarg
July 8. 1903

My dear Sir,

Many articles have been published in the papers regarding the proposed Infant Marriage Bill and one or two private representations have reached the Maharaja Saheb and others will, doubtless, have reached yourself. I have already written to you asking you to take steps to observe and carefully weigh all public

criticisms that may seem to deserve consideration. His Highness directs me to write again repeating that he wishes you to go thoroughly into all private representations and the arguments urged on either side in the public prints and draw up a *very* full and exhaustive memo balancing the pros and cons under each head of reasoning. His Highness does not wish to hurry you unduly, but he would like you at the same time to submit the memo without any unnecessary delay.

Yours sincerely
Aravind A Ghose
Secretary.

A Letter of Condolence

Gulmarg
July 10 1903

My dear D^e Sumant,

I am desired by His Highness to write to you expressing his sorrow at the death of your father and his sympathy with you in your great and sudden loss. This sympathy cannot come to very much, but His Highness hopes you will accept it as a tribute and expression of the regard he entertained for your father. Even when D^e Batukram was in the State service, before he entered on personal duties, he came much into contact with His Highness, and afterwards when he was in personal service, His Highness had special occasion to become acquainted with his character and personality. In that character there were some fine qualities which His Highness can never afford to forget. One of these was the sincere and steadfast interest he took in the welfare of His Highness and the State; he was a friend with whom His Highness could always converse and interchange views freely, a thing which is very rare amongst our countrymen and particularly in these days when the personality of the Raja is being detached from the administration and the interests of the servants being secured by rules and regulations. As to his professional abilities His Highness has not the requisite knowledge which

would entitle him to say anything, but as a personal physician His Highness had great confidence in him; he was, he thinks, prudent, sympathetic and strong, able to withstand influences, which are not uncommon in a palace and surroundings, such as obtain in a Native State. His Highness feels that it would be long before his place can be filled, if indeed it can ever be filled at all.

His Highness would like to do something which would show in a slight degree his appreciation of the good qualities and services of D^e Batukram and since your father has left two young sons and a little daughter, His Highness intends to give a scholarship of Rs 25/ to each for ten years while they are being educated, by which time, he hopes, they will be able to look after their own interests. If at the expiry of this period a farther continuation of the scholarship is necessary, His Highness will take into consideration a request to that effect.

I am forwarding this letter through the Minister who will give effect to its contents unless you wish anything different.

Yours sincerely
Aravind A. Ghose.
Secretary

To R. C. Dutt

Baroda
July 30. 1904.

My dear M^e Dutt,

I received your two letters this morning and they have been read by His Highness. There is no necessity to apply to the Government of India previous to engaging your services, now that you have retired. With an English Civilian it would have been different, but that would have been on the general rule against engaging Europeans or Americans without the previous sanction of the Govt.

The position is that of Councillor with Rs 3000 British as pay; Baroda currency is not at present in use, as we have given up the right to mint for a season.

His Highness sympathises with you entirely about your health and will give you every facility possible in that respect. The only difficulty that could arise, would be in case of some considerable emergency or some very serious question cropping up which would necessitate your presence. But as you will very easily understand, such contingencies occur rarely enough in a state like Baroda and are not really anticipated. The details need not be discussed just now, as they will be satisfactorily arranged by personal conversation when you come.

His Highness would like you to join as soon as possible and if you can do so within the month, he will be glad, but he does not wish to put you to inconvenience. If therefore you require a full month for your preparations, you will of course take it. Please let me know, as soon as you find it possible and convenient, when you propose to join so as to give me a little notice beforehand.

Yours sincerely
Aravind. A. Ghose

To the Principal, Baroda College

L. V. Palace.
18-9-04.

My dear M^r Clarke,

Under His Highness' directions I have written to the Chief Engineer not to build the rooms for the students' quarters as yet. His Highness wants to make some important alterations in the plans.

His Highness would like you, in consultation with M^r Krumbiegel if necessary, to draw up a plan showing the relative positions in which all the buildings it may be necessary to erect in future, will stand, Students' Quarters, Professors' houses etc. This will make it convenient for future building so that buildings may be put up at any time when necessary or desired without difficulty or inconvenience.

Though we may not build Professors' houses just now, yet

sooner or later His Highness would like to build some at least; so will you please take the Professors into consultation, and after fixing on all the requirements and conveniences necessary, make out a model plan which should be accompanied with elevations, estimates and a computation of the rent which may be charged, all complete, so that whenever it is thought desirable to build, orders can at once be given without going each time into details and estimates.

Yours sincerely
Aravind. A. Ghose.

A. B. Clarke Esq.
Principal
Baroda College.

To the Dewan, on Rejoining the College

Huzur Kamdar's Office
28th September 1904.

My dear Dewan Saheb,

I have been directed by H.H. the Maharaja Saheb to join the College immediately if that were possible so that there might be no delay in my beginning to draw the increment in my salary. In accordance with these instructions I have reported myself to M^r Clarke today, having forwarded the original order of my appointment in due course. I am also instructed, as there will be vacation for three months, to continue to help M^r Karandikar in the work of Huzur Kamdar as before.

These directions will, I presume, emend the last paragraph of the Huzur Order of the 26th September 1904 on the tippan for M^r Clarke's confirmation as Principal, since in the original order it is directed that the increment shall begin from the day I join the College.

Yours sincerely
Aravind. A. Ghose.
Huzur Kamdar

To the Maharaja

29 March 1905

May it please Your Highness,

Last December Your Highness was graciously pleased to grant my request that my brother might be entertained in Your Highness' service and directed me to remind Your Highness of the matter subsequently.

Owing to my brother's ill-health during the last two months, I have not thought it right to do so as yet, but now that Your Highness is leaving for Europe, I am obliged to take advantage of Your Highness' kind permission, hoping that Your Highness will consent to his joining whatever work may be assigned to him in June after he has recovered his health by a change.

My brother has read up to the F. A. of the Calcutta University. He had to give up the University course for certain family reasons, but since then he has studied privately with my elder brother and myself and can both speak and write English well and fluently; he has indeed some little literary ability in this direction. He can speak Hindustani fluently and has learned by this time to read and understand Marathi to some extent.

Your Highness asked me in December in what Department I should like him to be put. A work [?in which]² his knowledge of English would be immediately useful would perhaps be most suitable to him at the beginning. But this is a matter which I would prefer to leave entirely in Your Highness' hands. Your Highness is aware of the circumstances which oblige me to request this kindness at Your Highness' hands and it will be a great obligation to me if Your Highness will graciously keep them in mind when deciding this point.

Your Highness was once gracious enough to offer under similar circumstances to make an appointment of Rs 60. A start of the same kind [of] Rs 50 or 60 would be enough to induce my brother to settle here in preference to Bengal. If Your Highness will give him this start, it will be only adding one more act

² MS damaged; conjectural reconstruction. — Ed.

of grace to the uniform kindness and indulgence which Your Highness has shown to me ever since I came to Baroda.

I remain
Your Highness' loyal servant
Aravind. A. Ghose

A Letter of Recommendation

I have visited the Vividha Kala Mandir and seen specimens of the work as well as some groups taken for College classes. The work is admirably conceived and executed; the grouping etc is done with great taste and a keen eye for effect, and the details of the work brought out with both firmness and delicacy, being especially noticeable indeed for what should be always present in Indian work, but is too often deficient nowadays, minute care and finish. It is gratifying to note that the photographers are former students of the Baroda Kalabhavan and that this institution is producing silently and unobtrusively this among other admirable results.

Aravind. A. Ghose
Vice Principal, Baroda College

28 Feb. 1906

Letters and Telegrams to Political and Professional Associates 1906–1926

To Bipin Chandra Pal

Wednesday.

Dear Bepin Babu,

Please let us know by bearer when and where we can meet yourself, Rajat and Kumar Babu today.

Subodh Babu is going away today, and there are certain conditions attached by Dickinson to the arrangement about the type which it may be difficult to get him to agree to. Yet it must be done today if it is to be done at all. Can you not come by 3 o'clock and help us to persuade Subodh Babu to give signature before he goes.

Yours sincerely,
Aurobindo Ghose

A Letter of Acknowledgement

Deoghur,
9th March 1907.

Madam,

I beg to acknowledge, with many thanks, the receipt of Rs.10 forwarded to me by Mr. H. C. Das on your behalf towards the National University Fund.

Yours faithfully,
Aurobindo Ghose, Principal
Bengal National College.

To Hemendra Prasad Ghose

[19 April 1907]

Dear Hemendra Babu,

Will you kindly meet me and let us talk over the matter a little? It is a great pity that the work should be spoiled by friction and misunderstanding, and I think if we can talk things over, it ought not to be impossible to have an understanding by which they can be avoided.

Yours sincerely
Aurobindo Ghose

To Aswinicoomar Banerji

[1]

12 Wellington Square
June 26.1907.

Dear Aswini Babu,

I quite forgot about it. I am afraid I cannot just now think of any such book as you want. There is Marriot's *Makers of Italy* but that is not a biography nor anything like comprehensive. Bent's *Life of Garibaldi* is crammed full of facts and very tedious reading. I don't think there is any good life of Mazzini in English — only the translation of his autobiography. However, I will look up the subject and, if I find anything, will let you know.

Yours sincerely
Aurobindo Ghose.

[2]

[July – August 1907]

My dear Banerji,

Yes, I am still at large, though I hear warrants are out against myself, Subodh & three others. The contribution is not with us, it is in other hands at present, but I will get hold of it & return

it, if I am not previously arrested.

Yours sincerely
Aurobindo Ghose.

To Dr. S. K. Mullick

BENGAL NATIONAL COLLEGE AND SCHOOL
166, Bowbazar Street
Calcutta, the 8th Feb. [1908]¹

Dear Dr Mullick,

Your students have asked me to visit the National Medical College. They want to come for me here at 3.30. Will it inconvenience you if the thing is delayed for a while as I have very important work at the Bande Mataram Office from 3 pm? They might come for me there at 4.30 —

Yours sincerely
Aurobindo Ghose

[*Dr. Mullick's reply:*]

Let us split the difference with 4 pm
Excuse haste am lecturing
SKM

Telegrams about a Planned Political Reception

[1]

[*Telegrams from Aravinda Ghose and Chittaranjan Das, Harrison Road, Calcutta, to Kaminikumar Chanda, Silchar, and from Aravinda Ghose and Rabindranath Tagore, Harrison Road, Calcutta, to Muktear Library, Netrakara:*]

JOIN PALS RELEASE DEMONSTRATION NINTH HELP PURSE WIRE AMOUNT.

¹ MS 1907. See *Note on the Texts*, page 576. — Ed.

[2]

[Telegrams from Aurobindo, Harrison Road, Calcutta, to Satyendra Basu, Midnapur, and Jamini Sen, Chittagong:]

CELEBRATE PAL DEMONSTRATION NINTH. HELP PURSE. WIRE AMOUNT.

[3]

[Telegrams from Ghose, Harrison Road, Calcutta to Sitanath Adhikari, Pabna; Ananda Sen, Jalpaiguri; Jatin-dra Sen care Citizen, Allahabad; Lajpat Rai, Lahore; Bharati, 15 Broadway, Madras; Dr Moonje, Nagpur:]

CELEBRATE PAL DEMONSTRATION NINTH. HELP PURSE. WIRE AMOUNT.

[4]

[Telegrams from Ghose, Harrison Road, Calcutta, to Chidambaram Pillai, Tuticorin and Ramaswami Iyer, Tanjore:]

CELEBRATE DEMONSTRATION NINTH. HELP PURSE. WIRE AMOUNT.

[5]

[Telegram from Ghose, Harrison Road, Calcutta, to Monoranjan Guha, Giridih:]

CELEBRATE DEMONSTRATION NINTH. HELP PURSE PERSONALLY ALSO FRIENDS. WIRE AMOUNT.

[6]

[Telegram from Ghose, Harrison Road, Calcutta, to G. S. Khaparde, Amraoti:]

JOIN DEMONSTRATION NINTH THROUGHOUT BERAR. HELP PURSE. WIRE AMOUNT.

[7]

[*Telegram from Ghose, Calcutta, to Balgangadhar Tilak, Poona:*]

PLEASE JOIN DEMONSTRATION NINTH THROUGHOUT MAHARASHTRA. HELP PURSE. WIRE AMOUNT.

6 March 1908

Extract from a Letter to Parthasarathi Aiyangar

Be very careful to follow my instructions in avoiding the old kind of politics. Spirituality is India's only politics, the fulfilment of the Sanatan Dharma its only Swaraj. I have no doubt we shall have to go through our Parliamentary period in order to get rid of the notion of Western democracy by seeing in practice how helpless it is to make nations blessed. India is passing really through the first stages of a sort of national Yoga. It was mastered in the inception by the inrush of divine force which came in 1905 and aroused it from its state of complete tamasic ajnanam. But, as happens also with individuals, all that was evil, all the wrong sanskaras and wrong emotions and mental and moral habits rose with it and misused the divine force. Hence all that orgy of political oratory, democratic fervour, meetings, processions, passive resistance, all ending in bombs, revolvers and Coercion laws. It was a period of asuddha rajasic activity and had to be followed by the inevitable period of tamasic reaction from disappointed rajas. God has struck it all down, — Moderatism, the bastard child of English Liberalism; Nationalism, the mixed progeny of Europe and Asia; Terrorism, the abortive offspring of Bakunin and Mazzini. The latter still lives, but it is being slowly ground to pieces. At present, it is our only enemy, for I do not regard the British coercion as an enemy, but as a helper. If it can only rid us of this wild pamphleteering, these theatrical assassinations, these frenzied appeals to national hatred with their watchword of Feringhi-ko-marō, these childish conspiracies, these idiotic schemes for facing a modern army with half a dozen guns and some hundred lathis, — the opium

visions of rajogun run mad, then I say, "More power to its elbow." For it is only when this foolishness is done with that truth will have a chance, the sattwic mind in India emerge and a really strong spiritual movement begin as a prelude to India's regeneration. No doubt, there will be plenty of trouble and error still to face, but we shall have a chance of putting our feet on the right path. In all I believe God to be guiding us, giving the necessary experiences, preparing the necessary conditions.

13 July 1911

Note on a Forged Document

1 The card purports to issue from the Mymensingh Sadhana Samaj. The word is spelt Mâymentsingh with a long a. Every Bengali in Bengal knows that it is Moymentsingh with a short a and would at once be able to point out the mistake.

2. The word Swaraj wellknown to everyone in Bengal, is spelt Saraj and that this is no casual slip of the pen is shown by its faithful repetition, the only other time that "Saraj" appears in the card (on the flag to the left).

3. "Bande Mataram" is twice spelt Bade Mataram. This is interesting because it shows that the card was written by a man unaccustomed to the Bengali character and more habituated to the Devanagari (Sanskrit) alphabet. In the Devanagari the *n* is usually represented by a nasalising dot over the previous letter which might easily be dropped by an unpractised writer. In Bengali the *nd* is a conjunct letter and even the most ignorant Bengali writer would be incapable of dropping the *n*. If by an inconceivable blunder he dropped [it], the most casual look at the word would show him what was wrong; but here the mistake is twice consistently repeated and not corrected even in a card the details of which have been so carefully and boldly executed.

4. The writer drops the characteristic dots which differentiate *b* from *r* (ব, র) and *y* from impure *j* in Bengali. Thus he writes Pujar as Pujab and Viceroy as Viceroj. Only a foreigner writing the Bengali character, would commit an error of this kind so easily and repeatedly or would fail to correct it at the first glance.

5. The peculiar form of the l in Balidan shows again a man accustomed to write the Devanagari and not accustomed to write the Bengali l.

6. The formation of g in Durga Puja is a sheer impossibility to a Bengali eye or a Bengali hand. Other letters, m, p, etc give minor evidence in the same direction.

7. The mistakes are of such a nature that they could readily be made by a man copying his Bengali letters from the book forms and not accustomed to the written character. The convincing proof is the j in Samaj and Puja which is drawn rather than written by some foreigner acquainted with the printed j, but not acquainted with the very different form given to j in handwriting (জ).

8. Note beside that these few Bengali words have been written with great labour; but while some of the letters are very finely formed, almost as if they had been drawn, others are very rudely done — a difference so great that we must suppose either two writers of each word or else a man copying unfamiliar forms sometimes carefully, sometimes with deficient care and skill.

No tribunal in Bengal, presided over by a Bengali judge, would admit for a moment this clumsy forgery.

April 1912

To Anandrao

[June 1912]

Dear Anandrao,

My Bengal correspondent writes to me that you have sent me the following message, “The Baroda friend has left service and therefore there is difficulty in finding money. He asks, now you have become a Sannyasin, on what ground he can collect money. Still, if you let him know clearly your future, the time it will take to effect your siddhi and the amount of money you need, he will try to collect from Rs 600 to 1000.”

I cannot understand why on earth people should make up their minds that I have become a Sannyasin! I have even

made it clear enough in the public Press that I have not taken Sannyasa but am practising Yoga as a householder, not even a Brahmacharin. The Yoga I am practising has not the ghost of a connection with Sannyasa. It is a Yoga meant for life & life only. Its object is perfection of the moral condition & mental & physical being along with the possession of certain powers — the truth of which I have been establishing by continuous practical experiment, — with the object of carrying out a certain mission in life which God has given me. Therefore there is or ought to be no difficulty on that score. If I were a Sannyasin, there would indeed be no money difficulty to solve.

The question about the siddhi is a little difficult to answer precisely. There are four parts of the siddhi, roughly, moral, mental, physical & *practical*. Starting from December 1908 the moral has taken me three years and a half and may now be considered complete. The mental has taken two years of regular sadhana and for the present purpose may be considered complete; the physical is backward and nearing completion only in the immunity from disease — which I am now attempting successfully to perfect & test by exposure to abnormal conditions. The physical also does not matter so much for practical purposes, as the moral, mental and a certain number of practical siddhis are sufficient. It is these practical siddhis that alone cause delay. I have had first to prove to myself their existence and utility, secondly to develop them in myself so as to be working forces, thirdly to make them actually effective for life & impart them to others. The development will, I think, be complete in another two months, but the application to life & the formation of my helpers will take some time — for the reason that I shall then have a greater force of opposition to surmount than in the purely educative exercises I have hitherto practised. The full application to life will, I think, take three years more, but it is only for a year of that time (if so long) that I expect to need outside assistance. I believe that I may have to stay in French India for another year. I presume that is what the question about my future means. But on this point also I cannot speak with certainty. If, however, it refers to my future work, that is a big question &

does not yet admit of a full answer. I may say briefly that I have been given a religious & philosophical mission, to re-explain the Veda & Vedanta (Upanishads) in the ancient sense which I have recovered by actual experience in Yoga and to popularise the new system of Yoga (new in arrangement & object) which has been revealed to me & which, as I progress, I am imparting to the young men staying with me & to others in Pondicherry; I have also to spread certain ideas about God & life by literary work, speech & practice, to try & bring about certain social changes &, finally, to do a certain work for my country, in particular, as soon as the means are put in my hands. All this to be done by God's help only & not to be begun till things & myself are ready.

The amount of money I shall need for the year in question, are Rs 300 to clear up the liabilities I have contracted during the last nine or ten months (in which I have had only fortuitous help) and some Rs 1200 (or 1400, reckoning up to August 1913) to maintain myself & those I am training. I had hoped to get the money from a certain gentleman who had promised me Rs 2000 a year for the purpose & given it for the first year from October 1910 to October 1911. But there are great difficulties in the way & I can no longer reckon surely on this support which would have made it unnecessary for me to tax my friends. Please ask my friend if, with this explanation, he can manage the money to the amount suggested. If I get other help from this side, I shall let him know so that the [?burden can]² be lightened.

At present I am at the height of my difficulties, in debt, with no money for the morrow, besieged in Pondicherry & all who could help are in temporary or permanent difficulties or else absent & beyond communication. I take it, from my past experiences as a sign that I am nearing the end of the period of trial. I would ask you if you can do no more, at least to send me some help to tide over the next month or two. After that period, for certain reasons, it will be easier to create means, if they are not created for me.

AG.

² MS damaged; conjectural reconstruction. — Ed.

To Motilal Roy

[1]

3 July 1912

Dear M.

Your money (by letter & wire) & clothes reached safely. The French Post Office here has got into the habit (not yet explained) of not delivering your letters till Friday; that was the reason why we wired to you thinking you had not sent the money that week. I do not know whether this means anything — formerly we used to get your letters on Tuesday, afterwards it came to Wednesday, then Thursday & finally Friday. It may be a natural evolution of French Republicanism. Or it may be something else. I see no signs of the seals having been tampered with, but that is not an absolutely sure indication of security. The postman may be paid by the police. Personally, however, I am inclined to believe in the Republican administration theory — the Republic always likes to have time on its hands. Still, if you like, you can send *important* communications to any other address here you may know of, for the present (of course, by French post & a Madrasi address). All others should come by the old address — you may be sure, I think, no letter will be actually intercepted, on this side. By the way, please let us know whether M^r Banomali Pal received a letter by Fr. post from Achari enclosing another to Partha Sarathi.

I have not written all this time because I was not allowed to put pen to paper for some time — that is all. I send enclosed a letter to our Marathi friend. If he can give you anything for me, please send it without the least delay. If not, I must ask you to procure for me by will power or any other power in heaven or on earth Rs 50 at least as a loan. If you cannot get it elsewhere, why not apply to Barid Babu? Also, if Nagen is in Calcutta, ask him whether the Noakhali gentleman can let me have anything. I was told he had Rs 300 put aside for me if I wanted it; but I did not wish to apply to him except in case of necessity. The situation just now is that we have Rs 1½ or so in hand. Srinivasa

is also without money. As to Bharati, living on nothing a month means an uncertain quantity, the only other man in P. whom I could at present ask for help absent *sine die* and my messenger to the South not returned. The last time he came he brought a promise of Rs 1000 in a month and some permanent provision afterwards, but the promise like certain predecessors has not yet been fulfilled & we sent him for cash. But though he should have been here three days ago, he has not returned, & even when he returns, I am not quite sure about the cash & still less sure about the sufficiency of the amount. No doubt, God will provide, but He has contracted a bad habit of waiting till the last moment. I only hope He does not wish us to learn how to live on a minus quantity, like Bharati.

Other difficulties are disappearing. The case brought against the Swadeshis (no one in this household was included in it although we had a very charmingly polite visit from the Parquet & Juge d'Instruction) has collapsed into the nether regions & the complainant & his son have fled from P. & become, like ourselves, "political refugees" in Cuddalore. I hear he has been sentenced by default to five years imprisonment on false accusation, but I don't know yet whether the report is true. The police were to have left at the end of [the month]³ but a young lunatic (one of Bharati's old disciples in patriotism & atheism) got involved in a sedition-search (for the Indian Sociologist of all rubbish in the world!) and came running here in the nick of time for the Police to claim another two months' holiday in Pondicherry. However, I think their fangs have been drawn. I may possibly send you the facts of the case for publication in the Nayak or any other paper, but I am not yet certain.

I shall write to you about sadhana etc. another time.

Kali

³ MS Pondicherry

[2]

[August 1912 or after]

Dear M

P.S. has sent to his brother an address for sending Yogini Chakras. He says it is approved by you. Now we want to know, not only whether they are religious people there — he says you have assured him of that — but whether there is any likelihood of [their]⁴ being taken by the P.O. authorities for anything else. There are religious people who are openly mixed up with politics. We do not think it wise to send our purely religious Tantric instruments to any such.⁵ Kindly answer by return post. If the answer is satisfactory & we get the money promised, we will send Chakras.

15th August is usually a turning point or a notable day for me personally either in sadhana or life — indirectly only for others. This time it has been very important for me. My subjective sadhana may be said to have received its final seal and something like its consummation by a prolonged realisation & dwelling in Parabrahman for many hours. Since then, egoism is dead for all in me except the Annamaya Atma, — the physical self which awaits one farther realisation before it is entirely liberated from occasional visitings or external touches of the old separated existence.

My future sadhan is for life, practical knowledge & shakti, — not the essential knowledge or shakti in itself which I have got already — but knowledge & shakti established in the same physical self & directed to my work in life. I am now getting a clearer idea of that work & I may as well impart something of that idea to you; since you look to me as the centre, you should know what is likely to radiate out of that centre.

1. To reexplain the Sanatana Dharma to the human intellect

⁴ MS there

⁵ *In these letters to Motilal, terms such as “tantric instruments” and “tantric kriyas” are code-words for revolutionary materials and activities. The “Yogini Chakras” mentioned above were, according to an associate of Motilal’s, revolvers that Motilal wanted Sri Aurobindo to send to Chandernagore via the French post. — Ed.*

in all its parts, from a new standpoint. This work is already beginning, & three parts of it are being clearly worked out. Sri Krishna has shown me the true meaning of the Vedas, not only so but he has shown me a new Science of Philology showing the process & origins of human speech so that a new Nirukta can be formed & the new interpretation of the Veda based upon it. He has also shown me the meaning of all in the Upanishads that is not understood either by Indians or Europeans. I have therefore to reexplain the whole Vedanta & Veda in such a way that it will be seen how all religion arises out of it & is one everywhere. In this way it will be proved that India is the centre of the religious life of the world & its destined saviour through the Sanatana Dharma.

2. On the basis of Vedic knowledge to establish a Yogic sadhana which will not only liberate the soul, but prepare a perfect humanity & help in the restoration of the Satyayuga. That work has to begin now but will not be complete till the end of the Kali.

3. India being the centre, to work for her restoration to her proper place in the world; but this restoration must be effected as a part of the above work and by means of Yoga applied to human means & instruments, not otherwise.

4. A perfect humanity being intended society will have to be remodelled so as to be fit to contain that perfection.

You must remember that I have not given you the whole Yogic sadhana. What I have given you is only the beginning. You have to get rid of ahankara & desire & surrender yourself to God, in order that the rest may come. You speak of printing Yoga & its Objects. But remember that what I have sent you is only the first part which gives the path, not the objects or the circumstances. If you print it, print it as the first of a series, with the subtitle, the Path. I am now busy with an explanation of the Isha Upanishad in twelve chapters; I am at the eleventh now and will finish in a few days. Afterwards I shall begin the second part of the series & send it to you when finished.

I have also begun, but on a very small scale the second part of my work which will consist in making men for the new age by

imparting whatever siddhi I get to those who are chosen. From this point of view our little colony here is a sort of seed plot & a laboratory. The things I work out in it, are then extended outside. Here the work is progressing at last on definite lines and with a certain steadiness, not very rapid; but still definite results are forming. I should be glad to have from you clearer knowledge of the results you speak of over there; for my drishti is not yet sufficiently free from obstruction for me to know all that I need to know at this stage.

What you say about the Ramakrishna Mission is, I dare say, true to a certain extent. Do not oppose that movement or enter into any conflict with it; whatever has to be done, I shall do spiritually, for God in these matters especially uses the spiritual means & the material are only very subordinate. Of course, you can get into that stream, as you suggest, and deflect as much as you can into a more powerful channel, but not so as to seem to be conflicting with it. Use spiritual means chiefly, will & vyapti. They are more powerful than speech & discussion. Remember also that we derive from Ramakrishna. For myself it was Ramakrishna who personally came & first turned me to this Yoga. Vivekananda in the Alipore jail gave me the foundations of that knowledge which is the basis of our sadhana. The error of the Mission is to keep too much to the forms of Ramakrishna & Vivekananda & not keep themselves open for new outpourings of their spirit, — the error of all “Churches” and organised religious bodies. I do not think they will escape from it, so long as their “Holy Mother” is with them. She represents now the Shakti of Ramakrishna so far as it was manifested in his life. When I say do not enter into conflict with them, I really mean “do not enter conflict with her.” Let her fulfil her mission, keeping always ours intact and ever-increasing.

As to other work (Tantric), I am not yet in possession of knowledge. The Shakti is only preparing to pour herself out there, but I don't know what course she will take. You must remember I never plan or fix anything for myself. She must choose her own paddhati or rather follow the line Krishna fixes for her.

I am glad you have arranged something about money. It is indifferent to me whether you get it from others or provide it yourselves, so long as my energies which are badly needed for sadhan & for the heavy work laid on me, are not diverted at present into this lower effort in which they would be sorely wasted. You will be relieved of the burden as soon as this physical resistance is overcome, but I do not know yet how soon or late that will be. Reward, of course, those who give to God, shall have; but what reward He will determine. Remember the importance of keeping up this centre, for all my future work depends on what I work out here.

I shall write about the Sikh pamphlet, which is an excellent thing with one or two blemishes; but I could not understand who wrote the accompanying letter or what gentleman he refers to.

The letter you sent me last time from our man in Chandanagar is practically answered here. Biren may have made some mistake about my "shoes". It was intended that they should be got from Amiyas. The glass case theory is all right, — only the exhibits have got to be maintained.

Kali

[3]

[c. January 1913]

Dear M.

We have received from you in December Rs 60, & Rs 20, and in this month Rs 10. According to N's account, Rs 10 belongs to November account, Rs 50 to December; Rs 20 we suppose to have been sent in advance on the January account. If so, we still expect from you Rs 20, this month. I should be glad to know if there is any prospect of your being able to increase the amount now or shortly. Up till now we have somehow or other managed to fill in the deficit of Rs 35 monthly; but, now that all our regular sources here are stopped, we have to look to mere luck for going on. Of course if we were bhaktas of the old type this would be the regular course, but as our sadhan stands upon

karmayoga with jnana & bhakti, this inactive nirbhara can only continue so long as it is enjoined on us as a temporary movement of the sadhana. It cannot be permanent. I think there will have to be a change before long, but I cannot see clearly whether the regular & sufficient arrangement which must be instituted some time, is to come from you or from an unexpected quarter or whether I have myself to move in the matter. It is a question of providing some Rs 450 a year in addition to what you send, — unless, of course, God provides us with some new source for the *sharīrayātrā* as He did two years ago.

All these matters, as well as the pursuance of my work to which you allude in your last (commercial) letter, [depend]⁶ on the success of the struggle which is the crowning movement of my sadhana — viz the attempt to apply knowledge & power to the events and happenings of the world without the necessary instrumentality of physical action. What I am attempting is to establish the normal working of the siddhis in life ie the perception of thoughts, feelings & happenings of other beings & in other places throughout the world without any use of information by speech or any other data. 2^d, the communication of the ideas & feelings I select to others (individuals, groups, nations,) by mere transmission of will-power; 3^d, the silent compulsion on them to act according to these communicated ideas & feelings; 4th, the determining of events, actions & results of action throughout the world by pure silent will power. When I wrote to you last, I had begun the general application of these powers which God has been developing in me for the last two or three years, but, as I told you, I was getting badly beaten. This is no longer the case, for in the 1st, 2^d & even in 3rd I am now largely successful, although the action of these powers is not yet perfectly organized. It is only in the 4th that I feel a serious resistance. I can produce single results with perfect accuracy, I can produce general results with difficulty & after a more or less prolonged struggle, but I can neither be sure of producing the final decisive result I am aiming at nor of securing that orderly arrangement of events which

⁶ MS depends

prevents the results from being isolated & only partially effective. In some directions I seem to succeed, in others partly to fail & partly to succeed, while in some fields, eg, this matter of financial equipment both for my personal life & for my work I have hitherto entirely failed. When I shall succeed even partially in that, then I shall know that my hour of success is at hand & that I have got rid of the past karma in myself & others, which stands in our way & helps the forces of Kaliyuga to baffle our efforts.

About Tantric yoga; your experiment in the smashâna was a daring one, — but it seems to have been efficiently & skilfully carried out, & the success is highly gratifying.⁷ In these kriyas there are three considerations to be held in view, 1st, the object of the kriya. Of course there is the general object of mukti-bhukti which Tantriks in all ages have pursued, but to bring it about certain subjective results & conditions are necessary in ourselves & our surroundings & each separate kriya should be so managed as to bring about an important result of the kind. Big kriyas or numerous kriyas are not always necessary; the main thing is that they should be faultlessly effective like your last kriya or the small one with which you opened your practices. That is the second consideration viz the success of the kriya itself & that depends on the selection & proper use of the right mantra & tantra, — mantra, the mental part, & tantra, the practical part. These must be arranged with the greatest scrupulousness. All rashness, pride, ostentation etc, the rajasic defects, — also, all negligence, omission, slipshod ritual, — the tamasic defects, must be avoided. Success must not elate your minds, nor failure discourage. 3^{dly}, angarakshana is as important as siddhi. There are many Tantriks in this Kaliyuga who are eager about siddhi, careless in angarakshana. They get some siddhi, but become the prey of the devils & bhutas they raise. Now what is the use of a particular siddhi, if the sadhakas are destroyed? The general & real object, — mukti & bhukti, — remains unfulfilled. Angarakshana is managed, first, by the

⁷ This is apparently a reference to the attempt to assassinate the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, in Delhi on 23 December 1912. — Ed.

selection & arrangement of the right siddhi-mantra & kriya, secondly, by the presence behind the sadhaka of one who repeats what is called an anarakshaka mantra destructive of the pretas & Rakshasas or prohibitive of their attacks. The last function I have taken on myself; it is your business so to arrange the kriya that the bhutas get no chance for প্রবেশ or for the seizure & destruction of the sadhaka. I have found that my mantra has been more & more successful in protection, but it is not yet strong enough to prevent all উপদ্রব of a dangerous character. It will take some more আবৃত্তি to increase its power. It is for this reason that I do not yet tell you to go on swiftly in your course of practices. Still there is no harm in quickening the pace in comparison with the past. Remember always the supreme necessity of mauna in Tantric practices. In Vedantic & Puranic exercises expansion is not dangerous, but the goddess of the Tantra does not look with a favourable eye on those who from pride, ostentation or looseness blab about the mantra or the kriya. In Tantric sadhana secrecy is necessary for its own sake. Those who reveal mantra or kriya to the unfit, suffer almost inevitably; even those who reveal them unnecessarily to the fit, impair somewhat the force of their Tantric action.

Kali

P.S. Please send the rest of this month's money at once if you have not already sent it, & next month's as early as you can.

[4]

[February 1913]

Dear M

I have received Rs 60 by wire & Rs 20 by letter. It was a great relief to us that you were able to send Rs 80 this time & Rs 85 for March; owing to the cutting off of all other means of supply, we were getting into a very difficult position. I welcome it as a sign of some preliminary effectiveness, through you, in this direction, in which, hitherto, everything has gone against us; also, as one proof of several, that the quality of your power

& your work is greatly improving in effectiveness & sureness. I need not refer to the other proofs; you will know what I mean. But just now, I find every forward step to be made is violently combated & obstinately obstructed. Our progress is like the advance of a modern regiment under fire in which we have to steal a few yards at a run & then lie down under covert & let the storm of bullets sweep by. I neither hope for nor see yet any prospect of a more successful rapidity.

I have been lying down under covert ever since the middle of February, after a very brilliant advance in January & the early part of February. I keep the positions gained, but can make as yet no sure progress farther. There is only a slow preparation for farther progress. The real difficulty is to bring force, sureness & rapidity into the application of power & knowledge to life, — especially sureness, — for it is possible to bring force & rapidity, but if not attended by unfailing sureness of working, they may lead to great errors in knowledge & great stumbles & disasters in action which counteract the successes. On the other hand, if sureness has to be gained only by not stepping except where everything is sure (which is the first stage of action & knowledge necessary to get rid of rajasic rashness) progress is likely to be slow. I am trying to solve the dilemma.

I have not kept your last letter & I only remember that you asked me to write something about your sadhan. I cannot just now, but I shall try to do it in my next, as I expect by then to be clear of some of my present difficulties.

There is the pressing cry for clothes in this quarter, as these articles seem to be with us to remind us now constantly of the paucity of matter. I have received Bepin Pal's *Soul of India*. Can you add to it by getting from Hiranyagarbha Sister Nivedita's *My Master* as I saw him. I am also in need, as I wrote to you once before, of R. C. Dutt's Bengali translation of the Vedas. Neither of these books is urgently wanted but please []⁸ keep them in mind & send them when you can.

Kali

⁸ MS them

[5]

[June–July 1913]

Dear M.

I subjoin certain explanations about the matter of the Tantric books.⁹ I put them in cipher because there are certain things, as you can understand, not *comme il faut* according to the ideas of modern social decorum which ought not to fall under unfit eyes. It appears that you did not understand my last letter. However, from henceforth please leave this matter entirely in my hands. You will see from the explanations given how highly undesirable is the kind of correspondence you have been carrying on hitherto in another quarter. I have taken Rs 50 from S, but this sum or part of it (at least Rs 30) ought to be replaced for expenses attached to that particular transaction. Meanwhile I await Rs 35 for June & all the July money. I delay other matters in consideration of the urgency of the accompanying note.

Kali

PS. I received information of your Tantric kriyas. It is clear that you are far from perfect yet. All the more reason why you should not be in a hurry to progress physically. Get rid of the remnants of sattwic ahankara and rajoguna, for that which we are within, our karmas & kriyas will be without. Kali demands a pure adhara for her works, & if you try to hurry her by rajasic impatience, you will delay the success instead of hastening it. I will write to you fully about it later.

[6]

[June–July 1913]

Dear M.

Your letter, money etc have reached me without delay or mishap. Please make it a rule, in future, not to be anxious or troubled when you get no answer; when I do not reply, it is

⁹ These "explanations", written on a separate sheet of paper, have not survived. — Ed.

not because I have not received your letters, but because silence was necessary, for my siddhi, for yours or for the work that has to be done. At such times, keep calm, repel any suggestions of perplexity or anxiety and do not allow any disturbing mental waves to interfere between. A still heart, a clear mind and untroubled nerves are the very first necessity for the perfection of our Yoga.

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. I am drawing now towards the close of my internal Yogic tapasya and the time is not very distant when I shall have to use its results for the work God has sent me to do in the world. For that work I shall need large sums of money. So long as I was only perfecting myself and sending out Shakti to others, all I needed was enough for the maintenance of myself & those who are with me. This charge I gave to you and the charge is not withdrawn; but, as you know, it covers only the bare physical necessities of our life in Pondicherry. More than that, you are not likely to be able to afford; and certainly you could not provide me with the sums I shall need even in the earlier part of my work. To limit myself to the Rs 85 a month you can send me, would be to deny myself the material means for doing what I have to do and to accept stagnation and quiescence. It is true I am not beginning that work immediately, but, before it begins, I have to bend circumstances to my will in this very particular so that the obstacle of paucity of means which has been my chief stumbling block for the beginning may be got rid of once for all. My will has to become effective on this point above all & the impediments both subjective and objective to its mastery have to be eliminated. Therefore I have sent out the general *vyapti* I spoke of. Biren's action was one of the first responses, but, as it was [an] impure response, it has created more *golmal* than effect. As to confining the appeal for pecuniary assistance to those who are entirely of one way of thinking with ourselves, it

was a good rule for you to observe; but it cannot bind me when I begin my larger movement. From whatever quarter money or help comes to me, it comes from God.

With regard to the Tantric books, the Psalmist was here, & wrote to you and went away, expecting to return in a fortnight; but several fortnights have passed without his return. He has written to us to say he has received money from you and we have written to him to come here. He is expected daily, but he does not arrive. He will, no doubt, be a good karmavira in time; but at present he is too rajasic, with intervals of tamas, has too much faith in European religions & the arms of the flesh & too little faith in Yoga & the arms of the spirit. He went northward on his own initiative; I could have told him his efforts there would be fruitless, but it is always well for a man to get experience for himself, when he will not take the benefit of superior experience. Your scheme about the books is impracticable under present conditions of which you are ignorant. When he comes, we will consult together & see if any blameless way can be found. But there is a time for all things & the time for free publication of Tantric works has not arrived. Still, your particular order may be met. Your letter to him, if addressed to Pd, did not reach us; whether he got it in Madras or not, I do not know.

Your working, remember, is not yet definitive working; it is still in the nature of experiment, with some minor results. When your sadhan of our tantric kriya has become more perfect and the necessary spiritual force can be sent from here, — then, real Tantra can begin. Meanwhile, don't be over-eager; let nothing disconcert, discourage or perplex you. Eagerness, anxiety & discouragement are all different faces of one defect. I shall write to you on all matters connected with the Tantra after the Psalmist arrives. Also about the Vedanta. If he does not come soon, I shall write all the same.

Bejoy was to have seen Ramchandra in Calcutta & given you news of us, on his way to Khulna, but from your not sending the June money & from Sudhir's letter, it seems the interview did not take place or else no report was given to you. Please send

the money. I am going on somehow, but the money I am doing with, will have to be replaced.

Kali

P.S. The Psalmist has written, announcing his immediate arrival here, but he has so often disappointed us that I send off this letter, without farther waiting. If he comes, I shall write to you as soon as anything is settled.

[7]

[August 1913]

Dear M.

I enclose a letter to C. R. Das. Please let me know as soon as possible whether he has received the MSS. Also let me have the address of your West Indian friend in that connection which you omitted to give in your last letter, — of course in the usual formula. Please explain how you expect him to befriend you if there is any difficulty in the final stage of the publication. I am too exhausted to write anything at length this time — we shall see afterwards when I have recovered my physical equilibrium. I expect Rs 40 for July & the money for August (current) which will complete our regular account for the present if C. R. Das sends in the rest of his money as proposed. By the way, his agents Grindlay & Co send me Rs 300 with a note saying that I shall get Rs 1000 for the translations. Is the Rs 300 part of the Rs 1000 or separate. I ask this for information only, because you wrote that he intended to give me one year's expenses & Rs 300 extra. I need some extra money badly now for materials for the work I have now seriously entered on in connection with the Veda and the Sanscrit language. In that same connection will you please make a serious effort this time to get hold of Dutt's Bengali translation of the Rigveda & send it to me — or any translation for that matter which gives the European version.

Kali

[8]

[c. 1913]

Dear M.

I send the proofs. Your Rs 50 for Narayan etc.'s travelling expenses reached duly and were by him duly spent. He has promised to repay the sum, but I don't know when he will be able to do so. He will see you, he told me, when he first goes to Calcutta from his place; as his mother was ill, he would not stop to see you on the way. But perhaps other reasons prevented him just then, for I believe he did stop a day or two in Calcutta.

Biren is all right, I believe; he said nothing to anybody about that matter. There were some legitimate doubts in some quarters owing to his unsteady nature & other defects of character. I thought it right to give them as much value for practical purposes as was reasonable; therefore I wrote to you.

I do not write to you this time about the despatch of the books, because that is a long matter & would delay the proofs which have already been too long delayed. But I shall write a separate letter on that subject. I have also to write about your Tantric Yoga, but I think I shall await what else you have to tell me on that subject before doing so.

Kali

P.S. Don't delay long in sending the money.

[9]

[1913]

Dear M.

I write only about 3 points today.

1. Your R. S. Sharma I hold to be a police spy. I have refused to see him because originally when he tried to force his way into my house & win my confidence by his extravagances I received a warning against him from within which has always been repeated. This was confirmed afterwards by two facts, first, that the Madras Police betrayed a very benevolent interest in the

success of his mission, secondly, that he came to Pondicherry afterwards as subeditor of a new Pondicherry paper, the Independent, subsequently defunct and replaced by another the Argus, belonging to the same proprietor who has been openly acting in concert with the British Police against us in Pondicherry. In this paper he wrote a very sneering & depreciatory paragraph about me, (not by name, but by allusion,) in which he vented his spite at his failure. Failing even so to get any footing here, for the Swadeshis were warned against him, he returned to Madras. He seems now to have tried his hand with you at Calcutta & succeeded, probably, beyond his expectations! I wonder when you people will stop trusting the first stranger with a glib tongue who professes Nationalist fervour & devotion. Whether you accept my estimate of him or not, you may be sure that his bhakti for me is humbug — as shown by the above newspaper incident — & you must accept at least the facts I have given you and draw any conclusions that common sense may suggest to you.

2. Do not print Yoga & its Objects unless & until I give you positive directions. It cannot be printed in its present form, & I may decide to complete the work before it is printed. In any case parts of it would have to be omitted or modified.

3. Next, money matters. I could not understand your arithmetic about the Rs 40 and how we should gain by not getting it. The only reason why we wrote constantly for it, was that it was necessary to us in our present financial position, in which we have to provide anxiously for every need and the failure of any expected sum reduces us to difficulties. I had reckoned on the remainder of Madgaokar's money to pay the sum still due for the rent of our last house. Fortunately, the litigation connected with the house has kept the matter hanging; but it may be demanded from us one day & we shall have to pay at once, or face the prospect of being dragged into court & losing our prestige here entirely. In future, let me ask you, never to undertake any payment to us which you are not sure of being able to fulfil, because of the great disorder in our arrangements which results.

Our position here now is at its worst; since all efforts to get some help from here have been temporarily fruitless & we have to depend on your Rs 50 which is insufficient. We have to pay Rs 15 for rent, other expenses come to not less, & the remaining Rs 20 cannot suffice for the food expenses of five people. Even any delay in your money arriving makes our Manager “see darkness”. That is why we had to telegraph. We did not know then that your last remittance of Rs 20 had arrived; & our available money was exhausted. Our correspondence agent has turned merchant & walked off to Madras indefinitely; in his absence we had great difficulty in getting hold of your letter & indeed it is only today that it reached our hands. Narayan will give you a new address to which please address all letters in future.

There is no “reason” for my not writing to you. I never nowadays act on reasons, but only as an automaton in the hands of Another; sometimes He lets me know the reasons of my action, sometimes He does not, but I have to act — or refrain from action — all the same, according as He wills.

I shall write nothing about sadhan etc. until I am out of my present struggle to make the Spirit prevail over matter & circumstances, in which for the present I have been getting badly the worst of it. Till then you must expect nothing but mere business letters, — if any.

Kali

[10]

[March 1914]

Dear M.

Recently in the papers there has appeared a case of one Rashbehary Bose against whom a warrant of extradition has been granted by the Chandannagar Administrator *in a political case*. Although ordinarily we do not concern ourselves with political matters, this concerns me & my friends because it is an attack on the security of our position. If this kind of thing is allowed to go unchallenged, then any of us may at any moment

be extradited on a trumped up charge by the British police. I must therefore ask you to interest yourself in the matter, even though it interferes with your Yoga. The case is clearly a political one; for the main charges in the Delhi case seem to be (1) a charge of conspiracy on a clause relating to State (ie political) offences; (2) a charge of murder under Sc.-302 (?) read in connection with this State offence section, therefore an assassination with a political intention; (3) a charge under the Explosive Act, which is an extraordinary measure passed in view of certain political conditions. Moreover all these cases are tried together & form part of the same transaction, ie a political conspiracy directed against the existing form of Gov^t & having for its object the change or overthrow of that Gov^t. Under the Extradition Treaty between France & England, — unless that has been altered by the latest Treaty to which I have not had access, there can be no extradition for (1) a political offence, (2) an offence of a political character or tendency, (3) on a charge which, though preferred as for an ordinary offence, is really an excuse or device for laying hands on a political offender. Rashbehary Bose is reported to be in hiding either in Chandannagar or the Panjab. If anybody moves therefore it can only be a relative or friend on his behalf, — a relative would be much better. What you have to do is to get hold of someone entitled to act for him, consult the text of the latest Extradition Treaty between France & England and, if it is as I have stated, then let it be put in the hands of a lawyer of the French Courts who must move in the matter according to the French procedure about which I know nothing. I presume he would have to move the Gov^t in France or, failing there, the Court of Cassation in Paris, but the latter would be an expensive affair. So long as Bose is not handed over to the British (if he is in Chandannagar), the Court of Cassation has, I should suppose the power of cancelling the warrant. I do not know whether it is necessary first to appeal to the Procureur Général in Pondicherry before going to the Higher Court. On these points of procedure Bose's representative will have to consult a French lawyer. In case he is handed over, the Hague decision with regard to Savarkar will come in the way

& make the thing almost hopeless. The French Gov^t might still move on the ground that Bose is a French subject, but it could only succeed by strong diplomatic pressure which the present Fr. Gov^t might be unwilling to employ. In any case it might be worthwhile to get a decree of the Court of Cassation so as to establish the principle. There is always, however, the danger in these political cases, where justice & law are so seldom observed, of an opposite decision making the position worse than before. It would be worthwhile finding out what exactly was done & on what grounds in Charu Chander Ray's case & seeing whether these grounds can be made to apply. If you will give me the exact facts of the warrant, the charges etc, I may be able to get a letter written to France so that Jaurès or others may move in the matter.

As to your Tantric Yoga, the reasons of your failures are so obvious that I am surprised you should attribute it all to the Goddess and not to the unpardonable blunders we have all been making in our Yogic Kriya. Kali of the Tantra is not a goddess who is satisfied with mere tamasic faith & adoration. Perfection in Kriya is indispensable or at least a conscientious and diligent attempt at perfection. This has not been made; on the contrary all the defects that have made Tantra ineffective throughout the Kaliyuga abound in your *anusthana*. All this must be changed; the warning has been given & it will be wise to give heed to it. If not, — well, you know what the Gita says about those who from *ahankara* hear not.

The root of the whole evil is that we have been attempting an extension of Tantric Kriya without any sufficient Vedantic basis. You especially were going on the basis that if a man had faith, enthusiasm, intellectual & emotional sincerity & proffered self-surrender, all that was necessary was there & he could go on straight to difficult Tantric anusthana. This basis is condemned. A much stronger & greater foundation is necessary. It was the basis of the sattwic ahankara; which said to itself, "I am the chosen of Kali, I am her bhakta, I have every claim on her, I can afford to be negligent about other things, she is bound to help & guard me". It is this sattwic ahankara which I have long felt

to be the great obstacle in our Yoga; some have it in the sattwa-rajasic form, others in the sattwo-tamasic, but it is there in you all, blinding your vision, limiting your strength, frustrating your progress. And its worst quality is that it is unwilling to admit its own defects, or if it admits one, it takes refuge in another. Open your eyes to this enemy within you and expel it. Without that purification you can have no success. To “do rajasic kriya in a sattwic spirit” is merely to go on in the old way while pretending to oneself that there is a change. Going on in the old way is out of the question. That path can only lead to the pit. I speak strongly because I see clearly; if not yet with absolute vision yet without that misleading false light which marred all my seeing till now & allowed me to be swept in the flood of confused sattwo-rajasic impure Shakti which came with you from Bengal.

My first instruction to you therefore is to pause, stand on the defensive against your spiritual enemies & go on with your Vedantic Yoga. God is arranging things for me in my knowledge, but the process is not yet finished. I shall send you (it will take two or three letters) the lines on which I wish the Vedantic & Tantric lines to be altered & developed; afterwards we shall see when we have recovered from the stress that was upon us, how He intends to work them out in practice.

Please send me the Rs 50 with you, as I am again in the position of having to replace money diverted to current expenses & have very little [if]¹⁰ any living money left. Also try & get the rest of the money from Das. If not, you will have to find me an additional 20 for the last month & another 20 for next in addition to the monthly Rs 50 & deduct the sum of Rs 30 from Das’ payment when you do get it.

Kali

P.S. I have a sum of Rs 10 to pay monthly for a purpose unconnected with our own expenses & in addition certain additional expenses of my own which I cannot dispense with; for this reason Rs 50 is insufficient. I hope Das will be in a position to send the balance of the money this time.

¹⁰ MS of

[11]

[April 1914]

Dear M.

I send you today the electoral declaration of M. Paul Richard, one of the candidates at the approaching election for the French Chamber. This election is of some importance to us; for there are two of the candidates who represent our views to a great extent, Laporte & Richard. Richard is not only a personal friend of mine and a brother in the Yoga, but he wishes, like myself, & in his own way works for a general renovation of the world by which the present European civilisation shall be replaced by a spiritual civilisation. In that change the resurrection of the Asiatic races & especially of India is an essential point. He & Madame Richard are rare examples of European Yogins who have not been led away by Theosophical and other aberrations. I have been in material and spiritual correspondence with them for the last four years. Of course, they know nothing of Tantric Yoga. It is only in the Vedantic that we meet. If Richard were to become deputy for French India, that would practically mean the same thing as myself being deputy for French India. Laporte is a Swadeshi with personal ambitions; his success would not mean the same but at any rate it would mean a strong and, I believe, a faithful ally in power in this country and holding a voice in France.

Of course, there is no chance, humanly speaking, of their being elected this time. Laporte is not strong enough to change the situation singlehanded. Richard has come too late; otherwise so great is the disgust of the people with Bluysen & Lemaire, Gaebelé and Pierre that I think we could have managed an electoral revolution. Still, it is necessary, if it can at all be done, to stir things a little at the present moment and form a nucleus of tendency &, if possible, of active result which would be a foundation for the future & enable us at the next election to present one or other of these candidates with a fair chance of success.

I want to know whether it is possible, without your exposing yourself, to have the idea spread in Chandernagore, especially

among the younger men, of the desirability of these candidatures & the abandonment of the old parochial & rotten politics of French India, with its following of interested local Europeans & subservience to their petty ambitions in favour of a politics of principles which will support one of our own men or a European like Richard who is practically an Indian in beliefs, in personal culture, in sympathies & aspirations, one of the Nivedita type. If also a certain number of votes can be recorded for Richard in Chandernagore so much the better; for that will mean a practical beginning, a tendency from the sukshma world materialised initially in the sthula. If you think this can be done, please get it done — always taking care not to expose yourself. For your main work is not political, but spiritual. If there can be a Bengali translation of Richard's manifesto, or much better, a statement of the situation & the desirability of his candidature succeeding, — always steering clear of extremism and British Indian politics, — it should be done & distributed. I lay stress on these things because it is necessary that the conditions of Chandernagore & Pondicherry should be changed, the repetition of recent events rendered impossible and the cession of French territory put out of the question. There would be other & more positive gains by the change, but these I need not emphasise now.

I have just received your letter & the money. I shall delay answering it for the present, as this letter must go immediately. I shall answer soon, however. I am only waiting till this election is over to give some shape to the decision I have arrived at to resume personally my work on the material plane and it is necessary that there should be some arrangement by which the Vedantic work can go on unhampered by the effect of errors in Tantric kriya. For Tantric kriya carried on in the old style, to which your people seem to be so undivorcably attached, can only help so far as to keep up the Yogic flame in the hearts of a few, while on the other hand it is full of dangers to the spirit & the body. It is only by a wide Vedantic movement leading later to a greater Tantra that the work of regeneration can be done; & of that movement neither you nor Saurin can be the head. It needs a wider knowledge & a greater spiritual force

in the Adhara through which it is engineered; it needs, in fact, the greatest which India contains & which is at the same time willing to take it up. I see only Devavrata & myself who have the idea — for the Dayanandas & others are a negligible quantity, & Devavrata seems to me to have gone off for the moment on a wrong route & through egoism has even allowed his spiritual force to be used against us by secret forces in the sukshma world which he is not yet advanced enough to understand. Therefore, if God wills, I will take the field.

K.

P.S. Gaebelé has given me strenuous assurances that Bluysen is not working for the cession of Chandannagar & has sworn that he (Gaebelé) will ever be a stern and furious opponent of any such cession as well as a staunch defender of the Swadeshi refugees! Such is the fervour of electoral promises! He has given a number of the *Journal des Débats* in which there is a full account of Bluysen's interpellations, from which it appears that both Bluysen & Doumergue were agreed that there can be no question of cession but only of "rectification of Pondicherry boundaries". But only then did Bluysen tell us solemnly that the cession was a "settled fact" & any refugee in Ch must run to Pondicherry at once. However, I am trying to send you or get sent to Banamali Pal the copy of the *Journal*, so that Bluysen may have the benefit of his public declarations. They are in a sense binding, if anything can bind a French politician. If you don't get the *Journal*, at any rate contrive that the substance of it as given by me here should be known in Ch, if it is not known already. For you must remember that Lemaire has made no such declaration and is not bound at all by any past professions, but has rather been an advocate of the cession.

[12]

17 April, 1914

Dear M.

The political situation here is as follows. In appearance Bluysen and Lemaire face each other on the old lines and the

real fight is between them. Bluysen has the support of the whole administration, except a certain number of Lemairistes who are quiescent and in favour of it. The Governor Martineau, Gaebelé, the Police Lieutenant & the Commissaire form his political committee. By threats & bribes the Maires of all the Communes except two have been forced or induced to declare on his side. He has bought or got over most of the Hindu traders in Pondicherry. He has brought over 50,000 Rupees for his election & is prepared to purchase the whole populace, if necessary. Is it British rupees, I wonder? The British Gov^t is also said to be interfering on his behalf and it is certain the Mahomedan Collector of Cuddalore has asked his coreligionists to vote for this master of corruption. A violent administrative pressure is being brought to bear both at Pondicherry & Karikal, & the Maires being on his side the Electoral Colleges will be in his hands with all their possibilities of fraud & violence.

Lemaire has for him most of the Christians & Renonçants (except the young men who are for Richard) and Pierre. But the Pierre party is entirely divided. Kotia refuses to declare himself, most of the others are Bluysenites, the Comité Radical has thrice met without Pierre being able to overcome the opposition against him. Lemaire had two chances, one that if the people could be got to vote, Pierre's influence over the mass might carry the day for him, the other that Nandagopalulu might intimidate the enemy & counteract the administration. But Nandagopalulu instead of intimidating is himself intimidated; he is hiding in his house & sending obsequious messages to Gaebelé & Martineau. So great at one time was the despair of the Lemairistes, that Pierre offered through Richard to withdraw Lemaire, if Gaebelé withdraws Bluysen, the two enemies then to shake hands & unite in support of Richard or another candidate. Gaebelé would have been glad to accept the offer, but he cannot, he has taken huge sums from Bluysen. The leaders are almost all bought over by Bluysen & those who remain on Lemaire's side dare not act. The only weapon now in Lemaire's hands is vague threat and rumour, that the Cabinet has fallen, that Martineau is suspended, that the new Police Captain is his man etc. There are also rumours of a sudden

coup d'état by Lemaire on the election day, of Appa Swami being carried off or killed, of the [Recensement]¹¹ Committee being in his hands & it is true that the President is a Lemairiste. But I do not see how these things are going to be done. There may, of course, be a sudden Lemairiste rally, but at present it seems as if Bluysen by the help of the Administration money, the British Government and the devil were likely to win an easy victory.

Laporte had some chance of strong backing at the beginning but his own indolence & mistakes have destroyed it. He is now waiting on God and Lemaire into whose shoes he dreams of stepping, — for Lemaire has promised him that if he gets no favourable answer from France he will desist in Laporte's favour and Laporte being a man of faith is sitting quiet in that glorious expectation.

Then there is Richard. He has neither agent, nor committee, nor the backing of a single influential man. What he has is the sympathy & good wishes of all the Hindus & Mahomedans in Pondicherry & Karikal with the exception of the Vaniyas who are for Bluysen. The people are sick to death of the old candidates, they hate Bluysen, they abhor Lemaire & if only they could be got to vote according to their feelings, Richard would come in by an overwhelming majority. But they are overawed by the Gov^t and wait for some influential man among the Hindus to declare for him. No such man is forthcoming. All are either bought by Bluysen or wish to be on the winning side. Under these circumstances the danger is that the people will not vote at all and the electoral committees will be free to manufacture in their names bogus votes for Bluysen. On the other hand an impression has been made at Karikal, where the young men are working zealously for Richard; some of its communes are going to support him; some of the leaders who are themselves pledged to Bluysen have promised to tell their followers that they are free to vote for Richard if they wish; the Mahomedan leaders of Karikal are for Bluysen or rather for his money, but the mass have resolved to vote neither for

¹¹ MS Recension

B. nor Lemaire, & either not to vote at all or for Richard. At Pondicherry, Villenour has promised to declare for Richard the day before the election so as to avoid prolonged administrative pressure. Certain sections of the community e.g. the young men among the Christians and a number of the Mahomedans, — Richard is to speak at the mosque and a great number may possibly come over, — and a certain nucleus of the Hindus are certain to vote for him. We count also on the impression that can be given during the next few days. If in addition Chandernagore can give a large vote for Richard, there is a chance not of carrying Richard but of preventing a decisive vote at the first election, so that there may be a second ballot. If that is done, great numbers who hesitate to vote for Richard in the idea that Bluysen must carry all before him, may pick up courage & turn the whole situation, — to say nothing of the chances of Lemaire retiring & his whole vote coming over or a great part of it. Therefore, I say, throw aside all other considerations and let the young men of Chandernagore at least put all their strength on Richard's side and against the two unspeakable representatives of Evil who dispute the election between them. For if they do not, humanly speaking, Chandernagore seems to be doomed.

I wrote to you in my last doubtfully about Bluysen's or rather Gaebelé's professions about Ch. and the Swadeshis. Since then, even Martineau has condescended to let us know that he is trying to get the British police sent away from Pondicherry. But all this is either sheer falsehood or late repentance for the convenience of the moment. The damning facts are that Bluysen saw the Viceroy on his last visit, that it is known on this occasion the whole talk was about this cession of Chandernagore, that on his return he told Bharati the cession of Ch was a settled fact and while *before* his trip northward, he was gushing over to the Swadeshis, *afterwards* he roundly declared that he could not help us openly because the Cabinet was pro-English & he must follow the Cabinet, that he went to Karikal and declared to a number of people (this has only yesterday come to my knowledge) that Chandernagore was going to be ceded

to the British with Bluysen's consent; that, on his second & present visit, he was entertained by the Collector of Cuddalore on his way & that that Collector has condescended to act as an electoral agent for him with his coreligionists. It is perfectly clear now that the man has sold himself to England — selling & buying himself & others seem to be his only profession in the world. Therefore every vote given for Bluysen in Ch. is a vote for the cession of Chandernagore to the British.

On the other hand if you vote for Lemaire, it means the same thing at a later date. For he was the first to broach the question in the public press in France, he has advised the suppression of the vote in French India, he has English connections & is an Anglophil. Not only so, but although asked by the Hindus to recant his former views if he wanted their vote, he has refused to do it, & this refusal has contributed largely to the failure of Pierre to carry the Hindus with him. Let these facts be widely known in Chandernagore, both about Bluysen & Lemaire, let it be known that Richard is a Hindu in faith, a Hindu in heart and a man whose whole life is devoted to the ideal of lifting up humanity & specially Asia & India & supporting the oppressed against the strong, the cause of the future which is our cause against all that hampers and resists it. If after that, Chandernagore still votes for Bluysen or Lemaire, it is its own choice & it will have itself to thank for anything that may follow.

I have more to write of these things from the spiritual point of view, but I shall leave it till tomorrow or the day after as this letter must go at once. Put faith in God & act. You have seen that when He wills, He can bring about impossibilities. Do not look too much at the chances of success & failure in this matter.

কর্মণ্যেবাধিকারস্তে

Kali

[13]

5 May [1914].

Dear M—

The election is over — or what they call an election — with the result that the man who had the fewer real votes has got the majority. As for M. Richard's votes, they got rid of them in Pondicherry & Karikal by the simple process of reading Paul Bluysen wherever Paul Richard was printed. Even where he brought his voters in Karikal to the poll himself, the results were published "Richard — 0". At Villenur people were simply prevented from voting for him or anyone else. As for the results they had been arranged on the evening before the election by M. Gaebelé & were made to fit in with his figures. The extent to which this was done you can imagine from the fact that at Nandagopal's village where there is no single Bluysenite, there were only 13 "votes" for Lemaire and all the rest for Bluysen. The same result in Mudrapalli which is strong for Pierre, except in one college where Sada (President of the Cercle Sportif) was interpreter & did not allow any humbug; knowing whom they had to deal with, they did not dare to falsify the results. There Bluysen got only 33 votes against 200 & more for Lemaire. In most places, this would have been the normal result, if there had been any election at all. As for Richard, he would probably have got a thousand votes beside the Chandernagore total; as in some five Colleges of Pondicherry alone he had about 300 which were transmuted into zero, & we know of one village in which he had 91 who were prevented forcibly from voting. Bluysen normally would hardly have got 5000 in the whole of French India. Of course protests are being prepared from every side, & if Bluysen is not supported by the Cabinet which is likely to come in after the elections in France, the election may be invalidated. Otherwise, for some time, he may reign in spite of the hatred & contempt of the whole population by the terror of the administration and the police. This Madrasi population is so deficient in even the rudiments of moral courage that one cannot hope very much from it.

Meanwhile Richard intends to remain in India for 2 years & work for the people. He is trying to start an Association of the young men of Pondicherry & Karikal as a sort of training ground from which men can be chosen for the Vedantic Yoga. Everything is a little nebulous as yet. I shall write to you about it when things are more definite.

Since writing the above I have received your last letter. As for the election, we must wait to see whether Bluysen is validated or not. Even if he is not, I do not think Richard can stand again until the new party in Pondicherry is increased & organised & that will have to be done quietly at first. There is, however, just one possibility, that if something happens which it is just now needless to mention, it might be feasible to unite Gaebelé & Pierre in a candidature of reconciliation. The idea was raised by Pierre himself & very reluctantly rejected by Gaebelé before the elections. Another time it might succeed & even if Richard were not the candidate chosen, he would get a great influence by engineering the settlement. Otherwise we shall have to await a more favourable opportunity. As for Bluysen he has made himself a byword for every kind of rascality & oppression, & is now the enemy much rather than Lemaire. These things we shall see to afterwards. The young men of Pondicherry & Karikal are sending a protest with signed declarations of facts observed in the election & two hundred signatures to the Minister, the Chambre & the Temps newspaper. It has also been read aloud by the President in the Commission of Recensement & produced a great impression — moral only, of course. In France, the opinion of the “jeunesse” is much valued and, joined with the Lemairiste protests, it may possibly have some effect, unless either Bluysen buys the Validation Committee or is supported by the French “hommes d’état”. There is an ugly rumour that Poincaré supports Bluysen; & there are always corrupt financial dealings underlying French politics which the outside world does not see. If so, we must put spiritual force against the banded forces of evil & see the result.

Next as to money matters. My present position is that I have exhausted all my money along with Rs 60 Richard forced

on me & am still in debt for the Rs 130 due for the old rent. I do not like to take more money from Richard, for he has sold one fourth of his wife's fortune (a very small one) in order to be able to come & work for India, & the money he has can only carry him through the 2 years he thinks of staying here. I should therefore be impoverishing them by taking anything from them. Of course, they believe that money will come whenever it is necessary; but then God's idea of necessity & ours do not always agree. As for Rangaswamy, there is a fatality about his money,—it is intercepted by all sorts of people & very little reaches me even on the rare occasions when he sends anything. I have no hope, therefore, of any regular help from that quarter. Even in the fact of your being unable to meet him, fate has been against us. On the other hand, Saurin writes that he has been able to "fix" Rs 1000 a year for me in Bengal. Is this merely the refixing of Das' promise or something else. As for fixing anything may be fixed orally or on paper; the difficulty is to realise what has been fixed. He says also there is Rs 500 awaiting me, my share of the garden money. He wants it for his "commerce", but when I have no money to live on, I can hardly comply. He does not tell me what I am to do to get the money, but only that I can get it whenever I want it. I am writing to him to Meherpur, but if you see him in Calcutta, ask him to get it & send it to me at once. With this money I may be able to go on for a few months till something definite & regular can be settled & worked out. As for the sum I need monthly, so long as S & the others do not return, I need Rs 50 monthly for my own expenses + Rs 10 not for myself, but still absolutely indispensable. When S & the others return, that will no longer be sufficient. I am writing to S to try and make some real bandobast about money before coming back. Please also press Shyama Babu and the others for the money due to me. This habit of defalcation of money for "noble & philanthropic" purposes in which usually the ego is largely the beneficiary is one of the curses of our movement &, so long as it is continued, Lakshmi will not return to this country. I have sharply discontinued all looseness of the kind myself & it must be discouraged henceforth wherever we meet it. It is

much better & more honest to be a thief for our own personal benefit, than under these holy masks. And always, if one must plunder, it is best to do it as a Kshatriya, not with the corruption of the Vaishya spirit of gain which is the chief enemy in our present struggle. What you have to do, is to try to make some real arrangement, not a theoretical arrangement, by which the burden of my expenses may be shifted off your shoulders until I am able to make my own provision. Meanwhile get me Rs 150 & the Rs 500 due to me (garden money) &, if afterwards we can make no other arrangement, we shall then have to consider the question again. It is this point of equipment, not only for myself but for my work in which the opposition of the Kaliyuga forces is just now the most obstinate. It has somehow to be overcome.

Richard has paid the Rs 51. I am keeping the sum as the Rs 50 for last month + 1. Please cut it off from the sum you would otherwise have sent — (not, however, from the Rs 130 for the payment of the rent). Please also get us some cloths sent from Calcutta, as they are very urgently needed, especially as I may now have to go out from time to time breaking my old rule of seclusion. I am also in need of a pair of shoes as Bharati has bagged the pair I had.

Then for more important subjects. You write about Biren being here. I do not hold the same opinion about Biren as Saurin etc do, who are inclined towards a very black interpretation of his character & actions. It seems to me that events have corroborated all he said about his relations with certain undesirable persons. Moreover I see that he has taken Yoga earnestly & has made for him a rapid progress. I am also unaware of anything he has said to others which would help any evilminded person in establishing a wrong interpretation of your philosophic & social activities. I fail to find in him, looking at him spiritually, those ineffable blacknesses which were supposed to dwell in him, — only flightiness, weakness, indiscretion, childish & erratic impulsiveness & self-will & certain undesirable *possibilities* present in many young Bengalis, in a certain type, indeed, which has done much harm in the past. All these have recently much diminished & I hope even to eradicate them by the Yoga. In fact, the view

of his presence here forced on me by that which guides me, is that he was sent here as the representative of this type & that I have to change & purify it. If I can do this in the representative, it is possible in the future to do so in the class, & unless I can do it, the task I have set for myself for India will remain almost too difficult for solution. For as long as that element remains strong, Bengal can never become what it is intended to be.

You will say, supposing I am wrong & Saurin right, or supposing I fail. In any case, he cannot strike your work except by first striking at me, since he does not know anything about you directly or independently of his stay here. Still, there is the possibility (intellectually) of even that happening. That raises a whole question which it is necessary to settle—the entire separation of Vedantic Yoga from other activities. You must realise that my work is a very vast one & that I must in doing it, come in close contact with all sorts of people including Europeans, perhaps even officials, perhaps even spies & officials. For instance, there is Biren. There is a French man named Stair Siddhar now in Chandernagore, who came to me & whom I had to see & sound. He is a queer sort of fool with something of the knave, but he had possibilities which I had to sound. There is Richard who is to know nothing about Tantricism. There are a host of *possible* young men whom I must meet & handle, but who may not turn out well. It is obviously impossible for me to do this work, if the close connection with Tantriks remains & everyone whom I meet & receive is supposed by people there to be a mighty & venerable person who is to be taken at once into perfect confidence by reason of having been for a time in my august shadow. It won't do at all. The whole thing must be rearranged on a reasonable basis.

First, it must be known among our friends that my whole action is about to be such as I have described, so that they may not again repeat that kind of mistake.

Secondly, those immediately connected with me must be aloof physically from Tantricism—because of the discredit it brings,— & intangible by evilminded persons.

Thirdly, Biren & others of that kind must be made to under-

stand that Tantra for us is discontinued until farther notice which can be only in the far future.

Fourthly, the written basis of Vedantic Yoga has now become impossible & must be entirely changed &, as far as possible, withdrawn from circulation.

These are details, but important details. There is one matter, however, which has to be settled, that of the Brahmin. The Brahmin, it appears, has made himself impossible as an agent or, at least, he is so considered. Then as for your direct communication with Sarathi, it is looked upon with dislike by Sarathi's people & I do not know what S's own sentiments in the matter may be. Of course, the reason they allege is obvious enough. There is one of my own people here who might do it, but he is so useful in other important matters that I hesitate to use him as an agent in this. That is why I am in a difficulty & I get no light on the question from above, only the intellect stumbles about between possibilities against all of which there is an objection, especially from the new point of view which demands for the present a spotless peace & irreproachable reputation in these matters for the centre of Yogic activity here. Nevertheless, the thing must be done, although as the last legacy of the old state of things. I shall write to you on the old lines about it in a few days, as also about the future of the Tantric Yoga. Judging from what I have heard of the facts, I do not think the difficulty about S is likely to materialise — unless there are facts behind of which I do not know. Unfortunately the manner in which the Tantric Yoga has been carried on is so full of the old faults of former Tantric sadhana that a catastrophe was inevitable. The new Yoga cannot be used as a sort of sauce for old dishes; it must occupy the whole place on peril of serious difficulties in the siddhi & even disasters.

I shall write to you about what I propose to do about Vedantic Yoga & publication; as yet it has not been sufficiently formulated to write. At present we have only started a new society here called *L'Idée Nouvelle* (the New Idea) & are trying to get an authorisation.

K.

[*postscript in another hand:*]

Dear Moti baboo

We are in absolute want of clothes. Will you please take a little attention on that point and relieve us from this absolute want. K is going out now a days and at least for that we want some clothes.

Do not send it [in] Jogin's name they are going back to Bengal. Send it to David.

Yours,
B.

[14]

[June 1914]

Dear M

I have received from Grindlays Rs 400. That leaves Rs 200 out of the Rs 1000, which I hope will be received by next August. We have also the clothes & shoes,—but for myself only the slippers are useful as the shoes are too large. I have written to Saurin about the garden money & he says he has asked Sukumar to send it. But I have received nothing as yet. If I get this money and the remaining 200 from Das, that will be Rs 1100 in hand. With 100 more and 130 on account of the old rent, say Rs 250 altogether, we shall be provided for bare necessities for a year, during which other conditions may arise. That Rs 250 ought to come from Sham Babu and Sharma, but there is little hope of money once swallowed by a patriot being disgorged again. His philanthropic stomach digests sovereignly. I must seek it elsewhere. If this can be done, the only burden which will fall on you is to refurnish us with apparel and footwear from time to time. At the same time an attempt should be made to keep up the arrangement with Das, if possible; for we do not know whether our attempt to provide otherwise will succeed.

That attempt takes the form of a new philosophical Review with Richard and myself as Editors — the *Arya*, which is to be brought out in French & English, two separate editions,—one

for France, one for India, England & America. In this Review my new theory of the Veda will appear as also a translation and explanation of the Upanishads, a series of essays giving my system of Yoga & a book of Vedantic philosophy (not Shankara's but Vedic Vedanta) giving the Upanishadic foundations of my theory of the ideal life towards which humanity must move. You will see so far as my share is concerned, it will be the intellectual side of my work for the world. The Review will be of 64 pages to start with and the subscription Rs 6 annually. Of the French edition 600 copies will be issued, and it will cost about Rs 750 a year minus postage. Richard reckoned 200 subscribers in France at the start, ie Rs 1200 in the year. For the English edition we are thinking of an issue of 1000 copies, at a cost of about Rs 1200 annually. We shall need therefore at least 200 subscribers to meet this expense & some more so that the English edition may pay all its own expenses. Let us try 250 subscribers to start with, with the ideal of having 800 to 1000 in the first year. If these subscribers can be got before the Review starts, we shall have a sound financial foundation to start with. The question is, can they be got. We are printing a prospectus with specimens of the writings from my translation & commentary on a Vedic hymn, and an extract from Richard's collections of the central sayings of great sages of all times called the Eternal Wisdom to show the nature of the Review. This is supposed to come out in the middle of this month, & the Review on the 15th August, so there will be nearly two months for collecting subscribers. How far can you help us in this work? There is always one thing about which great care has to be taken, that is, there should be no entanglement of this Review in Indian politics or a false association created by the police finding it in the house of some political suspects they search for; in that case people will be afraid to subscribe. My idea is that young men should be got as agents who would canvas for the Review all over Bengal, but there so many young men are now political suspects that it may not be easy to find any who will be free & active & yet above suspicion. In that case some other method must be tried. I should like to know from you *as soon as possible* how far you

can help us & how many copies of the prospectus we should send to you. If the review succeeds, if, that is to say, we get in India 850 regular subscribers, and 250 in France etc. we shall be able to meet the expenses of the establishment, translation-staff etc. and yet have enough for each of the editors to live on with their various kinds of families, say Rs 100 a month for each. In that case the money-question will practically be solved. There will of course be other expenses besides mere living & there may be from time to time exceptional expenses, such as publication of books etc., but these may be met otherwise or as the Review increases its subscribers. Therefore use your best endeavours towards this end.

The second part of my work is the practical, consisting in the practice of Yoga by an ever increasing number of young men all over the country. We have started here a society called the New Idea with that object, & a good many young men are taking up Vedantic Yoga & some progressing much. You say that it has spread in the North all over. But in what way? I am not at all enamoured of the way in which it seems to be practised outside Bengal. It seems there to be mixed up with the old kind of Tantra sometimes of the most paishachic & undesirable kind & to be kept merely as a sauce for that fiery & gruesome dish. Better no vyapti at all outside Bengal, if it is not to be purified and divine Yoga. In Bengal itself, there are faults which cannot but have undesirable consequences. In the first place, there is the misplacement of values. Vedanta is practised, or so it seems to be in some quarters, for the sake of Tantra, & in order to give a force to Tantra. That is not right at all. Tantra is only valuable in so far as it enables us to give effect to Vedanta & in itself it has no value or necessity at all. Then the two are mixed up in a most undesirable fashion, so that the Vedanta is likely to be affected by the same disrepute and difficulties on the way of profession as hamper the recognition of the truth in Tantra ie in its real sense, value and effectivity. There are difficulties enough already, let us not wilfully increase them. You have seen, for instance, that in recent political trials Yoga pamphlets & bombs seem to have been kept together everywhere with the queerest incongruity.

That is a thing we could not control, we can only hope that it will not happen again. But meanwhile the work of publicity and spreading our yoga has got an unnecessary difficulty thrown in its way. Do not let any add to it by associating Vedanta & Tantra together in an inextricable fashion. The Tantric Yogins are few and should be comparatively reticent—for Vedanta is a wider thing and men may then help to fulfil it in all kinds of ways. Let the Tantriks then practise Vedanta silently, not trumpeting abroad its connection with their own particular school but with self-restraint and the spirit of self-sacrifice, knowing that they are only one small corps in a march that is vast and so meant to be world-embracing. The more they isolate themselves from the rest of the host that is in formation, the more they will be free for their own work & the more they will help without hampering the wider march.

Then as to the work of the Tantric discipline & kriya itself. Remember that Tantra is not like Vedanta, it exists as a Yoga for material gains, that has always been its nature. Only now not for personal gains, but for effectivity in certain directions of the general Yoga of mankind. The question I wish you to ask yourself, is whether you think that with its present imperfect basis it can really do the work for which it was intended. I see that it cannot. There have been two stages; first the old Tantra which has broken down & exists only in a scattered way ineffectual for any great end of humanity. Secondly, our own new Tantra which succeeded at first because it was comparatively pure in spite of the difficulties created by the remnants of egoism. But since then two things have happened. It has tried to extend itself with the result of bringing in undesirable elements; secondly, it has tried to attempt larger results from a basis which was no longer sufficient & had begun to be unsound. A third stage is now necessary, that of a preparation in full knowledge no longer resting on a blind faith in God's power and will, but receiving consciously that will, the illumination that guides its workings and the power that determines its results. If the thing is to be done it must be done no longer as by a troop stumbling on courageously in the dark & losing its best strength by failures &

the results of unhappy blunders, but with the full divine power working out its will in its instruments.

What is necessary for that action? First, that the divine knowledge & power should manifest perfectly in at least one man in India. In myself it is trying so to manifest as rapidly as the deficiencies of my mind & body will permit, and also — this is important — as rapidly as the defects of my chief friends & helpers will permit. For all those have to be taken on myself spiritually and may retard my own development. I advance, but at every fresh stage have to go back to receive some fresh load of imperfection that comes from outside. I want now some breathing time, however brief which will enable me to accomplish the present stage which is the central [?] of my advance. This once accomplished, all the rest is inevitable. This not accomplished, the end of our Yogic movement is, externally, a failure or a pitiful small result. That is the first reason why I call a halt.

The second necessity is that others should receive the same power & light. In the measure that mine grows, theirs also will increase & prosper provided always they do not separate themselves from me by the ahankara. A sufficient Vedantic basis provided, a long, slow & obscure Tantra will no longer be necessary. The power that I am developing, if it reaches consummation, will be able to accomplish its effects automatically *by any method chosen*. If it uses Tantric kriya, it will then be because God has chosen that means, because He wishes to put the Shakta part of Him forward first & not the Vaishnava. And that kriya will then be irresistible in its effects, perhaps even strange & new in its means & forms. I have then to effect that power & communicate it to others. But at present the forces of the material Prakriti strive with all their remaining energy against the spiritual mastery that is being sought to impose on them. And it is especially in the field to which your kriyas have belonged and kindred fields that they are still too strong for me. You will remember what has been written, that the sadhana shall first be applied in things that do not matter & only afterwards used for life. This is not an absolute rule, but it is the rule of necessity to apply for some time now in this particular matter. I

see that I have the necessary powers; I shall communicate them next to you and some others so that there may be a centre of irresistible spiritual light & effective force wherever needed. Then a rapid & successful kriya can be attempted. This is the second reason why I have cried a halt.

The first & supreme object you must have now is to push forward in yourself & in others the Vedantic Yoga in the sense I have described. The spread of the idea is not sufficient, you must have real Yogins, not merely men moved intellectually & emotionally by one or two of the central ideas of the Yoga. Spreading of the idea is the second necessity — for that the Review at present offers itself among other means. The other means is to form brotherhoods, not formal but real, (not societies of the European kind but informal groups of people united by one effort & one feeling) for the practice of Vedantic Yoga (without any necessary thought of the Tantric). But of this I shall write to you hereafter.

Finally as to commercial matters. I had arranged things according to the last idea, but at the last moment an objection was made that the arrangement was not a very reasonable one, — an objection which my reason was forced to admit. It was then proposed to send the Brahmin as a commercial agent & I so wrote to you. But a few days afterwards when I asked for him to be sent, I was informed that the Brahmin was no longer possible as a commercial agent as he was now an object of suspicion to the third party. Another man I had fixed on is so circumstanced that he cannot go now. There the matter stands. As for your suggestion, these people here never objected to dealing direct with you, the objection was mine due to the terms & the accidents of your correspondence. On the other hand every attempt I have made personally to get the matter settled has been frustrated by Krishna. I have made these attempts contrary to the inner instructions received & by the light of the reason. That always fails with me; if it succeeds momentarily, it brings some coarse result afterwards. The point now is that if you do as you suggest, it must be so done that there shall not be the least chance of the transaction interfering with our business here — I

mean not any commercial business, but the enterprises (Society, Review etc.) we are starting. The question is not one of direct communication, but of right handling & especially of the right person not only from the point of view of the buyer and seller, but with regard to the third party who is indirectly interested in the transaction. In any case you must write to me what you propose to do, before you act.

By the way, there was a very shocking and অশ্লীল word in your last letter to me with regard to my past activities, Bande Mataram, Karmayogin etc. I do not wish to repeat it here. Please do not use such an indecorous expression in writing in future. In personal talk it does not matter; but not, if you please, in correspondence.

As to your request for details of my life, about which you wrote to Bijoy, it is a very difficult matter for there is very little one can write without offending people, eg S. Mullick, B. Pal, S. S. Chakraborty & revealing party secrets. However we shall see what can be done. But let me know what you are writing about me & how & where you mean to publish it.

A. K.

[15]

[July 1914]

Dear M.

I write today only about two business matters. As to the Review, I do not think we can dispense with the 200 subscribers whom you promise. The only difficulty is that, if there are political suspects among them, it will give the police a handle for connecting politics & the Review & thus frightening the public. But this is not a sufficient reason for the Review refusing so many subscribers or for so large a number being deprived of the enlightenment it may bring them. Therefore, some arrangement should be made. I should suggest that you should make those subscribers who are mainly interested in Yoga, and as for those who decline to give up political opinions of a vehement nature

or to conceal them so as not to fall into police snares, they may without becoming subscribers on our list receive the Review from trustworthy agents appointed by you as our representative. The agent must let us or you know the number of copies wanted, send in the money and receive the Review from us or you in a packet as a declared agent commissioned to sell a certain number of copies, receiving (nominally) a discount on each copy sold. I suggest this arrangement but if another would be more convenient, please let us know. You must organise the subscription matter before starting for your pilgrimage so that we may have a fair start in August. I shall write a longer letter to you about Yoga & other matters as soon as I have a little time.

The Psalmist was here. He asked for the Calcutta address & I gave it to him. It appears he is sending it to Calcutta in connection with a business he wants to wind up. It is difficult to understand because he says it is a commercial secret, but he tells me you will understand if I send you the accompanying cabalistic figures — God save us from all mysteries except those of Tantric Yoga.

Kali

[16]

[July–August 1914]

Dear M.

Again a business letter. Enclosed you will find two samples of paper, taken from a sample book of the Titaghur Mills which we want made to order, of a certain size, for our Review. Will you please see *at once* the agent in Calcutta, whose address is given, and ask him for all the particulars, the price, whether the paper of that sample, of the size required, is available or can be made to order by them, in what minimum amount, within what time etc and let the Manager know immediately by the British post.

What about the commercial transaction and my last letter? The Psalmist's brother is asking for a reply.

K.

P.S. Received your letter. Please let us know how many copies of the Arya you want sent to you for sale, since you cannot get subscribers. I shall write later. The divorce from Tantrism is necessary if you are to do the work of the Review or the other work I wish you to undertake. You must surely see that. Neither will march if there are any occurrences of the old kind mixing them up together.

[Postscript in another hand:]

If it is possible please send some subscribers. Subscribers book is nearly as blank as it was at the time [of] our purchasing it.

Yours,
[Illegible signature]

[17]

29 August 1914

Dear M.

Before your letter came, ie yesterday, the news was published that the Government had drawn back from its proposal, and today the Amrita [Bazar]¹² with its comment arrived. I presume, therefore, no immediate answer from me is needed. But in case anything of the kind is raised again, I shall give you my opinion in the matter.

We gain nothing by preaching an unconditional loyalty to the Government, such as is the fashion nowadays, or doing anything which even in appearance strengthens the disposition towards an abject & unmanly tone in politics. Gandhi's loyalty is not a pattern for India which is not South Africa, & even Gandhi's loyalty is corrected by passive resistance. An abject tone of servility in politics is not "diplomacy" & is not good politics. It does not deceive or disarm the opponent; it does encourage nervelessness, fear & a cringing cunning in the subject people. What Gandhi has been attempting in S. Africa is to secure for Indians the position of kindly treated serfs, — as a

¹² MS Bazaar

stepping-stone to something better. Loyalty + Ambulance Corps mean the same thing in India. But the conditions of India are not those of S. Africa; our position is different & our aim is different, not to secure a few privileges, but to create a nation of men fit for independence & able to secure & keep it. We have been beaten in the first attempt, like every other nation similarly circumstanced. That is no reason why the whole people should go back to a condition of abject fear, grovelling loyalty & whining complaints. The public Nationalist policy has always been

1. Eventual independence
2. No cooperation without control.
- 3 A masculine courage in speech & action

Let us add a fourth,

4. Readiness to accept real concessions & pay their just price, but no more. Beyond that, I do not see the necessity of any change. We recognise that immediate independence is not practicable & we are ready to defend the British rule against any foreign nation, for that means defending our own future independence.

Therefore, if the Government accepts volunteers or favours the institution of Boy-Scouts, we give our aid, but not to be mere stretcher-bearers.

That is the side of principle; now let us look at that of policy.

(1) I don't appreciate Sarat Maharaj's position. If self-sacrifice is the object, every human being has the whole of life as a field for self-sacrifice & does not depend on any Government for that. We can show our sacrificing activities every moment, if we want. It is not a question of sacrifice at all, it is a question of military training. If the young men wish to organise for charitable work, the Government is not going to stop it, even though they may watch and suspect. I put that aside altogether.

(2) The leaders suggested cooperation in return for some substantial self-government. They are now offering cooperation without any return at all. Very self-sacrificing, but not political. If indeed, Gov^t were willing to train "thousands of young men" in military service as volunteers, Territorials or boy-scouts, whether for keeping the peace or as a reserve in case of invasion, then we

need not boggle about the return. But, after so much experience, do these addle-headed politicians think the Gov^t is going to do that except in case of absolute necessity and as a choice between two evils? When will that absolute necessity come? Only if the war goes against them seriously & they have to withdraw their troops from India. I shall discuss that point later on.

(3) Meanwhile what have the Government done? After testing the temper of the people &, you may be sure, watching closely what young men came forward as volunteers & who did not, they have removed an offer which had already been whittled down to a mere harmless Ambulance Corps in which the young men have plenty of chances of getting killed, but none of learning real warfare. Mere common sense warns us not to trust such an administration & to think ten times before accepting its offers. We know Lord Hardinge's policy; (1) sweet words, (2) quiet systematic coercion, (3) concession where obstinacy would mean too great a row & too much creation of deep-seated hostility.

Having prefaced so much, let us look at the utility of the things offered us or offered by us.

1. Ambulance Corps —

The only possible utilities would be two, (1) to train two thousand young men to be steady under fire (2) to train them to act together under discipline in an easy but dangerous service. Now it is quite possible for us to create courage in our young men without these means, & I hope our best men, or let me say, our men generally do not need to become stretcher bearers in a European war in order to have the necessary nerve, courage, steadiness & discipline. If therefore an Ambulance Corps is again suggested & accepted, either refuse or let only those young men go who are enthusiastic, but still lightheaded, self-indulgent or undisciplined. Possibly, the experience may steady & discipline them. It may be necessary to let this be done, if the circumstances are such that to refuse entirely would reflect on our national courage or be interpreted as a backing out from a national engagement.

2. Boy-Scouts — Volunteer Corps — Territorials.

All these are entirely good, provided the police are kept at

a distance, & provided officers as well as men are trained & the Gov^t control is limited to the giving of military discipline in the first two cases. Even without the second proviso, any of these things would be worth accepting.

Only in the case of volunteers going to the scene of war, you must see that we are not crippled by all our best men or even a majority being sent; only enough to bring in an element among us who have seen actual warfare—

=

I think any of these things may one day become possible. Since the last year, new forces have come into the world and are now strong enough to act, which are likely to alter the whole face of the world. The present war is only a beginning not the end. We have to consider what are our chances & what we ought to do in these circumstances.

The war is open to a certain number of broad chances.

I. Those bringing about the destruction of the two Teutonic empires, German & Austrian.

This may happen either by an immediate German defeat, its armies being broken & chased back from Belgium & Alsace-Lorraine to Berlin, which is not probable, or by the Russian arrival at Berlin & a successful French stand near Rheims or Compiègne, or by the entry of Italy & the remaining Balkan states into the war & the invasion of Austro-Hungary from two sides.

II Those bringing about the weakening or isolation of the British power.

This may be done by the Germans destroying the British expeditionary force, entering Paris & dictating terms to France while Russia is checked in its march to Berlin by a strong Austro-German force operating in the German quadrilateral between the forts of Danzig, Thorn, Posen and Königsberg. If this happens Russia may possibly enter into a compact with Germany based on a reconciliation of the three Empires and a reversion to the old idea of a simultaneous attack on England and a division of her Empire between Germany & Russia.

III. Those bringing about the destruction of British power.

This may happen by the shattering of the British fleet and a German landing in England.

In either of the two last cases an invasion of India by Germany, Russia or Japan is only a question of time, and England will be unable to resist except by one of three means.

- (1) universal conscription in England & the Colonies
- (2) the aid of Japan or some other foreign power
- (3) the aid of the Indian people.

The first is useless for the defence of India, in case III, & can only be applied in case II, if England is still mistress of the seas. The second is dangerous to England herself, since the ally who helps, may also covet. The third means the concession of self-government to India.

In case I, there will only remain four considerable powers in Europe & Asia, Russia, France, England, Japan — with perhaps a Balkan Confederacy or Empire as a fifth. That means as the next stage a struggle between England & Russia in Asia. There again England is reduced to one of the three alternatives or a combination of them.

Of course, the war may take different turns from the above, with slightly altered circumstances & results; the one thing that is impossible, is that it should leave the world as it was before. In any case, the question of India must rise at no very long date. If England adopts more or less grudgingly the third alternative, our opportunity arrives and we must be ready to take it — on this basis, continuance of British rule & cooperation until we are strong enough to stand by ourselves. If not, we must still decide how we are to prepare ourselves, so as not to pass from one foreign domination to a worse.

I want those of you who have the capacity, to consider the situation as I have described it, to think over it, enlarging our old views which are no longer sufficient, and accustom yourselves to act always with these new & larger conceptions in your minds. I shall write nothing myself about my views, just as yet, as that might prevent you from thinking yourselves.

Only, two things you will see obviously from it, first, the

necessity of seizing on any opportunity that arises of organisation or military training (not self-sacrificing charity, that has already been done); secondly, the necessity of creating an organisation & finding the means, if no opportunity presents itself. It will be necessary for someone from Bengal to come & see me before long, but that will probably not be till October or later.

I shall write to you before long farther on the subject, as also on other matters.

K.

[18]

[after October 1914]

Dear M—

I have not written for a long time for several reasons. Our position here since the war has become increasingly difficult and delicate, as the administration is run for the moment by certain subordinates who are actively hostile to the Swadeshis. I have therefore adopted a policy of entire reserve, including abstention from correspondence with Bengal even with officially unobjectionable people. Our correspondence now is chiefly limited to Arya business.

Your internal struggle in the Yoga has naturally its causes. I shall help you as much as possible spiritually, but you must get rid of everything that gives a handle to the enemy in ourselves. Your letters for a long time showed a considerable revival of rajasic egoism, contracted, I suppose, by association with the old Tantrics, and that always [brings]¹³ in our Yoga disagreeable consequences. If you could make yourselves entirely pure instruments, things would go much better. But there is always something in the prana and intellect which kicks against the pricks and resists the purifier. Especially get rid of the *Aham Karta* element, which usually disguises itself under the idea “I am the chosen yantra”. Despise no one, try to see God in all and

¹³ MS bring

the Self in all. The Shakti in you will then act better on your materials and environment.

There is another point. You sent a message about an “Aurobindo Math” which seemed to show you had caught the contagion which rages in Bengal. You must understand that my mission is not to create maths, ascetics and Sannyasis; but to call back the souls of the strong to the Lila of Krishna & Kali. That is my teaching, as you can see from the Review, and my name must never be connected with monastic forms or the monastic ideal. Every ascetic movement since the time of Buddha has left India weaker and for a very obvious reason. Renunciation of life is one thing, to make life itself, national, individual, world-life greater & more divine is another. You cannot enforce one ideal on the country without weakening the other. You cannot take away the best souls from life & yet leave life stronger & greater. Renunciation of ego, acceptance of God in life is the Yoga I teach, — no other renunciation.

Saurin has written to you about Bejoy’s detention. M. Richard wrote to the Madras Government, but with the usual result.

Here one of the Swadeshis, a certain VVS. Aiyar has been hauled up for circulating unauthorised pamphlets from America. It appears the Gov^t of Pondicherry has established a censorship in the French P.O. and opens letters etc from abroad. They have intercepted some wonderful pamphlets of the usual sanguinary order asking India to rise & help Germany which some fool had sent to his address from New York. On the strength of this a case has been trumped up against Aiyar who knew nothing about either the New York idiot or his pamphlets. The funny thing is that all the time Aiyar seems to be fervently Anti-German in his sentiments & pro-Belgian & pro-Servian! So this wonderful French administration insists on making him a martyr for the cause he denounces! One thing I could never appreciate is the utility of this pamphleteering business of which Indian revolutionists are so fond. Pamphlets won’t liberate India; but they do seem to succeed in getting their distributors and non-distributors also into prison. My connection with Aiyar has been practically

nil, as in normal times I only see him once in two years. But here all the Swadeshis are lumped together; so we have to be careful not only that we give no handle to our enemies, but that other people don't give them a handle against us — which is just a little difficult.

You have decided, it seems, to carry on Tantra & Mantra, *anushthan* and pure Vedanta together! My objection to it was from the standpoint of the Review and Vedantic work generally. *Anushthan* & the Review do not go well together. Of course, a synthesis is always possible, but amalgamation is not synthesis.

G.

P.S. By the way, try to realise one thing. The work we wish to do cannot produce its effects on the objective world until my Ashtasiddhi is strong enough to work upon that world organically and as a whole, & it has not yet reached that point. No amount of rajasic eagerness on my part or on yours or anybody else's will fill the place or can substitute itself as the divine instrument which will be definitely effective. In the matter of the Review Bejoy has found that out by this time! I have found it out myself by constant experience & warning. You also, if you wish to profit by my teaching, should learn it also — without the necessity of experience.

[19]

[1914–1915]

Dear M.

Your letter and enclosure (50) reached us all right. We have not received the Rs. 200 due from Das. As for the Rs. 500, that has nothing to do with the garden money of my uncle, it is a sum promised to me which Saurin was to have brought, but it was not paid in time. He tells me he told you about it before he came and he wrote also from here. Our actual expenses here are Rs. 115 a month; this can be reduced if we get another house, but you know that is not easy in Pondicherry. I note that we are to get Rs. 50 from you in the latter part of this month.

So much for money matters. It is regrettable that the Government should think you are mixed up in political matters and that you are on the list of suspects. But once they get that idea into their heads, it is impossible to change it; once a suspect, always a suspect is their rule. They are particularly good at purchasing trouble for themselves and others in this way and just now they are all fear and suspicion and see revolutions in every bush. The only thing is to be extremely careful. You should not on any account move out of Chandernagore so long as the war measures are in force; for in these times innocence is no defence.

It is regrettable that Bengal should be unable to find anything in the Arya, but not surprising. The intellect of Bengal has been so much fed on chemical tablets of thought and hot spiced foods that anything strong and substantial is indigestible to it. Moreover people in India are accustomed only to second-hand thoughts, — the old familiar ideas of the six philosophies, Patanjali etc. etc. Any new presentation of life and thought and Yoga upsets their expectations and is unintelligible to them. The thought of the Arya demands close thinking from the reader; it does not spare him the trouble of thinking and understanding and the minds of the people have long been accustomed to have the trouble of thought spared them. They know how to indulge their minds, they have forgotten how to exercise them.

It does not matter very much just now, so long as the people who practise the Yoga, read and profit. The Arya presents a new philosophy and a new method of Yoga and everything that is new takes time to get a hearing. Of course, in reality it is only the old brought back again, but so old that it has been forgotten. It is only those who practise and experience that can at first understand it. In a way, this is good, because it is meant to change the life of people and not merely satisfy the intellect. In France it has been very much appreciated by those who are seeking the truth, because these people are not shut up in old and received ideas, they are on the lookout for something which will change the inner and outer life. When the same state of mind can be brought about here, the Arya will begin to be appreciated. At

present, Bengal only understands and appreciates politics and asceticism. The central ideas of the Arya are Greek to it.

Soon after the Arya began, I got a letter from some graduates saying that what they wanted was “man-making”. I have done my share of man-making and it is a thing which now anybody can do; Nature herself is looking after it all over the world, though more slowly in India than elsewhere. My business is now not man-making, but divine man-making. My present teaching is that the world is preparing for a new progress, a new evolution. Whatever race, whatever country seizes on the lines of that new evolution and fulfils it, will be the leader of humanity. In the Arya I state the thought upon which this new evolution will be based as I see it, and the method of Yoga by which it can be accomplished. Of course, I cannot speak plainly yet my whole message, for obvious reasons, I have to put it in a severe, colourless fashion which cannot be pleasing to the emotional and excitement-seeking Bengali mind. But the message is there, for those who care to understand. It has really three parts (1) for each man as an individual to change himself into the future type of divine humanity, the men of the new Satyayuga which is striving to be born; (2) to evolve a race of such men to lead humanity and (3) to call all humanity to the path under the lead of these pioneers and this chosen race. India and especially Bengal have the best chance and the best right to create that race and become the leaders of the future—to do in the right way what Germany thought of doing in the wrong way. But first they must learn to think, to cast away old ideas, and turn their faces resolutely to the future. But they cannot do this, if they merely copy European politics or go on eternally reproducing Buddhist asceticism. I am afraid the Ramakrishna Mission with all its good intentions is only going to give us Shankaracharya & Buddhist humanitarianism. But that is not the goal to which the world is moving. Meanwhile remember that these are very difficult times and careful walking is necessary. It is just possible that the war may come to an end in a few months, for the old immobility is beginning to break down and the forces at work behind the veil are straining towards a solution. While the war

continues, nothing great can be done, we are fettered on every side. Afterwards things will change and we must wait for the development.

K.

[20]

[1916–1918]

Dear M.

I have not written for a long time because nothing definite came to me to be written. We are in a state of things in which every movement fails to come to a decisive result because everywhere and in everything the forces are balanced by contrary forces. At the present moment the world is passing through an upheaval in which all forces possible have been let loose and none therefore has a triumphant action. Ordinarily, there are certain puissances, certain ideas which are given a dominant impulsion and conquest, those opposing them being easily broken after a first severe struggle. Now everything is different. Wherever a force or an idea tries to assert itself in action, all that can oppose rushes to stop it and there follows a “struggle of exhaustion”. You see that in Europe now; no one can succeed; nothing is accomplished; only that which already was, maintains itself with difficulty. At such a time one has to act as little as possible and prepare and fortify as much as possible — that is to say, that is the rule for those who are not compelled to be in the battle of the present and whose action tends more towards the future.

I had hoped that we should be much more “forward” at this period, but the obstacles have been too great. I have not been able to get anything active into shape. Consequently, we have to go on as before for some time longer. Our action depends on developing sufficient spiritual power to overcome the enormous material obstacles opposed to us, to shape minds, men, events, means, things. This we have got as yet in very insufficient quantity.

You have done well in confining yourself to Vedantic Yoga;

you can see for yourself that the Tantric bears no secure and sufficient fruit without a very strong and faultless Vedantic basis. Otherwise you have a medley of good and bad sadhakas associating together and the bad spoil the Kriya of the good; for a collective yoga is not like a solitary one, it is not free from collective influences; it has a collective soul which cannot afford to be in some parts either raw or rotten. It is this which modern Tantrics do not understand, their aspiration is not governed by old Shastra founded on the experience of centuries. A *chakra*, for instance, must either be perfectly composed or immediately governed and protected by the spiritual force of some powerful guru. But our modern minds are too impatient to see to these things.

As for your external difficulties, I mean with regard to the bad ideas the Government or the police have about you and the consequent obstacles and pressure, that is a result of past Karma and probably of some present associations and can hardly be cured. I see people are interned who have no connection at all with politics or have long cut off whatever connection they had. Owing to the war, the authorities are uneasy & suspicious and being ill served by their police act on prejudgments and often on false reports. You have to sit tight, spiritually defend yourself and physically avoid putting yourself where the police can do you any harm and, so far as possible, avoid also doing anything which would give any colour or appearance of a foundation for their prejudices. More can hardly be done. One cannot throw aside friends because they are “suspects”; in that case, we should have to begin with ourselves. If on the ground of such associations we are ourselves more suspected, — as, for instance, the officials make it a grievance against me that although I am doing nothing political myself, yet I associate with my Madrasi friends against whom they have chosen to launch warrants for sedition, etc, it cannot be helped. We cannot suffer political or police dictation in our private friendships.

What has become of the “Pravartaka”. The last number was very good, but for a long time we have had no other. Is the administration withholding visa or are there other reasons for

the irregularity? I hope it is not a discontinuance. We have the “Arya” here visaed without delay or difficulty.

If you have difficulties of any kind, it is as well to let me know at once; for I can then concentrate what force I have more particularly to help you. The help may not be always or immediately effective, but it will count and may be more powerful than a general will, not instructed in the particular necessity. You must not mind if you do not get always a written answer; the unwritten will always be there.

I leave it to the Manager of the Arya to write to you about business matters.

K.

[21]

[1918–1919]

Dear M—

If you want discipline, the first thing of that kind I would impose on you or ask you to impose on yourselves is self-discipline, *âtma-sanyama*, and the first element in that is obedience to the law of the Yoga I have given to you. If you bring in things which do not belong to it at all and are quite foreign to it, such as “hunger-strikes” and vehement emotional revolt against the divine Will, it is idle to expect any rapid progress. That means that you insist on going on your own bypath and yet demand of me that I shall bring you to my goal. All difficulties can be conquered, but only on condition of fidelity to the Way that you have taken. There is no obligation on anyone to take it, — it is a difficult and trying one, a way for heroes, not for weaklings, — but once taken, it must be followed, or you will not arrive.

Remember what is the whole basis of the Yoga. It is not founded upon the vehement emotionalism of the Bhakti-marga to which the temperament of Bengal is most prone, though it has a different kind of Bhakti, but on *samata* and *atma-samarpana*. Obedience to the divine Will, not assertion of self-will, is the very first *mantra*. But what can be a more violent assertion of self-will than to demand the result you desire, whether external

or internal, at once, এই মুহূর্তে এই ক্ষণে and not in God's muhurta, God's moment? You say that there is complete *utsarga*, but it cannot be complete, if there is any kind of revolt or vehement impatience. Revolt and impatience mean always that there is a part of the being or something in the being which does not submit, has not given itself to God, but insists on God going out of his way to obey it. That may be very well in the Bhakti-marga, but it will not do on this Way. The revolt and impatience may come and will come in the heart or the prana when these are still subject to imperfection and impurity; but it is then for the will and the faith in your buddhi to reject them, not to act upon them. If the will consents, approves and supports them, it means that you are siding with the inner enemy. If you want rapid progress, the first condition is that you should not do this; for every time you do it, the enemy is strengthened and the *shuddhi* postponed. This is a difficult lesson to learn, but you must learn it. I do not find fault with you for taking long over it, I myself took full twelve years to learn it thoroughly, and even after I knew the principle well enough, it took me quite four years and more to master my lower nature in this respect. But you have the advantage of my experience and my help; you will be able to do it more rapidly, if you consciously and fully assist me, by not associating yourself with the enemy Desire; *jahi kâmam durâsadam*, remember that utterance of the Gita, it is a keyword of our Yoga.

As for Haradhan, he should show the way in calm, patience and endurance. He has been a soldier. How does he think the nations of Europe could have carried this war to an end, if they had grown so impatient of the fatigue of the trenches, suffering, disturbance, scarcity, continual postponement of the result, and declared that either they must have victory in a given time or throw up the struggle? Does he expect the inner war with our lower selves, the personal habit of thousands of lives and the human inheritance of ages, to be less arduous or to be carried out by a rapid and easy miracle? Hunger-striking to force God or to force anybody or anything else is not the true spiritual means. I do not object to M^r Gandhi or anyone else following it

for quite other than spiritual purposes, but here it is out of place; these things, I repeat, are foreign to the fundamental principle of our Yoga.

Shuddhi is the most difficult part of the whole Yoga, it is the condition of all the rest, and if that is once conquered, the real conquest is accomplished. The rest becomes a comparatively easy building on an assured basis, — it may take longer or shorter, but it can be done tranquilly and steadily. To prevent the shuddhi the lower nature in you and around you will exhaust all its efforts, and even when it cannot prevent, it will try to retard. And its strongest weapon then is, when you think you have got it, suddenly to break in on you and convince you that you have not got it, that it is far away, and so arouse disappointment, grief, loss of faith, discouragement, depression and revolt, the whole army of troubles that wait upon impure Desire. When you have once found calm, peace of mind, firm faith, equality and been able to live in it for some time, then and only then you may be sure that suddhi is founded; but you must not think it will not be disturbed. It will be, so long as your heart and prana are still capable of responding to the old movements, have still any memory and habit of vibrating to the old chords. The one thing necessary when the renewed trouble comes, is to stand back in your mind and will from it, refuse it the sanction of your higher being, even when it is raging in the lower nature. As that habit of refusal fixes itself, — at first you may not be able to do it, the buddhi may be lost in the storm, — you will find that the asuddhi, even though it still returns, becomes less violent, more and more external, until it ceases to be anything more than a faint and short-lived touch from outside and finally comes no more. That is the course it has followed with me, not only with regard to this kind of disturbance, but with regard to all imperfections. You, since you have chosen to share my Yoga for mankind, must follow the same way, undergo the same disturbances.

This is a thing which it is necessary for you to understand clearly. I myself have had for these fourteen years, and it is not yet finished, to bear all the possible typical difficulties, troubles, downfalls and backslidings that can rise in this great effort to

change the whole normal human being. How else could I have been able to help or guide others on the same way? Those who join me at the present stage, must share in my burden, especially those who are themselves chosen in any degree to lead, help and guide. It may be that when I have the complete siddhi, — which I have not yet, I am only on the way to it, — then, if it be God's will to extend very largely and rapidly my work in this body, those who come after may have the way made very easy for them. But we are the pioneers hewing our way through the jungle of the lower prakriti. It will not do for us to be cowards and shirkers and refuse the burden, to clamour for everything to be made quick and easy for us. Above all things I demand from you endurance, firmness, heroism, — the true spiritual heroism. I want strong men, I do not want emotional children. Manhood first, দেবস্ব can only be built upon that. If I do not get it in those who accept my Yoga, then I shall have to understand that it is not God's will that I should succeed. If that be so, I shall accept his will calmly. But meanwhile I go on bearing whatever burden he lays on me, meeting whatever difficulties he puts in the way of my siddhi. Personally, I am now sure of success in everything except in the *kaya-siddhi*, which is still doubtful, and in my work. The work can only succeed if I find noble and worthy helpers, fitted for it by the same struggles and the same endurance. I expect them in you.

Again you must not expect the *shuddhi* or any part of the *siddhi* to be simultaneous and complete at once in all whom you associate with you. One may attain, others progress, others linger. You must not expect a sudden collective miracle. I have not come here to accomplish miracles, but to show, lead the way, help, on the road to a great inner change of our human nature, — the outer change in the world is only possible if and when that inner transmutation is effected and extends itself. You must not expect to establish a perfect *sangha* all at once and by a single leap. If you make such demands on me, I can only say that I cannot do what is not God's will. Go forward calmly and firmly, not attached to success, not disturbed by unsuccess; my help will then not fail you.

As to your idea of work, it seems to me a little crude in form; but I have no objection to your beginning it, since you feel the pressing necessity. I shall write to you later on about it at more length. The only reason why I do not lay great stress on outer work, is that it must always be *kaccha*, much embarrassed by difficulties, at best only a preparatory thing, until we are inwardly and spiritually ready. That is no reason why it should not be done. Work done in the right spirit will itself become a means of the inner siddhi.

Kali

[22]

[end 1919]

Dear M.

About your scheme of a weekly paper — as for the name it is not difficult to find; it could be called the “Standard-bearer”. But are you quite sure you will be able to live up to the name and carry the thing on in the requisite manner? Nalini and Suresh are not likely to be able to write; one does not write at all in English, the other can do it if he likes, but is even more মস্বরগতি than in Bengali. To write for an English weekly would be beyond his present energies. As for myself, I am at present unable to write or do anything substantial, because of the extreme pressure of my Yoga, which has entirely occupied my time, — except for what I am obliged to give to the “Arya” and even that I have cut short as much as possible, — for the last few months. This state of things is likely to go on for the rest of the (English) year; whether it will be changed in the beginning of the next is more than I can tell with any certainty. The whole work might fall on your two Chandernagore writers. An English weekly cannot be conducted like a Bengali monthly or fortnightly. And it is not going to be a political paper of the ordinary kind which can be filled up anyhow. It will have to maintain a high reputation to be at all successful. These things however are for you to consider; you know your own strength and how far the field in Bengal is ready. As to the symbol, none has come to me. I

am not altogether favourably inclined to the Uttara Yogi idea, nor anyone else here. It sounds too like the old style of spiritual pretension, and, when it is put in a current English production, suggests *bujruki*. Plain colours and as few symbols as may be are what we want at the beginning. Indian spirituality has lost itself in a jungle of symbols and shlokas and we have to get out of them on to the plain and straight ways and the open heights, where we can see the “much work that has still to be done”. Why any editor? Let the Shakti herself be the editor.

As to articles for the Prabartak, Nalini used to be your mainstay and he is now in another atmosphere, — mainly hitherto of marriage and football, and complains of an inability to write. As for the other he has produced nothing since he left here, except a drama for the “Bijoli” and the answer to [?] even his Prabasi article was written and sent before he left for Bengal. Moni’s inspiration flows in channels hardly suitable for the Prabartak. As for myself, it was only as a result of a solitary inspiration and with much trouble of rewriting that I got one thing done for you. Since then I have been too much occupied by my Yoga and not at all visited by any *preranâ* or at least none which lasted long enough to produce more than a few lines. In this matter I am entirely dependent on the যথা নিযুক্তোচ্চিস্মি, as I have no natural control of the language and I have no time at present for increasing it by constant practice. It seems to me that Prabartak is getting on well enough as it is, though, if Nalini could write, it would produce an element of greater variety. You should be able to develop more writers with the necessary spiritual experience, grasp of the thought and literary ability, — these things the inner Shakti can bring to the surface if it is called upon for them, — so that Prabartak will not have to depend on three or four people only for its sustenance.

There is nothing more, I think, to add immediately, — if there is I will keep it for later answering, so that this letter may not be farther delayed. By the way, with regard to your design for the paper, the only thing that now suggests itself to me is the Hansa in the Sun, ie the free Soul lodged in the *vijñâna*, and the legend “In this sign thou shalt conquer,” which is appropriate,

but has the disadvantage of being borrowed from Christianity and Constantine. It would perhaps be better if you could find a Sanscrit equivalent or substitute.

K.

[23]

Jan 2. 1920

Dear M—

I write today only for your question about Manindranath and the other. We have been imprisoned in an inferno of rain for the last few days and I have only just been able to get a reliable answer. They have only to get a *sauf-conduit* from the Chandernagore Administrator and then, as they are called here by the French Government for government work, nobody can interfere with their going and coming. This is what I am told and it ought obviously to be so. How are your people going to vote? Martineau and Flandin are the two candidates at present and Martineau is impossible.

I note with some amusement the Secretary's letter to Bejoy Chatterji. The logic of the Bengal Government's attitude is a little difficult to follow. However, I suppose the King's proclamation will make some difference, but I fancy the Gov^t of India is the chief obstacle in these matters and they will perhaps try to limit the scope of this qualified amnesty. Still I hope that the restrictions on your own movements will be removed before long. We have received a postcard from Bejoy notifying to the "Arya" a change of address which shows that after five long years he has been released from his quite causeless imprisonment, but he is now interned in or near Ramnagar in Birbhum. As for me, I do not see, if Lajpatrai is coming to India, how they can object to my going to Bengal. But, allowed or not allowed, I have not the least intention of doing that at present or for another year at the earliest. When I do go, this or that circumstance will make no difference. M^t Gandhi, like the man in Macedonia with St Paul, sent me a message to "come over and help", but I had to say that I was not ready to join in the old politics and had no

new programme formed for a more spiritual line of work, and it would be no use my going out till I saw my way.

As to the *Standard-bearer*, I cannot write now, as it would take too long and delay this letter. I shall write afterwards or send word. Your insured packet reached us yesterday. The increase comes in a good moment, as with Saurin in Bengal the Aryan Stores is simply marking time and the Arya is in a new economic phase which means for the moment some diminution of income.

A. G.

[*Postscript in another hand:*]

In a few days you will be getting 50 copies of "War & S. D."

K. Amrita

[24]

Pondicherry

May 1920

Dear M.

It is only now for the first time since Sirish left that I get some time to write. It is not possible for me to write all I have to say, much must wait till you come here; I will confine myself to what is of pressing importance for the work.

The circumstances under which you have to work have now changed a great deal and you will have in order to meet it to enlarge your view and inner attitude on many sides; this I think you are preparing to do, but it will be as well for me to make it as precise as possible. Up till now you were working alone in a Bengal which was in a state, first, of the last fragmentary and chaotic agitations of the old violent spirit of rajasic politics and then of torpor and inaction; and the thing that had to be done was to get rid of the errors of the past (errors once necessary for the development, but likely if persisted in to ruin and frustrate the future), to get at a firm spiritual basis and found a centre of spiritual unity and action, a *sangha*, on a small scale but sure of its principle and capable of a large development. This has

now been done, but at the moment of its firm effectuation, new conditions have come in which create a new and larger problem. First, many imprisoned forces have been set loose and, secondly, the chaos of incertitude, confused agitation and unseeing unrest which has followed upon the war and is felt all over the world, is now at work in Bengal. The nature of this unrest is a haste to get something done without knowing what has to be done, a sense of and vague response to large forces without any vision of or hold on the real possibilities of the future of humanity and the nation. The old things are broken up in their assured mould and are yet persisting and trying to form themselves anew, the new exist for the most part only in vague idea without a body or clear action and without any power as yet to form what is lacking to them. The old politics in India persist in a chaos of parties and programmes centred round the Congress quarrel and the Reforms, and in Bengal we have a rush of the commercial and industrial spirit which follows the Western principle and, if it succeeds on those lines, is likely to create a very disastrous reproduction or imitation of the European situation with its corrupt capitalism and the labour struggle and the war of classes. And all that is the very reverse of our own ideal. The one advantage for us is that it is a chaos and not a new order, and it is essential that we should throw our spirit and idea upon this fermentation, and draw what is best among its personalities and forces to the side and service of our ideal so as to get a hold and a greater mass of effectuation for it in the near future.

This, as I conceive it, has to be done on two lines. First, what has already been created by us and given a right spirit, basis and form, must be kept intact in spirit, intact in basis and intact in form and must strengthen and enlarge itself in its own strength and by its inherent power of self-development and the divine force within it. This is the line of work on which you have to proceed. We have to confront the confusion around us with a thing that is sure of itself and illumined by self-knowledge and a work that by its clear form and firm growth will present more and more the aspect of an assured solution of the problems of the present and the future. The mind of the outside world may

be too shallow, restless and impatient to understand a great, profound and difficult truth like ours on the side of the idea, but a visible accomplishment, a body of things done has always the power to compel and to attract the world to follow it. The only danger then is that when this body of things becomes prominent and attractive, numbers may rush into it and try to follow the externals without realising and reproducing in themselves the truth and the power of the real thing that made it possible. It was that against which I warned you when there came the first possibility of a considerable expansion. It is your business to enlarge your field of work and the work itself but not at the cost of any lowering or adulteration of its spirit. The first condition you have to assure is that all who have the work in hand or share in its direction must be of the spirit and work from the self outward; they must be men of the Yoga; but, secondly, all who enter in must have this imposed on them as the thing to be developed, must learn to develop this self-realisation first and foremost and the work only as its expression. The safety of the work lies in a strict adherence to this principle. The majority of the educated people of Bengal care only to get something done — and are not troubled by the fact that really nothing sure and lasting does get done or else only something that is likely to do as much harm as good; they care nothing about the spiritual basis of life which is India's real mission and the only possible source of her greatness, or give to it only a slight, secondary or incidental value, a something that has to be stuck on as a sentiment or a bit of colouring matter. Our whole principle is different and you have to insist on our principle in all that you say and do. Moreover, you have got a clear form for your work in association and that form as well as the spirit you must maintain; any loosening of it or compromise would mean confusion and an impairing of the force that is working in your sangha.

But on the other hand there is another line of work which is also necessary at the present moment, because the Shakti is moving in that direction also and the Shakti is the doer of the work, — and that is for others, like Barin to enter into the fermenting mass and draw out of it elements that are fit but not

yet ready to take our whole idea and first to get into and then occupy existing or newly created means and activities, — as he is doing with the Narayan, — which can be increasingly made instruments of our purpose. This work will be attended with all the difficulties and uncertainties and obstacles which go with a mixed and yet unformed working, — such as you had at the beginning, but have now got over, — but we must trust to the divine Shakti to overcome them. The one difficulty that it is in our power to avoid is that of the relation between those who are working on these different lines. There the first necessity is that there should be no clash or spirit of rivalry, sense of division or monopolising personal or corporate egoism to bring discord among those who receive their inspiration from the same source and have the same ideal. A spiritual unity and a readiness for cooperation must be the guiding principle of their relations.

I have already answered to Sirish the first very natural question that arose in your mind at the inception of these new conditions, why Barin and others should cast themselves separately into the অরূপ to create a রূপ out of it, when there is already a form and a body of associated communal work in the spirit of our ideal and why all should not unite in that form and create a greater power of associated driving force to bring about a rapid enlargement and victory of the ideal. The first thing is that the particular form given is the right thing for those who are already associated together, because it has arisen naturally out of themselves and by the Will that guides, but it may well be that the same precise form may not be applicable or intended everywhere. The spirit, the truth must be the same, but the formations may be different with advantage to the spirit. To insist on one form only might well bring in that rigidity which grew upon Indian society and its civilisation in the past and brought about an imprisonment and decline of the spirit. India was strongest and most alive when she had many variations of form but one spirit. And I think, — that at least was the prevision that came on me in the Alipur jail and I do not yet see a different prospect, — that this will be the case also in the future. Then, secondly, there is a psychological

necessity which we cannot at the present moment leave out of consideration. The sangha at Chandernagore is a thing that has grown up with my power behind and yours at the centre and it has assumed a body and temperament which is the result of this origination. But there are others, people of strong personality and full of shakti, who receive the spiritual force direct from me and are made themselves to be central spirits and direct radiators of the shakti, and for these to subordinate themselves to the existing body and temperament would not be easy for any and in most cases impossible, — such a subordination would not have grown out of themselves and would only be imposed by *nigraha*, a thing contrary to the *prakriti*, — and it would besides clog up the natural action of the power in them. And on the other hand to bring them in as coordinated central figures into the existing form would not be feasible, for it would mean a disturbing change and new fermentation of forces in the work that is already being well done on established lines. It would mean, even if at all successful, a sort of conducting by spiritual committee and that is not the line on which the Shakti has proceeded at Chandernagore. The more perfect coordination of all who are at work can only come, as far as I can see, after I myself go to Bengal and can act by my direct presence. Thirdly, there are a considerable number of people in the country who are not yet of us, yet can be given the necessary turn, but owing to temperamental and other causes they would not be drawn to the existing centre, but could be easily drawn by Barin, Saurin, Bijoy and others. And in all these and similar cases we must leave freedom to the guiding Shakti to use her own means and instruments. Finally, there are things to be done which need to be done, but which I would not like to impose on your sangha as it now stands, first, because it would disturb the characteristic frame and ideal temperament of your work, a thing which it is important to keep, and secondly because it would impose on you unnecessary complications; and these things can best be done by Barin and others while seeming to work independently for their own hand. And there are needs also to be met for which these other activities are required. Of that I can better speak to

you in person than by letter. This being the situation, the need that remains is to keep a right relation between those who are working, and that means to extend the spirit of unity which is our basis so as to embrace all the work and workers, undeterred by differences of mentality and divergences of action.

In our work we have to fix our relations with three different kinds of people, first, those who are working for the country but without any greater idea or spiritual motive, secondly, those who have the spiritual motive but not the same ideal and inspiration as ourselves, thirdly, those who have the same ideal and inspiration, but are working in different bodies and at first on different lines. Our relation to the first class of people and their work must be based on the fundamental principle of our Yoga to see God in all and the one Self in all acting through different natures and all energies, even those which are hostile, as workings of the divine Shakti although behind the veil of the *ahankara* and the ignorant mentality. There are movements at work new and old which are not the definite reality of the future but are needed at the present moment as part of the transition. It is in this light for example that I regard many things that are in process in Europe and I am even moved to give a temporary spiritual support to efforts and movements which are not in consonance with our own and must eventually fail or cease by exhaustion of their utility but are needed as transitional powers. This too is how I regard the work of men like Tilak and Gandhi. We work in the faith that it is our vision of the future that is the central divine will, the highest actualisable possibility and therefore the one thing that must be made the object of our action; but that does not mean that the Shakti is not working in her own covert way and for her own ends through others. No doubt their movements are of a western and materialistic inspiration or else an imperfect mixture, and some day it may be we shall have to give battle to them as certainly we shall have to overcome the spirit that informs them. But that time has not come yet, and meanwhile what we have to do is to develop and spread our own vision and idea and give it body so as eventually to confront the things that are in possession of the present with

a realisation of the things that belong to the future. I think that at this juncture we should avoid a too direct attack or criticism of them as that only creates avoidable opposition to our own work. The positive rather than the negative method is the one we should adopt until we are strong enough to convince by our visible strength and work the minds that are now attracted by the present power and activity of other movements, — to assert our own ideal as the true and the right way but not to invite conflict by a destructive frontal attack on the others.

As for the second class, such as the other spiritual movements in Bengal, our attitude to most should be that of a benevolent neutrality and a sympathy for such of their elements as are at all in consonance with our own ideal. The one thing which we have to get rid of is the idea of Maya and ascetic abandonment of the life and effort of humanity and also, though that is social and religious rather than directly spiritual, the clinging to old forms and refusal to admit new development. The movements that admit life and Ananda and are ready to break away from the old narrowness of social and other forms, are so much to the good even though they have not the full largeness of the integral spiritual idea and realisation. These we must leave to go on their way and run themselves out or else enlarge themselves till they are ready to coalesce with us. I do not mean that with regard to either of these classes we should refrain from all criticism of the insufficiency of ideal or method, but this should be as far as possible quite general, a discussion and the enforcement of a greater principle and truer method, distinguishing truth from error but not too pointedly aggressive against particular things or so expressed as to seem to hit straight at this or that person or body. To insist on our own propaganda and work is always necessary and sometimes though not always to meet any attack on it; but we need not go out of our way to invite conflict. To this rule there may be particular exceptions; I only indicate what seems to me for the present the right general attitude.

This once understood, the really important thing becomes at once our own work and the relation between different workers,

and here, as I have said, what we need is the growth of spiritual unity and a readiness to take the work of others as supplementing one's own and, wherever it is called for and possible, to cooperate. There is a danger here from the subtler forms of egoism. It is not enough to realise unity among those who are already working with one mind as one soul in many bodies; there must be unity of spirit with others who are following different ways or working separately for the present and complete *samata* with regard to their action, even if it seems to one wrong or imperfect, and patience with regard to mental and moral divergences. This should be easy for you, as it means only getting rid of the remnants of your sattwic ahankara; it may not be so easy for others who have still a rajasic ahankara to trouble them. But if people like you and Barin give the example, that difficulty can eventually be got over; if on the contrary you also allow misunderstandings among yourselves, the work is likely to be very unnecessarily hampered. I may give as an instance, the matter about the *Prabartak*. Certain casual utterances of Saurin's, made in answer to queries and not volunteered, have come to you quite misreported as a sort of intentional campaign to belittle the paper and the other half of what he said, namely, that the *Prabartak* was inspired, though not actually written by me and the spirit and substance were that of my ideal, never reached your ears. I may add also that the alleged incident to which you took exception, as to his method of raising money, never actually happened. Again the advertisement or rather paragraph about Narayana in the *Amrita [Bazar]*¹⁴ was not inserted by Barin, but by someone else according to that other person's idea after a conversation with him: Barin was not responsible for the form nor had he any intention of claiming the Narayana as the sole and direct mouthpiece of my ideas. It is these misunderstandings which I want to see all of you avoid and it can be easily done if those who are among the principal channels of the Shakti preserve the spiritual unity which ought to prevail among those who derive their inspiration from the same source and follow

¹⁴ *MS Bazaar*

the same ideal. Others less developed may give cause for offence owing to their inability to control the rajasic ego still working in them, but calm, patience, *prema* and *samata* are the spirit in which we should meet such causes of offence; otherwise where is the perfection we seek by our Yoga? Let me add, while I am on this subject, that Haradhan seems to have been misinformed about Nalini. As a matter of fact he has mixed with no दल, nor engaged in any kind of associated activity while in Bengal. And if he had, it would have been with no other purpose than to draw others to our Yoga and our way of thinking; but as a matter of fact he remained inactive.

As for the other matter of the different lines of work, there is one instance which illustrates the difficulties that may arise. Barin has taken up the "Narayan" with the idea of gradually and eventually making it another instrument of propaganda for our ideas, and if he succeeds, that will be so much the more strength for us. It will not be a mere doubling of the work of the *Prabartak*, as it will present our ideas in a different way and so as to catch minds of a different type from those who are naturally attracted by the *Prabartak* which demands from its readers a mind already turned to spiritual things or at least naturally able to enter into that atmosphere. To others who are of a less spiritual and intuitive, a more intellectual or literary and artistic temperament, the articles of the *Prabartak* written out of an experience to which they are strangers, are not easily assimilable, and it is these minds which it may be possible to approach through the "Narayan". But if there is not a right understanding, the attitude of the two to each other may be that of separation and competition rather than of activities supplementary to each other in the same work. In addition he has now the chance of getting hold of a strong publishing agency in Calcutta, as Sirish must already have told you, but he hesitates to take it up from fear that it may be regarded as a rival agency to the *Prabartak* Publishing House. He is not afraid of any misunderstanding between you and him, but of others connected with either work taking things in the wrong light and bringing in an unwholesome spirit of competition. This is a thing which

might easily happen, but must not be allowed to happen. I have told him that I would write to you and ask you to see that there is no misunderstanding in the matter, before giving him sanction to take up the possibility. Afterwards it will be for you and him to see that things on both sides are managed in the right spirit. This agency, if it comes into Barin's control, will be conducted with the same idea and method as the "Narayan" and all the profits except what is necessary for the maintenance and extension of the agency, will come to us and our work. These two things are the first fields the Shakti has offered to his energy and they are of a kind for which he is well fitted; their success means for us a great advantage. A time is now coming in which the Shakti is pressing to break down the barriers in which we have had hitherto to move and we must be ready to follow her indications without allowing our personal preferences and limitations to attempt to dictate to her any mind-made limits.

As for the extension of the work you are doing, I have spoken in general terms to Sirish and it is not necessary to add anything in this letter. When you come, I shall perhaps have more to say about it. It is regrettable that at this moment the physical strain should take an effect on your body; I trust it is only a part of a temporary invasion of Roga of which many of us including myself have recently felt some touch. But you must be careful not to throw too much strain on the physical system. A timely sparing of the physical system when there is an indication of overstrain is often necessary before the Shakti has taken perfect possession of the more external parts of the adhara or the *vijnana* will is strong enough to set right at once weakenings and disturbances. There remains the question of your visit to Pondicherry. I had thought to delay it for a short time until I saw my way more clearly on certain important matters; but I now believe this is not necessary and it will be as well for you to come as soon as may be. I hardly suppose that Nelson's curious reservation about your visit means anything serious; otherwise he would have been more positive about it. I take it that they do not like the idea and would be suspicious about its motive and watch your actions more narrowly after it; but as they are

obstinately determined to be suspicious about anything we do in any case, this by itself cannot be allowed to be an obstacle. I should suggest therefore that you might come over after making arrangements for the work in your absence in such a way that the visit may be a fairly long one.

The work of the Arya has fallen into arrears and I have to spend just now the greater part of my energy in catching up, and the rest of my time, in the evening, is taken up by the daily visit of the Richards. I hope to get over the worst part of this necessity by the middle of June, so that by the time you come I may have a freer atmosphere to attend to the currents of the work and the world about me. There is now the beginning of a pressure from many sides inviting my spiritual attention to the future कर्म and this means the need of a greater outflowing of energy than when I had nothing to do but support a concentrated nucleus of the Shakti. I doubt however whether I shall be in a fit condition for meeting the demand till August, especially as I have not been able to get the physical basis yet put right by the power of the vijnana. After that we shall see what and how much can actually be done under the new circumstances. Meanwhile your visit may help to get things into preparatory line both in the inward motor-power and the outward determination.

A. G.

[25]

Pondicherry
Sept. 2. 1920

Dear M.

My impression about your marriage idea is that you are going too fast. What you say about the commune and the married couple is quite right as our ideal or rather as one side of our ideal, but there is here a question of time and tactics. In our work, especially in the preparatory and experimental part of it, there must be not only spiritual hardihood, साहसं, but skill and prudence, कौशलं. The question is whether it is necessary or wise

and advisable to engage in a battle with society at the moment on a point which it considers to be vital but which is to us subordinate. Our first business is to establish our communal system on a firm spiritual, secondly on a firm economical foundation, and to spread it wide, but the complete social change can only come as a result of the other two. It must come first in spirit, afterwards in form. If a man enters into the commune by spiritual unity, if he gives to it his life and labour and considers all he has as belonging to all, the first necessity is secured. The next thing is [to] make the movement economically self-sufficient, and to do that requires at the present moment all the energy you can command. These two things are, the one a constant, the other an immediate necessity. The institution of a communal ceremony of marriage can only be a future necessity; it involves nothing essential at the moment. The idea is that the family in future is not to be a separate unit, but a sub-unit of the communal whole. It is too early to decide exactly what form the family life will take, it may take many forms, not always the same. The principle is the important thing. But this principle can be observed whatever the form of the marriage ceremony they may have gone through at the time of personal union, whether recognised or not by the present social system. An external necessity does not arise in the present case, as Khagen is not marrying outside his caste.

It remains to be seen whether this step, though not necessary, is advisable. In the first place by your action you declare your commune to be an entirely separate thing from the rest of Hindu society; you will be following in the way of the Brahma Samaj or more exactly in that of Thakur Dayananda. That means a violent scission and a long struggle, which is likely greatly to complicate your other work and put difficulties in the way which need not have been there. My own idea was for our system to grow up in the society, not out of it, though different from it, first bringing in a new spiritual idea, — a field in which opposition and intolerance cannot now long endure, — secondly, justifying itself on the outward plane by becoming a centre of economical regeneration and new power for the country, a work in which we shall have sympathy more than opposition, and getting forward

with other matters according to need and opportunity and with a considerable freedom and latitude, meeting social orthodoxy with the plea of reembodying the old free Hindu idea in new forms rather than with the profession of a violent rejection both of the past and the present. In this process a clash will be inevitable sooner or later, but a deliberate precipitation of the conflict in so extreme a form as you suggest was not within my intentions. That was to come, but only when we were strong and had already a hold on the country, so that we might have a strong support as well as enemies.

Your point is that the commune should not depend either on Government or society for the validity of the union. It seems to me sufficient if that is spiritually insisted on or at most given an outward indication. I would suggest that the exchange of garlands should be done before the commune, as it was done in the old *Swayamvara* before the assembly. The conventional marriage can then be added as a concession to the present society, as in old times the *sampradana* by the father was added to the *swayamvara* although in fact the *swayamvara* itself would have been quite valid without it. If a case should arise in future where the mutual giving would be necessary by itself, we might then go to the more extreme course. This would, it seems to me, satisfy everything immediately necessary or advisable, — first, the assertion of free choice as the principle of marriage, secondly, the formal inclusion of the couple in their united life in the commune, apart from any conventional marriage ceremony, thirdly, the justification of a continuity between our movement and the great past of India. The movement of course is not to stop with the forms of the past or a modernisation of them, but this sort of preliminary advance under cover will prepare more easily its future advance into the open, which we can afterwards make as rapid as we choose. At the same time it will have the advantage of awaking a less vehement opposition at a moment when it seems to me we are not yet ready for a frontal attack in the social field and a decisive battle. If a battle becomes necessary, of course we must not flinch from it, but I should myself prefer to have it after I have reached the proper stage in my Yoga and

after I return to Bengal. At present I have so many calls upon an energy which is still largely occupied with pushing forward to its own perfection that I do not quite like the idea of the heavy drain on it such a struggle would entail. This at least is my present view on the matter.

The Standard Bearer is, I am afraid, subject to the criticism passed on it; the criticism is general and I felt it myself. It is a sort of weekly "Arya"; but the Arya style and method are not what is wanted for a weekly paper. What you need to do, is to make the ideas easy to the people and give them a practical direction. At present you give only a difficult philosophy and abstract principles. I shall write more about this matter hereafter as soon as I find time.

A. G.

[26]

Pondicherry
Nov 11. 1920

Dear M.

It has become necessary for me to give a categorical denial to all the rumours and ascriptions of opinion which irresponsible people are publishing from time to time about me. The Janmabhumi nonsense is especially idiotic and I do not understand how anyone with brains in his head could have accepted such childish rubbish as mine. Please write an article in the next issue of the Standardbearer saying that in view of the conflicting rumours that have been set abroad, some representing me as for the Reforms and others as for Non-Cooperation, you (that is the St. B.) have written to me and received the following reply which you are authorised to publish. "All these assertions are without foundation. I have made no pronouncement of my political views. I have authorised nobody whether publicly or privately to be the spokesman of my opinions. The rumour suggesting that I support the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms and am opposed to Non-Cooperation is without basis. I have nothing to do personally with the manifesto of Sir Ashutosh

Chaudhuri and others citing a passage from my past writings. The recorded opinions of a public man are public property and I do not disclaim what I have written; but the responsibility for its application to the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms and the present situation rests entirely with the signatories to the manifesto. The summary of my opinions in the *Janmabhumi*, representing me as an enthusiastic follower of Mahatma Gandhi, of which I only came to know the other day, is wholly unauthorised and does *not* “render justice to my views” either in form or in substance. Things are attributed to me in it which I would never have dreamed of saying. It is especially adding insult to injury to make me say that I am ready to sacrifice my conscience to a Congress mandate and recommend all to go and do likewise. I have not stated to anyone that “full responsible self-government completely independent of British control” or any other purely political object is the goal to the attainment of which I intend to devote my efforts and I have not made any rhetorical prophecy of a colossal success for the Non-Cooperation movement. As you well know, I am identifying myself with only one kind of work or propaganda as regards India, the endeavour to reconstitute her cultural, social and economic life within larger and freer lines than the past on a spiritual basis. As regards political questions, I would request my friends and the public not to attach credence to anything purporting to be a statement of my opinions which is not expressly authorised by me or issued over my signature.”

I shall write to you about other matters in another letter.

A. G.

P.S. Please ask Mani Naik to see my sister before he comes here. She wants to send with him certain utensils for our use.

[27]

TIME INOPPORTUNE. INTERVIEW NOT POSSIBLE. WHY NOT WRITE?

13 May 1925

[28]

[8 May 1930]

Nalini.

There are certain words (marked) I fail to decipher and I don't understand the first line of the second paragraph. Can you enlighten me as to what he really wants, behind the twists and vagueness of his rhetoric?¹⁵

Sri Aurobindo

Write to Motilal in Bengali telling him that Sri Aurobindo for the last few years does not see anybody, not even his disciples here, except on the three days of the year set apart for darshan and even then does not speak to anyone. At first an occasional exception was made but now even this has not been done for a long time. It is through the Mother and not by personal contact that he directs the work. If anyone wants to ask him a question of importance, get a difficulty solved etc, he writes and the answer is given in writing.

Add that the difficulty for which he wants a solution is not clear to Sri Aurobindo from his letter. He appears to say that the Sangha is securely founded on a spiritual basis and that he wishes now to go out in search of *mukti*. He knows that *mukti* in the ordinary sense (moksha), release from the world and life, is not an aim in Sri Aurobindo's Yoga. Mukti here means liberation from ego and all its movements and elevation into a divine and spiritual consciousness. For this it may be necessary to come out of the ordinary life and its unsuitable atmosphere, surroundings and activities. But if the Sangha is well founded on a spiritual basis then there ought to be a spiritual atmosphere there favourable to this kind of *mukti*, the very work itself being a help and a means toward it and not an obstacle. It is therefore not clear why it should be necessary for him to go out of it to get *mukti*.

¹⁵ Sri Aurobindo wrote these two sentences to his secretary Nolini Kanta Gupta on the back of a letter from Motilal. He wrote the two paragraphs that follow on the back of the same letter, apparently after getting the required clarification. — Ed.

Draft of a Letter to Saurin Bose

[June 1914]

Dear Saurin,

I have received your letter and I reply first to the one or two points in it which demand an answer. We have changed the name of the review from the *New Idea* to the *Arya*. We are bringing out a prospectus with specimens of the content which will have to be distributed so as to attract subscribers. It will probably be out in the middle of the month. Please let us know before then how many copies we should send to you to distribute. The address of the Review will be 7 Rue Duplex & subscriptions should be sent to the Manager, *Arya* at that address. This is the house that has been found for M & Madame Richard; they have not occupied it yet but will do so within a week or so. It is Martin's house over on the other side of the street just near to the Governor's. It is also to be the headquarters of the Review & the Society, at least for the present.

Sukummar has not yet sent the garden-money but I presume he will do so before long. I have received Rs 400 of the Rs 600 due to me from another quarter & hope to get the remainder by August. With the garden money, this will mean Rs 1100, & with another Rs 100 & 130 for payment of the old rent, we could just go on for a year even without the Rs 1000 arrangement yearly or other money. But Rs 150 is the real minimum sum needed, especially if we keep this house after Nagen goes, as Richard wishes. If the Review succeeds, the problem will be solved; for with 500 subscribers abroad & 1500 in India, we could run the Review, pay the assistants & keep a sufficient sum for the two Editors.

As for your loans, my point was not about a legal process or any material trouble as the result of non-payment. It was that those who give the loan should not have any feeling of not being rightly dealt with, if we should fail to repay them, any feeling that advantage had been taken of their friendship. I have had too bad an experience of money-matters & their power to cool down friendly relations not to be on my guard in this respect.

Therefore, I desire that there should be no ground left for future misunderstanding in any matter of the kind, & loans are the most fruitful of these things, much more than money asked or taken as a gift.

You will of course return before August, — as soon in fact as it is no longer necessary for you to stay in Bengal to get matters arranged there. I await your farther information with regard to the idea of Mrinalini coming here. At present it seems to me that that will depend very much on the success of the Review & a more settled condition in my means of life. We shall see, however, whether anything else develops.

To K. R. Appadurai

“ARYA”

Revue de Grande Synthèse Philosophique
7, rue Dupleix, PONDICHÉRY.

13th April. 1916

Dear M^r Appadurai

Thanks for the money. About the Raja of Pittapur, the difficulty is that I do not know Pundit Shivanath very well, and secondly we were never associated politically. I am even afraid that any letter of mine might do a disservice, if, as I think, the Pundit belongs to the Moderate school of politics; it might cause him to look upon M^r K.V.R. as an extreme politician to be avoided rather than supported. However, if you don't mind taking the risk, you can use the letter which I send.

Kindly ask M^r K.V.R. to send me money from time to time if he can for a while as just at present my sources of supply in Bengal are very much obstructed and I am in considerable difficulty.

Yours sincerely
Aurobindo Ghose

Fragmentary Draft Letter

[.....] with whatever the superior wisdom and political experience of the ruling race to grant to them. You are asking for a thing contrary to human nature.*¹⁶

I state the difficulty broadly as I see it; I shall try to make my meaning more precise in a subsequent letter. Meanwhile all I can say is that whatever can be done to alter this state [of] things — subject to my conscience and lights, I am always willing to do. But my scope of action is very limited. I am an exile in French India, in danger of arrest or internment if I step across the border. I have long abstained from all intermixture in politics, and anything I might say, write or do now would be misunderstood by the Government. They regard me, I believe, as an arch revolutionary and irreconcilable; any assertion of mine to the contrary would be regarded probably as camouflage or covert for unavowable designs. Nor could I engage to satisfy them by my utterances or action, I would necessarily have to speak and act from the point of view of Indian aspiration to liberty and this is a thing which they seem still to regard [as] objectionable. All that I can see at present to do is in the line I am doing, but that is necessarily a [samadhi] kind of action which can only bear fruit indirectly and not in the present

But if the English mind would take the first step and try to see things from the Indian's standpoint — see their mind and act accordingly, all difficulties might be solved. The Indian mind has not the Irish memory for past wrongs and discords, it forgives and forgets easily. Only it must be made to feel that the approach on the other side is frank and whole hearted. If it once felt that, every difficulty would be solved.

I send you my volume of poems since you have desired to read it, but with some hesitation. I doubt whether you will find much that is worth your perusal except two or three of the shorter poems, they were written long ago, some as many as 20 or 25 years, and are rather gropings after verse and style than a

¹⁶ *The asterisk is Sri Aurobindo's; its significance is not known. — Ed.*

self-expression. It is only now that I am doing work which I feel has some chance of living, but it is not yet ready for publication.

To a Would-be Contributor to the *Arya*

Pondicherry
Sept. 3. 1919

Dear Sir,

I regret that not knowing you would require the copy back, — we do not usually return manuscripts, — I have entered upon it certain alterations to indicate the kind of changes which would be needed if you wished to have it published in the “*Arya*”. The magazine aims at a very high standard of style and thinking, and I make it a rule to admit nothing which is not in my judgment as perfect as possible in both directions. Your poem is noble throughout in idea and has fine lines, but is not throughout of one piece; that is to say, it is written in a high and almost epic strain, but there are dissonant turns and phrases which belong to a lower pitch of writing. I was about to write to you to this effect. I understand from your letter that you wish now to publish the poem elsewhere; but the copy is spoilt for the purpose, though I can return it if you still desire.

Yours sincerely
Aurobindo Ghose
Director, “*Arya*”

To Joseph Baptista

Pondicherry
Jan. 5, 1920

Dear Baptista,

Your offer is a tempting one, but I regret that I cannot answer it in the affirmative. It is due to you that I should state explicitly my reasons. In the first place I am not prepared at present to return to British India. This is quite apart from any political obstacle. I understand that up to last September

the Government of Bengal (and probably the Government of Madras also) were opposed to my return to British India and that practically this opposition meant that if I went back I should be interned or imprisoned under one or other of the beneficent Acts which are apparently still to subsist as helps in ushering in the new era of trust and cooperation. I do not suppose other Governments would be any more delighted by my appearance in their respective provinces. Perhaps the King's Proclamation may make a difference, but that is not certain since, as I read it, it does not mean an amnesty, but an act of gracious concession and benevolence limited by the discretion of the Viceroy. Now I have too much work on my hands to waste my time in the leisured ease of an involuntary Government guest. But even if I were assured of an entirely free action and movement, I should yet not go just now. I came to Pondicherry in order to have freedom and tranquillity for a fixed object having nothing to do with present politics — in which I have taken no direct part since my coming here, though what I could do for the country in my own way I have constantly done, — and until it is accomplished, it is not possible for me to resume any kind of public activity. But if I were in British India, I should be obliged to plunge at once into action of different kinds. Pondicherry is my place of retreat, my cave of tapasya, — not of the ascetic kind, but of a brand of my own invention. I must finish that, I must be internally armed and equipped for my work before I leave it.

Next in the matter of the work itself. I do not at all look down on politics or political action or consider I have got above them. I have always laid a dominant stress and I now lay an entire stress on the spiritual life, but my idea of spirituality has nothing to do with ascetic withdrawal or contempt or disgust of secular things. There is to me nothing secular, all human activity is for me a thing to be included in a complete spiritual life, and the importance of politics at the present time is very great. But my line and intention of political activity would differ considerably from anything now current in the field. I entered into political action and continued it from 1903 to 1910 with one aim and one alone, to get into the mind of the people a settled

will for freedom and the necessity of a struggle to achieve it in place of the futile ambling Congress methods till then in vogue. That is now done and the Amritsar Congress is the seal upon it. The will is not as practical and compact nor by any means as organised and sustained in action as it should be, but there is the will and plenty of strong and able leaders to guide it. I consider that in spite of the inadequacy of the Reforms, the will to self-determination, if the country keeps its present temper, as I have no doubt it will, is bound to prevail before long. What preoccupies me now is the question what it is going to do with its self-determination, how will it use its freedom, on what lines is it going to determine its future?

You may ask why not come out and help, myself, so far as I can, in giving a lead? But my mind has a habit of running inconveniently ahead of the times,—some might say, out of time altogether into the world of the ideal. Your party, you say, is going to be a social democratic party. Now I believe in something which might be called social democracy, but not in any of the forms now current, and I am not altogether in love with the European kind, however great an improvement it may be on the past. I hold that India having a spirit of her own and a governing temperament proper to her own civilisation, should in politics as in everything else strike out her own original path and not stumble in the wake of Europe. But this is precisely what she will be obliged to do, if she has to start on the road in her present chaotic and unprepared condition of mind. No doubt people talk of India developing on her own lines, but nobody seems to have very clear or sufficient ideas as to what those lines are to be. In this matter I have formed ideals and certain definite ideas of my own, in which at present very few are likely to follow me, since they are governed by an uncompromising spiritual idealism of an unconventional kind and would be unintelligible to many and an offence and stumbling block to a great number. But I have not as yet any clear and full idea of the practical lines; I have no formed programme. In a word, I am feeling my way in my mind and am not ready for either propaganda or action. Even if I were, it would mean for some time ploughing my lonely

furrow or at least freedom to take my own way. As the editor of your paper, I should be bound to voice the opinion of others and reserve my own, and while I have full sympathy with the general ideas of the advanced parties so far as concerns the action of the present moment and, if I were in the field, would do all I could to help them, I am almost incapable by nature of limiting myself in that way, at least to the extent that would be requisite.

Excuse the length of this screed. I thought it necessary to explain fully so as to avoid giving you the impression that I declined your request from any affectation or reality of spiritual aloofness or wish to shirk the call of the country or want of sympathy with the work you and others are so admirably doing. I repeat my regret that I am compelled to disappoint you.

Yours sincerely,
Aurobindo Ghose

To Balkrishna Shivaram Moonje

[1]

Pondicherry
Aug 30. 1920

Dear D^r Moonje,

As I have already wired to you, I find myself unable to accept your offer of the Presidentship of the Nagpur Congress. There are reasons even within the political field itself which in any case would have stood in my way. In the first place I have never signed and would never care to sign as a personal declaration of faith the Congress creed, as my own is of a different character. In the next place since my retirement from British India I have developed an outlook and views which have diverged a great deal from those I held at the time and, as they are remote from present actualities and do not follow the present stream of political action, I should find myself very much embarrassed what to say to the Congress. I am entirely in sympathy with all that is being done so far as its object is to secure liberty for India, but I should

be unable to identify myself with the programme of any of the parties. The President of the Congress is really a mouthpiece of the Congress and to make from the presidential chair a purely personal pronouncement miles away from what the Congress is thinking and doing would be grotesquely out of place. Not only so, but nowadays the President has a responsibility in connection with the All India Congress Committee and the policy of the Congress during the year and other emergencies that may arise which, apart from my constitutional objection and, probably, incapacity to discharge official duties of any kind or to put on any kind of harness, I should be unable to fulfil, since it is impossible for me to throw over suddenly my fixed programme and settle at once in British India. These reasons would in any case have come in the way of my accepting your offer.

The central reason however is this that I am no longer first and foremost a politician, but have definitely commenced another kind of work with a spiritual basis, a work of spiritual, social, cultural and economic reconstruction of an almost revolutionary kind, and am even making or at least supervising a sort of practical or laboratory experiment in that sense which needs all the attention and energy that I can have to spare. It is impossible for me to combine political work of the current kind and this at the beginning. I should practically have to leave it aside, and this I cannot do, as I have taken it up as my mission for the rest of my life. This is the true reason of my inability to respond to your call.

I may say that in any case I think you would be making a wrong choice in asking me to take Tilak's place at your head. No one now alive in India, or at least no one yet known, is capable of taking that place, but myself least of all. I am an idealist to the marrow and could only be useful when there is something drastic to be done, a radical or revolutionary line to be taken, (I do not mean revolutionary by violence) a movement with an ideal aim and direct method to be inspired and organised. Tilak's policy of "responsive cooperation", continued agitation and obstruction whenever needed — and that would be oftener than not in the present circumstances — is, no doubt,

the only alternative to some form of non-cooperation or passive resistance. But it would need at its head a man of his combined suppleness, skill and determination to make it effective. I have not the suppleness and skill — at least of the kind needed — and could only bring the determination, supposing I accepted the policy, which I could not do practically, as, for []¹⁷ reasons of my own, nothing could induce me to set my foot in the new Councils. On the other hand a gigantic movement of non-cooperation merely to get some Punjab officials punished or to set up again the Turkish Empire which is dead and gone, shocks my ideas both of proportion and of common sense. I could only understand it as a means of “embarrassing the Government” and seizing hold of immediate grievances in order to launch an acute struggle for autonomy after the manner of Egypt and Ireland, — though no doubt without the element of violence. All the same, it could be only on a programme involving an entire change of the creed, function and organisation and policy of the Congress, making it a centre of national reconstruction and not merely of political agitation that I could — if I had not the other reason I have spoken of — re-enter the political field. Unfortunately the political mind and habits created by the past methods of the Congress do not make that practicable at the moment. I think you will see that, holding these ideas, it is not possible for me to intervene and least of all on the chair of the President.

Might I suggest that the success of the Congress can hardly depend on the presence of a single person and one who has long been in obscurity? The friends who call on me are surely wrong in thinking that the Nagpur Congress will be uninspiring without me. The national movement is surely strong enough now to be inspired with its own idea especially at a time of stress like the present. I am sorry to disappoint, but I have given the reasons that compel me and I cannot see how it is avoidable.

Yours sincerely
Aurobindo Ghose

¹⁷ MS my

[2]

RECONSIDERATION IMPOSSIBLE [SUBSEQUENT]¹⁸ EVENTS ONLY
CONFIRM MY DECISION.

19 September 1920

To Chittaranjan Das

“Arya” Office
Pondicherry
the 18th 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. Now that I am looking outward again, I find that circumstances lead me to write first to you, I say circumstances, because it is a need that makes me take up the pen after so long a disuse.

The need is in connection with the first outward work that I am undertaking after this long inner retirement. Barin has gone to Bengal and will see you in connection with it, but a word from me is perhaps necessary and therefore I send you through Barin this letter. I am giving him also a letter of authority from which you will understand the immediate nature of the need for which I have sent him to raise funds. But I may add something to make it more definite.

I think you know my present idea and the attitude towards life and work to which it has brought me. 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

¹⁸ *MS (telegram)* SUBSEQUENTLY

India to make this great victory for the world. But what precisely was the nature of the dynamic power of this greater consciousness? What was the condition of its effective truth? How could it be brought down, mobilised, organised, turned upon life? How could our present instruments, intellect, mind, life, body be made true and perfect channels for this great transformation? This was the problem I have been trying to work out in my own experience and I have now a sure basis, a wide knowledge and some mastery of the secret. Not yet its fulness and complete imperative presence — therefore I have still to remain in retirement. 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.

But still I have gone far enough to be able to undertake one work on a larger scale than before — the training of others to receive this Sadhana and prepare themselves as I have done, for without that my future work cannot even be begun. 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?

One word to avoid a possible misunderstanding. Long ago I gave to Motilal Roy of Chandernagore the ideas and some principles and lines of a new social and economical organisation and education and this with my spiritual force behind him he has been trying to work out in his own way in his Sangha. This is quite a separate thing from what I am now writing about, — my own work which I must do myself and no one can do 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.

To Shyamsundar Chakravarty

Pondicherry, March 12–1926

Dear Chakravarty,

I have been obliged to answer in the negative to your request by wire for contributions to the [“Bengalee”]¹⁹ on the occasion of your taking it over on behalf of the Nationalist party. I have been for a long time under a self-denying ordinance which precludes me from making any public utterance on politics and I have had to refuse similar requests from “Forward” and other papers. Even if it were not so, I confess that in the present confused state of politics I should be somewhat at a loss to make any useful pronouncement. No useful purpose could be served by any general statements on duties in the present situation. Everybody seems to be agreed on the general object and issue and the only question worth writing on is that of the best practical means for securing the agreed object and getting rid of the obstacles in the way. This is in any case a question for the practical leaders actually in the field and not for a retired spectator at a distance. It would be difficult for me even to pass an opinion on the rival policies in the field; for I have been unable to gather from what I have seen in the papers what is the practical turn they propose to give these policies or how they propose by them to secure Swaraj or bring it nearer. Please therefore excuse my refusal.

Yours sincerely,
Aurobindo Ghose.

¹⁹ MS “Bengali”

Open Letters
Published in Newspapers
1909 – 1925

To the Editor of the *Bengalee*

BABU AUROBINDO GHOSE'S LETTER

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "BENGALEE",

SIR,— Will you kindly allow me to express through your columns my deep sense of gratitude to all who have helped me in my hour of trial? Of the innumerable friends known and unknown, who have contributed each his mite to swell my defence fund, it is impossible for me now even to learn the names, and I must ask them to accept this public expression of my feeling in place of a private gratitude. Since my acquittal many telegrams and letters have reached me and they are too numerous to reply to individually. The love which my countrymen have heaped upon me in return for the little I have been able to do for them, amply repays any apparent trouble or misfortune my public activity may have brought upon me. I attribute my escape to no human agency, but first of all to the protection of the Mother of us all who has never been absent from me but always held me in Her arms and shielded me from grief and disaster, and secondarily to the prayers of thousands which have been going up to Her on my behalf ever since I was arrested. If it is the love of my country which led me into danger, it is also the love of my countrymen which has brought me safe through it.

AUROBINDO GHOSE.

6, College Square, May 14.

published 18 May 1909

To the Editor of the *Hindu*

[1]

BABU AUROBINDO GHOSE AT PONDICHERRY

A STATEMENT

Babu Aurobindo Ghose writes to us from 42, Rue de Pavillon, Pondicherry, under date November 7, 1910: —

I shall be obliged if you will allow me to inform every one interested in my whereabouts through your journal that I am and will remain in Pondicherry. I left British India over a month before proceedings were taken against me and, as I had purposely retired here in order to pursue my Yogic sadhana undisturbed by political action or pursuit and had already severed connection with my political work, I did not feel called upon to surrender on the warrant for sedition, as might have been incumbent on me if I had remained in the political field. I have since lived here as a religious recluse, visited only by a few friends, French and Indian, but my whereabouts have been an open secret, long known to the agents of the Government and widely rumoured in Madras as well as perfectly well-known to every one in Pondicherry. I find myself now compelled, somewhat against my will, to give my presence here a wider publicity. It has suited certain people for an ulterior object to construct a theory that I am not in Pondicherry, but in British India, and I wish to state emphatically that I have not been in British India since March last and shall not set foot on British territory even for a single moment in the future until I can return publicly. Any statement by any person to the contrary made now or in the future, will be false. I wish, at the same time, to make it perfectly clear that I have retired for the time from political activity of any kind and that I will see and correspond with no one in connection with political subjects. I defer all explanation or justification of my action in leaving British India until the High Court in Calcutta shall have pronounced on the culpability or innocence of the writing in the KARMAYOGIN on which I am indicted.

published 8 November 1910

[2]

Babu Aurobindo Ghose.

Babu Aurobindo Ghose writes from 42, Rue de Pavillon, Pondicherry, under date the 23rd instant: —

I am obliged to seek the protection of publicity against attempts that are being made to prejudice my name and reputation even in my retirement at Pondicherry. A number of individuals have suddenly begun to make their appearance here to whom my presence seems to be the principal attraction. One of these gems heralded his advent by a letter in which he regretted that the Police had refused to pay his expenses to Pondicherry, but informed me that in spite of this scurvy treatment he was pursuing his pilgrimage to me “jumping from station to station” without a ticket. Since his arrival he has been making scenes in the streets, collecting small crowds, shouting *Bande Mataram*, showing portraits of myself and other Nationalists along with copies of the Geneva *Bande Mataram* and the *Indian Sociologist* as credentials, naming men of advanced views as his “gurus”, professing to possess the Manicktola bomb-formula, offering to kill to order all who may be obnoxious for private or public reasons to any Swadeshist and informing everyone, but especially French gendarmes, that he has come to Pondicherry to massacre Europeans. The man seems to be a remarkable linguist, conversing in all the languages of Southern India and some of the North as well as in English and French. He has made three attempts to force or steal his way into my house, once disguised as a Hindustani and professing to be Mr. Tilak’s durwan. He employs his spare time, when not employed in these antics for which he claims to have my sanction, in watching trains for certain Police-agents as an amateur detective. I take him for a dismissed police spy trying to storm his way back into the kingdom of heaven. Extravagant and barefaced as are this scoundrel’s tactics, I mention them because he is one of a class, some of whom are quieter but more dangerous. I hear also that there are some young men without ostensible means of livelihood, who go about Madras figuring as

my shishyas, instructed by me to undertake this or that activity, and request people to pay money for work or for my maintenance. After this letter I hope they will lose this easy source of income. I have authorised no such youths to collect money on my behalf and have directed none to undertake any political activity of any description. Finally I find myself besieged by devotees who insist on seeing me whether I will or not. They have crossed all India to see me — from Karachi’s waters, from the rivers of the Panjab, whence do they not come? They only wish to stand at a distance and get mukti by gazing on my face; or they will sit at my feet, live with me wherever I am or follow me to whatever lands. They clamber on to my windows to see me or loiter and write letters from neighbouring Police-stations. I wish to inform all future pilgrims of the kind that their journey will be in vain and to request those to whom they may give reports of myself and my imaginary conversations, to disbelieve entirely whatever they may say. I am living in entire retirement and see none but a few local friends and the few gentlemen of position who care to see me when they come to Pondicherry. I have written thus at length in order to safeguard myself against the deliberate manufacture or mistaken growth of “evidence” against me, *e.g.* such as the statement in the Nasik case that I was “maintained” by the Mitra Mela. I need hardly tell my countrymen that I have never been a paid agitator, still less a “maintained” revolutionist, but one whom even hostile Mahatmas admit to be without any pecuniary or other axe to grind. Nor have I ever received any payment for any political work except occasional payments for contributions to the Calcutta *Bande Mataram* while I was on its staff.

published 24 February 1911

[3]

Babu Aurobindo Ghose

Babu Aurobindo Ghose writes to us from Pondicherry: —

An Anglo-Indian paper of some notoriety both for its language and views, has recently thought fit to publish a libellous

leaderette and subsequently an article openly arraigning me as a director of Anarchist societies, a criminal and an assassin. Neither the assertions nor the opinions of the *Madras Times* carry much weight in themselves and I might have passed over the attack in silence. But I have had reason in my political career to suspect that there are police officials on the one side and propagandists of violent revolution on the other hand who would only be too glad to use any authority for bringing in my name as a supporter of Terrorism and assassination. Holding it inexpedient under such circumstances to keep silence, I wrote to the paper pointing out the gross inaccuracy of the statements in its leaderette, but the *Times* seems to have thought it more discreet to avoid the exposure of its fictions in its own columns. I am obliged therefore to ask you for the opportunity of reply denied to me in the paper by which I am attacked.

The Anglo-Indian Journal asserts, (1) that I have adopted the saffron robes of the ascetic, but “continue to direct” the movements of the Anarchist society from Pondicherry; (2) that one Balkrishna Lele, a Lieutenant of Mr. Tilak, is in Pondicherry for the same purpose; (3) that the most dangerous of the Madras Anarchists (it is not clear whether one or many) is or are at Pondicherry; (4) that a number of seditious journals are being openly published from French India; (5) that revolutionary literature is being manufactured and circulated from Pondicherry, parts of which the police have intercepted, but the rest has reached its destination and is the cause of the Ashe murder.

It is untrue that I am masquerading or have ever masqueraded as an ascetic; I live as a simple householder practising Yoga without sannyas just as I have been practising it for the last six years. It is untrue that any Balkrishna Lele or any lieutenant of Mr. Tilak is at Pondicherry; nor do I know, I doubt if anybody in India except *Madras Times* knows, of any Mahratta politician of that name and description. The statement about Madras Anarchists is unsupported by facts or names and therefore avoids any possibility of reply. It is untrue that any seditious journal is being published from French India. The paper *India* was discontinued in April, 1910, and has never been issued since.

The only periodicals published from Pondicherry are the Tamil *Dharma* and *Karmayogi* which, I am informed, do not touch politics; in any case, the harmless nature of their contents, is proved by the free circulation allowed to them in British India even under the rigours of the Press Act. As to the production of revolutionary literature, my enquiries have satisfied me, — and I think the investigations of the police must have led to the same result, — that the inflammatory Tamil pamphlets recently in circulation cannot have been printed with the present material of the two small presses owned by Nationalists. In the nature of things nobody can assert the impossibility of secret dissemination from Pondicherry or any other particular locality. As to the actuality, I can only say that the sole publications of the kind that have reached me personally since my presence here became public, have either come direct from France or America or once only from another town in this Presidency. This would seem to show that Pondicherry, if at all guilty in this respect, has not the monopoly of the trade. Moreover, though we hear occasionally of active dissemination in some localities of British India, the residents of Pondicherry are unaware of any noticeable activity of this kind in their midst. Finally, the impression which the *Times* seeks sedulously to create that Pondicherry is swarming with dangerous people from British India, ignores facts grossly. To my knowledge, there are not more than half a dozen British Indians here who can be said to have crossed the border for political reasons. So much for definite assertions; I shall refer to the general slander in a subsequent letter.

published 20 July 1911

[4]

Babu Aurobindo Ghose.

Babu Aurobindo Ghose writes to us from Pondicherry: —

In continuation of my last letter, I proceed to deal with the allegation that I “continue to direct Anarchist activities from Pondicherry,” an allegation self-condemned by the gross implied

imputation of a charge from which I have been exonerated by British tribunals. Here too a simple statement of facts will be the best answer. My political conduct has been four times under scrutiny by different tribunals and each time the result has been favourable to me. I have been twice accused of sedition. In the first case I was charged, not as responsible for the editorial columns of the "Bande Mataram," which were never impugned as infringing the law while I was connected with the paper, but for a stray correspondence and a technical violation of the law by the reproduction of articles in connection with a sedition case; my freedom from responsibility was overwhelmingly established by the prosecution evidence itself, the only witness to the contrary, a dismissed proof-reader picked up by the police, destroying his own evidence in cross examination. In the second, an article over my signature was somewhat hastily impugned by the authorities and declared inoffensive by the highest tribunal in the land. The article was so clearly unexceptionable on the face of it that the judges had to open the hearing of the appeal by expressing their inability to find the sedition alleged! My name has been brought twice into conspiracy trials. In the Alipur Case, after a protracted trial and detention in jail for a year, I was acquitted, the Judge condemning the document which was the only substantial evidence of a guilty connection. Finally, my name was dragged prominently into the Howrah Case by an approver whose evidence was declared by three High Court Judges to be utterly unreliable, — a man, I may add, of whose very name and existence I was ignorant till his arrest at Darjeeling. I think I am entitled to emphasise the flimsy grounds on which in all the cases proceedings originated, so far as I was concerned. Even in the Alipur trial, beyond an unverified information and the facts that my brother was the leader of the conspiracy and frequented my house, there was no original ground for involving me in the legal proceedings. After so many ordeals, I may claim that up to my cessation of political activity my public record stands absolved from blame.

I left British India in order to pursue my practice of Yoga undisturbed either by my old political connections or by the

harassment of me which seemed to have become a necessity of life to some police officials. Ceasing to be a political combatant, I could not hold myself bound to pass the better part of my life as an undertrial prisoner disproving charge after charge made on tainted evidence too lightly accepted by prejudiced minds. Before discontinuing activity myself I advised my brother Nationalists to abstain under the new conditions from uselessly hampering the Government experiment of coercion and reform and wasting their own strength by the continuance of their old activities, and it is well known, to use the language of the *Madras Times*, that I have myself observed this rule to the letter in Pondicherry. I have practised an absolute political passivity. I have discountenanced any idea of carrying on propaganda from British India, giving all who consulted me the one advice, "Wait for better times and God's will." I have strongly and repeatedly expressed myself against the circulation of inflammatory literature and against all wild ideas and reckless methods as a stumbling block in the way of the future resumption of sound, effective and perfect action for the welfare of the country. These facts are a sufficient answer to the vague and reckless libel circulated against me. I propose, however, with your indulgence, to make shortly so clear an exposition of my views and intentions for the future as will leave misrepresentation henceforward no possible character but that of a wanton libel meriting only the silence of contempt.

published 21 July 1911

To the Editor of the *New India*

[1]

National Education is, next to Self-Government and along with it, the deepest and most immediate need of the country, and it is a matter of rejoicing for one to whom an earlier effort in that direction gave the first opportunity for identifying himself with the larger life and hope of the Nation, to see the idea, for a time submerged, moving so soon towards self-fulfilment.

Home Rule and National Education are two inseparable

ideals, and none who follows the one, can fail the other, unless he is entirely wanting either in sincerity or in vision. We want not only a free India, but a great India, India taking worthily her place among the Nations and giving to the life of humanity what she alone can give. The greatest knowledge and the greatest riches man can possess are hers by inheritance; she has that for which all mankind is waiting. But she can only give it if her hands are free, her soul free, full and exalted, and her life dignified in all its parts. Home Rule, bringing with it the power of self-determination, can give the free hands, space for the soul to grow, strength for the life to raise itself again from darkness and narrow scope into light and nobility. But the full soul rich with the inheritance of the past, the widening gains of the present, and the large potentiality of her future, can come only by a system of National Education. It cannot come by any extension or imitation of the system of the existing universities with its radically false principles, its vicious and mechanical methods, its dead-alive routine tradition and its narrow and sightless spirit. Only a new spirit and a new body born from the heart of the Nation and full of the light and hope of its resurgence can create it.

We have a right to expect that the Nation will rise to the level of its opportunity and stand behind the movement as it has stood behind the movement for Home Rule. It should not be difficult to secure its intellectual sanction or its voice for National Education, but much more than that is wanted. The support it gives must be free from all taint of lip-service, passivity and lethargic inaction, evil habits born of long political servitude and inertia, and of that which largely led to it, subjection of the life and soul to a blend of unseeing and mechanical custom. Moral sympathy is not enough; active support from every individual is needed. Workers for the cause, money and means for its sustenance, students for its schools and colleges, are what the movement needs that it may prosper. The first will surely not be wanting; the second should come, for the control of the movement has in its personnel both influence and energy, and the habit of giving as well as self-giving for a great public cause is growing more widespread in the country. If the third condition is not from

the beginning sufficiently satisfied, it will be because, habituated individually always to the customary groove, we prefer the safe and prescribed path, even when it leads nowhere, to the great and effective way, and cannot see our own interest because it presents itself in a new and untried form. But this is a littleness of spirit which the Nation must shake off that it may have the courage of its destiny.

If material and prudential considerations stand in the way, then let it be seen that, even in the vocational sphere, the old system opens only the doors of a few offices and professions overcrowded with applicants, whence the majority must go back disappointed and with empty hands, or be satisfied with a dwarfed life and a sordid pittance; while the new education will open careers which will be at once ways of honourable sufficiency, dignity and affluence to the individual, and paths of service to the country. For the men who come out equipped in every way from its institutions will be those who will give that impetus to the economic life and effort of the country without which it cannot survive in the press of the world, much less attain its high legitimate position. Individual interest and National interest are the same and call in the same direction. Whether as citizen, as worker or as parent and guardian, the duty of every Indian in this matter is clear: it lies in the great and new road the pioneers have been hewing, and not in the old stumbling cart-ruts.

This is an hour in which, for India as for all the world, its future destiny and the turn of its steps for a century are being powerfully decided, and for no ordinary century, but one which is itself a great turning-point, an immense turn-over in the inner and outer history of mankind. As we act now, so shall the reward of our karma be meted out to us, and each call of this kind at such an hour is at once an opportunity, a choice, and a test offered to the spirit of our people. Let it be said that it rose in each to the full height of its being and deserved the visible intervention of the Master of Destiny in its favour.

published 8 April 1918

[2]

[The following letter to Mrs. Annie Besant is from the pen of a well-known Nationalist.]¹

I do not see that any other line can be taken with regard to these astonishing reforms than the one you have taken. It can only be regarded as unwise by those who are always ready to take any shadow, — how much more a bulky and imposing shadow like this, — and are careless of the substance. We have still, it appears, a fair number of political wise men of this type among us, but no Home Rule leader surely can stultify himself to that extent. A three days' examination of the scheme, — I have only the analysis to go upon and the whole thing is in the nature of a cleverly constructed Chinese puzzle — has failed to discover in them one atom of real power given to these new legislatures. The whole control is in the hands of Executive and State Councils and Grand Committees and irresponsible Ministers, and for the representative bodies, — supposing they are made really representative, which also is still left in doubt — there is only a quite ineffective and impotent voice. They are, it seems, to be only a flamboyant *édition de luxe* of the present Legislative Councils. The only point in which there is some appearance of control is the Provincial Budget and what is given by the left hand is taken away by the right. Almost every apparent concession is hedged in by a safeguard which annuls its value. On the other hand new and most dangerous irresponsible powers are assumed by the Government. How, under such circumstances, is acceptance possible? If, even, substantial control had been definitely secured by the scheme within a brief period of years, five or even ten, something might have been said in favour of a sort of vigilant acceptance. But there is nothing of the kind: on the contrary there is a menace of diminution of even these apparent concessions. And as you say the whole spirit is bad. Not even in the future is India to be allowed to determine its own destinies [or]² its rate of progress! Self-determination, it

¹ *Square brackets in New India. — Ed.*

² *New India* on

seems, has gone into the waste paper basket, with other scraps, I suppose.

If by unwisdom is meant the continuation of the present political struggle and what is advised, is a prudent submission and making the best of a bad matter, it seems to me that it is the latter course that will be the real unwisdom. For the struggle cannot be avoided; it can only be evaded for the moment, and if you evade it now, you will have it to-morrow or the day after, with the danger of its taking a more virulent form. At present it is only a question of agitating throughout the country for a better scheme and getting the Labour Party to take it up in England. And if the Congress does less than that, it will stultify itself entirely. I hope your lead will be generally followed; it is the only line that can be taken by a self-respecting Nation.

published 10 August 1918

To the Editor of the *Hindustan*

In answer to your request for a statement of my opinion on the intermarriage question, I can only say that everything will have my full approval which helps to liberate and strengthen the life of the individual in the frame of a vigorous society and restore the freedom and energy which India had in her heroic times of greatness and expansion. Many of our present social forms were shaped, many of our customs originated, in a [time]³ of contraction and decline. They had their utility for self-defence and survival within narrow limits, but are a drag upon our progress in the present hour when we are called upon once again to enter upon a free and courageous self-adaptation and expansion. I believe in an aggressive and expanding, not in a narrowly defensive and self-contracting Hinduism. Whether Mr. Patel's Bill is the best way to bring about the object intended is a question on which I can pronounce no decided opinion. I should have preferred a change from within the society rather than one brought about by legislation. But I recognise the difficulty

³ *Hindustan* line

created by the imposition of the rigid and mechanical notions of European jurisprudence on the old Hindu Law which was that of a society living and developing by an organic evolution. It is no longer easy, or perhaps in this case, possible to develop a new custom or revert to an old — for the change proposed amounts to no more than such a [reversion].⁴ It would appear that the difficulty created by the legislature can only be removed by a resort to legislation. In that case, the Bill has my approval.

1918

To the Editor of the *Independent*

“A GREAT MIND, A GREAT WILL”

A great mind, a great will, a great and pre-eminent leader of men has passed away from the field of his achievement and labour. To the mind of his country Lokamanya Tilak was much more, for he had become to it a considerable part of itself, the embodiment of its past effort, and the head of its present will and struggle for a free and greater life. His achievement and personality have put him amidst the first rank of historic and significant figures. He was one who built much rapidly out of little beginnings, a creator of great things out of an un-worked material. The creations he left behind him were a new and strong and self-reliant national spirit, the reawakened political mind and life of a people, a will to freedom and action, a great national purpose. He brought to his work extraordinary qualities, a calm, silent, unflinching courage, an unwavering purpose, a flexible mind, a forward-casting vision of possibilities, an eye for the occasion, a sense of actuality, a fine capacity of democratic leadership, a diplomacy that never lost sight of its aim and pressed towards it even in the most pliant turns of its movement, and guiding all, a single-minded patriotism that cared for power and influence only as a means of service to the Motherland and a lever for the work of her liberation. He sacrificed much for her and suffered

⁴ *Hindustan* revision

for her repeatedly and made no ostentation of his suffering and sacrifices. His life was a constant offering at her altar and his death has come in the midst of an unceasing service and labour.

The passing of this great personality creates a large and immediate void that will be felt acutely for a time, but it is the virtue of his own work that this vacancy must very soon be filled by new men and new forces. The spirit he created in the country is of that sincere, real and fruitful kind that cannot consent to cease or to fail, but must always throw up minds and capacities that will embody its purpose. It will raise up others of his mould, if not of his stature, to meet its needs, its demands, its call for ability and courage. He himself has only passed behind the veil, for death, and not life, is the illusion. The strong spirit that dwelt within him ranges now freed from our human and physical limitations, and can still shed upon us, on those now at work, and those who are coming, a more subtle, ample and irresistible influence; and even if this were not so, an effective part of him is still with us. His will is left behind in many to make more powerful and free from hesitations the national will he did so much to create, the growing will, whose strength and single wholeness are the chief conditions of the success of the national effort. His courage is left behind in numbers to fuse itself into and uplift and fortify the courage of his people; his sacrifice and strength in suffering are left with us to enlarge themselves, more even than in his life-time, and to heighten the fine and steeled temper our people need for the difficult share that still lies before [their]⁵ endeavour. These things are his legacy to his country, and it is in proportion as each man rises to the height of what they signify that his life will be justified and assured of its recompense.

Methods and policies may change but the spirit of what Lokamanya Tilak was and did remains and will continue to be needed, a constant power in others for the achievement of his own life's grand and single purpose. A great worker and creator is not to be judged only by the work he himself did, but also

⁵ *Independent its*

by the greater work he made possible. The achievement of the departed leader has brought the nation to a certain point. Its power to go forward from and beyond that point, to face new circumstances, to rise to the more strenuous and momentous demand of its future will be the greatest and surest sign of the soundness of his labour. That test is being applied to the national movement at the very moment of his departure.

The death of Lokamanya Tilak comes upon us at a time when the country is passing through most troubled and poignant hours. It occurs at a critical period, it coincides even with a crucial moment when questions are being put to the nation by the Master of Destiny, on the answer to which depends the whole spirit, virtue and meaning of its future. In each event that confronts us there is a divine significance, and the passing away at such a time of such a man, on whose thought and decision thousands hung, should make more profoundly felt by the people, by every man in the nation, the great, the almost religious responsibility that lies upon him personally.

At this juncture it is not for me to prejudge the issue; each must meet it according to his light and conscience. This at least can be demanded of every man who would be worthy of India and of her great departed son that he shall put away from him in the decision of the things to be done in the future, all weakness of will, all defect of courage, all unwillingness for sacrifice. Let each strive to see with that selfless impersonality taught by one of our greatest scriptures, which can alone enable us to identify ourselves both with the Divine Will and with the soul of our Mother. Two things India demands for her future, the freedom of soul, life and action needed for the work she has to do for mankind; and the understanding by her children of that work and of her own true spirit that the future India may be indeed India. The first seems still the main sense and need of the present moment, but the second is also involved in [it]⁶ — a yet greater issue. On the spirit of our decisions now and in the next few years depends the truth, vitality and greatness of

⁶ *Independent them*

our future national existence. It is the beginning of a great Self-Determination not only in the external but in the spiritual. These two thoughts should govern our action. Only so can the work done by Lokamanya Tilak find its true continuation and issue.

AUROBINDO GHOSE
published 5 August 1920

To the Editor of the *Standard Bearer*

Sri Aurobindo's declaration

In view of the conflicting rumours that have been set abroad, some representing Sri Aurobindo as for the Reforms and others as for Non-co-operation, Sri Mati Lal Roy, his spiritual agent in Bengal was requested by those in charge of their spiritual organ, in this humble instrumentality of our "Standard Bearer," to write to him in Pondicherry and as a result of the letter he had written to his Master, Sri Matilal has received the following reply which we are authorised to publish: —

Dear M—

* * * * *

All these assertions are without foundation.⁷ I have made no pronouncement of my political views. I have authorised nobody whether publicly or privately to be the spokesman of my opinions. The rumour suggesting that I support the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and am opposed to Non-Co-operation is without basis. I have nothing to do personally with the manifesto of Sir Ashutosh Choudhuri and others citing a passage from my past writings. The recorded opinions of a public man are public property and I do not disclaim what I have written; but the responsibility for its application to the Montagu Chelmsford Reforms and the present situation rests entirely with the signatories to the manifesto. The summary of my opinions in the *Janmabhumi*, representing me as an enthusiastic follower of Mahatma Gandhi, of which I only came to know the other day, is wholly unauthorised and does NOT "render justice to my views" either

⁷ This is an extract from a letter that is published in full on pages 248–49. — Ed.

in form or in substance. Things are attributed to me in it which I would never have dreamed of saying. It is especially adding insult to injury to make me say that I am ready to sacrifice my conscience to a Congress mandate and recommend all to go and do likewise. I have not stated to anyone that “full responsible Self-Government completely independent of British control” or any other purely political object is the goal to the attainment of which I intend to devote my efforts and I have not made any rhetorical prophecy of a colossal success for the Non-Cooperation movement. As you well know, I am identifying myself with only one kind of work or propaganda as regards India, the endeavour to reconstitute her cultural, social and economic life within larger and freer lines than the past on a spiritual basis. As regards political questions, I would request my friends and the public not to attach credence to anything purporting to be a statement of my opinions which is not expressly authorised by me or issued over my signature.

A. G.

published 21 November 1920

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.

Aurobindo Ghose.

published 22 June 1925

Section Two

Early Letters on Yoga and the Spiritual Life 1911–1928

Extracts from Letters to the Mother and Paul Richard, 1911 – c. 1922

To Paul Richard

[1]

I need some place of refuge in which I can complete my Yoga unassailed and build up other souls around me. It seems to me that Pondicherry is the place appointed by those who are Beyond, but you know how much effort is needed to establish the thing that is purposed upon the material plane. . . .

I am developing the necessary powers for bringing down the spiritual on the material plane, and I am now able to put myself into men and change them, removing the darkness and bringing light, giving them a new heart and a new mind. This I can do with great swiftness and completeness with those who are near me, but I have also succeeded with men hundreds of miles away. I have also been given the power to read men's characters and hearts, even their thoughts, but this power is not yet absolutely complete, nor can I use it always and in all cases. The power of guiding action by the mere exercise of will is also developing, but it is not so powerful as yet as the other. My communication with the other world is yet of a troubled character, though I am certainly in communication with some very great powers. But of all these things I will write more when the final obstacles in my way are cleared from the path.

What I perceive most clearly, is that the principal object of my Yoga is to remove absolutely and entirely every possible source of error and ineffectiveness, of error in order that the Truth I shall eventually show to men may be perfect, and of ineffectiveness in order that the work of changing the world, so far as I have to assist it, may be entirely victorious and irresistible. It is for this reason that I have been going through so long a discipline and that the more brilliant and mighty results of Yoga

have been so long withheld. I have been kept busy laying down the foundation, a work severe and painful. It is only now that the edifice is beginning to rise upon the sure and perfect foundation that has been laid.

12 July 1911

[2]

My Yoga is proceeding with great rapidity, but I defer writing to you of the results until certain experiments in which I am now engaged, have yielded fruit sufficient to establish beyond dispute the theory and system of yoga which I have formed and which is giving great results not only to me, but to the young men who are with me. . . . I expect these results within a month if all goes well.

20 September 1911

[3]

A great silence and inhibition of action has been the atmosphere of my Yoga for the last year and it is only now beginning to lift from me. The most serious part of my difficulties, — the inward struggle, — is over; I have conquered, or rather One whose instrument I am has conquered for me. I am turning now to the outward struggle, preparing my powers for it, awaiting the time and the signal to begin. The details I will not write to you now; the hour has not yet struck; for the enemy in the subtle parts of the material world, although beaten, is still struggling desperately to prevent my Yoga materialising in the objective plane. I await the issue of the struggle, towards which every day of the Yoga brings me nearer with a long stride.

* * *

In spite of that, however, my work in its foundations proceeds. There are means in this world, fortunately for the humanity, which Govts & authorities cannot touch or prevent. For the outward work, I see now, why it has been held back. It was necessary for me to have myself a perfect knowledge & power before I seriously undertook it. My knowledge and my power

are now making rapid strides towards the necessary perfection and, once that is secured, it will be impossible for the material difficulties to remain. 18 December 1912

To the Mother and Paul Richard

[1]

All is always for [the] best, but it is sometimes from the external point of view an awkward best.

* * *

I had one of my etheric writings, "Build desolated Europe into a city of God". I give it [to] you for what it is worth. Perhaps it is only an aspiration of the powers that have brought about your recall. But is not the whole world and not Europe only in a state of decomposition? As for the idea of a quiet country somewhere in Asia, where does it exist? The whole earth is now under one law and answers to the same vibrations and I am sceptical of finding any place where the clash of the struggle will not pursue us. In any case, an effective retirement does not seem to be my destiny. I must remain in touch with the world until I have either mastered adverse circumstances or succumbed or carried on the struggle between the spiritual and physical so far as I am destined to carry it on. This is how I have always seen things and still see them. As for failure, difficulty and apparent impossibility I am too much habituated to them to be much impressed by their constant self-presentation except for passing moments.

* * *

One needs to have a calm heart, a settled will, entire self-abnegation and the eyes constantly fixed on the beyond to live undiscouraged in times like these which are truly a period of universal decomposition. For myself, I follow the Voice and look neither to right nor to left of me. The result is not mine and hardly at all now even the labour. 6 May 1915

[2]

Heaven we have possessed, but not the earth; but the fullness of the yoga is to make, in the formula of the Veda, "Heaven and Earth equal and one".

20 May 1915

[3]

Everything internal is ripe or ripening, but there is a sort of locked struggle in which neither side can make a very appreciable advance (somewhat like the trench warfare in Europe), the spiritual force insisting against the resistance of the physical world, that resistance disputing every inch and making more or less effective counter-attacks. . . . And if there were not the strength and Ananda within, it would be harassing and disgusting work; but the eye of knowledge looks beyond and sees that it is only a protracted episode.

28 July 1915

[4]

I have begun in the issue of the Arya which is just out a number of articles on the Ideal of Human Unity. I intend to proceed very cautiously and not go very deep at first, but as if I were leading the intelligence of the reader gradually towards the deeper meaning of unity, — especially to discourage the idea that mistakes uniformity and mechanical association for unity.

* * *

Nothing seems able to disturb the immobility of things and all that is active outside our own selves is a sort of welter of dark and sombre confusion from which nothing formed or luminous can emerge. It is a singular condition of the world, the very definition of chaos with the superficial form of the old world resting apparently intact on the surface. But a chaos of long disintegration or of some early new birth? It is the thing that is being fought out from day to day, but as yet without any approach to a decision.

* * *

These periods of stagnation always conceal work below the surface which produces some advance afterwards.

16 September 1915

[5]

Reflection, where there is no directing voice, thought or impulse, does not carry one any farther. It only makes the mind travel continuously the round of [uncertain]¹ possibilities.

These things really depend on ourselves much more than on outside factors. If we do not raise difficulties by our thoughts and mental constructions or do not confirm them if they rise, if we have the calm and peace within and there is not that in us which excites the enemy to throw himself on us, then outward possibilities, usually, will not concretise themselves.

Our business at present is to gather spiritual force, calm knowledge and joy regardless of the adverse powers and happenings around us so that when our work really begins we shall be able to impose ourselves on the material world in which our work lies. (This [I] am slowly doing; you, I think, more rapidly.)

I am always of the opinion that the internal must precede the external, otherwise whatever work we attempt beyond our internal powers and knowledge is likely to fail or be broken.

This is precisely my present struggle to get outside the circle of forces and possibilities into the light of the Truth, the vijñana.

Abdul Baha's prevision is possibly correct, but at present it seems to me to be put into too rigid a form. A centre of light, not necessarily translated into the terms of a physical grouping, but in which a few can stand, an increasing circle of luminosity into which more & more can enter, and outside the twilight world

¹ MS (copy) certain

struggling with the light, this seems to be the inevitable course.

* * *

We live still more in the reflection of the light than in the light itself, and until we get nearer to the centre we cannot know.

* * *

The Scheme that was sent me seems to me to be a mental construction formed largely under the influence of the environment. I do not think it could be put into practice; for the world is not ready and if any such thing were attempted it would not be loyally initiated or loyally executed. . . . A change in the heart of mankind, a new heart, would be necessary before any such scheme could at all serve the great ends we contemplate. I would prefer a general breaking up to any premature formation, however harmful this dissolution might be. 18 November 1915

[6]

The experience you have described is Vedic in the real sense,² though not one which would easily be recognised by the modern systems of Yoga which call themselves [Vedic]³. 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 this world and the body are only images. But the modern Yogas hardly recognise the possibility of a material union with the Divine.

31 December 1915

[7]

The difficulties you find in the spiritual progress are common to us all. In this Yoga the progress is always attended with these relapses into the ordinary mentality until the whole being is so remoulded that it can no longer be affected either by any

² See *The Mother*, Prayers and Meditations (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 2003), pp. 311–12; entry of 26 November 1915.

³ MS (copy) Yogic

downward tendency in our own nature or by the impressions from the discordant world outside or even by the mental state of those associated with us most closely in the Yoga. The ordinary Yoga is usually concentrated on a single aim and therefore less exposed to such recoils; ours is so complex and many-sided and embraces such large aims that we cannot expect any smooth progress until we near the completion of our effort, — especially as all the hostile forces in the spiritual world are in a constant state of opposition and besiege our gains; for the complete victory of a single one of us would mean a general downfall among them. In fact by our own unaided effort we could not hope to succeed. It is only in proportion as we come into a more and more universal communion with the Highest that we can hope to overcome with any finality. For myself I have had to come back so often from things that seemed to have been securely gained that it is only relatively that I can say of any part of my Yoga, “It is done”. Still I have always found that when I recover from one of these recoils, it is always with a new spiritual gain which might have been neglected or missed if I had remained securely in my former state of partial satisfaction. Especially, as I have long had the map of my advance sketched out before me, I am able to measure my progress at each step and the particular losses are compensated for by the clear consciousness of the general advance that has been made. The final goal is far but the progress made in the face of so constant and massive an opposition is the guarantee of its being gained in the end. But the time is in other hands than ours. Therefore I have put impatience and dissatisfaction far away from me.

An absolute equality of the mind and heart and a clear purity and calm strength in all the members of the being have long been the primary condition on which the Power working in me has insisted with an inexhaustible patience and an undeviating constancy of will which rejects all the efforts of other powers to hasten forward to the neglect of these first requisites. Wherever they are impaired it returns upon them and works over and again over the weak points like a workman patiently mending the defects of his work. These seem to me to be the foundation

and condition of all the rest. As they become firmer and more complete the system is more able to hold consistently and vividly the settled perception of the One in all things and beings, in all qualities, forces, happenings, in all this world-consciousness and the play of its workings. That founds the Unity and upon it the deep satisfaction and the growing rapture of the Unity. It is this to which our nature is most recalcitrant. It persists in the division, in the dualities, in the sorrow and unsatisfied passion and labour, it finds it difficult to accustom itself to the divine largeness, joy and equipoise — especially the vital and material parts of our nature; it is they that pull down the mind which has accepted and even when it has long lived in the joy and peace and oneness. That, I suppose, is why the religions and philosophies have had so strong a leaning to the condemnation of Life and Matter and aimed at an escape instead of a victory. But the victory has to be won; the rebellious elements have to be redeemed and transformed, not rejected or excised.

When the Unity has been well founded, the static half of our work is done, but the active half remains. It is then that in the One we must see the Master and His Power, — Krishna and Kali as I name them using the terms of our Indian religions; the Power occupying the whole of myself and my nature which becomes Kali and ceases to be anything else, the Master using, directing, enjoying the Power to his ends, not mine, with that which I call myself only as a centre of his universal existence and responding to its workings as a soul to the Soul, taking upon itself his image until there is nothing left but Krishna and Kali. This is the stage I have reached in spite of all setbacks and recoils, imperfectly indeed in the secureness and intensity of the state, but well enough in the general type. When that has been done, then we may hope to found securely the play in us of his divine Knowledge governing the action of his divine Power. The rest is the full opening up of the different planes of his world-play and the subjection of Matter and the body and the material world to the law of the higher heavens of the Truth. To these things towards which in my earlier ignorance I used to press forward impatiently before satisfying the first conditions — the effort,

however, was necessary and made the necessary preparation of the material instruments — I can now only look forward as a subsequent eventuality in a yet distant vista of things.

To possess securely the Light and the Force of the supramental being, this is the main object to which the Power is now turning. But the remnant of the old habits of intellectual thought and mental will come so obstinate in their determination to remain that the progress is hampered, uncertain and always falls back from the little achievement already effected. They are no longer within me, they are blind, stupid, mechanical, incorrigible even when they perceive their incompetence, but they crowd round the mind and pour in their suggestions whenever it tries to remain open only to the supramental Light and the higher Command, so that the knowledge and the will reach the mind in a confused, distorted and often misleading form. It is, however, only a question of time: the siege will diminish in force and be finally dispelled.

23 June 1916

Draft of a Letter

He wishes me to say that he sent back the MS according to your request because he felt that it was quite impossible for him to deal with it in the near future.⁴ He is now living entirely retired and engrossed in his yoga. He has put off all external activities and so organised his time as to be able entirely to concentrate upon it alone. He has removed from his immediate surroundings all who are out of harmony with the atmosphere necessary to the yogic quietude. He sees no one and receives no visits. His friends in Madras do not see him when they come. Even his old guru Vishnu Lele who proposed to come here at this time has been requested to postpone indefinitely his visit. For the same reason he has ceased altogether to write. His own works, even those of which the publication has been arranged, — except the few of which others take the responsibility and which make no demand on him, — are lying unpublished for want of time to

⁴ *In this draft, Sri Aurobindo referred to himself in the third person because he intended the letter to be sent over the signature of his secretary. — Ed.*

retouch them. It is not only that he does not wish but that he cannot any longer allow himself to be disturbed or interrupted by anything that would perturb the balance or break the mould of his present arrangement of his life or draw him aside from the concentration of his energies. All else must be postponed until he has finished what he has to do and is free again to apply himself to external things and activities. Under these conditions a work so considerable as the retranslation or revised translation of the "Seigneur des Nations" becomes quite impossible. If he undertook it, he would not be able to carry it out. He hopes therefore that you will be able to make some other arrangement for it, as for the translations of your recent addresses which have been admirably done. Once you understand in the light of the above the conditions here, you can understand also why — apart from all other considerations — he is unable to assent to the suggestions in your letter.

To People in India, 1914–1926

To N. K. Gogte

[1]

Dear Sir,

I regret that I have not been able to reply as yet to your postcard. I am entirely occupied with the work for the Review which has to be given to the Press shortly. After the 17th I shall be more free and hope then to be able to reply to the questions you have put to us.

Yours sincerely
Aurobindo Ghose

Pondicherry
9 Sept. 1914

[2]

Pondicherry
21 Sept 1914

Dear Sir,

I hope you received duly my card explaining the delay in my answer.

Your questions cover the whole of a very wide field. It is therefore necessary to reply to them with some brevity, touching only on some principal points.

1. *What meditation exactly means.*

There are two words used in English to express the Indian idea of *Dhyana*, “meditation” and “contemplation”. Meditation means properly the concentration of the mind on a single train of ideas which work out a single subject. Contemplation means regarding mentally a single object, image, idea so that the knowledge about the object, image or idea may arise naturally in the mind by force of the concentration. Both these things are forms of *dhyana*; for the principle of *dhyana* is mental

concentration whether in thought, vision or knowledge.

There are other forms of *dhyana*. There is a passage in which Vivekananda advises you to stand back from your thoughts, let them occur in your mind as they will and simply observe them & see what they are. This may be called concentration in self-observation.

This form leads to another, the emptying of all thought out of the mind so as to leave it a sort of pure vigilant blank on which the divine knowledge may come and imprint itself, undisturbed by the inferior thoughts of the ordinary human mind and with the clearness of a writing in white chalk on a blackboard. You will find that the Gita speaks of this rejection of all mental thought as one of the methods of Yoga and even the method it seems to prefer. This may be called the *dhyana* of liberation, as it frees the mind from slavery to the mechanical process of thinking and allows it to think or not think as it pleases and when it pleases, or to choose its own thoughts or else to go beyond thought to the pure perception of Truth called in our philosophy *Vijnana*.

Meditation is the easiest process for the human mind, but the narrowest in its results; contemplation more difficult, but greater; self-observation and liberation from the chains of Thought the most difficult of all, but the widest and greatest in its fruits. One can choose any of them according to one's bent and capacity. The perfect method is to use them all, each in its own place and for its own object; but this would need a fixed faith and firm patience and a great energy of Will in the self-application to the Yoga.

2. *What should be the objects or ideas for meditation?*

Whatever is most consonant with your nature and highest aspirations. But if you ask me for an absolute answer, then I must say that Brahman is always the best object for meditation or contemplation, and the idea on which the mind should fix is that of God in all, all in God and all as God. It does not matter essentially whether it is the Impersonal or the Personal God or, subjectively, the One Self. But this is the idea I have found the best, because it is the highest and embraces all other

truths, whether truths of this world or of the other worlds or beyond all phenomenal existence, — “All this is the Brahman.”

In the third issue of *Arya*, at the end of the second instalment of the Analysis of the Isha Upanishad, you will find a description of this vision of the [Brahman]¹ which may be of help to you in understanding the idea. (October number now in the Press.)²

3. Conditions internal and external that are most essential for meditation.

There are no *essential* external conditions, but solitude and seclusion at the time of meditation as well as stillness of the body are helpful, sometimes almost necessary to the beginner. But one should not be bound by external conditions. Once the habit of meditation is formed, it should be made possible to do it in all circumstances, lying, sitting, walking, alone, in company, in silence or in the midst of noise etc.

The first internal condition necessary is concentration of the will against the obstacles to meditation, ie wandering of the mind, forgetfulness, sleep, physical and nervous impatience and restlessness etc.

The second is an increasing purity and calm of the inner consciousness (*citta*) out of which thought and emotion arise; ie a freedom from all disturbing reactions, such as anger, grief, depression, anxiety about worldly happenings etc. Mental perfection and moral are always closely allied to each other.

Aurobindo Ghose

P.S. The answer to your last question cannot be given so generally; it depends on the path chosen, the personal difficulties, etc.

Draft of a Letter to Nolini Kanta Gupta

Dear Nalini,

Quorsum haec incerta? Do you really mean to perpetrate

¹ MS All. See Note on the Texts, page 586. — Ed.

² See “The Vision of the Brahman” in Isha Upanishad, volume 17 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 30. The passage was first published in the third issue of the *Arya*, dated October 1914. — Ed.

the sexual union dignified by the name of marriage, or don't you? Will you, won't you, will you, won't you — to quote the language of the spider to the fly? Whither does all this tend, to fructuation (I was going to use another word) or fluctuation, — footballing and floating and flirting as much as exchange of eyes in the delicious brevity of *kanya dekha* and the subsequent vast freedom of imagination will give you of that modern amusement. But all this seems too Robindranathian, too *ki jani ki*, to come to a practical conclusion. To weigh in the subtle scales of amorous thought noses and chins and lips and eyes and the subtleties of expression is no doubt a charming mathematics, but it soars too much into the region of the infinite, there is no reason why it should work out into any sum of action. Saurin's more concrete and less poetic and philosophic mind seems to have realised this at an early stage and he wrote asking me whether it was worth while to marry with our ideas and aims under present social conditions. After about two months' absence of cogitation, I have returned a sort of non committal answer, — that I don't think it is — very, but it may turn out to be and on the whole he had better consult his *antarâtman* and act or not act accordingly.

c. 1919

To A. B. Purani

Pondicherry

Feb 21. 1920

Dear Purani,

It is not easy to get a letter out of me, I hardly write more than a dozen in the year, so you must not be surprised at my long delay in answering you. On the two matters you mentioned in your first letter — what *word* did you want? There is no need of a word, when there is personal contact; the spirit is always greater than the word. And if there was anything that needed to be said, I believe it was spoken between us. I do not know if there is anything definite of which you feel the necessity. If there is, the best way is to try and get it from within first, and only if there is still doubt, would there be the need to come for it to

a definite word from me. It would be well, however, to let me know from time to time how you are proceeding with your Yoga and especially of any obstacles or difficulties you experience; for, even if I do not answer, I can always then give the silent help which I have usually found to be the most effective. As regards malady or illness, it is true that the chief reliance should be on the inner will and secondly on simple remedies. But this rule should not at first be rigorously applied in affections of a strongly physical character, because the gross body is the most obstinately recalcitrant to the will; there it is better in the earlier stages to respect to a certain extent the habits of the bodily consciousness which being physical relies upon physical remedies. When you find that the will is strong enough to deal rapidly with even these affections, then you can dispense with remedies.

You have written to Amrita about a translation of the “Secret of the Veda” and “To the Nations.” The latter book is not my property, it is M. Richard’s and it is possible that he has given the rights of translation to the publisher who, if he knew, might take objection to your publishing a translation without his permission. M. Richard himself would no doubt give the permission at my request, but I do not know whether he has kept the right in his own hands. Please therefore do not publish that at present, but let me know the name of the translator. M. Richard is expected here at any time during the next month or two; but even if he does not come, I can ask the publisher for permission on behalf of the translator. The “Secret of the Veda” is not complete and there are besides many imperfections and some errors in it which I would have preferred to amend before the book or any translation of it was published. Perhaps, however, it does not matter so much in a Gujerati translation which will not come under close criticism such as would meet a book on the subject in English. It would be better, however, whenever there is question of a translation of a book — as opposed to an article or chapter here and there — to let me know first so that I may see whether there is any modification needed or indispensable change.

Yours

Aurobindo Ghose

To V. Chandrasekharam

[1]

Pondicherry

13th July 1920

Dear Chandrashekhar,

I have not been able to write to you before for want of time — a thing of which I have always a very short supply nowadays. I hope that your illness has “improved” — in the right way — by this time; if not, please write and keep us informed of your state of health. Above all, do not harbour that idea of an unfit body — all suggestions of that kind are a subtle attack on the will to siddhi and especially dangerous in physical matters. It has been cropping up in several people who are doing the Yoga and the first business is to expel it bag and baggage. Appearances and facts may be all in its favour, but the first condition of success for the Yogin and indeed for anybody who wants to do anything great or unusual is to be superior to facts and disbelieve in appearances. Will to be free from disease, however formidable, many-faced or constant its attacks, and repel all contrary suggestions.

It is now precisely in this physical field that I am getting most obstruction nowadays. I have myself been sporting a choice kind of cough for the last month or so which took up its lodgings in my throat and cheerfully promised to be my companion for the longest possible period it could manage of my physical existence; and though ill received and constantly discouraged, it is still hanging about the premises. In other matters I progress with and in spite of the customary obstructions, much faster than at any previous period of my Yoga. Nothing absolutely new — I am simply going on developing to a higher degree the *vijnana* and turning other things into something of its substance.

It is bad that you do not find things favourable for your own Yoga. In case you find it too difficult there, why not try another period here? This time there would be no inconveniences. Our

friends the R-s had intended to ask you to stay with them; they were only waiting to get things into order and were sorry you went away suddenly before they could put it to you. Another time the arrangement could be made, and I think there would be no objection on your side. I think you said something to someone about being here for the 15th August. Was that only an idea, an intention or a resolution?

Please write sometimes about your health and your Yoga.

Yours

Aurobindo Ghose

[2]

Pondicherry

13 April 1921

Dear Chandrasekhar,

I am glad to get your letter after so long a time. I have myself written no letters for the last six months to anyone, both on account of lack of time and absorption in Yoga, which explains my silence. I will do my best to help you; but until you come, write to me, for even if I do not answer, that creates a physical link which makes transmission of help easier on the material plane — for the physical consciousness. It will certainly be better for you if you come to Pondicherry, but I recognise the difficulties. We are trying, not yet with success, to arrange for a house here where people who come for the Yoga may stop. Perhaps it would be best for you to wait a little and see whether this materialises. It would hardly do in your present state of health for you to expose yourself to the difficulties of bad food of the Tamil hotel type etc. Amrita will write and inform you as soon as we can get the thing settled.

Yours

Aurobindo Ghose

[3]

[21 July 1924]

It is not easy to get into the silence.³ That is only possible by throwing out the mental and vital activities. It is easier to let the silence get into you, i.e., to open yourself and let it descend. The way to do this and the way to call down the higher powers is the same. It is to remain quiet at the time of meditation, not fighting with the mind or making mental efforts to pull down the power of the Silence but keeping only a silent will and aspiration for them. If the mind is active, one has only to learn to look at it, drawn back and not giving any sanction from within, until its habitual or mechanical activities begin to fall quiet for want of support from within. If it is too persistent, a steady rejection without strain or struggle is the one thing to be done.

The mental attitude you are taking with regard to “the Lord is the Yogeswara” can be made a first step towards this quietude.

Silence does not mean absence of experiences. It is an inner silence and quietude in which all experiences happen without producing any disturbance. It would be a great mistake to interfere with the images rising in you. It does not matter whether they are mental or psychic. One must have experience not only of the true psychic but of the inner mental, inner vital and subtle physical worlds or planes of consciousness. The occurrence of the images is a sign that these are opening and to inhibit them would mean to inhibit the expansion of consciousness and experience without which this Yoga cannot be done.

All this is an answer to the points raised by your letter. It is not meant that you should change suddenly what you are doing. It is better to proceed from what you have attained which seems to be solid, if small, and proceed quietly in the direction indicated.

³ *This letter and the next were written by K. Amrita at Sri Aurobindo's dictation or following his oral instructions. — Ed.*

[4]

[4 October 1924]

He asks me to tell you that there are two kinds of movements in the Sadhana, the ascent and the descent. The ascent or the upward movement takes place when there is a sufficient aspiration from the being, i.e. from the various mental, vital and physical planes. Each in turn ascends above the mind to the place where it meets the supramental and can then receive the origination of all its movements from above.

The Higher descends when you have a receptive quietude in the various planes of your being prepared to receive it. In either case whether in aspiring upward to rise to the Higher or in remaining passive and open to receive the Higher, an entire calmness in the different parts of the being is the true condition. If you do not have the necessary force in the quiet aspiration or will and if you find that a certain amount of effort will help you in rising upward, you may go on using it as a temporary means until there is the natural openness in which a silent call or simple effortless will is sufficient to induce the action of the Higher Shakti.

Extract from a Letter to K. N. Dixit

Finally, I must inform you that AG is not inclined to give permission at the present time.⁴ He does not want any, even the least disturbance of his concentration on his own sadhana as he is passing through a most difficult period when any diversion of his energies or impact from the outside world may have undesirable consequences. For yourself also it is not a favourable time and by coming here you are likely, even if you get some help, to have also more and perhaps very acute difficulties. AG asks me to tell you that you would do best to return home, write to him whatever obstacles in sadhana you may have and await a more favourable time for renewing your request about coming to Pondicherry.

30 March 1924

⁴ This paragraph was written by Sri Aurobindo in his own hand at the end of a letter written by A. B. Purani on his behalf. — Ed.

To Ramchandran

[30 September 1925]

Dear Ramchandran,

I am answering your second letter which reached me today. And first I must say something about the very extraordinary line of conduct you propose to adopt in case of not hearing from me. I think it is because, as you say, your mind is not in a completely right condition that you have proposed it. No one with any common sense and certainly no one with a clear moral sense would support you in your intention. As to the law, it is not usual in France to take up things of this kind but only public offences against morals. The court would probably take no notice of your self-accusation and in any case it would not proceed in the absence of evidence from others which would here be lacking. But supposing it were otherwise, what would your action amount to? First, it would be putting an almost insuperable obstacle in the way of your own mental and moral recovery and of your leading a useful life in future. Secondly, it would be bringing an unmerited disgrace upon your father and family. Thirdly, it would mean, if it took any form, the ruin of the life of someone else, for, if I understand rightly what you say, some other or others would be involved, and your suggestion that you are entirely responsible would be absurd in law and could have no value and all this havoc you propose to cause merely in order to satisfy a morbid moral egoism. It would be, in fact, if it could be seriously executed, a greater immorality than anything you have yet done. The true way to set yourself right for your act is not to do untold harm to others in the name of honesty or any other virtue but to put yourself right inwardly and do otherwise in future.

I shall answer briefly the questions you put in your second para. (1) The way to set yourself right is, as I have said, to set your nature right and make yourself master of your vital being and its impulses. (2) Your position in human society is or can be that of many others who in their early life have committed excesses of various kinds and have afterwards achieved self-control

and taken their due place in life. If you [were]⁵ not so ignorant of life, you would know that your case is not exceptional but on the contrary very common and that many have done these things and afterwards become useful citizens and even leading men in various departments of human activity. (3) It is quite possible for you to recompense your parents and fulfil the past expectations you spoke of, if you make that your object. Only you must first recover from your illness and achieve the proper balance of your mind and will. (4) The object of your life depends upon your own choice and the way of attainment depends upon the nature of the object. Also your position will be whatever you make it. What you have to do is, first of all, to recover your health; then, with a quiet mind to determine your aim in life according to your capacities and preferences. It is not for me to make up your mind for you. I can only indicate to you what I myself think should be the proper aims and ideals.

Apart from external things there are two possible inner ideals which a man can follow. The first is the highest ideal of ordinary human life and the other the divine ideal of Yoga. I must say in view of something you seem to have said to your father that it is not the object of the one to be a great man or the object of the other to be a great Yogin. The ideal of human life is to establish over the whole being the control of a clear, strong and rational mind and a right and rational will, to master the emotional, vital and physical being, create a harmony of the whole and develop the capacities whatever they are and fulfil them in life. In the terms of Hindu thought, it is to enthrone the rule of the purified and sattwic *buddhi*, follow the *dharma*, fulfilling one's own *svadharma* and doing the work proper to one's capacities, and satisfy *kāma* and *artha* under the control of the *buddhi* and the *dharma*. The object of the divine life, on the other hand, is to realise one's highest self or to realise God and to put the whole being into harmony with the truth of the highest self or the law of the divine nature, to find one's own divine capacities great or small and fulfil them in life as

⁵ MS (copy) are

a sacrifice to the highest or as a true instrument of the divine *Sakti*. About the latter ideal I may write at some later time. At present I shall only say something about the difficulty you feel in fulfilling the ordinary ideal.

This ideal involves the building of mind and character and it is always a slow and difficult process demanding patient labour of years, sometimes the better part of the lifetime. The chief difficulty in the way with almost everybody is the difficulty of controlling the desires and impulses of the vital being. In many cases as in yours, certain strong impulses run persistently counter to the ideal and demand of the reason and the will. The cause is almost always a weakness of the vital being itself, for, when there is this weakness it finds itself unable to obey the dictates of the higher mind and obliged to act instead under the waves of impulsion that come from certain forces in nature. These forces are really external to the person but find in this part of him a sort of mechanical readiness to satisfy and obey them. The difficulty is aggravated if the *seat* of the weakness is in the nervous system. There is then what is called by European science a neurasthenia tendency and under certain circumstances it leads to nervous breakdowns and collapses. This happens when there is too great a strain on the nerves or when there is excessive indulgence of the sexual or other propensities and sometimes also when there is too acute and prolonged a struggle between the restraining mental will and these propensities. This is the illness from which you are suffering and if you consider these facts you will see the real reason why you broke down at Pondicherry. The nervous system in you was weak; it could not obey the will and resist the demand of the external, vital forces, and in the struggle there came an overstrain of the mind and the nerves and a collapse taking the form of an acute attack of neurasthenia. These difficulties do not mean that you cannot prevail and bring about a control of your nerves and vital being and build up a harmony of mind and character. Only you must understand the thing rightly, not indulging in false and morbid ideas about it and you must use the right means. What is needed is a quiet mind and a quiet will, patient, persistent, refusing

to yield either to excitement or discouragement, but always insisting [tranquilly]⁶ on the change needed in the being. A quiet will of this kind cannot fail in the end. Its effect is inevitable. It must first reject in the waking state, not only the acts habitual to the vital being, but the impulses behind them which it must understand to be external to the person even though manifested in him and also the suggestions which are behind the impulses. When thus rejected, the once habitual thoughts and movements may still manifest in the dream-state, because it is a well-known psychological law that what is suppressed or rejected in the waking state may still recur in sleep and dream because they are still there in the subconscious being. But if the waking state is thoroughly cleared, these dream-movements must gradually disappear because they lose their food and the impressions in the subconscious are gradually effaced. This is the cause of the dreams of which you are so much afraid. You should see that they are only a subordinate symptom which need not alarm you if you can once get control of your waking condition.

But you must get rid of the ideas which have stood in the way of effecting this self-conquest.

(1) Realise that these things in you do not come from any true moral depravity, for that can exist only when the mind itself is corrupted and supports the perverse vital impulses. Where the mind and the will reject them, the moral being is sound and it is a case only of a weakness or malady of the vital parts or the nervous system.

(2) Do not brood on the past but turn your face with a patient hope and confidence towards the future. To brood on the past failure will prevent you from recovering your health and will weaken your mind and will, hampering them in the work of self-conquest and rebuilding of the character.

(3) Do not yield to discouragement if success does not come at once, but continue patiently and steadfastly until the thing is done.

(4) Do not torture your mind by always dwelling on your

⁶ *MS (copy)* tranquility

weakness. Do not imagine that they unfit you for life or for the fulfilment of the human ideal. Once having recognised that they are there, seek for your sources of strength and dwell rather on them and the certainty of conquest.

Your first business is to recover your health of mind and body and that needs quietness of mind and for some time a quiet way of living. Do not rack your mind with questions which it is not yet ready to solve. Do not brood always on the thing. Occupy your mind as much as you can with healthy and normal occupations and give it as much rest as possible. Afterwards when you have your right mental condition and balance, then you can with a clear judgment decide how you will shape your life and what you have to do in the future.

I have given you the best advice I can and told you what seems to me the most important for you at present. As for your coming to Pondicherry, it is better not to do so just now. I could say to you nothing more than what I have written. It is best for you so long as you are ill, not to leave your father's care, and above all, it is the safe rule in [an] illness like yours not to return to the place and surroundings where you had the breakdown, until you are perfectly recovered and the memories and associations connected with it have faded in intensity, lost their hold on the mind and can no longer produce upon it a violent or disturbing impression.

Aurobindo Ghose

To and about V. Tirupati

[1]

Pondicherry. February 21st - 1926.

Tirupati, my child -

Our Divine Lord sends you the following message:⁷

⁷ This letter-draft and those numbered [5], [6], and [8] below were written by the Mother at Sri Aurobindo's dictation or following his oral instructions. Items [3], [4], [7], [9] and [11], also drafts, were written by Sri Aurobindo in his own hand. Item [10]

Your letters have been received and read with pleasure. Haradhan came back yesterday morning bringing the two last ones and also the news that, during the time he remained with you, you were eating and sleeping — which we have been very pleased to hear. It is a great first step forward; and if you go on like that, you will soon establish a solid basis for your complete physical recovery.

We heard also with pleasure that your family is ready to help you without intruding or forcing themselves upon you, and that arrangements are made for you to live quietly.

In your letters you ask for detailed instructions and also Haradhan reported that you were insisting very much to receive them. Here are, then, the instructions we have to give you:

First the outer condition.

1) Be careful to always eat well and never think that to eat well or to take pleasure in eating is in any way wrong. On the contrary you must try to recover the ananda of food; without fearing the attachment for food; if there is such [a] thing in you, it will fall off from you as the ananda grows.

2) You must take long, peaceful sleeps. Never believe that there is anything wrong in sleeping well and deeply. And fear not that the time you give to sleep is wasted for your sadhana. In a good, quiet sleep necessary things are done by the super-conscience and in the sub-conscience.

3) You need good fresh air and a moderate amount of exercise in the open every day. Vizianagaram is near the hills, it is surely a wholesome place; and a daily walk of one hour or so in the country will help you much to recover completely your physical strength.

4) We have heard that there are several alternatives for your lodging: an empty family house in front of the house where your family lives, or a villa out of town, or another two storied house. Because of its situation, the villa seems the best, provided arrangements can be made for your material needs. If not

was written partly in the Mother's and partly in Sri Aurobindo's hand. Items [2] and [12] were recorded by A. B. Purani. — Ed.

possible, you might live in the empty family house and receive food prepared for you in your family's house.

5) Haradhan said also that you wished to cook for yourself. If you can take pleasure in cooking and making the necessary material arrangements, marketing, etc. it would be a good thing. But if you do not take pleasure and interest in it, it would be better to receive the food from your family or any of your friends.

6) You write: "it is most painful for me to have to accept this obligation from these people." This is a wrong way of looking at the matter. This help is given to you *through* the family and that involves no obligation on your part and binds you to nothing. The spiritual sadhaka is entitled to receive help from others, and that puts him to no obligation to them and leaves him perfectly free. Those that help are merely instruments used by the Divine Power to provide the sadhaka with the needed conditions for his living.

7) About the inner condition.

Write regularly, fully and frankly everything, whether you think it good or bad. It is important that you should conceal nothing; and if you feel some hesitation in writing some things that appear to you as crude or non important, you must overcome this hesitation. To make everything as clear and open as possible is the essential condition for receiving a complete help and guidance; it is also the necessary condition for the transformation of the movements that are to be changed. So, you must write everything internal and external.

Do not forget that your absence from Pondichéry is only temporary. The sooner you get into the right condition, the sooner you will be able to come back.

And the right condition is to have a strong body, strong nerves, a calm mind capable of action and will; no shrinking from contact with life and with the others. These conditions are necessary because, before your return, we shall have to ask you to make certain arrangements, and you must have full power of will and action in order to succeed.

Write everything always, and we shall guide you and know

how you are progressing. And when we see that you are ready, we shall tell you what to do.

P.S. We have received your letters of the 19th and the telegram of the 21st. We will answer fully, but meanwhile we write a few necessary words.

It is not sufficient to strengthen your body, you must also strengthen your mind; you must absolutely get rid of these ideas about sin, this brooding upon suggestions of sexual impulse and this habit of seeing dark vital forces everywhere. Your people are quite ordinary human beings, they are not evil spirits or forces, your attitude to them must be one neither of attachment nor of fear, horror and shrinking, but of quiet detachment.

Do not seek for inspirations, but act quietly and rationally according to our instructions, with a calm mind and a quiet will. Get rid of your obsession about coming here and falling at our feet. This and the other suggestions and voices are not inspirations but merely things created by your own mind and its impulses. Your safety lies in remaining quiet and doing what we tell you quietly and persistently, with a perfect confidence, until you are entirely recovered.

We have written one letter on the 16th, one yesterday [the] 20th and this is the third. Let us know each time you receive a letter from us.

[2]

[24 February 1926]

INFORM TIRUPATI MY ANGER. PREVENT COMING TO PONDICHERRY. I REFUSE TO RECEIVE HIM.⁸

[3]

[26 February 1926]

I received this morning your letter about Tirupati.⁹ I shall try to

⁸ Telegram to S. Duraiswami, an advocate living in Madras, to whom Tirupati had gone on his way to Pondicherry. — Ed.

⁹ Draft of a letter to Dasari Narayana Swamy Chetty, Tirupati's father-in-law. — Ed.

explain to you Tirupati's condition, the reasons why I have been obliged to send him away from Pondicherry and the conditions which are necessary for his recovery from his present abnormal state of mind.

Some time ago Tirupati began to develop ideas and methods of Yoga-sadhana which are quite inconsistent with the ideas and methods that underlie my system of Yoga. Especially, he began practices that belong entirely to the most extreme form of Bhakti sadhana, practices that are extremely dangerous because they lead to an excited, exalted, abnormal condition and violently call down forces which the body cannot bear. They may lead to a break-down of the physical body, the mind and the nervous system. As soon as I became aware of this turn, I warned him of the danger and prohibited the continuance of these practices. At first he attempted to follow my instructions, but the attraction of his new experiences was so great that he resumed his practices in secret and in the end openly returned to them in defiance of my repeated prohibitions. The result was that he entered into and persisted in an abnormal condition of mind which still continues and at times rises to an alarming height dangerous to the sanity of his mind and the health of his body.

The following are the peculiarities of this condition.

1. There is a state of mind in which he loses hold to a great extent of physical realities and lives in a world of imaginations which do not at all belong to the terrestrial body and the physical human life.

- 2 He conceives a great distaste for eating and sleeping and believes that the power in him is so great that he can live without sleep and without food.

- 3 He is listening all the time to things which he calls inspirations and intuitions, but which are simply the creations and delusions of his own excited and unduly exalted state of mind. This exalted state of mind gives him so much pleasure, so much a false sense of strength and Ananda and of being above the human condition that he is unwilling to give it up and feels unhappy and fallen when he is brought down to a more ordinary consciousness.

4 In this condition he has no longer enough discrimination left or enough will-power to carry out my instructions or even his own resolutions, but obeys blindly and like a machine these false inspirations and impulses. Everything contrary to them he explains away or ignores — that is the reason why he ignores my orders and puts no value on my telegrams or letters.

5 Also he feels in this condition an abnormal shrinking (not any spiritual detachment) from physical life, from his family, from his friends — for some time he withdrew even from the society of his fellow sadhakas, — and considers anything that comes from them or turns him from his exalted condition as the prompting of evil forces.

Please understand that all these things are the delusions of his own abnormal and exalted state of mind and are *not*, as he falsely imagines and will try to persuade you, signs of a high spiritual progress. On the contrary, if he persists in them, he will lose altogether such spiritual progress as he had made and may even destroy by want of food and want of sleep his body.

To allow him to remain here would be quite disastrous for him. He would count it as a victory for his own aberrations and would persist in them without any farther restraint with results that might be fatal to him. And the intensity of the spiritual atmosphere here would prevent him from coming back to his normal self. Besides when in this condition he brings about here a state of confusion and perturbation, — the one thing to be absolutely avoided in this way of Yoga, — which if prolonged would make the sadhana of my other disciples impossible and would spoil my own spiritual work altogether.

His one chance is if he can settle down in Vizianagaram for a considerable time and in the surroundings of his old physical life return to a normal condition. Please therefore do not send him back or give him money to return to Pondicherry. It will be of no use and may do him great and irreparable harm. He promised, when he went from here first, to eat well and sleep regularly, and he has now promised, on my refusing to see or receive him on account of his disobedience of my orders, to remain quietly at Vizianagaram, to cease listening to his false

inspirations and intuitions and to obey my written orders. I had already written to him to that effect and also to throw away his shrinking from life and from his contact with others, but he came away without waiting for my letter. If this time he carries out my instructions, he may yet recover. He must eat well, he must sleep regularly, he must give up his wrong sadhana and live for some time as a normal human being, he must do some kind of physical action, he must resume normal contact with life and others. If he returns to his erratic movements, the remedy is not to let him leave Vizianagaram, but to remind him of my instructions and his promises and insist on his carrying them out. Only you must do it in my name and remind him always that if he does not obey me, I have resolved not to see him again nor to receive him. This is the only thing at present that can make him do what is requisite.

I consented to an arrangement by which he could live quietly by himself because that was what he asked for; but the best would have been that he should live either with his family in their house so that his needs could be looked after or with some one who would see to his needs, some one *with a strong will* who will quietly insist, always in my name, on his doing what he has promised. But I do not know if there is anyone there who could do this for him or whom he would consent to have with him.

You should not understand by what I have written, that he should live as a householder, resume his relations with his wife etc, or that he should not be left mostly to quiet and solitude, if that is what he likes. What I mean is that he must come gradually, if not at first, to deal with those around him as a human being with human beings, without his present nervous shrinkings and abnormal repulsions. The spiritual attitude I have told him to take is one of calm freedom from attachment (*ásakti*), not of an excited shrinking. It may be that after a time this will seem more possible to him than it does at present.

It will be best if you let me know fairly often what he is doing and whether he is carrying out my instructions, as it is likely that he will not write himself to me all the truth when he is in the wrong condition.

[4]

[February 1926]

You must by this time have read the first three letters we wrote to you and we hope you have understood and will act according to our instructions. But it is necessary to make some of them more precise and clear. Today I will write only on two subjects

1 First as to your so-called inspirations and intuitions.

Understand henceforth that you must put no reliance on these suggestions which merely come to you from your mind. They are altogether false. If they seem to come from very high, they are still false; they come from the heights of vital error and not from the truth. If they present themselves as inspirations and intuitions or commands, they are still false; they are only arrogant creations of the vital mind. If they claim to be from me, they are still false; they are not from me at all. If they seem imperative, loud, grand, full of authority, they are all the more false. If they excite and elate you and drive you to act blindly in contradiction to my written orders and instructions, they are most false; they are the suggestions of a power that wants only its own satisfaction and not the Truth.

Henceforth do not seek at all for inspirations and intuitions to guide your conduct. Get back into touch with physical realities, act with a plain practical mind that sees things as they are and not as you want them to be.

You ought to see now that your inspirations were entirely untrue. The explanations by which you try to account for their failure, are equally untrue. For instance you told Duraiswami that because you did not start by the first train from Madras, therefore you lost your chance. This is absurd and false. By whatever train, at whatever time, whatever you might have done, I would not have seen you or received you, for you may [not] come without my written orders [to] come and even against my orders.

2 Next, as to your coming back to Pondicherry. You are always thinking that you have only to act for one or two days according to my orders and then I will call you back. You are

always expecting an immediate recall. Put this out of your head altogether. You cannot come back until I am satisfied that you have entirely got out of your present false consciousness which makes you act and think as you have been doing, and that there is no danger of your going back to it. This will take time. You will be called back to Pondicherry if you obey my orders consistently for a long time and satisfy my conditions, but you must no longer be always thinking of a rapid coming back; you must think only of doing what I tell you and satisfying my conditions. Remember what those conditions are

(1) You must eat and sleep and build up again a strong body.

(2) You must come out of your present state of vital consciousness, give up its false excitement, false elations, harmful depressions, give up your false inspirations and intuitions and come down into a plain, natural quiet physical consciousness. That is your only chance of coming back to reality and the Truth.

(3) You must get rid of your nervous shrinkings from life and others; you must be able to look at people naturally as human beings and deal with them calmly, quietly with a sane calm practical mind. Until you have done this, you will not be in the right condition for returning here.

3dly, about your stay there. You must not talk or think of Vizianagaram or your surroundings as a bad or dangerous atmosphere. It is nothing of the kind. I would not have sent you there, if it were — on the contrary, it is the best place for what you have to do now and what you will have to do hereafter before you can return to Pondicherry.

If you cannot stay in your family house, which would be the most convenient, you can stay in your father-in-law's villa — or the empty family house. But then it will be much better if you allow somebody to stay with you who will look after your needs and [*incomplete*]

[5]

4-3-26

Dear Tirupati,

We have received your letters and noted all the points on

which you have asked for instruction and enlightenment. We intend to answer fully, but the letter will take a day or two to write. In the meanwhile try to carry out the instructions already given. In your relations with your people, act simply and naturally; get rid of these nervous shrinkings which are a weakness. The important thing is to have the right inner attitude, calm and without attachment. If you do that, all these details — about how to address them, food and bathing, etc — become trifling matters which will arrange themselves according to convenience and common sense. It is simply that you have to stay at Vizianagaram for some time — as you have rightly seen, for several months, and during that time you must take what help they can give you for your material needs, without that binding you in any way to them. But on this matter as on the other questions raised in your letter we shall write fully in our next letter.

[6]

5.3.26

Dear Tirupati.

This morning we have received your letter probably of the 2nd of March (please put dates on your letters) and it is necessary to reply to it at once, for it is evident from it that you are persisting in a wrong effort which prevents the very object that you have in view. You want to have what you call the “divinisation”; but you cannot have it in the way you are trying.

I will point out your mistakes; please read carefully and try to understand rightly. Especially understand my words in their plain sense and do not put into them any “hidden meaning” or any other meaning which might be favourable to your present ideas.

The Divine Consciousness we are trying to bring down is a Truth Consciousness. It shows us all the truth of our being and nature on all the planes, mind, life and body. It does not throw them away or make an impatient effort to get rid of them immediately and substitute something fantastic and wonderful in their place. It works upon them patiently and slowly to perfect

and raise in them all that is capable of perfection and to change all that is obscure and imperfect.

Your first mistake is to imagine that it is possible to become divine in a moment. You imagine that the higher consciousness has only to descend in you and remain there, and all is finished. You imagine that no time is needed, no long, hard or careful work, and that all will be done for you in a moment by the Divine Grace. This is quite wrong. It is not done in that way; and so long as you persist in this error, there can be no permanent divinisation, and you will only disturb the Truth that is trying to come, and disturb your own mind and body by a fruitless struggle.

Secondly, you are mistaken in thinking that because you feel a certain force and Presence, therefore you are at once divine. It is not so easy to become divine. There must be to whatever force or presence comes, a right interpretation and response, a right knowledge in the mind, a right preparation of the vital and physical being. But what you are feeling is an abnormal vital force and exaltation due to the impatience of your desire, and with this there come suggestions born of your desire, which you mistake for truth and call inspirations and intuitions.

I will point out some of the mistakes you make in this condition.

1) You immediately begin to think that there is no further need of my instructions or guidance, because you imagine you are henceforth one with me. Not only so, but the suggestions which you want to accept go quite against my instructions. How can this be if you are one with me? It is obvious that these ideas that go against my instructions come from your mind and impulses, and not from me or from any Divine Consciousness or from anything that can be called the Sri Aurobindo Consciousness.

2) In this connection, you write: "I see one difficulty: that even when I am filled with you the idea of obeying and following your instructions still works — even when you have made me yourself. I pray for the needful." The idea of following and obeying my instructions is not a difficulty, it is the only thing

that can help you. That obedience is the thing that is needful.

3) What do you mean by saying: “You have made me yourself”? The words seem to have no meaning. You cannot mean that you become the same individual self as I; there cannot be two Aurobindos; even if it were possible it would be absurd and useless. You cannot mean that you have become the Supreme Being, for you cannot be God or the Iswara. If it is in the ordinary (Vedantic) sense, then everyone is myself, since every Jiva is a portion of the One. You may perhaps have become conscious for a time of this unity; but that consciousness is not sufficient by itself to transform you or to make you divine.

4) You begin to imagine that you can do without food and sleep and disregard the needs of the body; and you forget my instructions, and mistakenly call these needs a disturbance or the play of hostile material and physical forces. This idea is false: what you feel is only a vital force, not the highest truth, and the body remains what it was; it will suffer and break down if [it] is not given food, rest and sleep.

5) It is the same mistaken vital exaltation that made you feel your body to see if it was of supramental substance. Understand clearly that the body cannot be transformed in that way into something quite unphysical. The physical being and the body, in order to be perfected, have to go through a long preparation and gradual change. This cannot be done, if you do not come out of this mistaken vital exaltation and come down into the ordinary physical consciousness first, with a clear sense of physical realities.

As regards what you say about your wife —

As you are determined to have no such relations with her, all that is needed is to regard her as an ordinary woman and with a quiet indifference. It is a mistake to dwell on the idea of your past relations, or to have shrinking and abhorrence; that only keeps up a struggle in your self which would otherwise disappear of itself.

Finally, if you want the real change and transformation, you must clearly and resolutely recognise that you have made and are still making mistakes, and have entered into a condition

that is unfavourable to your object. You have tried to get rid of the thinking mind, instead of perfecting and enlightening it, and have tried to replace it by artificial “inspirations and intuitions.”

You have developed a dislike and shrinking for the body and the physical being and its movements; and therefore you do not want to come down into the normal physical consciousness and do patiently there what is necessary for the change. You have left yourself only with a vital consciousness which feels sometimes a great force and ananda and at others falls into bad depressions, because it is not supported either by the mind above or by the body below.

You must absolutely change all this, if you want the real transformation.

You must not mind losing the vital exaltation; you must not mind coming into a normal physical consciousness, with a clear practical mind, looking at physical conditions and physical realities. You must accept these first, or you will never be able to change and perfect them.

You must recover a quiet mind and intelligence.

If you can once firmly do these things, the Greater Truth and Consciousness can come back in its proper time, in the right way and under the right conditions.

[7]

Pondicherry

March 22. 1926.

My dear Tirupati,

I have received all your letters; I am sorry to find from them that you are still persisting in the same state of vital exaltation, the same ideas, the same forms of speech, the same delusions. You say that you have understood our letter of the 5th. We told you to understand that letter in its plain significance and not to put into it some false imaginary meaning out of your mind. Either you have put some false meaning into it or, if you understood our plain written instructions, you are deliberately refusing to follow them. For you are doing exactly the opposite

of what we told you to do. We shall write more about this in a day or two. At present I write only a few essential things.

1. It is not possible for you to become my “Avatar”; I have told you that the very idea is absurd and meaningless.

2 It is possible for you to manifest the supramental consciousness in this life. But it is not possible by the means you are now trying. It cannot be done by falling at my feet. It cannot be done in a moment. It cannot be done by fasting. It cannot be done by refusing to have anything to do with physical forces and the normal physical life.

3 If you throw away your body, you will not be my “Avatar” either in this life or in any other. On the contrary, you will destroy your chances for a hundred lives to come.

4 The supramental consciousness can only be manifested if you follow exactly my written instructions. These are

(1) *You must eat well and regularly every day, sleep well every night and build up a strong body.* The supermind cannot descend and remain in a weak and starved body.

(2) *You must consent to come down into the ordinary physical consciousness and stay there to transform it slowly.* If you continue to refuse to live in the ordinary consciousness, the supermind cannot get the opportunity to change it; in that case you will always go on as now thinking “now I have got it, today it is made permanent”, but it will not remain.

(3) *You must learn to understand and follow in their plain sense my written instructions. You must learn to give them a greater value than to the ideas you get from within by your sadhana.* If you refuse to do this, the supramental consciousness will refuse to remain in you.

(4) You must learn to resume natural relations with people in the physical world — with those around you, with your friends and your people.

5. I have told you that *you are not to come to Pondicherry without my written permission.* If you disobey and follow your own impulses, you will not be received here; you will be sent away like last time.

It is not for you to fix the date of your coming, whether

August 15th or another. It is for me to decide and you must not come till I write and call you.

You cannot come to Pondicherry till you have carried out my written instructions plainly and faithfully for many months together. You cannot come till you have stopped fasting altogether. You cannot come till you have descended into the ordinary physical consciousness and remained there for months together. You cannot see me again at Pondicherry until you are ready to meet me on the physical plane and that can only be when you have accepted the physical consciousness and the physical life. This is definite.

6. If you refuse to do what I tell you, you cannot have the fulfilment you hope for. You can if you like remain as a Bhakta all your life, but even then you must renounce the vital form of Bhakti. You must bring back the psychic Bhakti, the Bhakti which is calm, quiet, deep, the Bhakti which is not noisy, not making demands, the Bhakti which finds its greatest pleasure in obedience. This is the only Bhakti in which I can take delight; I accept no other.

My blessings.

Sri Aurobindo

[8]

March 27-[1926]

Tirupati my child

I am happy to find you back again.

Your letters of March 25. reached this morning and are most welcomed.

All you have written in these two letters is exactly what we wanted you to think and feel.

You have only to keep this state of mind permanently; for this is the true foundation for the careful and patient building of the real Divine Life in you.

If you feel any kind of excitement or demand for immediate divinisation, or any idea of fasting, or impatience of staying there, then read again my letter of March 22 and it will help you

to come back to the right idea and right attitude.

As to eating and sleeping, perhaps it will be best at the beginning to keep a daily record of the number of meals you take and the number of hours you sleep and send it to me when you write. This will help you to keep [steady]¹⁰ in your resolution.

Yes, it will be very good for you to read and translate the *Arya*. We have not until now been able to get the numbers you wanted from Calcutta, and at present we have not a set of the *Arya* available. I will send you a copy of the *Essays on the Gita*, first series; it will be best for you to begin with this and translate it. Accustom yourself to translate only a little every day and do it very carefully. Do not write in haste; go several times through what you have written and see whether it accurately represents the spirit of the original, and whether the language cannot be improved. In all things, in the mental and physical plane, it should be your aim, at present, not to go fast and finish quickly, but to do everything carefully, perfectly, and in the right manner.

We wish you to understand and keep henceforth the right attitude with regard to the physico-vital impulses of which you complain; that is as regards food, money, sexual impulses etc. You have been adopting the moral and ascetic attitude which is entirely wrong and cannot help you to master these powers of the nature.

For food, it is a need of the body and you must use it to keep the body fit and strong. You must replace attachment by the ananda of food. If you have this ananda and the right sense of the taste, etc. and of the right use of food, the attachment, if there is any, will of itself, after a time, disappear.

As regards money, that too is a need for life and work. For instance, before you can come back here, when you have reestablished your hold on physical life, we shall ask you to collect money for certain arrangements which will include the arrangements for your living here. Money represents a great power of life which must be conquered for divine uses. Therefore you

¹⁰ MS study

must have no attachment to it but also no disgust or horror of it.

As to the sexual impulse — For this also you must have no moral horror, or puritanic, or ascetic repulsion. This also is a power of life and while you have to throw away the present form of this power (that is the physical act), the force itself has to be mastered and transformed. It is often strongest in people with a strong vital nature and this strong vital nature can be made a great instrument for the physical realisation of the Divine Life. If the sexual impulse comes, do not be sorry or troubled, but look at it calmly, quiet it down, reject all wrong suggestions connected with it, and wait for the Higher Consciousness to transform it into the true force and ananda.

As regards your friends and family, you must look at them normally as ordinary human beings. Here also have no attachments, no shrinkings; deal with them in a quiet rational manner. Your father-in-law has repeatedly promised me that they would not interfere with your spiritual life. All they want is that you should eat and be in good health, and take their help for your needs and comforts. It was only under my instructions that they pressed you to eat.

All these things we have told you are necessary for your being in the physical consciousness and having the right relations with physical life. In our next letter we will write to you in detail what we mean by being in the physical consciousness and meeting us on the physical plane. But today there is no time and we want this letter to go by today's post.

[9]

March 30.

Dear Tirupati

We are sorry to see that you are not physically well. You must be careful not to tire or overstrain yourself. You are walking too much, especially for a body weakened by fasting and want of regular sleep. You should walk only some two and a half miles a day, in the fresh air, and when you are tired and

not well, you should suspend the walking and rest as much as possible.

Do not eat hot things; it is extremely bad for your intestines. But take plenty of good plain food.

Especially you must sleep regularly. It is most important. You must also bathe and keep your body clean. If you can arrange, bathe in hot water.

If you follow these instructions carefully, good health must come back with the returning strength of the body. You have overstrained yourself in every way and weakened yourself nervously, that is why these things come back.

The true explanation of the vision you saw of dark dancing women is not the one you put upon it. The vaishnava bhajan is one that easily excites the vital being, and if there are people there of a low nature, all sorts of dark and low forces come in to feed upon the excitement. These are the women you saw; they had nothing to do with you or with sexual impulses.

You ought not to attach too much importance to impulses like the one you had about going downstairs to the puja, or think that because you do not obey the impulse you have prevented the spiritual experience of fulfilment. The spiritual fulfilment will come in its time by a steady development of the being and the nature. It does not depend on seizing upon this or that opportunity.

There is another thing which you must learn. If you are interrupted in sadhana, as by the boy coming with the water, you must simply remain inwardly quiet and allow the interruption to pass. If you learn to do this, the inner state or experience will go on afterwards just as if nothing had happened. If you attach undue importance and get upset, on the contrary, you change the interruption into a disturbance and the inner state or experience ceases. Always keep the inner quiet and confidence in every circumstance; allow nothing to disturb it or to excite you. A steady inner calm and quiet will and psychic faith and bhakti are the one true foundation for your sadhana.

[10]

[c. March–April 1926]

Dear Tirupati

We answer first your letter of the 28th.

It is evident that you are suffering from a nervous reaction due to overstrain. You have allowed for a long time an excessive vital energy kept up by a concentration of vital excitement to tyrannise over your body. The body was being weakened all the time, but the vital excitement prevented you from feeling it. Now it is making itself felt. The pains you have seem to be partly rheumatic, partly due to fatigue of the nerves. If you want to recover your strength, you must consent to take plenty of rest. Do not consider long rest and repose tamasic. Sleep long at night, rest much during the day.

Do not do anything in excess. 8 to 10 miles a day walking is far too much; two to three miles is quite sufficient, enough to give you air and exercise.

Also, five or six hours meditation is quite sufficient. Ten hours is too much; it is likely to overstrain the system. Intense meditation is not the only means of sadhana. Especially when one has to deal with the physical, it is not good to be always drawn within in meditation. What you have to learn is to keep at all times the true consciousness, calm, large, full of a quiet strength, looking at all in you and around you with true perception and knowledge, a calm unmoved observation and a quiet will ready to act when necessary. No overstress, no yielding to excitement, nervous sensitiveness or depression.

Learn to occupy your time in a quiet even and harmonious way. Walk a little but not too much. Meditate, but not too much, nor so as to overstrain the body. Read and write, but not so as to tire the brain. Look out a good deal on the physical world and its action and try to see it rightly. When you are stronger, but not now, you can undertake also some kind of physical work and action and learn to do it in the right way and with the right knowledge.

You say that you do not find it so easy to understand the “Arya” as before. But that is mostly because you have made your body weak and the brain is easily tired. With rest and return of physical strength this will disappear. You say too that you cannot do things now that you were easily able to do before. But then you were keeping some kind of harmonious balance between the mind, the vital being and the body, and all were strong. Afterwards you went entirely into the vital and neglected and fatigued the body; you kept yourself up only by an abnormal vital concentration and excitement. Now you are feeling the physical reaction. But this too will disappear with rest, calm of mind and the return of physical strength.

Therefore do not scruple to rest much. It will be good to remain quiet for long periods of time and allow the calm and quiet effect of the higher consciousness to settle unobtrusively into the body.

Your “tamasic” condition and pains are not in the least due to taking food from your people or to their atmosphere. Dismiss this kind of idea from your mind altogether; it is entirely untrue.

The sensations you have when going out into the town, in the streets, in the market, meeting women, seeing people with illnesses are all signs of nervous weakness and []¹¹ an abnormally exaggerated nervous sensitiveness. You must get rid of this weakness and recover control of your nerves. You must become able to see women without any of these reactions; dismiss from your mind the obsession of your fear of the sexual impulse and this will become easier. The fear and abhorrence makes the sexual attraction or suggestion itself come more persistently. Learn to be calm and indifferent. If you observe the atmosphere of people, observe it as something external to you, not affecting you. To be affected is simply due to a weakness of the nervous being. At Pondicherry I am afraid you encouraged this nervous weakness and shrinking with the idea that it was a sign of superior psychic sensitiveness. Get rid of this idea. You may be conscious of things around you and yet calm and strong

¹¹ MS and

to meet them without being affected and overcome.

One other point. It is something else than the truth that gives the forms of your mother and wife to the feminine figures seen by you at the time of sexual suggestions. Do not be constantly thinking of your wife in this connection; regard her like any other woman without attachment and without repulsion or shrinking. I do not believe she has enough force to project herself into your consciousness in the way you think she does: it is your mental association that helps to [create]¹² the image. Repulsion and shrinking (*jugupsa*) are a bad way of getting rid of things; they usually give more force to what you want to throw from you.

Before you go to sleep, do not be satisfied with prayer, but bring down and leave in the body a strong will against any sexual suggestion in sleep or its result. With a little practice the body will learn to take the inhibiting suggestion and these things will cease.

In one of your letters you speak of a voice telling you “Mira will never consent to be your Shakti”. What precisely do you mean by this phrase, “my Shakti”? It is a wrong way of putting it which may lead to a confusion of ideas. You mean perhaps that she is to you the Mahashakti and that the force which will descend on you from the supramental plane and support your sadhana and action, will come from her. That is all right; but the Mahashakti is the Ishwara’s and nobody can speak of her as “my Shakti”.

Lastly, you speak in regard to your experience of coming here to this house of coming here “in the supermind”. What happened was that you entered into a supraphysical consciousness and in that state some part of you came over here. You speak too easily of any kind of supraphysical consciousness as if it were necessarily the supermind. But there are many grades of consciousness between the physical and the supermind and you will have hereafter to learn to distinguish rightly between them. Moreover even when the supramental touches or descends into the intermediate grades or into the physical, that is merely

¹² MS creates

a glimpse of what may or will be; it is not the whole or the definite realisation. The realisation must be worked out patiently afterwards. If you understand this carefully, you will no longer be disappointed because a higher condition does not settle down in you at once “permanently”.

I think you write your letters too rapidly; it is often very difficult, sometimes impossible to read many of the words. Write carefully so that all may be clear and legible.

[11]

[c. March–April 1926]

Tirupati,

I have received your long, rambling, incoherent, excited letter of the 29th; it is from beginning to end a mass of almost insane nonsense.

I understand from it that you have returned to your former delusions and the lies imposed by some Hostile Force on your mind and your vital being. You are once more determined to revolt against my orders, to disobey my written instructions, to disregard the plain meaning of my letters. You are determined to deceive yourself by reading into them a “hidden” meaning, that is to say to read into them the lies of the Hostile Force which you take for inspirations and intuitions. You have decided to follow again the mad course which led you away from Pondicherry and exiled you from my presence.

You have disowned your letter of the [?] the only letter which was entirely sound, true and sane. In that letter of the [?] we saw the real Tirupati, the only Tirupati we know; with the other who wrote this letter of the 29th we have no connection.

[12]

[6 May 1926]

Tirupati,

Your aspiration to be my manifestation and all the rest of the delusions to which you have surrendered yourself are not Yoga

or Sadhana. They are an illusion of your vital being and your brain. We tried to cure you and for a few days while you were obeying my instructions you were on the point of being cured. But you have called back your illness and made it worse than before. You seem to be no longer capable even of understanding what I write to you; you read your own delusions into my letters. I can do nothing more for you.

All that I can tell you is to go back to Vizianagaram and allow yourself to be taken care of there. I can make no arrangements for you anywhere. I can give only a last advice. Throw away the foolish arrogance and vanity that have been the cause of your illness, consent to become like an ordinary man living in the normal physical mind.

Now that is your only means of being saved from your illness.

To Daulatram Sharma

Pondicherry.
26.3.26.

Dear friend,

I have shown your letter to A.G. and below I give you his answer to it.¹³

Your letter is very interesting, because it shows that you have accurate intuitions which unfortunately your mind does not allow you to follow out. Your mind also interferes by giving your intuitions a mental form and mental consequences or conditions which are not correct.

You are quite right when you say that your sadhana will not open through the mind but through your psychic being. It is from there indeed that these guiding intuitions come.

Your intuition that in your case the effective impulse can best come from Mira (you can call her Mira Devi if you like, but please don't call her Madame!) is also perfectly correct. When

¹³ *This letter was drafted by one of Sri Aurobindo's secretaries and completely rewritten by Sri Aurobindo in his own hand. — Ed.*

she saw you from the window on the terrace on your last visit, she herself said to A.G., “This is a man I can change. *But he is not yet ready*”. But it was your mind that interfered when you thought it was necessary to sit in meditation with her in order to receive what she has to give. There is no such condition for her spiritual or psychic action and influence.

It is true that she was not mixing with the sadhaks at that time, partly because they themselves were not ready to take the right relation and receive her influence, partly because the difficulties of the physical plane made it necessary for her to retire from all direct contact with anyone, as distinct from an indirect contact through A.G. Always however she was acting with him on the psychic and vital levels to do whatever might be possible at the time. All that is needed to receive a direct touch from her is to take the right relation to her, to be open and to enter her atmosphere. The most ordinary meeting or talk with her on the physical plane is quite enough for the purpose. Only the sadhaka must be ready; otherwise he may not receive the impulse or may not be able to fulfil it or bear its pressure.

Also it will be a mistake if you make too rigid a separation between A.G and Mira. Both influences are necessary for the complete development of the sadhana. The work of the two together can alone bring down the supramental Truth into the physical plane. A.G acts directly on the mental and on the vital being through the illumined mind; he represents the Purusha element whose strength is predominantly in illumined (intuitive, supramental or spiritual) knowledge and the power that acts in this knowledge, while the psychic being supports this action and helps to transform the physical and vital plane. Mirra acts directly on the psychic being and on the emotional, vital and physical nature through the illumined psychic consciousness, while the illumined intuitions from the supramental being give her the necessary knowledge to act on the right lines and at the right moment. Her force representing the Shakti element is directly psychic, vital, physical and her spiritual knowledge is predominantly practical in its nature. It is, that is to say, a large and detailed knowledge and experience of the mental, vital and

physical forces at play and with the knowledge the power to handle them for the purposes of life and of Yoga.

In your case what is strong in your nature is especially the dynamic mind, the vital force and the practical physical mind. The thinking mind in you in spite of the interest it has taken in religion and philosophy is not easily open to a true illumination. The other parts mentioned above could more easily accept the light, but they cannot find it for themselves because their whole strength and activity has been turned outwards. It is only the psychic being in you that has from time to time been giving you intuitions and turning you towards the Truth. But it could not come forward and lead your life because you have too much suppressed your emotional nature, dried up your surface mind and choked up with much rubbish the psychic fire. If once it can awaken entirely and come in front, it can transform the dynamic mental, the vital and the physical mind and through them make you an illumined instrument for the physical realisation of the Truth upon earth. This, as you can see from what has been said above about Mira's force, makes your nature one which is specially meant for the kind of work she can best do.

You did not quite understand what A.G. had said about Brahmacharya. He did not mean that you should indulge the sexual impulse freely. On the contrary, if you have the impulse to cease from sexual life you should by all means do it. What he meant to say was that by Brahmacharya is generally understood a mental & moral control, a cessation because of a mental rule. Such a control especially if undertaken from an ascetic or puritan attitude, only keeps chained or even suppresses the vital power behind the sexual impulse and does not really purify or change it. The true motive for overcoming the sexual impulse is the inner psychic and when that rises then comes the real will to an inner purity which makes it an inner necessity for the being to drop the animal sexual play and turn the life-force to greater uses. The vital power behind the sexual impulse is an indispensable force for the perfection of the nature and for the Yoga. Often it is those who because of the strong vital force in them are most capable of the supramental transformation of

the physical nature that have the strongest sexual impulses. All lust, the sexual act and the outward dragging impulse have to be thrown away by the sadhaka, but the power itself has to be kept and transformed into the true force and Ananda. You are right in thinking that a certain fundamental purity in this respect is needed in order to approach Mira and have her help. It is not possible for her to have relations with one who is full of coarse animal or perverted sexual impulses or unable because of them to have the true spiritual or psychic regard on women. But an absence of all sexual impulse is not necessary, still less an ascetic or puritanic turn in this matter. On the contrary. Neither the conventional Puritan nor the coarse animal man can receive anything from her.

This is what A.G said about your letter. Now, since you have these intuitions, why not act on them? Why not try even from a distance to open yourself to receive any influence which may come to you by the mere fact of your having turned towards Mira and her knowing it? If nothing else happens, the necessary psychic preparation (so far your preparation has been only mental) may take place. At least, you could try it. Only do keep your mind quiet — not silent or blank — but put outside you; look at the thoughts if they rise, but wait for a higher truth, for the psychic being to come forward, for the psychic intuition to speak, and when it comes do not let the mind meddle. If there is something not quite clear, wait for more light. Give your soul a chance, that is what is needed.

To Barindra Kumar Ghose and Others, 1922–1928¹

To Barindra Kumar Ghose

[1]

Arya Office
Pondicherry
November 18. 1922.

Dear Barin,

I understand from your letter that you need a written authority from me for the work I have entrusted to you and a statement making your position clear to those whom you may have to approach in connection with it. You may show to anyone you wish this letter as your authority and I hope it will be sufficient to straighten things for you.

I have been till now and shall be for some time longer withdrawn in the practice of a yoga destined to be a basis not for withdrawal from life, but for the transformation of human life. It is a yoga in which vast untried tracts of inner experience and new paths of sadhana had to be opened up and which therefore needed retirement and long time for its completion. But the time is approaching, though it has not yet come, when I shall have to take up a large external work proceeding from the spiritual basis of this yoga.

It is therefore necessary to establish a number of centres, small and few at first but enlarging and increasing in number as I go on, for training in this sadhana, one under my direct supervision, others in immediate connection with me. Those trained there will be hereafter my assistants in the work I shall

¹ *All the letters in this subsection, except the first, second and ninth to Barindra Kumar Ghose, are preserved only in the form of handwritten, typed or printed copies. Whenever possible, the editors have collated several copies of each letter in order to produce an accurate text. — Ed.*

have to do, but for the present these centres will be not for external work but for spiritual training and tapasya.

The first, which will be transferred to British India when I go there, already exists at Pondicherry, but I need funds both to maintain and to enlarge it. The second I am founding through you in Bengal. I hope to establish another in Guzerat during the ensuing year.

Many more desire and are fit to undertake this sadhana than I can at present admit and it is only by large means being placed at my disposal that I can carry on this work which is necessary as a preparation for my own return to action.

I have empowered you to act for me in the collection of funds and other collateral matters. I have an entire confidence in you and I would request all who wish me well to put in you the same confidence.

I may add that this work of which I have spoken is both personally and in a wider sense my own and it is not being done and cannot be done by any other for me. It is separate and different from any other work that has been or is being carried on by others under my name or with my approval. It can only be done by myself aided closely by those like you who are being or will in future be trained directly under me in my spiritual discipline.

Aurobindo Ghose.

[2]

Pondicherry
December 1. 1922

Dear Barin,

I waited for your letter in order to know precisely what portions Chittaranjan wanted to publish and why.² It turns out to be as I saw, but I wanted confirmation. I must now make clear the reasons why I hesitated to sanction the publication.

I should have had no objection to the publication of the

² Chittaranjan Das proposed publishing portions of Sri Aurobindo's letter to him of 18 November 1922. This letter is published on pages 260–62. — Ed.

portion about the spiritual basis of life or the last paragraph about Swaraj. But that about non-cooperation as it stands without farther explanation and amplification would lead, I think, to a complete misunderstanding of my real position. Some would take it to mean that I accept the Gandhi programme subject to the modifications proposed by the Committee. As you know, I do not believe that the Mahatma's principle can be the true foundation or his programme the true means of bringing about the genuine freedom and greatness of India, her Swarajya and Samrajya. On the other hand others would think that I was sticking to the school of Tilakite Nationalism. That also is not the fact, as I hold that school to be out of date. My own policy, if I were in the field, would be radically different in principle and programme from both, however it might coincide in certain points. But the country is not yet ready to understand its principle or to execute its programme.

Because I know this very well, I am content to work still on the spiritual and psychic plane, preparing there the ideas and forces which may afterwards at the right moment and under the right conditions precipitate themselves into the vital and material field. And I have been careful not to make any public pronouncement as that might prejudice my possibilities of future action. What that will be will depend on developments. The present trend of politics may end in abortive unrest, but it may also stumble with the aid of external circumstances into some kind of simulacrum of self-government. In either case the whole real work will remain to be done. I wish to keep myself free for it in either case.

My interest in Das's actions and utterances, apart from all question of personal friendship, arises first from the fact that the push he is giving, although I do not think it likely to succeed at present, may yet help to break the narrow and rigid cadre of the "constructive" Bardoli programme which seems to me to construct nothing and the fetish-worship of non-cooperation as an end in itself rather than a means, and thereby to create conditions more favourable for the wide and complex action necessary to prepare the true Swarajya. Secondly, it arose from

the rapidity with which he seems to be developing many of the ideas which I have long put down in my mind as essentials of the future. I have no objection to his making use privately of what I have written in the letter. But I hope he will understand why the publication of it does not recommend itself to me.

I see you are having great difficulties over the money question. Remember that money as a general power is still in the hands of the adverse forces, Mammon or Amrita's grand Titan. The favourable force can only come in waves which must be realised at once, otherwise the adverse forces will intervene and create all difficulties. Also it will not do to relax effort or turn it elsewhere when things seem to promise favourably, — the promise is likely to be deceptive because that is just the moment for the hostile intervention. As in the Yoga, so here the will and the force must be kept steadily working on men, forces and circumstances until the possible success is achieved.

Aurobindo

P.S. The answer to Jyotish Ghose's letter will go later.

[3]

Pondicherry
9th December 1922

Dear Barin,

I have read carefully Jyotish Ghose's letter and I think the best thing is first to explain his present condition as he describes it. For he does not seem to me to understand the true causes and the meaning.

The present condition of passivity and indifference is a reaction from a former abnormal state to which he was brought by an internal effort not properly guided from without or from within. The effort brought about a breaking of the veils which divide the physical from the psychic and vital worlds. But his mind was unprepared and unable to understand his experiences and judged them by the light of fancy and imagination and erroneous mental and vital suggestions. His vital being full of rajasic

and egoistic energy rushed up violently to enjoy these new fields and use the force that was working for its own lower ends. This gave an opportunity for a hostile power from the vital world to break in and take partial possession and the result was disorganisation of the nervous and physical system and some of the brain centres. The attack and possession seem to have passed out and left behind the present reaction of passivity with a strong hold of *tamas* and indifference. The *tamas* and indifference are not in themselves desirable things but they are temporarily useful as a rest from the past unnatural tension. The passivity is desirable and a good basis for a new and right working of the *Shakti*.

It is not a true interpretation of his condition that he is dead within and there is only an outside activity. What is true is that the centre of vital egoism that thinks itself the actor has been crushed and he now feels all the thought and activity playing outside him. This is a state of knowledge; for the real truth is that all these thoughts and activities are Nature's and come into us or pass through us as waves from the universal Nature. It is our egoism and our limitation in the body and individual physical mind which prevent us from feeling and experiencing this truth. It is a great step to be able to see and feel the truth as he is now doing. This is not of course the complete knowledge. As the knowledge becomes more complete and the psychic being opens upwards one feels all the activities descending from above and can get at their true source and transform them.

The light playing in his head means that there has been an opening to the higher force and knowledge which is descending as light from above and working on the mind to illumine it. The electrical current is the force descending in order to work in the lower centres and prepare them for the light. The right condition will come when instead of the vital forces trying to push upward the *Prana* becomes calm and surrendered and waiting with full assent for the light and when instead of the chasm in between there is a constant aspiration of the heart towards the truth above. The light must descend into these lower centres so as to transform the emotional and vital and physical being as well as the mental thought and will.

The utility of psychic experiences and knowledge of the invisible worlds as of other yogic experiences is not to be measured by our narrow human notions of what may be useful for the present physical life of man. In the first place these things are necessary for the fulness of the consciousness and the completeness of the being. In the second place these other worlds are actually working upon us. And if you know and can enter into them then instead of being the victims and puppets of these powers we can consciously deal with, control and use them. Thirdly, in my Yoga, the Yoga of the supramental, the opening of the psychic consciousness to which these experiences belong is quite indispensable. For it is only through the psychic opening that the supramental can fully descend with a strong and concrete grasp and transform the mental, vital and physical being.

This is the present condition and its value. For the future if he wishes to accept my yoga the conditions are a steady resolve and aspiration towards the truth I am bringing down, a calm passivity and an opening upward towards the source from which the light is coming. The Shakti is already working in him and if he takes and keeps this attitude and has a complete confidence in me there is no reason why he should not advance safely in the sadhana in spite of the physical and vital damage that has been done to his system. As for his coming here to see me I am not yet quite ready but we will speak of it after your return to Pondicherry.

Aurobindo

[4]

30th December 1922
Arya Office
Pondicherry

Dear Barin,

First about Krishnashashi. I do not think you are quite right about him at least in the idea that he is responsible for the recent undesirable manifestations at your place. He is evidently what is called a psychic sensitive and one of a very high, though

not perhaps the first order. It is not his fault, I think, that things went wrong recently. These sensitives require a constant protection and guidance from someone who has both power on the psychic and vital plane and knowledge of the science of these planes. There is none such among you. Especially when he is in certain psychic conditions such as those into which he has recently entered, he needs absolutely this protection. He cannot then possibly protect himself because the very nature of these conditions is an absolute passivity and openness to the psychic and psycho-vital influences. It is useless to ask him at that time to exercise his judgment or his power of rejection. For that would immediately make the condition itself impossible. If the psychic and psycho-vital influences are of the right kind, all is well and very remarkable results can be obtained. If they are bad the condition becomes dangerous. The only way to secure the exclusion of the bad influences is for someone else with psychic power to keep a wall of protection round him at the time. The sort of trance in which the breath diminishes, the tongue goes in, the body is curved upward and psycho-physical movements begin in the body is one which I know perfectly well and there is nothing essentially wrong about it. It may be brought about by a very high influence and equally by a bad one, or being brought about by the former, it can be misused or attacked by the latter. If there had been a protection about him exercised by one who had knowledge and confidence in his own psychic and vital force, the untoward influence evidenced by the cries, grimaces, etc. would not have come in to spoil this stage. Let me add that these are not forces of our lower universal but an intervention from a foreign and hostile vital world.

In the present circumstances the proper line for Krishna-shashi is to postpone this kind of psychic development, I mean the later ones—especially those of a physical character. He must understand the character of his higher psychic experiences. These, including the voice, are not direct from the supra-mental but psychic and intuitive on the whole mental plane from the higher mind downwards. That is no reason to belittle them.

Only in the transcription in his mind there is a mixture of his own mental and other suggestions which is almost inevitable at the beginning. He should now without interrupting his higher psychic development give more attention to a self-controlled meditation and mental enlargement. In one letter he speaks of interrupting the reading of "Arya" from the fear of growing too intellectual. This was an erroneous suggestion of his own mind. Let him by all means read and study these things. Of course in this kind of mental enlargement and self-controlled meditation there are dangers and likelihood of mistakes as in all the rest of Yoga. But I think it is what he needs at the present stage. The progress would be slow but it is likely to be more safe, and he can resume the full psychic development when the necessary conditions can be provided. He should also turn his will towards mental and vital purification. There is often much misunderstanding about passivity and self-surrender. It does not mean that there should not remain in the earlier stages any kind of choice, self-control or will towards certain things which are seen to be needed rather than others. Only they must be subject to a confidence and free openness to a higher guidance, which will respond to this choice and will in us if the choice and will are right and sincere.

Next with regard to the hostile manifestations which I observe to be of a very low vital and physico-vital character. I may observe that although there is a real force behind them many of them are not of a real character, that is to say, the faces seen and touches felt were not, in all cases, of real vital beings but only forms suggested and created out of the stuff of your own surrounding vital atmosphere and can easily be dismissed by refusing to accept their reality or to admit their formation. It may be that some particular person in your group opened the way for them but they need not necessarily have had such a personal cause. The real cause may have been the coming together in meditation of so many yet undeveloped people carrying with them a very mixed atmosphere. When that happens or even when there is a general meditation, a *chakra*, hostile forces are attracted and try to break in. There ought to

be someone in the group who during the meditation protects the circle. If the meditation is of a psychic character the protection must be psychic on the vital plane. Mirra's experience is that the protection must take the form of a white light constantly kept round the circle. But even this is not enough as the forces will attack constantly and try to find a gap in the protection; there must therefore be round the white light a covering of dense purple light sufficiently opaque for these beings not to be able to see through it. It is not sufficient to have this light in the mental or psychic levels. It must be brought down into the vital and fill it, because it is in the vital that there is the attack. Further, nobody must go out of his body during the meditation (I mean the vital being must not go out, the mental can always do it) or psychically out of the circle. But there is one thing that must be noticed. That if the manifestations occur in spite of all there must be no fear in the minds of those who become aware of them. It is by creating fear through terrible forms and menaces that the hostile beings prevent the Sadhaka from crossing over the threshold between the physical and vital world and it is also by creating fear and alarm that they are able to break in on the vital being of the body. Courage and unalterable confidence are the first necessity of the Sadhaka.

I observe that in your Calcutta centre the Sadhana seems to have taken a different turn from that in the Krishnagore centre. It seems to be marked by an immediate opening and rapid development of the psychical consciousness and psychical phenomena. This turn has great possibilities but also by itself great dangers. In the complete Sadhana there are two powers necessary, the masculine, *Purusha* or *Ishwara* power coming down in knowledge, light, calm, strength, wide consciousness from above and the feminine, Nature or *Ishwari* power opening in receptivity, passivity, psychic sensibility, the responsiveness on all the planes of the being from below. The first by itself tends to be predominantly mental or mentalised intuitive and afterwards mentalised supramental. It is slow in action but sure and safe, only there is often a difficulty of opening up the separate psychic, vital and physical being to the illumination and change.

The second by itself is rapid, sensitive, full of extraordinary and striking experiences but apt in the absence of psychic or occult powers to be chaotic, uneven and open to many dangers. It is when both are present and act upon each other in the being that the Sadhana is likely to be most perfect.

I think you should insist in your Calcutta centre on attention being given to what I call the Purusha side, that is to say, a basis of deep calm, strength, equality, wide consciousness and purity in the mental being, and as the vital and physical open, also in the vital and physical being. If that is attended to and successfully developed the play of the psychic, vital and physical experiences will be more steady, ordered and safe.

As to the three photographs you have sent I give you Mirra's comments in inverted commas with my additions afterwards.

1. Kanai

"An extremely interesting head, highly psychic personality but he must be careful about the physical as this type is likely to burn up the body in the intensity of its psychic developments."

The basis of calm, strength and purity brought down into the physical consciousness without any hasty trepidations or unhealthy vibrations will secure the physical safety and is here very indispensable.

2. Girin

"An intellectual and philosophic temperament but there is something heavy below."

I think that the heaviness is in the vital being and the physical mind and may cause considerable obstruction but if these two can be cleared and illuminated there may be behind a fund of conservative energy and steadiness which will be useful.

3. Jagat Prasanna

"Very dull. I don't know whether anything can be given to him."

I seem to find behind the eyes a psychic capacity of a very low kind and in the bodily vitality something dark and impure which may be a mediumistic element for the lower psycho-vital forces. If he sat in the circle or meditated in the house that might explain the irruption of undesirable phenomena. This is

my impression about the man. But I am not quite sure. If he is to do any Yoga it should rather be of the old kind and especially a discipline of self-purification. Passivity of any kind in his case would be dangerous.

One or two things I should add suggested by your remarks on Krishnashashi. All should understand that the true direct supramental does not come at the beginning but much later on in the Sadhana. First the opening up and illumination of the mental, vital and physical beings; secondly, the making intuitive of the mind, through will etc. and development of the hidden soul consciousness progressively replacing the surface consciousness; thirdly, the supramentalising of the changed mental, vital and physical beings and finally the descent of the true supramental and the rising into the supramental plane.

This is the natural order of the Yoga. These stages may overlap and intermix, there may be many variations, but the last two can only come in an advanced state of the progress. Of course the Supramental Divine guides this Yoga throughout but it is first through many intermediary planes; and it cannot easily be said of anything that comes in the earlier periods that it is the direct or full supramental. To think so when it is not so may well be a hindrance to progress.

As to what you say about an unhinged and unsound element in Krishnashashi, this is a probable explanation. The nature of this kind of psychic sensitives is complex and is full of many delicate springs easily touched from behind the veil; hence the sensitiveness; but also easily twisted owing to their very delicacy. Something may have been thus twisted in his nature. In that case great care must be taken. It must be found out what it is and the thing be put right without any too rough handling.

I shall write to you separately about Arun's money and Sarojini.

Aurobindo.

[5]

Pondicherry
January 1923

My dear Barin

It is unfortunate that Krishnashashi's Sadhana should have taken this turn. As things stand however a general mess in Calcutta is the worst possible place for him. If no other arrangement can be made it is better that he should go for the present to Chittagong, do his Sadhana there and write to me. It is not possible for me to have him here just now. If his Sadhana rights itself it may be possible hereafter.

As to the development of egoism in him that is a thing which often happens in the first rush of experience and with proper protection and influence may be got over. The serious features are only the psycho-vital, the danger to the body and certain suggestions which are evidently meant to put him off the right way. I still find it difficult to believe that the menacing apparitions are primarily due to him, for there is nothing in the atmosphere of his letters that suggests a medium of this kind. [Is]³ there a photograph of him []⁴ available that you can send or ask him to send it to me?

I see that you say in your letter that all have been frightened by these apparitions. Insist on what I have already said about the necessity of dismissing fear. Sometime or other everybody will have to face things of this kind and how can they do it if they fear. If they are afraid of these things, many of which are merely figures or nervous formations, how can they be spiritual warriors and conquerors, without which there can be no rising towards supermanhood. I presume they would be brave against physical dangers; why not then be brave against all psychical dangers or menace.

If Krishnashashi heeds the instructions I have sent in my former letter to you (they were made after consultation with Mirra) all may yet be well. If not I shall have to try to send my

³ MS (copy) If

⁴ MS (copy) is

mental protection and see what it can do. He is unfortunately too far away for me to put a psycho-vital protection about him. Let me know immediately what has been done and where he goes. I am sending you a letter for him enclosed to you.

As regards Arun's money I understand that it is for the Calcutta centre and I do not understand why you want to send it here. If he can give the first monthly instalment at once that ought to lighten your difficulties there. I shall be able to arrange with Durgadas's help and with the money coming from Madras and Gujerat for one year's expenses here, just sufficient for the two houses. What I want you to do, if you can, is to raise money from Bengal for the next year and for the maintenance of your Bengal centre also for two years, so that there may be no need of hunting for funds for sometime to come.

At present the main difficulty in your attempts to raise money there is that all remains as potentiality and promise and thins away before it can come to material realisation. It is possible that if you can materialise the small amounts this obstacle may break and even the big sums begin to come in afterwards. Always remember that it is a psychic difficulty, a state of forces, that is the thing to be changed, because that is the real obstacle. If another balance of forces can be begun in which there is the actual materialisation even on a small scale that may well be an opening for better conditions.

Aurobindo.

[6]

23rd January 1923.
Arya Office,
Pondicherry.

My dear Barin,

I got your telegram about Krishnashashi this morning. Yesterday I received his photograph and today his last written experiences.⁵ I have been able to form from all these and from

⁵ Sri Aurobindo commented on some of these experiences in a letter to Krishnashashi of January 1923. See pages 370–73. — Ed.

other indications as complete an idea about him and about what has happened to him as is possible at this distance. The photo shows a remarkable soul, an idealistic psychic intelligence and the presence of a high and beautiful internal being but the part of the face showing the emotional and vital being is too delicate to support adequately the upper part and the physical and physico-vital mould is of a poor and inferior character not easily lending itself to the higher movements or to the change demanded by the Yoga. This disparity in the being was the cause of his illness and is the cause also of his present disorder. The immediate cause however is his being hurried by circumstances and the eagerness of his own mind into a development too rapid for the physical consciousness which should have been subjected to a long and steadying preparation.

I do not know whether Krishnashashi received Moni's letter written to him at his other address, Raja Brojendra Narayan Roy's Street, which he should have got on the 14th. In this letter I suggested that he should remain in Chittagong or some other quiet place and do the Sadhana by himself turning to me for help and protection and I also insisted that the main object of his Sadhana should be the purification and calming of the mind, the vital being and the body. After returning to Bhowanipore I see that just the contrary has happened, — a feverish psycho-mental activity and a much too eager attempt at rapid progress. Instead of calmly receiving he has been seizing at everything that came and trying to translate it and throw it out into form. He has also been pulling at realisation and trying, as Mirra has put it, to swallow the world in a minute. The result is that there has been an uprush of some undesirable kind from the imperfect vital being and the physical mind unable to bear the strain has been thrown into disorder. It is evident also that the atmosphere of the Bhowanipore centre is not favourable to him. There is there an intense mental and psychic activity and a constant push towards rapid experience and progress which are just the things that are dangerous for him and there is not yet the assured basis of calm, peace, serenity and inner silence which is what he needs above all things.

I hope that it is only a crisis or a passing disorder. I am doing my best from here to mend the breakdown, but you must help me by keeping there a firm quietness and calm concentration. This was the object of my telegram. I am of the opinion that when he recovers his balance, my original instructions (in Moni's letter) should be adhered to and he should go to some quiet place where there will not be any high pressure. He must be instructed to put away every other object except the quieting of his mind, vital being and body and the attainment of a poise of serene calm and peace. Also it is better for him not to pass the whole day in meditation and Sadhana but to take plenty of relaxation for the relief of the physical being and do some kind of physical work (not exhausting) which will keep it occupied and healthy. He must be assured that this change does not mean at all a rejection but that it is necessary to secure the proper condition for his future Sadhana. He must of course keep himself in constant spiritual connection with me and write to me from time to time.

Please keep me constantly informed of his condition until he recovers.

Since the above was written your second telegram came into my hands this morning. It is possible that Krishnagore may be a more suitable place for Krishnashashi than Calcutta. There is a more settled basis there. The place is more deliberate and the surroundings are likely to be quieter, a not unimportant consideration in his case. Besides he needs some one who can impose upon him an atmosphere of calm and influence him directly from the psychic nature and not through the mentality, the latter being always of a doubtful effectivity in dealing with psychic people, and from what you have told me about Indu, it is possible that she may be able to help him in this way. In that case it would not be necessary for him to return to Chittagong or pursue his Sadhana in isolation. All this of course after he has recovered. His case is not that of insanity in the ordinary sense but, as in Jyotish's case and for rather similar reasons, a psychic disorder. I should of course be kept informed of his condition.

I have many things to write but as this must go without delay I postpone them to another letter.

Aurobindo.

[7]

Arya Office
Pondicherry

January 1923.

My dear Barin,

I have got a fuller idea from your letters about Krishna-shashi's collapse. The main cause is what I saw, the vehement and unrestrained pressure and the vital uprush, overstraining and upsetting the defective physical mind. There is no evil in the psychical and mental or even the vital being proper. The seat of the harm is evidently in the physico-vital and the physical being. The physico-vital dazzled by the experiences began to think itself a very interesting and important personage and to histrionise with the experiences and play for that purpose with the body. This is a frequent deviation of Yoga observable even in some who are considered great Sadhakas. It is a kind of charlatanism of the vital being but would not by itself amount to madness, though it may sometimes seem to go very near it. Ordinarily if the physical mind is strong it either rejects or else keeps these demonstrations within certain bounds. But in this case the physical mind also broke down. The coarse kind of violence exhibited is due to the rough and coarse character of the physical being, — so much I see but am not yet able to determine whether the disorder is only psychic or, as was suggested in my last letter, there is some defect in the brain which has come to the surface. I am concentrating daily and those in Krishnagore have to help me by remaining calm and strong and surrounding him with an unagitated atmosphere, also those who can, have to keep a quiet concentration. He must be kept outwardly and inwardly under firm control and check. If the disorder is only psychic the violence will pass away and the other signs abate and less frequently recur. But if there is some brain defect then

as I said, it may be a difficult affair. I can give final instructions only after seeing how the malady goes.

As regards your own sadhana and those of others in Bhowanipore I think it necessary to make two or three observations. First I have for some time the impression that there is a too constant activity and pressure for rapidity of progress and a multitude of experiences. These things are all right in themselves, but there must be certain safeguards. First there should be sufficient periods of rest and silence, even of relaxation, in which there can be a quiet assimilation. Assimilation is very important and periods necessary for it should not be regarded with impatience as stoppages of the Yoga. Care should be taken to make calm and quiet strength and inner silence, the basic condition for all activity. There should be no excessive strain; any fatigue, disturbance, or inordinate sensitiveness of the nervous and physical parts, of which you mention certain symptoms in your letters, should be quieted and removed, as they are often signs of overstrain or too great an activity or rapidity in the Yoga. It must also be remembered that experiences are only valuable as indications and openings and the main thing always is the steady harmonious and increasingly organised opening and change of the different parts of the consciousness and the being.

Among Rati's experiences there is one paper headed "surface consciousness". What is described there is the nervous or physico-vital envelope. This is the thing observed by the mediums and it is by exteriorising it to a less or greater extent that they produce their phenomena. How did Rati come to know of it? Was it by intuition, by vision or by personal experience? If the latter, warn him not to exteriorise this vital envelope for to do so without adequate protection, which must be that of a person acquainted with these things and physically present at the time, may bring about serious psychical dangers and also injuries to the nervous being and the body or even worse.

Next about money matters. The sources you speak of as supplementing the three thousand you propose to raise are almost all uncertainties. As for instance Miss Hodgson's money, which depends first on her staying here and secondly on the life of her

father, an aged and ailing man. I think it necessary to have some six thousand actually in hand for the year after this. Of course you will raise as much as you can in the time at your disposal. I believe if you can once begin to materialise sums and send them here, the rest will come much more easily than seems probable at present. It seems to me as regards the press that the terms made with Amar were hardly precise enough and too unfavourable to you. Still since it is done, let me know what sums are covered by Arun's loan of two thousand and what sums still remain to be raised and paid. When you have some money in hand for the expenses here, can you send the smaller items in Mirra's list, the tooth powder etc.

As to Akhil Choudhury, my intention was that you should meet him and report to me and afterwards I would decide. I was thinking of his remaining at Krishnagore but Krishnashashi's affair has disarranged everything. I understand from Akhil's letter that he has Rs.100/-. I think it would be best for him to come here for a very short time. I shall see him personally and judge what is best to be done. He must be prepared to go to Krishnagore or else, if I find that he can go on by himself after a first touch from here, to return to Chittagong. He should keep enough money to come here and return. Kshitish has written asking to come here for a year and offering to pay all his expenses. I shall decide about this hereafter. Purani will be coming in March and I don't want too many people here. But if Hrishikesh does not come, as I suppose he will not, I may possibly decide to let Kshitish come for some time if not for a whole year.

Aurobindo.

[8]

“Arya” Office,
Pondicherry.
31st January, 1923.

My dear Barin,

I got your letter of the 26th and intended to wire but had not your Krishnagore address. This afternoon I have received your

telegram and sent a reply giving permission for Krishnashashi's removal. In case the telegram should not reach I have also wired to Kanai in Calcutta. Although to cure Krishnashashi by psychic means might not be impossible, the prolonged resistance and the increasing violence make the present condition impossible. The ordinary means of restraint and medical treatment will have to be used and therefore his removal as you suggest is the only thing left open to us.

It appears from your letters that there is a strong play around you of the hostile opposition from beings of the lowest physico-vital and physical ranges. These beings are small and without intelligence but full of power to do various kinds of harm and mischief. They are similar to those that did the stone-throwing in the other house. To produce brain-incoherence, freaks, absurdities, sexual disorders, nervous agitations, and disequilibrium, coarse violence of various kinds is their sphere in the physical domain and in the physical to bring about accidents, illnesses, injuries, physical impediments and on a smaller scale little mischiefs, inconveniences and hindrances of all kinds. It is these that have taken possession of Krishnashashi's brain and nervous centres and impel his speech and movements. It is these also that pursue with accidents those who are trying to collect money. I have for some time been aware of their activities and suggestions and they are now almost the only positively hostile forces of which I am aware in the Yoga, the rest being merely the normal obstructions of nature. In my own atmosphere I am able to make their suggestions abortive and minimise their play pending their elimination. But in your case they seem to be moved by some more powerful force which not being able to act directly on you is using them as agents. Probably you have in your Sadhana touched and awakened the plane on which they work, but are not yet able to conquer and protect as you can in the higher fields. Those entirely within your spiritual influence may resist or escape but others are exposed to their attack.

I think in these circumstances it is best to limit your creation of a centre there to those who have already begun and

even with them, I mean the newcomers, you should be careful. Probably the best course is to keep the centre at Krishnagore as you suggest and have only a small establishment at Calcutta. The atmosphere of Calcutta cannot be a good environment for a Sadhana centre. As to money affairs you must see whether the resistance can be overcome during February and in any case I hope you will not return empty-handed or with a nominal sum, for that would mean a victory for the hostile force which will make things more difficult in the future. I understand from your last letter that Satkari has already realised 500/-. If so get that sum and send it at once, also get in hand and send the Benares money. That will mean so much materialised and to that extent the opposing force defeated. Afterwards see whether the rest does not come in with less difficulty. If you can prevail, that means the way made clear for better success in the future. It is enough that these forces should have destroyed such fine psychic possibilities as Krishnashashi's. I do not like their being successful in other directions also.

As to Sarojini it is out of the question that she should come here. Make it plain to her that the Yoga I am doing now is much too difficult for her. Her coming here would be a waste of time and money. If she is in earnest about Sadhana she must begin with something much more easy. The first thing for her is to study these things, understand, get her mind prepared and begin with turning herself Godward, elimination of egoistic movements and perhaps doing works in the spirit of Karma Yoga; a meditation active and not passive with these things as the object is all she can safely try at the beginning. I have of course no objection to her turning to Theosophy if she is drawn that way. But for her to come into the concentrated atmosphere here just now would not be good for her and it would be disturbing to us. Please stop her coming here by whatever means you can.

I learn from your post card today that Kanai and the others are at Krishnagore. Please let me know your address there so that I may be sure, whenever necessary, of making a direct communication. Manmohan is writing today to Jogesh at Chittagong to take charge of Krishnashashi. He has already cared for and

almost cured another in the same condition. Let us hope he will equally be successful here.

Aurobindo.

[9]

14th February 1923.
“Arya” office
Pondicherry

My dear Barin,

I have received the Benares money and am sending an acknowledgement with this letter, which you can transmit to Das. Rajani's 50 has not yet reached me.

I had already written to you about Akhil and on the 10th Manmohan telegraphed and wrote to Chittagong instructing him not to go to Bhowanipore but to collect the money and as soon as he had done this and sufficiently recovered from fever, to write and he would receive a call from here. It appears from your telegram today that he started before receiving Manmohan's telegram. I can give no other instructions than those I have already given. Akhil must collect the money sufficient for his journey here and back either to Krishnagore or Chittagong and he must not come without the sum in his hand. I have arranged things here so as to have just sufficient to meet one year's expenses under each head, just that and no more. Until I am assured of the next year's expenses and more, I cannot meet unexpected charges or enlarge my expenditure. Therefore it will not do for him to come and then have to wait here indefinitely for the means of his return journey. An arrangement agreed upon ought to be observed, otherwise there is unnecessary inconvenience and confusion.

I infer from your letter and telegram taken together that Mohini is starting for Krishnagore in order to take back Krishnashashi. Of course in that case there is no need to wait further as was suggested in Moni's letter. I have received no news about Krishnashashi for the last three days. This kind of disregard of instructions is not at all right. It puts me in considerable

difficulty in trying to help Krishnashashi. Please ask Mohini to let me know often from Chittagong about Krishnashashi and his condition. Boroda Babu's letter is very interesting but does not solve the difficulty I had as it gives me no fresh information of any importance. It had already been seen that the immediate cause of the collapse was partly sexual; for that was included in what I meant by the uprush from the vital being. Nor does it make much difference that the physico-vital force possessing him took the form or assumed the *Pranic* body of some dead friend. The situation remains as before. If the disorder is only psychic it will disappear in time. If there is some brain defect that has come up, the issue is more doubtful. The suggestion about the medicine may possibly be useful hereafter. Mohini had better be informed about it.

As to Rajani's difficulties you might ask him to write to me himself stating them and the precise cause of his doubts. As far as I know about his *Sadhana* he was progressing in a steady and sound fashion, but for long I have no farther news of it. There is no reason why he should not succeed in the *yoga* if he keeps the right attitude and faith and perseverance. He will necessarily have difficulties with his vital nature and his physical mind which have a strong earth element, but that is the case also with several others. His development, if he perseveres, is likely to be rather through knowledge and will than any great richness of psychic experience; but he must not take the absence or paucity of the latter for an inability to develop the *yoga*.

The paragraph in one of your letters about the debts is very confused and I can make nothing precise out of it. What I want is to know first what were the heads and the exact sums actually met by the loan of two thousand, especially as this will give me some idea of what has fallen upon us on account of the press; secondly, the heads and exact sums still outstanding apart from this loan of two thousand. What, for instance, is the amount still due to the Kabirajas and what the amount of the small loans. It is very necessary for me, whether in determining what to write to Amar with regard to money matters or in trying to help you, to have an exact and clear idea of the whole transaction. Where

there is only a confused, vague or general idea, the force I put out loses itself very largely in the void. Especially I shall have in future to try and act more and more from the Supramental and less and less from the mind. Now the first condition of the Supramental is exactness, clearness and order both in the total and the details and their relations. Therefore it is a great advantage if there are these elements in the data upon which I have to work and a great disadvantage if they are absent.

I shall await your report about Mohini. I gather from his letter that he wanted to remain some time with you for sadhana. My own idea is that already written by Manmohan to Chittagong, that it is better for most to practise first in its elements at least the synthetic Yoga of jnana, bhakti and karma and establish a basis of mental peace and samata before taking up the Yoga of complete and direct self-surrender. There will always be exceptions, but this is for most the safest course.

Aurobindo

[10]

2nd April, 1923.
 "Arya" Office,
 Pondicherry.

My dear Barin,

First about the photographs. The mounted photograph man is fully unfit for the Yoga. The face is empty except for a great deal of pretension, not warranted by any substance behind. He had better be put off or left aside. It is no use just now bringing in people who have not a definite possibility and even among those who have the best only should be chosen.

As to the unmounted photograph, this is a much worse case. I cannot at all find what you say you see in his eyes. They seem to me rather the eyes of madness or at least mono-mania. The whole face is a nightmare. It seems to me a clear case either of possession or, even, of the incarnation of some vital being. Please do not meddle with him at all. It is only when we have obtained mastery over the physico-vital world and all the physical planes

that it will be at all safe to deal with such cases and certainly even then it will not be to begin by taking them into the Yoga.

I note from this case and from what you say in connection with Rathin that you have just now what seems to me a rather dangerous attraction (because likely to create hindrances or misdirect the energy) towards these vital cases. What you say about the different vital worlds is no doubt interesting and has a certain truth, but you must remember that these worlds, which are different from the true or divine vital, are full of enchantments and illusions and they present appearances of beauty which allure only to mislead or destroy. They are worlds of “Rakshashimaya” and their heavens are more dangerous than their hells. They have to be known and their powers met when need be but not accepted; our business is with the Supramental and with the vital only when it is supramentalised and until then we have always to be on our guard against any lures from that other quarter. I think the worlds of which you speak are those which have a special attraction and a special danger for poets, imaginative people and some artists. There is, especially, a strain of aestheticised vital susceptibility or sentiment or even sentimentalism through which they affect the being and it is one of the things that has to be purified before one can rise to the highest poetry, art and imaginative creation. In the case of Krishnashashi some influences from these worlds certainly entered into the cause of his collapse. I shall write about Rathin directly to his father for I don’t know how long you are staying in Gauhati.⁶ I shall only say just now that it will not be good for the boy if he merely changes the control of one kind of vital world for that of another. He must become healthily normal first and all else can only come afterwards.

As to money matters, I think you should go on trying for some time longer. I believe the obstacle is bound to break before long if we do not get tired out by the obstinacy of the resistance. I am just now very much concentrated in the effort to bring down the Supramental into the physical plane which demands

⁶ See the letter to Rajani Palit on pages 373–77. — Ed.

a very constant and sustained effort and it is for this reason that I have not been able to answer letters. I shall decide about Kshitish when the time for your return draws near.

Aurobindo.

[11]

16th April 1923.
Pondicherry.

My dear Barin,

I answer first your letter of the 6th April. I have already let you know that I approve both the people whose photographs you have sent to me. As to Bibhuti Bhushan Datta you are right in thinking that he is a born Yogin. His face shows the type of the Sufi or Arab mystic and he must certainly have been that in a former life and brought much of his then personality into the present existence. There are defects and limitations in his being. The narrowness of the physical mind of which you speak is indicated in the photograph, though it has not come out in the expression, and it might push him in the direction of a rather poverty-stricken asceticism instead of his expanding and opening himself richly to the opulences of the Divine. It might also lead him in other circumstances to some kind of fanaticism. But on the other hand if he gets the right direction and opens himself to the right powers these things may be turned into valuable elements, the ascetic capacity into a force useful against the physico-vital dangers and what might have been fanaticism into an intense devotion to the Truth revealed to him. There is also likely to be some trouble in the physico-vital being. But I cannot yet say of what nature. This is not a case of an entirely safe development, which can be assured only where there is a strong vital and physical basis and a certain natural balance in the different parts of the being. This balance has here to be created and its creation is quite possible. Whatever risk there is must be taken; for the nature here is born for the Yoga and ought not to be denied its opportunity. He must be made to understand

fully the character and demands of the integral Yoga.

Next for Kumar Krishna Mitter. He is no doubt what you say, a type of the rich and successful man, but the best kind of that type and cast on sound and generous lines. There is besides indicated in his face and expression a refinement and capacity of idealism which is not too common. Certainly we are not to take people into the Yoga for the sake of their riches, but on the other hand we must not have the disposition to reject anyone on account of his riches. If wealth is a great obstacle, it is also a great opportunity, and part of the aim of our work is, not to reject, but to conquer for the divine self-expression the vital and material powers, including that of wealth, which are now in the possession of other influences. If there a man like this [who]⁷ is prepared with an earnest and real will to bring himself and his power over from the other camp to ours, there is no reason to refuse him. This of course is not the case of a man born to the Yoga like Bibhuti Bhushan, but of one who has an opening in him to a spiritual awakening and I think of a nature which might possibly fail from certain negative deficiencies but not because of any adverse element in the being. The one necessity is that he should understand and accept what the Yoga demands of him — first the seeking of a greater Truth, secondly the consecration of himself and his powers and wealth to its service and finally the transformation of all his life into the terms of the Truth and that he should have not merely the enthusiastic turning of his idealism but a firm and deliberate will towards it. It is especially necessary in the case of these rich men for them to realise that it is not enough in this Yoga to have a spiritual endeavour on one side and on the other the rest of the energies given to the ordinary motives, but that the whole life and being must be consecrated to the Yoga. It is probably from this reason of a divided life [that]⁸ men like Arunsingh fail to progress in spite of a natural capacity. If this is understood and accepted, the consecration of which he speaks is obviously in his circumstances the first step

⁷ *MS (copy)* and

⁸ *MS (copy)* these

in the path. If he enters it, it will probably be advisable for him to come after a short time and see me in Pondicherry. But this of course has to be decided afterwards.

About Kanai I have no objection to his coming as he wants for a short visit here. But I think it would be best after you come.

I may say a word in passing about Nalineswar. I have read through his experiences and they confirm what I have said about the deficient capacity of his *adhar*. The mental, vital and physical beings are full of weakness and Tamas and the debility and torpor which he constantly experiences are the result of this deficient *adhar* trying to bear the pressure of the Sadhana. At the same time he has one thing which can carry him through if he keeps it steadily, — the persistent faith and self-surrender. If the physical lightness, which he experienced for the last four or five days before he wrote, can be made permanent then probably the worst part of the difficulty is over. In any case that permanence whenever it comes will be the sign of a certain fundamental safety and the other deficiencies can be gradually rectified by the coming in of the light and the power into the mind and the vital being.

As regards Jyotish Mukherjee, the most notable thing in his photograph is the strong symmetry between the two sides of his face centred in the dissimilarity of the two eyes. This is always a sign of two sides in the nature which have not been harmonised and unified, one side perhaps of faith and devotion and another of a critical and negative mind or one side drawn to higher things and the other held down by the earth nature. This is likely to create a great disadvantage and difficulties in the earlier part of the Sadhana, for it remains even though the disparity may be suppressed by the mental effort but once the balance or the unification can be created there is a compensating advantage by the combination of two strong elements both necessary to completeness. The Sadhana he has been doing seems to have been mainly that of a preliminary mental and vital (psychological) purification and preparation of a very sound character but what is still lacking is a positive spiritual side of the Sadhana. However the clearing of the system seems to have gone far enough for him

to have had at least glimpses of psycho-spiritual experiences and a promise even of the supramental awaiting its time for manifestation. I shall, if I can make time, write separately my comments on his experiences and if he understands and follows he may proceed more rapidly in his Sadhana.

As regards the press debts, I have, as I have already let you know, asked Amar to cut off from it the two hundred rupees which he wanted to send after being paid. The debt to him is marked in your list as rupees two hundred and ninety one odd. If he does as I ask him you will only then have this 91 odd to pay and it is better to do it than to leave the debt running and pay interest. As to Arun's pro-note I suppose it must be signed, but as soon as we have sufficient money for other purposes we should have to turn our attention to paying it. These debts are a very heavy burden as they are likely to swallow up any large sum you may be able to realise. I am thinking over the matter and I shall write to you in detail as soon as I see my way clearer.

What you say about your Sadhana is probably the right interpretation of your experiences. The two things of which you speak are really two sides of one movement. The opening and clearing of the lower strata can only be effectively done in proportion as this relative or mentalised supramental can lay hold on the consciousness and open to and bring down the higher or intermediate supramental from above, and this in its turn can only settle it into the being in proportion as the physico-vital and physical open and clear and change. The interaction must go on until a certain balance between the two movements is created which will enable the higher to hold the being without interruption, and open it more and more to the true supramental activities. The action into which you have been cast was probably necessary because it is the dynamic part of your being in which the defects of the lower nature have the greatest hold and are most prominent.

Aurobindo

P.S. After this letter was finished I got your last of the 12th. What you say about Kumar Krishna there is what I could already

gather about him, only made precise. I do not think that these things very much matter. All strong natures have the rajasik active outgoing force in them and if that were sufficient to unfit for the Yoga, very few of us would have had a chance. As for the doubt of the physical mind as to whether the thing is possible, who has not had it? In my own case it pursued me years and years and it is only in the last two years that the last shadow of doubt, not latterly of its theoretical feasibility, but of the practical certainty of its achievement in the present state of the world and of the human nature, entirely left me. The same can be said of the egoistic poise, — that almost all strong men have the strong egoistic poise. But I do not think judging from the photograph that it is the same half bull and half bulldog nature as in P. Mitter. These things can only go with spiritual development and experience and then the strength behind them becomes an asset. It is also evident from what you say about his past experience of the voice and the vastness that there is, as I thought, a psychic something in him waiting for and on the verge of spiritual awakening. I understand that he is waiting for intellectual conviction and, to bring it, some kind of assurance from an inner experience. To that also there is nothing to say. But the question is, and it seems to me the one question in his case, whether he will be ready to bring to the Yoga the firm, entire and absolute will and consecration that will be needed to tide him through all the struggles and crises of Sadhana. The disparity between his mental poise and action is natural enough, precisely because it is a mental poise. It has to become a spiritual poise before the life and the ideal can become one. Have the spoiling by luxury of which you speak and the worldly life sapped in him the possibility of developing an entire Godward will? If not, then he may be given his chance. I cannot positively say that he is or will be the Adhikari. I can only say that there is the capacity in the best part of his nature. I cannot also say that he is among the “best”. But he seems to me to have more original capacity than some at least who have been accepted. When I wrote about the “best” I did not mean an Adhara without defects and dangers; for I do not think such a one is to be found. My impression is

of course founded on a general favourable effect produced by the physiognomy and the appearance, on certain definite observations upon the same and on psychic indications which were mixed but in the balance favourable. I have not seen the man as you have. Take the sum he offers, do not press him for more at present and for the rest, let him understand clearly not only what the Yoga is, but the great demands it makes on the nature. See how he turns and whether he cannot be given his chance.

Your fuller account of your Sadhana shows that you are seeing in the nature and power of the supramental but you are seeing it probably through the revelatory light descending into the mind. It can only fulfil itself on the conditions I have named, first, the opening to the actual descent of the supermind itself which you will find something still more concrete and full of the truth-power and truth-substance and its penetration of the physical consciousness in all its layers.

Lastly, I may add to what I have said about the press debts that what has been troubling me is the necessity of applying money given for the spiritual work and the maintenance of the Sadhana centres to this object. This is likely to create falsehood or equivocate in the physical atmosphere and I think the mixture of the two things is one obstacle to the movement of the incoming resources. I am trying to find separate means of meeting the debt. About this I will write to you in future. I have written in the body of the letter that Kanai might come after your return, it is just possible I may call him before. Kshitish is always asking for a word about his Sadhana, but it is proceeding very well and he seems to understand it so clearly himself that there is no need for comment.

Your last letter came insured for Rs. 25/- but there was no money or mention of the sum inside. Was it forgotten or was there some other reason for insurance?

Aurobindo

[12]

30th May 1923.
'Arya Office'
Pondicherry.

My dear Barin,

I have been obliged for some time, partly owing to the many-sided storm of which you speak, to concentrate on other things and perhaps that is one reason why this stream of money collection has run dry. I shall see whether we can set it flowing again. I do not ask you to come back as yet because it is much better if possible to get this thing finished in such a way that you may not have to go running back after a time to complete it. The arrangements I thought of with regard to the debts have not taken shape or rather have postponed themselves to an indefinite future. If I remember right what you have immediately to pay is some 250 more to Kamala Palit and 600 to Arun. Besides this and the other 2000 to Arun, which if necessary can wait, there are the sums due, 1500 altogether, to the Kaviraj and Pulin Mitter. I believe there is nothing else. Can the last two wait and if so, how long? What is still necessary is to raise 1500 more for next year's expenses here. Next, to pay off the more pressing debts and if there is any large opening all the debts. I would have no objection to your applying any money you raise from the Marwaries to the latter purpose. If Basanta Lal Murarka can really raise 5000 from them, the problem will be solved. I shall then be able to keep Das' money separate and if he also keeps his promise that with some help from elsewhere will prevent all necessity of thinking of these things for another two years.

As regards Kanai the experiences of which he is afraid do not seem to me dangerous in themselves. They are such as come to all people whose Yoga runs strongly on psychic lines and those you mention and similar ones of still stronger character have been experienced by Mirra at least a thousand times during her Sadhana. The only danger, apart from any hostile interference, comes from the disturbances of the physical mind and the fear and apprehensions of the nervous and physical being.

I have already written once before that fearlessness is the first necessary condition for going through this Yoga. These fears and apprehensions and the sense of weakness and insecurity come from the attachment of the physical and nervous being to its ordinary basis of consciousness and usual habits of living and its alarm at anything abnormal which forces it out of its own grooves. As for the need of immediate protection, that is only when the vital being goes out of the body. The psychic being can go out without any danger if the physical consciousness does not disturb and itself create the danger. But unfortunately Kanai's physical and nervous being seems to be weak and not on a level with the powers of his mind and psychic nature. It may be better for him to concentrate first on the preparation of his physical consciousness. I have already said that what he must do is to bring down the basis of calm, light and strength into the physical mind, nerves and body. Once this is thoroughly done all attacks can be met. There will be no disturbing vibrations and all kinds of psychic and vital experiences such as those now pressing upon [him] will be welcomed as an expansion and fulfilment of the integral nature and a cause not of apprehension but of knowledge and Ananda. As to his coming here, I was not calling him because just now I am still in the concentration on the complete mastery of the physical and that prevents me from putting myself out very much at present. I could not give him the constant attention which will be needed according to your suggestion and besides, as his physical being is the weakest part of him, it might not be altogether advisable for him to be here until I have established a sufficient general security against any attack which might touch on that plane. Still I shall see whether I can call him after a little time.

I have no objection to Rajani's proposal of a visit here in case of his confirmation. It might be helpful to him in the present stage of his sadhana.

I had forgotten that Peary Mohan Das and the Chittagong aspirant were one and the same person. You will have to take together what was said about each in Nalini's letter. The chaotic nature of his experiences about which I spoke are probably due

to some kind of difficulty or exaggeration in his vital being. It is best for him to start with getting a sure foundation of calm and a quiet opening up on all the planes of his consciousness, especially the emotional and the vital, so that a sound and orderly development of the Yoga may be possible.

Aurobindo.

P.S. If Kanai really gets anything of the nature of psychic trance the one thing he will have to be careful about is to meditate under such conditions that it will not be roughly broken from outside.

A.G.

[13]

Arya Office, Pondicherry
16th June 1923.

I have read the record of Jyotish Mukherjee's experiences.⁹ It appears from it that he has made the right start to a certain extent and has been able to establish the beginning of mental calm and some kind of psychic opening but neither of these has yet been able to go very far. The reason probably is that he has done everything by a strong mental control and forcible stilling of the mind and emotional and vital movements, but has not yet established the true spiritual calm which can only come by experience of or surrender to the higher being above the mind. It is this that he has to get in order to make a foundation for a more substantial progress.

1. He is right in thinking that an inner calm and silence must be the foundation, not only of external work but of all inner and outer activities. But the quieting of the mind in a mental silence or inactivity although often useful as a first step is not sufficient. The mental calm must be changed first into the deeper spiritual peace, Shanti, and then into the supramental calm and silence full of the higher light and strength and Ananda. Moreover, the

⁹ *This letter, which as preserved has no salutation, was apparently written to Barindra Kumar Ghose. The typescript is headed "To Jyotish Mukherjee" — apparently indicating that Sri Aurobindo's answer was to be transmitted to Jyotish by Barin. — Ed.*

quieting of the mind only is not enough. The vital and physical consciousness have to be opened up and the same foundation established there. Also the spirit of devotion of which he speaks must be not merely a mental feeling but an aspiration of the deeper heart and will to the truth above, that the being may rise up into it and that it may descend and govern all the activities.

2. The void he feels in the mind is often a necessary condition for the clearing of it from its ordinary movements so that it may open to a higher consciousness and a new experience, but in itself it is merely negative, a mental calm without anything positive in it and if one stops there, then the dullness and inertia of which he complains must come. What he needs is, in the void and silence of the mind, to open himself to, to wait or to call for the action of the higher power, light and peace from above the mind.

3. The survival of the evil habits in sleep is easily explained and is a thing of common experience. It is a known psychological law that whatever is suppressed in the conscious mind remains in the subconscious being and recurs either in the waking state when the control is removed or else in sleep. Mental control by itself cannot eradicate anything entirely out of the being. The subconscious in the ordinary man includes the larger part of the vital being and the physical mind and also the secret body-consciousness. In order to make a true and complete change, one has to make all these conscious, to see clearly what is still there and to reject them from one layer after another till they have been entirely thrown out from the personal experience. Even then, they may remain and come back on the being from the surrounding universal forces and it is only when no part of the consciousness makes any response to these forces of the lower plane that the victory and transformation are absolutely complete.

4. His experience that whenever he gains a conquest in the mental plane the forces of past Karma, — that is to say, really of the old nature, — come back upon him with a double vigour is again a common experience. The psychological explanation is to be found in the preceding paragraph. All attempt at transformation of the being is a fight with universal forces which have long been in possession and it is vain to expect that they will give up

the struggle at the first defeat. As long as they can, they seek to retain possession and even when they are cast out they will, as long as there is any chance of response in the conscious or subconscious being, try to recur and regain their hold. It is no use being discouraged by these attacks. What has to be done is to see that they are made more and more external and all assent refused until they weaken and fade away. Not only the Chitta and Buddhi must refuse consent but also the lower parts of the being, the vital and physico-vital, the physical mind and the body consciousness.

5. The defects of the receiving mind and the discriminating Buddhi spoken of are general defects of the intellect and cannot be entirely got rid of so long as the intellectual action is not replaced by a higher supra-intellectual action and finally by the harmonising light of the supramental knowledge.

Next as regards the psychic experiences. The region of glory felt in the crown of [the] head is simply the touch or reflection of the supramental sunlight on the higher part of the mind. The whole mind and being must open to this light and it must descend and fill the whole system. The lightning and the electric currents are the (*vaidyuta*) Agni force of the supramental sun touching and trying to pour into the body. The other signs are promises of the future psychic and other experiences. But none of these things can establish themselves until the opening to the higher force has been made. The mental Yoga can only be a preparation for this truer starting point.

What I have said is merely an explanation of these experiences but it seems to me that he has advanced far enough to make a foundation for the beginning of the higher Yoga. If he wishes to do that he must replace his mental control by a belief in and a surrender to the Supreme Presence and Force above the mind, an aspiration in the heart and a will in the higher mind to the supreme truth and the transformation of the whole conscious being by its descent and power. He must, in his meditation, open himself silently to it and call down first a deeper calm and silence, next the strength from []¹⁰ above

¹⁰ MS (copy) the

working in the whole system and last the higher []¹¹ glory of which he had a glimpse pouring through his whole being and illuminating it with the divine truth-movement.

A.G.

[14]

[7 June 1928]

The idea that comes to you to go away and try a severe asceticism, “to go *my way* to fight *my* battle alone and in *my* own way”, as you express it, is an error and the suggestion of an adverse force, and at the same time it points directly to the real difficulty in you that has stood blocking your progress. If you went, you would go very far not only from us but from the Yoga and be lost to the Path, and you would fare no better than now. The difficulties would be always with you or sleep for a time only to rise again in your nature. However hard the fight, the only thing is to fight it out now and here to the end.

The trouble is that you have never fully faced and conquered the real obstacle. There is in a very fundamental part of your nature a strong formation of ego-individuality which has mixed in your spiritual aspiration a clinging element of pride and spiritual ambition and is supported by a long-formed habit of leadership, self-confident activity and self-reliance. This formation has never consented to be broken up in order to give place to something more true and divine. Therefore, when the Mother has put her force upon you or when you yourself have pulled the force upon you, this in you has always prevented it from doing its work in its own way. It has begun itself building according to the ideas of the mind or some demand, trying to make its own creation in its “own way”, by its own strength, its own Sadhana, its own Tapasya. There has never been any real surrender, any giving up of yourself freely and simply into the hands of the Divine Mother. And yet that is the only way to succeed in the Supramental Yoga. To be a Yogi, a Sannyasi, a Tapaswi is not the object here. The

¹¹ MS (copy) and

object is transformation, and the transformation can only be done by a force infinitely greater than your own, it can only be done by being truly like a child in the hands of the Divine Mother.

The difficulties that shake you would be of no importance, if this central obstacle were removed. They come from the weakness of the external being which was always intense and eager, but built in too narrow a mould for the fulfilment of the inner urge and which has in addition been badly worn down by life. This could be mended; what it needs is to be at peace, to remain quiet and at rest, to open itself confidently without strain and harassing struggle to the Force and allow it to rebuild and strengthen and widen till a sufficient physical foundation is made. At present, under the pressure of the Force, it either falls into Tamas or, if the vital forces touch it, responds by a rajasic movement and is driven helplessly in these rajasic gusts. All this would easily change (naturally, not in a moment but steadily and surely) if the central difficulty is removed. It is for this that you ought to use your retirement, first of all, to face, see in its complete extent and conquer.

A complete will to surrender in the mind is the first condition, but not by itself sufficient. The trouble lies deeper than the surface mind and you have to find it out where it is and extirpate it. It is only when this has been done, that the help given you (and it was always there till now) can bear fruit in the true spiritual and psychic (not an ascetic) change of the recalcitrant parts of your nature.

Sri Aurobindo

To Hrishikesh Kanjilal

[c. 1922]

To Hrishikesh

It appears from your present letter and attitude that you propose to give God a seat on your right hand and R— another on the left and to sit in meditation between oscillating sweetly from one to the other. If this is what you want to do please

do it in the Cherry Press and not at Pondicherry. If you want to come here, you must do it with a firm determination to get rid of this attachment and make a complete and unconditional consecration and self-surrender.

You seem not to have understood the principle of this Yoga. The old Yoga demanded a complete renunciation extending to the giving up of the worldly life itself. This Yoga aims instead at a new and transformed life. But it insists as inexorably on a complete throwing away of desire and attachment in the mind, life and body. Its aim is to refound life in the truth of the spirit and for that purpose to transfer the roots of all we are and do from the mind, life and body to a greater consciousness above the mind. That means that in the new life all the connections must be founded on a spiritual intimacy and a truth quite other than any which supports our present connections. One must be prepared to renounce at the higher call what are called the natural affections. Even if they are kept at all, it can only be with a change which transforms them altogether. But whether they are to be renounced or kept and changed must be decided not by the personal desires but by the truth above. All must be given up to the Supreme Master of the Yoga.

If you cling to the desires of the mental, vital and physical beings, this transference and transformation cannot happen. Your attachment to your son is a thing of the vital parts in you, and if you are not prepared to give it up, it will inevitably clash with the demands of the Yoga and stop your progress.

When you came here, your psychical being was opened up, and the mental, vital and physical obstacles sufficiently worked upon to admit of this opening. This came first, because that was the strongest part of you for the purposes of the Yoga. Afterwards there was an attempt to open up the mind and other parts. But owing to certain influences their resistance became strong enough to bring things to a standstill. Doubt and non-understanding in the mind and the vital attachments of which this one to your son is the strongest, were the main instruments of this resistance. It is no use coming back with any of these things still cherished and supported by your mind and will.

Either you will make no progress at all here or if the power works on you it will work to break the resistance of the vital being and if you still support that resistance the nature of this struggle and the consequences may be of a serious and undesirable character. The power that works in this Yoga is of a thorough-going character and tolerates in the end nothing great or small that is an obstacle to the truth and its realisation. To come here will be to invite its working in the strongest and most insistent form.

Aurobindo Ghose

To Krishnashashi

Pondicherry,
January 1923.

My dear Krishnashashi,

I have seen all the experiences that you have written down, and sent to me and received yours and Barin's letter.¹² It is no doubt true as you say that your sadhana has gone on different lines from that of the others. But it does not follow that you are entirely right in insisting on your own ideas about it. I shall tell you briefly what I have observed about your experiences.

The first things you sent were very interesting and valuable psycho-spiritual and psycho-mental experiences and messages. Later ones lean more to the psychic-emotional and have in them a certain one-sidedness and mixture and there are also psycho-vital and psycho-physical developments of a double nature. I do not mean that all is false in them but that there are many strong partial truths which need to be corrected by others which they seem to ignore and even to exclude. Besides there are suggestions from the intellect and the vital being and also suggestions from external sources which you ought not to accept so easily as you seem to do. This mixture is inevitable in the earlier stages and there is no need to be disheartened about it. But if you insist on

¹² *Sri Aurobindo's letters to Barindra Kumar Ghose on Krishnashashi's case are published on pages 337-54. — Ed.*

preserving it, it may deflect you from your true path and injure your Sadhana.

As yet you have no sufficient experience of the nature of the psychic being and the psychic worlds. Therefore it is not possible for you to put the true value on all that comes to you. When the psychic consciousness opens, especially so freely and rapidly as it has done in your case, it opens to all kinds of things and to suggestions, and messages from all sorts of planes and worlds and forces and beings. There is the true psychic which is always good and there is the psychic opening to mental, vital and other worlds which contain all kinds of things good, bad and indifferent, true, false and half truths, thought-suggestions which are of all kinds, and messages [which] are also of all kinds. What is needed is not to give yourself impartially to all of them but to develop both a sufficient knowledge and experience and a sufficient discrimination to be able to keep your balance and eliminate falsehood, half-truths and mixtures. It will not do to dismiss impatiently the necessity for discrimination on the ground that that is mere intellectualism. The discrimination need not be intellectual, — although that also is a thing not to be despised. But it may be a psychic discrimination or one that comes from the higher super-intellectual mind and from the higher being. If you have not this, then you have need of constant protection and guidance from those who have it, and who have also long psychic experience, and it may be disastrous for you to rely entirely on yourself and to reject such guidance.

In the meantime there are three rules of the Sadhana which are very necessary in an earlier stage and which you should remember, *first*, open yourself to experience but do not seek to take the *bhoga* of the experiences. Do not attach yourself to any particular kind of experience. Do not take all ideas and suggestions as true and do not take any knowledge, voice or thought-message as absolutely final and definitive. Truth itself is only true when complete and it changes its meaning as one rises and sees it from a higher level.

I must put you on your guard against the suggestions of hostile influences which attack all *Sadhakas* in this Yoga. The

vision you had of the European, is itself an intimation to you that these forces have their eye on you and are prepared to act if they are not already acting against you. It is their subtler suggestions, which take the figure of truth, and not their more open attacks, that are the most dangerous. I will mention some of the most usual of them.

Be on your guard against any suggestions that try to raise up your egoism, as for instance, that you are a greater Sadhaka than others or that your Sadhana is unique or of an exceptionally high kind. There seems to be some suggestion of this kind to you already. You had a rich and rapid development of psychic experiences, but so precisely have some others who have meditated here and none of yours are unique in their kind or degree or unknown to our experience. Even if it were otherwise, egoism is the greatest danger of the Sadhana and is never spiritually justifiable. All greatness is God's; it belongs to no other.

Be on your guard against anything that suggests to you to keep or cling to any impurity or imperfection, confusion in the mind, attachment in the heart, desire and passion in the *Prana* or disease in the body. To keep up these things by ingenuous justifications and coverings, is one of the usual devices of the hostile forces.

Be on your guard against any idea which will make you admit these hostile forces on the same terms as the divine forces. I understand you have said that you must admit all because all is a manifestation of God. All is a manifestation of God in a certain sense but if misunderstood as it often is, this Vedantic truth can be turned to the purposes of falsehood. There are many things which are partial manifestations and have to be replaced by fuller truer manifestations. There are others which belong to the ignorance and fall away when we move to the knowledge. There are others which are of the darkness and have to be combated and destroyed or exiled. This manifestation is one which has been freely used by the force represented by the European you saw in your vision and it has ruined the Yoga of many. You yourself wished to reject the intellect and yet the intellect is a manifestation of God as well as the other things you have accepted.

If you really accept and give yourself to me, you must accept my truth. My truth is one that rejects ignorance and falsehoods and moves to the knowledge, rejects darkness and moves to the light, rejects egoism and moves to the Divine Self; rejects imperfections and moves to perfection. My truth is not only the truth of Bhakti or of psychic development but also of knowledge, purity, divine strength and calm and of the raising of all these things from their mental, emotional and vital forms to their Supramental reality.

I say all these things not to undervalue your Sadhana but to turn your mind towards the way of its increasing completion and perfection.

It is not possible for me to have you here just now. First because the necessary conditions are not there and secondly because you must be fully prepared to accept my guidance before you come here.

If, as I suppose you must under the present circumstances, you have to go home, meditate there, turning yourself to me and try to prepare yourself so that you may come here hereafter. What you need now is not so much psychic development, which you will always be able to have (I do not ask you to stop it altogether) but an inner calm and quiet as the true basis and atmosphere of your future development and experience, calm in the mind, the purified vital being and in the physical consciousness. A psycho-vital or psycho-physical Yoga will not be safe for you until you have this calm and an assured purity of being and a complete and always present vital and physical protection.

Aurobindo.

To Rajani Palit

6th April, 1923.

“Arya Office”

Pondicherry.

My dear Rajani,

I am writing today about your son Rathin and his illness if it can be called by that name. I shall state first in general terms

the nature of the malady and its usual developments, that is to say, the normal course it takes when no psychic or spiritual force is brought in to remove it. Afterwards I shall indicate the two possible means of cure.

I think it is best for me to state the case in its worst and not only in its best possible terms because it is necessary that you should know the full truth and have the courage to face it. These cases are not those of a truly physical malady but of an attempt at possession from the vital world; and the fits and other physical symptoms are signs, not of the malady itself, but of the struggle of the natural being against the pressure of the hostile influence. Such a case in a child of this age indicates some kind of accumulation in the physical heredity creating an opportunity or a predisposition of which the vital invasion takes advantage. It is especially the physical consciousness and the physico-vital which contain the germs or materials of this predisposition. The physical being is always changing its constituents and in each period of seven years a complete change is effected. If the symptoms of this predisposition in the nature are detected and a wise influence and training used by the parents to eradicate them and this is done so effectively that in the first seven years no seeds of the malady appear, then usually there is no further danger. If on the contrary they manifest by the seventh year, then the next period of seven years is the critical period and, ordinarily, the case would be decided one way or the other by or before the fourteenth year.

There are normally three possible eventualities. The difficulty in dealing with the case of so young a child is that the mind is not developed and can give no help towards the cure. But as the mind develops in the second seven years it will, if it is not abnormally weak which I think is not the case here, react more and more against the influence. Aided by a good control and influence it may very well succeed in casting out the hostile intrusion and its pressure altogether. In that case the fits and other signs of the physical struggle pass away, the strange moral and vital tendencies fade out of the habits and the child becomes mentally, morally and physically a healthy normal being.

The second possibility is that the struggle between the natural being and the intruding being may not be decisive in the psychic sense, that is to say, the intruder cannot take full possession but also he cannot be thrown out entirely. In that case anything may happen, a shattered mind and health, the death of the body or a disturbed, divided and permanently abnormal nature.

The third and worst possibility is that the intruding being may succeed and take entire possession. In that case the fits and other violent symptoms will disappear, the child may seem to be physically cured and healthy, but he will be an abnormal and most dangerous being incarnating an evil vital force with all its terrible propensities and gifted with abnormal powers to satisfy them.

In Rathin's case there is not as yet possession in the full sense of the word, but a strong pressure and influence indicated by the strange habits of which you have written. These are suggested and dictated by the intruding being and not proper to the boy himself. The fearlessness and security with which he does these things is inspired from the same source. But the fits prove that there is as yet no possession. There is a struggle indicated by them and a temporary hold which passes out again. He is evidently in the earlier part of the critical period. I have indicated the course normally taken by the illness, but it is not necessary to pass through it and take its risks. There are other means which can come to his help and effect a complete cure.

The first and easiest is to cure by hypnotic suggestion. This if properly applied is an absolutely sure remedy. But in the first place, it must be applied by someone who is not himself under the influence of evil powers, as some hypnotists are. For that obviously will make matters worse. Moreover, it must be done by someone who has the proper training and knows thoroughly what he is about, for a mistake might be disastrous. The best conditions would be if someone like yourself who has a natural relation and already an influence over the child could do it with the necessary training and knowledge.

The other means of cure is the use of spiritual power and influence. If certain psycho-spiritual means could be used, this

would be as sure and effectual as the other. But this is not possible because there is no one there who has the right knowledge. The spiritual influence by itself can do it but the working is likely to be slow. It must ordinarily be conveyed through someone on the spot and you yourself are obviously the right instrument. What you have to do is to keep the idea that I am sending to you power for this object, to make yourself receptive to it and at the same time make your own will and natural influence on the child a direct channel for it. The will must be a quiet will, calm and confident and intent on its object, but without attachment and unshaken by any amount of resistance and unalarmed and undiscouraged by the manifestations of the illness. Your attitude to the child must be that of a calm and firm protecting affection free from emotional weakness and disturbance. The first thing is to acquire such an influence as to be able to repel the attack when it comes and if it takes any hold to diminish steadily its force and the violence of its manifestation. I understand from your letter that you have already been able to establish the beginning of such an influence. But it must be able to work at a distance as well as in his presence. Further you must acquire the power of leaving a protection around him when you are absent. Secondly, you must be able to convey to him a constant suggestion which will gradually inhibit the strange undesirable habits of which you speak in your letter. This, I may say, cannot be effectively done by any kind of external coercion. For that is likely to make these impulses more violent. It must be a will and suggestion and silent influence. If you find the control increasing and these habits diminishing, you can understand that the work of cure has begun. Its completion may take some time because these vital beings are very sticky and persistent and are always returning to the attack. The one thing which can make the cure rapid is if the boy himself develops a will in his mind to change, for that will take away the ground of the hostile influence. It is because something in him is amused and takes pleasure in the force which comes with the influence that these things are able to recur and continue. This element in him calls the invading presence back even when it has been centrally rejected. I shall of course try to act directly on him

as well as through you, but the instrumentality of one on the spot greatly enforces and is sometimes indispensable to the action.

A word about your Sadhana. It seems to me that the key of your future development is contained in the experience which you say you often attained for a few days at Krishnagore (your letter of the 9th February) "A state which was full of knowledge, calm serenity, strength and wide consciousness — all questions automatically solved — a continuous stream of power passed into the body through the forehead centre — extremely powerful, having undisturbed samata, calm conviction, keen sight and knowledge." This was the consciousness of the true Purusha in you aware of his own supramental being and it is this which must become your normal consciousness and the basis of the supramental development. In order that it may so become, the mind has to be made calm and strong, the emotional and vital being purified and the physical consciousness so opened that the body can hold and retain the consciousness and power. I notice that at the time you had it the body also expressed it. This is a sign that the capacity is already there in your physical being. The calm and strength will descend from above, what you have to do is to open yourself and receive it and at the same time reject all the movements of the lower nature which prevent it from remaining and which are ruled by desires and habits inconsistent with the true being, the true power and the true knowledge. Of course the superior power will itself reveal to you and remove all the obstacles in your nature. But the condition is that not only your mental but your vital and physical being must open and surrender to it and refuse to surrender themselves to other powers and forces. As you yourself experienced at that time, this greater consciousness will of itself bring the development of the higher will and knowledge. Psychic experiences of a proper kind are of course a great help but in your case it may be that any rich development of the psychic will only come after or in proportion as this consciousness with its calm, knowledge, will and samata takes possession of the different parts of the being.

Aurobindo Ghose

 Draft Letters to and about Kumud Bandhu Bagchi

[1]

There are certain things that it is absolutely necessary for Kumud to realise in a sincere and straight-forward spirit, without veils and self-justifications if his sadhana is not to turn about in a constant circle to the end or else fail and fall into pieces.

First, it is necessary for him to have a truer understanding of the Yoga than he seems to have had either in the past or now. This Yoga is not turned towards renunciation of the world or an outward asceticism, but neither is its aim Bhoga, nor what the Chandernagore people call "Life-realisation" which means nothing but the satisfaction of one's own magnified vital ego. The aim is an opening to a higher Divine Truth beyond mind, life or body and the transformation of these three things into its image. But that transformation cannot take place and the Truth itself cannot be known in its own unmistakable spirit, perfect light and real body until the whole of the *adhara* has been fundamentally and patiently purified, and made plastic and capable of receiving what is beyond the constructions of the mind, the desires of the body and the habits of the physical consciousness and physical being.

His most obvious obstacle, one of which he has not in the least got rid of up to now, is a strongly Rajasic vital ego for which his mind finds justifications and covers. There is nothing more congenial to the vital ego than to put on the cloak of Yoga and imagine itself free, divinised, spiritualised, siddha, and all the rest of it, or advancing towards that end, when it is really doing nothing of the kind, but [is] just its old self in new forms. If one does not look at oneself with a constant sincerity and an eye of severe self-criticism, it is impossible to get out of this circle.

Along with the exclusion of self-deceiving vital ego, there must go that which accompanies it usually in the mental parts, mental arrogance, a false sense of superiority and an ostentation of knowledge. All pretence and all pretensions must be given up, all pretence to oneself or others of being what one is not,

of knowing what one does not know and all vain idea of being higher than one's own actual spiritual stature.

Over against the vital rajasic ego there is a great coarseness and heaviness of *tamas* in the physical being and an absence of psychic and spiritual refinement. That must be eliminated or else it will stand always in the way of a true and complete change in the vital being and the mind.

Unless these things are radically changed, merely having experiences or establishing a temporary and precarious calmness in the mental and vital parts will not help in the end. There will be no fundamental change; only a constant going from one state to another, sometimes a quieting and sometimes a return of the disturbances, and always the same defect persisting to the end of the chapter.

The one condition for getting rid of these things is an absolute central sincerity in all the parts of the being, and that means an absolute insistence on the Truth and nothing but the Truth. There will then be a readiness for unsparing self-criticism and vigilant openness to the Light, an uneasiness when falsehood comes in, which will finally purify the whole being.

The defects mentioned are more or less common in various degrees in almost every *sadhaka*, though there are some who are not touched by them. They can be got rid of if the requisite sincerity is there. But if they occupy the central parts of the being and vitiate the attitude, then the *sadhaka* will give a constant open or covert support to them, his mind will always be ready to give disguises and justifications and try to elude the search-light of the self-critical faculty and the protest of the psychic being. That means failure of the Yoga at least for this existence.

6 February 1926

[2]

When the psychic being awakens you grow conscious of your own soul; you know your Self. And you no longer commit the mistake of identifying yourself with the mental or with the vital being. You do not mistake them for the soul.

When awakened, the psychic being gives true Bhakti for God or for the Guru. That Bhakti is quite different from mental or vital Bhakti.

In the mind one may have a strong admiration or appreciation for the intellectual or spiritual greatness of the Guru, — follow him and mentally accept his dictates. But if it is merely mental, that does not carry you very far. Of course, there is no harm in having that also. But by itself it does not open the whole of the inner being; it only establishes a mental contact.

The vital Bhakti demands and demands. It imposes its own conditions. It surrenders itself to God, but conditionally. It says to God, “You are so great,” “I worship you,” — “and now you must satisfy this desire of mine or that ambition”; “make me great; make me a great sadhaka, a great yogin” etc.

The unillumined mind also surrenders to the Truth, but makes its own conditions. It says to the Truth, “Satisfy my judgment, and my opinion”; it demands the Truth to cast itself in the mind’s own forms.

The vital being also insists on the Truth throwing itself into its own vital movement of force. The vital being pulls at the Higher Power and pulls and pulls at the vital being of the Guru.

Both of them (the mental and the vital) have got an *arrière pensée* (mental reservation) in their surrender.

Psychic Bhakti is not like that. Because it is in communication with the Divinity behind, it is capable of true Bhakti. Psychic Bhakti does not make any demand, it makes no reservations. It is satisfied with its own existence. The psychic being knows how to obey the Truth in the right way. It gives itself up truly to God or the Guru, and because it can give itself up truly, therefore it can also receive truly.

When the psychic being comes to the surface it feels sad if it sees that the mental or the vital being is making a fool of itself. That sadness is purity offended.

When the mind is playing its own game, or when the vital being is carried away by its impulses, it is the psychic being which says, “I don’t want these things.” “What am I here for after all?” “I am here for the Truth; I am not here for these things.”

The psychic sadness is a quite different thing from mental dissatisfaction or vital sadness or physical depression.

If the psychic being is strong, it makes itself felt on the mental or the vital being, and forces them to change. But if it is weak, the other parts take advantage of it and use the psychic for their own advantage.

In some cases it comes up to the surface and upsets the mental and the vital being and throws all their settled arrangements and habits into disorder, pressing for a new and divine order. But if the mind or the vital being is stronger than the psychic then it casts only an occasional influence and gradually retires behind. All its cry is in the wilderness; and the mental or the vital being goes on in its own round.

Lastly, the psychic being refuses to be deceived by appearances. It is not carried away by falsehood. It refuses to be oppressed by falsehood — nor does it exaggerate the Truth. For example, even if everything around says, “There is no God”, the psychic being refuses to believe in it. It says, — “I know” and “I know because I feel.”

And because it knows the thing behind, it is not deceived by appearances. It immediately feels the force.

Also, when the psychic being is awakened, it throws out all the dross from the emotional being and makes it free from sentimentalism or the lower play of emotionalism.

But it does not carry in it the dryness of the mind or the exaggeration of the vital feelings. It gives the just touch to each emotion.

23 March 1926

To People in America, 1926–1927

To Mr. and Mrs. Sharman

[c. January 1926]

Dear M^r and M^{rs} Sharman,

I received a little while ago your Christmas card and greetings and it reminded me of a letter written long ago which I had hoped personally to answer, but could never do it, the time not having come. I have ever since I came to Pondicherry been obliged to withdraw more and more first from public life and then from all outer activities and absorb myself in a long and arduous inner endeavour. I had to discontinue the “Arya” for this purpose and for a long time I wrote nothing, not even any letters. Now although the needed intensity of the inner concentration is not over, it is becoming more possible for me to turn my face towards action on the physical plane. I take the opportunity of your card to do what I then failed to do, even after so long a lapse of time.

I understand from your letter that there are around you a number of seekers after the spiritual life who have received some help from my works. I should be glad to hear more of this group and of what they and you are now doing. Perhaps it would now be possible to open a regular correspondence; for, even when I am not able to write myself, my brother and one or two others who are practising Yoga here with me, often now write under my instructions or dictation the necessary answer. If you feel that such a correspondence would be of help to you,¹

In a letter of the year 1924 you asked whether I had prepared any more intimate instructions in Yoga (other than my published works) and asked to be allowed to share them with those I am guiding in Pondicherry. The “Yoga and its Objects”

¹ *Sentence left incomplete. — Ed.*

and “Synthesis [of]² Yoga”, although founded on my personal knowledge and experience were not intended for that purpose, but merely meant to indicate the general lines on which Yoga might proceed, the main principles, the broad ways of spiritual progress. I have not written or prepared anything new of the kind. All intimate guidance must necessarily in so inner and delicate a thing as the spiritual life []³ be personal, suited to the recipient and the instruction given can only be effective if it is the channel for a spiritual contact and a guiding or helpful influence. In that way if you need my help, I shall be glad to give it. That indeed is one of the objects which the correspondence I propose could serve.

To the Advance Distributing Company

[1]

Arya Office. Pondicherry

9 March. 1926

Advance Distributing Company
Pittsburgh. Pa.

Your letter of the 8th January to the Arya Publishing House has just been forwarded to me.

The publishing house restricted by the Government is not the A.P.H, but the Prabartak Publishing House which has no longer any connection with my work. My books were originally published by various agencies, but an arrangement has recently been made by which the preference for future editions or new publications will usually be given under fixed conditions to the A.P.H. It is from there that all my books already in print can be most readily secured. This arrangement however applies only to India and I have reserved rights of separate or sole publication in Europe, America and elsewhere.

² MS on

³ MS must

I have suggested to the A.P.H to supply you with my works as requested by you, but I am told they have rules in the matter which may come in the way of an immediate compliance. The firm is still a small one and it is not likely that it will be able to supply you rapidly or on any large scale. If any pressing or considerable demand is created in America, it will be more convenient to publish there than to rely on India.

I am quite willing therefore that you should yourselves publish "parts of this literature" according to your proposal. I may observe that all proceeds of my books are set aside for furthering of the work for which the "Arya" appeared.

Vol II. No. 8 is no longer separately available; but a friend is willing to send you his copy of the number temporarily for immediate use. I shall despatch it by this post. Please return it here as soon as it has served your purpose.

There is one full set of the "Arya" in Pondicherry, partly bound, which the owner wishes to devote to the work if he can get his price; but as full sets are no longer available in India, he estimates the value at Rs 500. If this offer is acceptable, the set will be sent on remittance of the amount to the Arya Office.

I have received recently letters from different parts of the United States which seem to indicate the beginning of a demand for my writings and, for other reasons also, I have been for some time desirous to bring out my works in America including those not yet published in book form. I do not know if it will enter into your views to take up this work. If so, please inform me of the conditions. All communications and remittances in connection with my works (other than for orders for supply of my books from the A.P.H.) should be sent to me to the following address.

Sri Aurobindo Ghose
Arya Office
Pondicherry
French India

I shall be well-pleased to enter into touch with the student of my thought mentioned in your letter, if he will write to me personally at the above address.

[2]

The ARYA Office
Pondicherry French India

July 2. 26

To
The ADVANCE DISTRIBUTING Co.
Pittsburgh. Pa.

I am in receipt of your letter dated May 2^d 1926 and the sum of Rs 500 and over sent by you for the complete set of the "ARYA". The complete set will be kept here in the office according to your suggestion; if needed at any time, it will be at your disposal. As to the missing numbers of Vol. VII — Nos 3 and 6 — as I understand, — I am writing to the A.P.H. where I have kept all the unsold numbers, and if these two are with them, as is most probable, they will be sent to you. I shall inform you if I find anyone here who needs the two superfluous numbers.

Next, as [to] the conditions of publication in America. I shall be glad to entrust the work to you and I leave it to you whether to keep your present name or take that of the Arya Publishing Company, if you so desire. I do not know whether a rigorous self-limitation to the "Arya" material would be the best course; perhaps it would be better to make it the nucleus while other literature could be added which would be supplementary or consonant with the general idea and purpose.

I believe you are right in your suggestion regarding standardisation; conditions in India are different and the system here would not be advantageous or suitable, but I can understand that in America this system would be the best. I agree also that a limited edition in first-class style would be the best from the point of view of the financial return. In India we are obliged to suit the form and price of our publications to the purse of the average educated middle class who are the mass of the still very limited reading public.

The conditions I have made with the A.P.H. are of a special character and cannot be repeated in your case. I understand from

what you have written that in America any profit from the sale of literature like the "Arya" publications is not at all probable unless and until a larger demand has been created than is likely for some time to come. A percentage on the sales would bring in only small sums while it might hamper the development of the work. Now small returns would be of very little use to me except for financing petty incidents and details of my work which can be otherwise met. The method and scope I have fixed for the future work to be done is of the large-scale kind and would need even from the beginning sums more like those raised by Swami Yogananda as described by you in your letter. I would prefer therefore that you should concentrate at present on the development of the publications and on getting them known as soon as possible and use the proceeds of the sale of the books for that purpose. If at any time a great demand arose and resulted in considerable profits, the question of a percentage of the sales to be remitted to me or any other arrangement in the matter could then be brought up again for consideration.

In regard to the order of issue I think you are right in selecting "War and Self-Determination" as a preliminary publication. The "Essays on the Gita" seems to me preeminently fitted to take the lead in a standardised series, but it would be necessary to await the publication of the "Second Series" by the A.P.H. The "First Series" covering the first six chapters of the Gita is being reprinted with only one necessary correction and should be out in a few days. But I have had to make extensive additions, alterations and corrections and to remould to some extent the language of the Second Series now to be published in book form for the first time. I have sent the M.S. to the A.P.H and I hope that it will be out in two or three months at the outside, when it will be sent to you. At present I am preparing a revised edition of the "Ideal of Human Unity", already published in Madras but now out of print, and the "Psychology of Social Development", not yet published in book form, which I propose to bring out under another title, "The Human Cycle". The "Synthesis of Yoga" is too large a work to be included in a single book; I propose to publish it in India in four parts, each devoted to one

of the four Yogas, — Works, Knowledge, Devotion and Self-Perfection, — but this would involve a slight recasting here and there so as to make each volume in itself sufficiently complete. There remain, apart from some uncompleted works, the “Life Divine” and “The Future Poetry” which could be published, subject to the writing of a Preface, almost as they are and the smaller books or booklets already published some of which might be put together as you suggest so as to form part of the standardised volumes. That is the situation as regards the “Arya” writings. I gather that, having view to the conditions in America you propose to print “War and Self-Determination” first as a booklet, to start the standardised series with “Essays on the Gita” and to follow with the “Life Divine”. I would have no objection to such an order of issue.

I have received the copy of the “East-West” magazine and the gift-book. It is not at all surprising that Swami Yogananda should have been so successful in America. His propaganda is admirably suited to the practical mentality of a western and especially of an American public and his statement of ideas on subjects like Karma to its present capacity of understanding in these matters. I cannot gather from the magazine what is the nature of the practice or discipline which he calls Yogoda. The name “Satsanga” is that of a religious sect with a special kind of Bhakti Yoga which is now achieving considerable success in Bengal, but the practice here if one can judge from the style and manner of its announcement seems to be very different. I do not think it would have much success in India where there is a long tradition and in spite of much imperfection and error the standards of spiritual life are of a subtler kind. The difficulties we experience here are due rather to a wide-spread inability to go freely beyond ancient ideas and forms. Plenty of money can be had in India for orthodox religious purposes and also, although not on the American scale, for Asramas or other spiritual institutions which take the ascetic form or repeat established and well-understood formulas. But the general mind has not yet advanced far enough from the old moorings to form even an inadequate conception of what I am doing here and it is easily disconcerted by the

departure from old forms, a willed absence of the customary paraphernalia and the breaking of traditional barriers and limits.

That is one considerable advantage of America; there is evidently a sufficiently widespread eagerness and openness of mind to new things. We have to see whether this will be sufficient to open the mind also to deep and true things. The spiritual future of America is not yet decided; it is in the balance. There is a great possibility before her, but it depends on Americans themselves whether she will make good and realise it. Otherwise she will follow the disastrous curve of other western peoples. India and America stand prominent at the two poles that have to meet and become one, the spiritual and the material life; one has shown a preeminent capacity of realisation on the spiritual, the other on the material plane. America must be able to receive freely India's riches and to give freely in return from her own for the material organisation of a higher life on the physical plane; this is at once a condition and her chance. At present it is only a possibility; let us see whether it can be made an achieved and perfected symbol.

The book "Some I.L.O.F. Correspondence" has reached me: I await the promised letter of the writer.

Draft of a Letter to C. E. Lefebvre

[c. July 1926]

I have taken a long time to consider the answer [to] your letter or rather to allow the answer to ripen and take form. It is not easy to reply to the request implied in what you have written; for the distance between India and America is great and, even if it were not so, guidance in Yoga by correspondence and without personal contact is a very hampered and not usually in my experience a satisfactory method. Ideas can be exchanged on paper, but a spiritual influence, a psychic interchange, a vigilant control — and all this is implied in this kind of guidance — are not so easily communicated. However, I will try to comply with your request as best I can under these circumstances.

First, let me say, that the absorption of ideas and the remoulding of the mental aims and attitude is one thing and the

remoulding of the inner life and consciousness and eventually also of the outer life, which is the aim of Yoga, is quite another. The first can be done to some extent by the method of dissemination you indicate. But as you rightly see, instructions in Yoga cannot be fruitfully given on the same lines. That can only be given successfully to a few, to each separately as an intimately personal thing which he must assimilate and make living and true in himself according to his own capacity and nature. That is why I am led to believe that the work of Swami Yogananda is not only elementary but can hardly be the true thing — Yoga cannot be taught in schools and classes. It has to be received personally, it has to be lived, the seeker, *sadhaka*, has to change by a difficult aspiration and endeavour his whole consciousness and nature, his mind, heart, life, every principle of his being and all their movements into a greater Truth than anything the normal life of man can imagine. Those who can do this are not yet many, but some are to be found everywhere, and I see no reason why those in America should be condemned to only an elementary “instruction”. The true Truth, the great Path has to be opened to them; how far they will go in it depends on their own personal capacity and the help they receive.

To and about Anna Bogenholm Sloane

[1]

The ARYA Office
Pondicherry French India

August 3, 1926

To
Anna Bogenholm Sloane
Ashirvada.

I have read your letter with great interest and I have no hesitation after the perusal in acceding to your request and asking you to come over to India and see me; certain of the experiences

you relate seem to me very clear and decisive. I presume that, as you suggest in your letter, you will come prepared to live here for a few years. For, although the first openings to a higher and larger consciousness — the experiences called by you initiations — can be very rapid and luminous and decisive, they have to be followed by a long process of firm and stable foundation, fuller development, progressive transformation of the nature and a complete organisation of the new consciousness which involves years of persistent and vigilant discipline and endeavour.

Please write to me before you start and inform me of the date of your arrival.

[2]

[August–September 1927]

It is not my intention to reply to your questions regarding myself or the Mother.⁴ They are indeed of a kind that I make it a rule not to answer, but even if it were otherwise, a reply would not be fitting in the present stage of your progress.

The important point that comes out in your letter is that you consider that the Mother can be of no help to you, as she does not understand your experiences and has never had anything like them. Under these conditions I can only ask her not to spend farther time in a work that is by your own assertion useless.

On the other hand I can give no assent to your demand that I should replace her. If you cannot profit by her help, you would find still less profit in mine. But in any case I have no intention of altering the arrangement I have made for all the disciples without exception that they should receive the light and force from her and not directly from me and be guided by her in their spiritual progress. I have made the arrangement not for any temporary purpose but because it is the one way (considering what she is and her power — provided always the disciple is open and receives) that is true and effective.

⁴ *This and the next two items are draft-letters from Sri Aurobindo's notebooks. There is no indication that any of them was sent as drafted or in any other form. — Ed.*

[3]

[August–September 1927]

I do not think it necessary to answer the personal question you put me or announce who I am on the spiritual plane. If I am what your question suggests, it is not for me to declare it but for others to discover.

I prefer also to make no reply to the question about the Mother, at least in the form in which you put it. All I care to say, and it is all that is needed, is that she is doing the work for which she took birth and has prepared herself uninterruptedly from her childhood. The Power is in her that can bring down a true supramental creation, open the whole nature of the disciple to the supramental Light and Force and guide its transformation into a divine nature. It is because there is this Power in her that she has been entrusted with the work.

But all are free in their inner being, free to accept or refuse, free to receive or not to receive, to follow this way or another. What the Mother can do for the disciple depends on his willingness or capacity to open himself to her help and influence and on the completeness of his consent and confidence. If they are complete, the work done will be perfect and true; if they are imperfect, the work will be marred by the distortions brought in by his mind and his vital failings, if they are denied, then nothing can be done. Or, rather, nothing will be done; for the attempt in such circumstances might lead to a breaking rather than a divine building of the nature, or even there might be a reception of hostile forces instead of the true light and power. This is the law of the relation on the spiritual plane: the consent of the disciple must be at every moment free, but his confidence, if given, must be complete and the submission to the guidance absolute.

This is the one real issue that your recent development has raised between us. The rising of some doubts would in itself have been of little importance; doubt is the very nature of the ignorant physical mind. But yours have very evidently risen because you have taken a turn away from the path to the

supramental realisation along which the Mother was helping you and admitted another occult influence. This is shown by the nature of your doubts where you question her knowledge of certain common experiences of Yoga and by your conclusion that she can no longer help you. I pass by your pretensions to gauge her knowledge and experience; her dealings with you and others proceed from a consciousness to which the mental understanding and judgment have not the key. But when the doubt and questioning go so far, it is because something in the vital nature begins to be unwilling to accept any longer the guidance; for the guidance is likely to interfere with its going on its own way.

I could not accede under any circumstances to your request to me to substitute my instruction and guidance for the Mother's. If you cannot receive help from her any longer, it is evident that you cannot receive it either from me; for the same Power and the same Knowledge act through both of us. I have no intention of taking a step which would bring down the work to the personal human level and would be a direct contradiction of its divine origin and nature.

[4]

[August–September 1927]

When you wrote to me from America some of the experiences you narrated in your letter []⁵ indicated a very clear call to the new supramental life. And we understood also that a Power from the higher planes that had a place in our work was trying to manifest through your personality. But a call is only the beginning; it is after many ordeals that it matures into a definite and irrevocable choice. Moreover whenever a Power of this kind tries to manifest, always in the exterior human personality the opposite movements have a strong place. It is as if for each divine power the conquest of its opposite in its own

⁵ MS from America

chosen vessel was a condition for its perfect manifestation on the earth plane.

When you came here the Mother perceived that you must at first be left alone to your own movement and the discipline imposed on other sadhakas was not laid upon you. All she did was to bring down supramental light and power in you and to open to them the different centres. This was rapidly and on the whole successfully done.

But to open the centres is only a beginning, for then comes one of the most difficult periods for the disciple. The consciousness opens not only to the true Light and Power, but to all kinds of experiences and all sorts of influences from all the planes and from all sources and quarters. There is a period of intense and overpowering internal activity of formation, vision and movements of new consciousness and new power. If then the disciple is carried away []⁶ by the brilliance and splendour and delight of his experiences, he can easily wander far from the highest way. But the Forces and Beings that are behind them are sometimes adverse Forces, sometimes the lesser Gods of the mental and vital planes. In either case they try to occupy and use the instrument, but for their own purpose, for the play of the Ideas and Forces they represent, not the highest Truth. There are only three safeguards for the disciple. One is to call down first the eternal peace, calm and silence of the Divine into the mind and the vital and physical being. In that peace and silence there is a true possibility that the mental and vital formations will fall to rest and the supramental creation can have free space. The second safeguard is to remain entirely detached even from the most absorbing experiences and observe them without being carried away by their brilliance. The power of discernment and discrimination will slowly form from above and he will be able to distinguish between the higher truth and the lower truth as between truth and falsehood. The third safeguard is to follow implicitly the instructions of the spiritual guides who have already trod the path and to follow their guidance.

⁶ MS during these experiences

This is the ordeal into which you have entered; but unhappily you seem to have departed from the guidance of the Mother in the crucial point. You seem to have deliberately rejected the peace and silence of the vital being in the fear that it would bring stagnation. As a result the strong habit [of] vital formation came into play and you began to call down lights and powers and build things in [yourself]⁷ in your own way. In this condition, when the disciple is not accustomed to complete trust in his masters the one thing that can be done is to stand aside and let the disciple take his own way, for to insist is likely to raise in him doubt and revolt and decide him in the opposite way. According to whatever may be the supreme decision in his case, he will feel the need of guidance and return to the straight way or he will depart on his own path wherever his inner destiny calls him.

If you have not an entire confidence in us, are not prepared to submit absolutely to our guidance, if the supramental Truth is not your one aim, if you are not prepared to go through the slow, difficult and often painful process of self-emptying new creation by which alone it can form in you, putting away all pride, self-will and excessive self-confidence, or if you think that with you is the Truth and not with us, then obviously you can draw no benefit from staying here. It is for you to choose.

One thing I would say in ending is that you seem to have formed very erroneous ideas about the work I have undertaken, as for instance when you imagine that I am working by spiritual means to bring about a worldwide conflagration and war between the white and the coloured races. This is a sheer error. The Mother has indeed told you that I do not believe in crude and violent external means for a spiritual work. As for the division of the human race according to their colour, it is in my view the play of an obscure ignorance and I would never dream of admitting it as a basis for my action. If any such world catastrophe happened it would be the result of Karmic forces and far from helping would be a serious hindrance to my work. My work is one of

⁷ MS yourselves

spiritual creation not of physical destruction. If anything has to disappear or change, it will do so by the turning on it of the supramental light and Force and what has to change must be decided by that omniscient Light and omnipotent Force and not by the human mind and its narrow ideas and false desires.

[5]

[13 October 1927]

M^{rs} Sloane wrote to me from America asking if she could come here to stay and practise Yoga. She was recommended by M^r Ralph [deBit]⁸, her spiritual guide, the head of a movement in America called the School of Sacred Science, who had written one or two letters to me in connection with his work and my books. I wrote giving her permission to come.

She delayed her coming because she had quarrelled with M^r [deBit]⁹ and was busy trying to destroy his work and publishing charges against him which on enquiry evidently were not substantiated as the proceedings against him came to nothing. This is the same manoeuvre that she has repeated here.

When she arrived, I had already decided to retire into seclusion and could not see her. She has seen me only once on August 15th and has never had any talk with me. She was not at any time admitted as a member of the Asram, is acquainted only with the Mother and one English disciple (Datta) — except for two visits to Madame Potel and knows nothing personally about the Asram. Throughout she has been kept apart on probation. But it was found that she was a woman who took her desires and imaginations and the forms she gave to them for truth and fact and finally she developed such violent delusions that it became necessary to give her up for good. When she realised by my silence that she had been rejected, she entered into an almost insane fury and sent word that she was staying here in order to crush me and destroy my work, that with the help of the

⁸ MS De Bit

⁹ MS De Bit

British consul she would get me sent to prison etc. Her present campaign is her way of realising this programme.

Her other allegations, mostly sheer inventions or grotesque distortions mixed with her own fancies, hardly need an answer. As to the charge that I am carrying on politics under the cover of Yoga, it seems to be the development of certain visions and imaginations of the future in which she began to indulge some time ago — visions of a world war and troops entraining at Baghdad, prophecies of a war between England and the Islamic peoples, etc; she had even fixed the date for next year. She had been told at the beginning that my work had no connection with politics and that I did not approve of the catastrophic and childish violences to which her mind seemed very ready to turn when it meddled with politics and the future of peoples. At first therefore she took these visions on her own account and did not mix me with them; but after the Mother had ceased to receive her, she suddenly wrote among her other experiences (e.g. of having a God glowing and tingling inside her) that she had seen that I was an incarnation of Shiva and discovered by intuition that I was working *by my spiritual forces* to bring about a war between the white and the coloured races next spring. This is all the foundation she has for her statement.

There is no connection between my spiritual work and politics. Not only so but those like Anilbaran Ray who were political workers or leaders outside, had to give up politics before they were taken into the Asram. There is not a single fact or act of mine, that can support any statement to the contrary. If Sloane or anyone else wants any evidence better than her intuitions to establish her charge, they will first have to invent it.

Sri Aurobindo Ghose

Draft Letters, 1926–1928

To an Unknown Person

Now you have seen practically all that needed to be seen with an entire sincerity and a true unsparing vision. The root was there in the lower vital; it was that one among your formations of personality on the vital level which brought in a persistent element of insincerity and vitiated precisely in the way you have described your nature and, consequently, your aspiration and sadhana.

This part of the work has been well done. Now it only remains for you to cast out this thing finally with all its effects from your mind and life and physical being so that there may be clear room for the true Person to descend and occupy all the place. Do your part and the full Power and Grace will be upon you.

To and about Marie Potel

[1]

Your experiences in themselves are good and free from the old mixture; but the workings of your mind upon them are not yet correct or clear. In the last page you have tried to generalise and to philosophise your experience; immediately your old mind has come between the truth and you and the thought and expression are wrong and confused and quite full of errors. It is better to wait, to gather inner experience, to allow the sense of the truth to grow in you — in that way, the time will sooner come when a true supramental revelation (and not the mental attempt at the thing) can find its exact thought and word. When you try now, the old mind begins to play and blunder.

Why “*pourtant*”?

The “essence” is always more easily seized by the heart and the internal sense than by the mind — for the heart is in touch with the psychic and the internal sense is the essential action of mind as opposed to its external and formal action. Both of these are nearer to a knowledge by identity or by direct communion than the active mind, and the “essence” can only be seized by identity or by direct communion. The active mind cannot do it except by falling silent and leaning on the psychic and on the internal sense.



The universal Mental is not the “stuff and body of the Father-Mother”. No doubt what you mean is that the universal mental like the universal vital and physical is one form of the expressive substance of the Divine, but behind is another and a spiritual substance which is the true essence. If you want an image, it would be nearer the truth to say that this spiritual substance is the very stuff and body of the Divine and mind, life and matter are lesser sheaths, coverings or outer folds.



To describe the “essence” as “l’immaterielle matière” is neither very clear nor very helpful. If you mean by matter substance, in one sense or in one line of experience all is substance — spirit, being, consciousness, ananda are substance; mind, life and matter are substance. Not only so, but all are one substance in its different powers and various degrees. All these except Matter can be described as immaterial substance.

Do you mean that this essence or spiritual substance is the true Material from which all is constituted? It is substance of the Self and Brahman; it is within everything, above everything and when it descends upon one as true being, as consciousness, as Ananda, it enables the soul to separate itself from mind, life and matter, to face them instead of being involved in them and to act upon them and change them. If this is what you have felt and seen, it is true; but your language does not make it clear.

But mark that much depends on the power on which it is manifested. If it is only the spiritual substance within the

universal Mental, it can raise the mental to its own highest powers, but it cannot do more. Only if it manifests as the spiritual substance in its supramental power, can the consciousness, power, Ananda it brings effect the transformation which is the object of our Yoga.

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Afterwards you mix up many different aspects of the Divine and make a great confusion. No doubt all are the One and all are the Mother, but to mix them up confuses rather than clarifies the oneness. In any case the “essence” is not the Mother uniting the Father to the human sons! It is *through* the spiritual substance that the Jiva feels his oneness with the Ishwara and with the Mother from whom he came and it is the Mother who shows him the oneness; but that is quite another matter. The Mother is more than the essence; Self and spirit manifest the Supreme, manifest the Mother, are their first embodying substance if you like; but they are more than self and spirit.

Then what is it that is spirit of spirit and substance of substance? [Is it the “essence”?]¹ But all this seems rather too much to say of any however exalted “essence”! Either you are extending your experience beyond its proper limits or you are deforming it in your language.

It is the one and dual Supreme who is Spirit of the spirit — the supreme Spirit, supreme Brahman, supreme Ishwara, supreme Shakti, supreme Purusha with supreme Prakriti. The Supreme is the one Being; it would be absurd to describe him as an essence within the universal Mental. The clumsy abstract language of the dry intellect soon gets out of place when you are trying to go beyond a spiritualised mental experience of these things. You must find a more intimate and living language.

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Again who is the Father here and who the Mother and what are the human sons doing in the affair?

The one and dual Supreme manifests as the Supreme Shakti. She is the transcendent Mother who stands above and behind

¹ Sentence cancelled without substitution in MS. — Ed.

all the creation and supports it and stands too above and behind each plane of the creation. She is contained in the Supreme and supported in all she does and creates by the Supreme; but she carries too the Supreme within her.

Here in the creation she manifests the dual Supreme whom she carries within her as the Ishwara and the Mahashakti and also as the dual power of Purusha-Prakriti. The Mahashakti comes out of the Ishwara and does the work of the creation, supported by the Ishwara.²

Man, the ignorant embodied mental being, begins to get free from his ignorance when he draws back from half-conscious substance of mind to conscious substance of Spirit. This is an overwhelming and absorbing experience to him and he cannot get beyond it. He speaks of it as his Self and gets in it some experience of his oneness with That which is beyond him, the Supreme. Yet what the Supreme is he does not really know and, so long as he is man, he cannot know. He tries to describe it or its aspects by abstract mental terms. He regards this experience of Self or Spirit as if it were the ultimate experience. Most absurdly, he tries to get through self to the Supreme by denying or getting rid of the Mother. Or else he regards her only as a convenience for getting united to the “Father”, ie an exclusive Purusha side of the supreme. All this is reflected in your language which is a confused repetition of the language of the more ignorant schools of Vedanta.

The Supreme is not exclusively the Purusha. One has to go through both aspects in union to reach him. The Mother herself is not merely Prakriti; she is the supreme and universal Shakti and contains in herself Purusha as well as Prakriti. And, secondly, the self or “essence” as experienced by man, that is to say, by the spiritualised mind, is not the ultimate experience. As that which uses the body is more than the body, so more than the Self is That of which the self is the spiritual substance.

² *Sri Aurobindo struck through this and the two preceding paragraphs. Later he took up the ideas and some of the language of the second paragraph in Part 6 of The Mother. —Ed.*

Universal Mind is not “the stuff and body” of the Father-Mother. At most it is like life and matter, one form of expressive substance, a sheath or covering. It is rather the spiritual substance that could be imaged as the stuff and body of the Divine.³

—

I presume that by your “essence” you mean the self or spiritual substance of things. But why do you call it immaterial Matter? Life and mind could as well be described in that language — they can be felt or seen as immaterial substances.

—

Again what is this “own being” of yours to which you are united by your heart-centre and which unites you to the universal Mind? Is it the mental or the psychic being or what is it? All this is confused and vague in the last degree. “Thy own being” is an expression which would usually mean the Jiva who is soul and spirit and has no more special connection with the universal Mental than with universal life or Matter.

—

If the “essence” is the spiritual substance in which the Divine manifests and which is the true substance of all things, the one substance of which mind, life and body are lesser degrees, then no doubt that when it pours down as true being, as consciousness, as Ananda enables not only to face the universal mental as also the universal vital and physical but to work upon them and transform them. But is this what you have seen or is it something else?

—

In any case the “essence” cannot be the Mother uniting the Divine Father to the human sons. It is through the spiritual substance that the unity with the Father and Mother is felt, because out of her spiritual substance the Mother has manifested her children. But the Divine and the Mother are surely something more than a spiritual substance.

—

³ *This paragraph and the four that follow are reworkings of earlier paragraphs of this draft letter. — Ed.*

[2]

Mira has shown me your letter. You seem to yield periodically to an attack of suggestions from an adverse force always of the same kind; yet each time, instead of seeing the source of the suggestions and rejecting them, you accept and are chiefly busy in justifying your wrong movements, always with the same morbid ideas and language about “méfiance” and being “misunderstood” etc. When will you discover finally that these movements and expressions of this kind are not and cannot be part of the true consciousness, that they are and can only be the expression of something small, morbid, vitally weak and petty and obscure that was in your past nature, still clings and is used by the adverse Powers to pull you back from your progress?

There can be no question of “confidence” or want of confidence in these matters. We have only to see for ourselves what progress you make and where you stumble and deal with your Yoga according to the truth of what we see. You surely do not expect us to accept without examination your own estimate of yourself and of where you are.

The questions you asked Mira had no true connection with the vital-physical weakness of which you complain, nor can that kind of practice help you to transmit to the physical the exact light of Truth from the higher consciousness. It was the ignorant Mind in you which was attaching an undue importance to this “practical occultism” and it is the same mind which tries to connect two unconnected things. This mind in you makes the most fanciful mistakes and likes to cling to them even when they are pointed out to you. Thus it erected a sheer imagination about an “interior circle” from which you were excluded in the arrangement of places, took it as a true and “profound” impression and seems to want still to cling to its own falsehood after the plain and simple practical reason of the arrangement had been clearly told to you. It is because of this continued false activity of the mind that you were told to silence the mentality and keep yourself open to the Light alone. What is the use of answering

that you are centred in the supermind and living in the Light and that [it] is only the vital physical that is weak in you? You were nearer the supramental when you discovered your mind's entire ignorance and accepted that salutary knowledge. That humility of the mental being and the clear perception of its own incompetence is the first step towards a sound approach to the supramental Truth. Otherwise you will always live in messages, approximations and suggestions, some from the Truth, some from the many regions of half Truth, some from the Twilight and Error and have no sure power to distinguish between them.

Nobody doubts the sincerity of your efforts or the reality of the progress you have made. But you have been warned that the way is long and the progress made is nothing in comparison to what has still to be done. If you get discouraged at each [pace]⁴ because your demands are not satisfied or all your sentiments respected or all your perceptions valued as definitive truth, if you admit always the egoistic demand how do you expect to make a swift or a sure advance? Each step reveals an imperfection, each stage gained makes the experience left behind seem incomplete and inadequate.⁵

Active surrender, by the way, does not mean to follow your own ideas or your own guidance; it means to fight against your imperfections and weaknesses and follow only the way of the Truth shown to you.

[3]

The conditions have greatly changed since she went away and are not at present such as would make her return at all useful to her or otherwise advisable. I remain in my retirement and have no intention of coming out from it at any early date. On her side the Mother is also retiring more and more. There is no longer a daily meditation and she does not now give a regular day to the sadhakas, but sees them only from time to time. This movement of retirement is likely to remain and increase until what has to

⁴ MS paces

⁵ Sri Aurobindo wrote this sentence in the margin of the page. He apparently intended it to be inserted here. — Ed.

be achieved on the material plane has been definitely conquered and made sure. Under these conditions her return here would be of no use to her; she must remain in Europe until we write from here that things are changed and her return advisable.

Section Three

Other Letters of Historical Interest on Yoga and Practical Life 1921–1938

On Yoga and Fund-raising for the Ashram, 1921 – 1938

To and about Durgadas Shett

[1]

Pondicherry
May 12. 1921

Dear Durgadas

I received day before yesterday your letter and the Rs 400 you sent me. I accept the money and shall use it for the house for those who come to me for the Yoga. The house is taken and will be ready on the 15th.

There is no reason, no just reason for your indulging the state of mind which is expressed in your letter. You write as if you were not accepted and there was no hope for you. That is not so. Those who sincerely give themselves to me, cannot be rejected. All that was intended in what Barin and Satyen have told you, is that you should come with a complete self-giving and a readiness to renounce everything in you that may be an obstacle to the completeness. The main obstacles in you are an emotional self-indulgence and the ahankara of work etc to which you seem to give a greater importance than to the greater and deeper object of the Yoga. Our Yoga is solely for the development of the divine consciousness in man and all the rest is secondary, work only valuable as the expression of the Divine in the individual and it is to be done by the Divine, not with the ego, not as a work that is *yours* or to be done by you for the satisfaction of the sense of the অহং কৰ্তা in you. Equally an emotional self-indulgence will stand in the way of the true calm and Ananda which belong to the divine consciousness. If you are ready from the beginning to recognise the difficulties in your own nature, they can be easily removed; otherwise you will have to face much internal trouble and suffering in the

first stages of the sadhana. The Sangha of our Yoga must be of men who give up the lower consciousness and the lower nature in order to assume the higher and divine. The formation of a commune for the sake of a particular “work” is not at all the true ideal. It is only as we all grow into the Divine that the true sangha can be created. This you ought to understand clearly and try to fix in yourself before you come here. This also you must understand that I cannot reject yourself and take your money. Money is nothing; it is a mere means and convenience which God will give me whenever and to whatever degree he wills for his purpose. It is yourself, your soul that matters.

Try to understand these things in their true light so that you may be ready, when [you come], to receive completely what I have to give you. Meanwhile put yourself in spiritual relation with me, try to receive me with a passive and unobstructing mind and wait for the call to come here. As soon as I am ready, I shall call you.

As for the others of whom you write, you may speak to them of me hereafter, but you must leave it to me to decide about their fitness and what is best for them. All cannot come to me immediately and each case must be decided according to the truth of the being of each and the will of the Divine with regard to him.

Aurobindo

[2]

[29 December 1927]

Answer¹

The “Sadhak-Bhav” is Anilbaran’s translation of one of several pieces that are being put together and published by Rameshwar under the title “The Mother”. There seems to be no great utility in publishing a separate translation of it and the English of it is out of question since that has been given to Rameshwar.

¹ Sri Aurobindo wrote what follows to indicate how he wanted his secretary, Nolini Kanta Gupta, to answer a letter from Durgadas. Nolini’s reply was apparently written in Bengali. — Ed.

Anilbaran says his translations cannot be published in book form without serious revision and he is no doubt right. If it is published at all it will have to be given to R, who wants all the things from here that can be given to him.

Some four months ago Durgadas wrote a letter about a friend of his; the letter passed out of my memory and no answer was given. The photograph sent shows nothing. As for the illness, it is evidently a disease of the physical nerves—these diseases attack at various places and create or simulate different illnesses. Probably it is an after result of the ravage on the organism created by the Kalazar. In most cases it indicates a weakness in the vital being which opens it to pressure from hostile influences belonging to the lower vital worlds.

[3]

I had given Barin an answer to your former letter, but it may either not have been sent or else delayed or lost owing to the railway strike.

A paper of the kind you are undertaking is not part of my work. My only work is that which is centralised at Pondicherry under the control of the Mother. What she gives to the sadhaks to do elsewhere or accepts as helpful for the present or the future is part of the work. All else belongs to the old movements or to the outside world. So long as one has the old mentality and is still living the old life, he can always undertake anything of the kind and according to his fortune and capacity succeed or fail. I may give some help if there is any good reason for it, but I can undertake no responsibility for the work or its results.

Suresh is not at present “one of us”, on the contrary he has left and taken a hostile attitude. Your request to Nalini and others []² to go over there as editor is made without any knowledge of the present condition of the Sadhana and the present mentality of the Sadhakas here. You write as if all were

² MS seems

as it was seven or eight years ago, but everything is changed since then and such things are no longer possible.

You write about your pres[ent] [*incomplete*]³

[4]

It is difficult to understand anything precise from Durgadas' letter. I gather that his personal and his financial condition are not very good and that his inner condition, if not too bad, is not famous, finally that he is empty of vital force and the joy of life. All that, however, is exceedingly imprecise and does not help me to help him. The source of his difficulty is in his mind; it is too full of uncertainties, useless complexities and twistings upon itself and hesitations and শটিকা generally, to give his inner heart and life-force and spiritual force a real chance. If he wants effective help, he ought to lay himself open entirely to us and receive without hesitation our influence.

As regards this paper, I cannot say that it has any very particular connection with my work; but under present conditions there is no reason why he should not take part in it.

Finally about Moni whom he proposes to call, write to him that Moni has left us and is no longer "one of us". On the contrary, he has become hostile to us and is campaigning against my work so that there can be no question of inviting him there.

[5]

[June–July 1929]

Nalini

Write to Durgadas (in Bengali) a letter to the following purpose.

It is hardly practicable to send anyone from here so far as Bhubaneshwar to bring him. We had wired to Jyotish Mukherji to stop there and bring him, but Jyotish had started before

³ This is Sri Aurobindo's draft answer to a letter from Durgadas dated 16 July 1928. Sri Aurobindo did not complete the letter. Instead he wrote a note to Nolini Kanta Gupta in which he gave his thoughts on the points in Durgadas's letter, presumably for communication to Durgadas in Bengali. See the next item. — Ed.

receiving the wire. The next person expected from Bengal is Hrishikesh Kanjilal and we can ask him to do it; but this will take some time. If Durgadas is anxious to come *at once*, it will be better for him to make his own arrangements in the matter.

As to the money he needs, if he absolutely cannot get from home or his friends, we will see about it. But it will be better if he can arrange, for the expenses of the Ashram are heavy and always increasing, and at present money is not coming in freely.

Next, about his stay. In his former letter he spoke of coming for a few days to settle certain matters, but in this letter he speaks casually of not returning; but there is no clear statement that he wants to settle down in Pondicherry for good. The conditions here internal and external have very much changed from what they were when he was here before. The conditions are in many respects much more rigorous and there is a strong pressure in the atmosphere for concentration in the sadhana and for change of the nature. It will have to be seen if he can accommodate himself to the conditions or bear the pressure. If he can, then there can be no objection to his staying here. But those who stay here for the Yoga find usually that other interests that do not come within its scope fall away from them or recede to a distance. If it is decided that he stays, he must be prepared for that change.

He writes in his letter as if he wanted to see me and talk about his paper and other enterprise. But that is impossible. I see no one except on three days in the year, and even then I speak with no one. All that people have to say to me, they communicate orally to the Mother or in writing and, afterwards if there is a decision to be made, it is made by her in consultation with me. There can be no exception to this rule.

As to his health, there is no reason why in itself the subjection to fever, weakness or intestinal illness should be incurable. Only, he must be able to open himself altogether to the Power. When people practising Yoga suffer in this way, it is more often than not because there is a disharmony between the Force that is working in them and some parts of the mind and the vital and physical nature, some resistance or some unwillingness or inability to open up to it. Part of the nature opens, but part shuts itself

up and follows its own impulses and ideas; a disequilibrium, disturbance or illness is the result. Moreover, if he wants to recover, he must have the faith and the will to do so. He must not always be thinking of death or see it as the inevitable result; he must make up his mind to cure.

Finally, he wrote in his first letter about making a will. What his meaning is, is not clear — in this matter, his ideas and mine differ. But all that can best be settled, when he is here. The best thing for him will be not to make farther hesitations and difficulties, but anyhow arrange or manage to come — once here, there can be, in Chandernagore language, a general “clearance”.

[6]

9, Rue de la Marine
Pondicherry

—
July 5, 1929.

To
Durgadas Shett

Hrishikesh has wired on the 2nd from Sherpur (Myensingh) that he will start in a week and bring you to Pondicherry with him. I do not know if he has written or wired to you, so I write to inform you. Please arrange to come with him, if you are not in a condition to come alone. To bring someone else would be very inconvenient and might lead to awkwardness; for it has been for a long time the rule of the Asram to admit for residence only sadhaks of the Asram itself, disciples who come for a visit or short stay, people who come with special permission for initiation in Yoga, and, in some cases, those who come, — again with special permission, — for *darshan* on the days in the year on which Sri Aurobindo comes out. Outsiders who do not fall within these classes are not allowed to stay in the Asram, but are supposed to make their own arrangements elsewhere.

There is one thing which I should mention and of which I omitted to write in my last letter. You have written of the

work in which you have been recently engaged as if it were part of Sri Aurobindo's work and of those who are with you in it as if they were among his spiritual followers or disciples. But in matter of fact Sri Aurobindo knows practically nothing about what you are doing and nothing at all about those who are helping you. When you wrote to him about the "Swadeshi Bazaar" you yourself expressed a doubt as to the possibility of this enterprise having any connection with his work and his reply was that there was none. But as he understood that it was to be a weekly review with a special interest in economics and Swadeshi industry and trade, he could make no objection to your taking it up if that took your fancy. He does not interfere as a rule with the external activities of those who are not members of the Ashram and therefore self-bound to its spiritual aim and discipline or who have not made a complete surrender of their inner and outer life to his direction and control. Recently, however, since your last letters to him, Sri Aurobindo has been informed that those who are now with you are political workers of a particular school. If that is so, it is rather surprising that you should still think it possible to connect this work of yours with Sri Aurobindo's. You must surely be aware that he has cut off all connection with politics and that his work is purely spiritual and he does not support or have any kind of connection with any political school or group or party. It is also a rule of the Ashram that any one entering it as a member must give up all political connections and cease from any activities of that kind. I write this in order that any misunderstanding there may be should be cleared up, first in your own mind and afterwards here in a complete explanation of all matters when you come.

[7]

Pondicherry
26 November 1930.

My dear Durgadas,

I reply today to your letter; I think my answer will reach you by the 29th instant.

Of the three proposals you put before me, it is the first, that of a lump sum of Rs 50,000, which recommends itself to me.

The third is hardly possible since it would be extremely difficult and inconvenient, not to say impracticable, for me to realise the rent of a house in Calcutta.

The second proposal seems to me to be a little wanting in definiteness and, at any rate, I would prefer something speedy and final to a temporary arrangement for a number of years. I would not recommend to anyone the acceptance of the Government promissory note at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, if he had a better choice; those of the kind we have had to deal with were worth in the market less than $\frac{2}{3}$ of their face value. Moreover, this is a kind of investment for which I never had any liking. I gather from your letter that you are yourself not at all certain what will be realised from the property coming to you under this arrangement.

There remains the question about the Bank. The simplest way would be to deposit the money in the Imperial Bank, Calcutta, which is in relation with the Banque d'Indo-Chine, Pondicherry, and to send a cheque signed by the Imperial Bank in the name of the Mother (Madame M. Alfassa) which we could easily get cashed here. If the cheque were in my name, it would not be so easy, as my signature is not known to the Bank in Calcutta and I have no account with the bank here nor any transactions with it in my own name. We can however consider this matter hereafter when the time comes and decide on this or any other alternative. I mention it at once because it is the simplest and most convenient and we have employed it already, so that it seems to me superfluous to seek for any other way.

Sri Aurobindo

[8]

Pondicherry. 9.12.30

My dear Durgadas,

Your letter of the 3^d instant reached me only on the 8th afternoon, owing to the breakdown of railway communications between Madras and Pondicherry. You must have received the

telegram dated the next morning in answer. I perfectly understand the financial advantages of your second and third proposal, especially the last; but my experience is that clear cash transactions turn out usually to be the best. In these long term or transactional arrangements I have found most often that circumstances independent of the giver or receiver have interfered and upset the calculated advantages. I therefore stick to my original preference.

The usual charge made by the Bank is 2 as [*annas*] per cent, which would amount for a sum of Rs 50,000 to Rs 62.8,⁴ and if the cheque is in the Mother's name (it must be in the form given to you in my last letter, Madame M. Alfassa), they would probably make a reduction in the charges. A cheque from the National Bank would, I suppose, serve also; only there would be more delay in converting it because there are no direct relations of that Bank with the Banque d'Indo-Chine.

Sri Aurobindo

[9]

24.4.33.

Durgadas

The Mother's protection is always with you. Trust in her always and call down her peace and strength and light in you to still the restlessness and fill the vacancy with calm and force and joy and ease.

Sri Aurobindo

[10]

Pondicherry
30.4.34

Durgadas,

I have received your letter of the 26th. It is not necessary to make any arrangements for the interest—we shall be able

⁴ That is, 62 rupees and 8 annas (one half-rupee). — Ed.

to manage. What is more important is the way of sending. On no account must you cut the papers in half. It was publicly proclaimed by the Government some years ago — I do not know how it is that so many people are still ignorant of it — that they would not be responsible for cut notes. We have had much difficulty with cut bank notes, and Government paper cut like this will not at all be recognised and accepted. I must ask you therefore to make some other secure arrangement for sending the papers.

You have written nothing about yourself and how you are getting on. I hope you will let us know in a future letter.

Sri Aurobindo

[11]

14.5.34

Durgadas

As regards the sending of the Government paper there is a perfectly simple method which will involve no trouble. It is to endorse the Notes in favour of Duraiswami's bank in Madras and give them to its branch in Calcutta which will forward them to Madras. Duraiswami has often negotiated for us large sums in Govt promissory notes and in bank notes through his bank, so there will be no difficulty. I have asked Duraiswami to draw up a letter of instructions so that you will know exactly what to do and I am enclosing it with this. You have only to follow the instructions in his letter.

Sri Aurobindo

[12]

Durgadas,

I had intended to write to you as soon as I had received your offering, but as you told us not to send any letters before knowing your new address I could not do so. I decided to realise the Government Notes as I was informed that they would lose in value and I have placed Rs 50,000, the sum originally agreed

upon in the Ashram account from which money cannot again be diverted for other uses, and kept the rest (Rs 25000 about) free for use.

I gather from your letter that your health has not improved and is sometimes very bad leading to occasional crises. But from what you describe and from what I know, I believe that this ill-health is due to the weakness of the nervous system — the vital physical and the nervous envelope and not to any specific illness. If so, it can be got rid of by strengthening that part. You should determine on that and dismiss in future any depressing suggestions and certainly never think for this or any other reason of leaving the body. I understand from what you write that inwardly you have progressed and received much help. Since that is so, you have every reason to be confident since you will certainly receive more and not less help now and be able to make the progress which is still needed.

You have not given any indication of what you are doing. You had written before that you had certain things to clear up from the past before you came here. How far has that been done? I see from your letter that you are in difficulties for money, — but why then did you not write? I have no idea of what you stand in need of, but I am sending you a sum of Rs 100 to go on with and you will let me know at an early date what you need. But I must be sure of your address before sending letter and money so I despatch a telegram tomorrow reply paid to make sure of that.

Do not hesitate to write or to ask or tell openly what you need to ask or tell. I wish to have letters regularly from you keeping me informed of all that concerns you. I may not be able to answer always, at least personally, for I am overpressed with work and it is only on Sundays that I am a little free, but whenever necessary I will write and you will get besides whatever invisible help you need from me.

Sri Aurobindo

30.9.34.

[13]

28.10.34

Durgadas

It is unfortunately impossible for me to write letters with punctuality and at length — for most letters written outside I have to rely on Nolini who writes them from my directions and even so nine out of ten have to go unanswered; yet I have not sufficient time for my work. There are only three people outside the Asram besides yourself to whom I make it a point of writing personally, but the result of the conditions is that I can write to them only when I find a little time, usually on Sunday. For the same reason I have to write briefly. But you know by experience that help can come silently and letters, though necessary under the existing conditions, are only a minor help.

As to the past, you have written that your difficulties have been solved. I need not therefore return to that, except to say that I consider you took the right attitude and the right course as regards your share in the family property. I think that includes everything and I need say no more.

I am sorry to hear of your continued bad health. There is evidently a weakness in your aura or nervous envelope which allows these invasions of the forces of illness. That can only be set right by a strengthening of this nervous envelope. That can be done partly by a healthy climate and a life without anxieties, but the only radical cure is to bring down the strength of the higher consciousness into the nervous being and the body and refortify the nervous envelope. This depends on the progress of your sadhana. Meanwhile report to me from time to time the state of your health and I will see what can be done.

I have read carefully what you have written about your sadhana but I should like to know more precisely and specifically the exact stage you have reached and how the Force is working in the different planes of your being.

I would also like to know whether you would care to receive the letters on Yoga (usually called messages) circulated in the Asram? Not many go out nowadays, but sometimes I write still

and one here or there may be useful to you. If so, I will ask Nolini to send to you. However, most of those recently written are being published shortly in a book to be called "Lights on Yoga".

Finally about your idea of marriage. On this I should like to have more precise information about the girl and, if possible, a photograph of her. It is evidently a step of great consequence that you propose. Is it the life of a householder you propose to lead or is the marriage solely with the idea of sadhana in life together?

Sri Aurobindo

[14]

[January 1935]

Durgadas

I had intended to write about your sadhana, but, as recently there have been many difficulties in the work that I had to overcome, I could make no time.

In answer to your last letter I would say that when you have had the experiences and realisation you have described, nothing ought to discourage you. It is true that even after one has the consciousness in the inner being, it is still difficult to bring out it or its results in the outer being and the life. But that is a difficulty which all have and it can be overcome by patient sadhana and time.

One thing these realisations ought to remove from you — the idea of giving up the body. Once there is the inner consciousness established, the possibility of realisation in the outer life []⁵ is established also and, whatever the obstacles and difficulties, the disappointments from people or circumstances, the idea of giving up the body ought not to arise.

Two things especially are needed for the life-realisation to take form, an entire faith and equality of mind — not disturbed by anything that may happen, knowing that all happens for the best by the inscrutable Will — and the instrumentation of the Divine Force in the adhara. These must be established in the

⁵ MS also

inner being, but also as much as possible in the outer nature. Men and circumstances may not come up to your expectation or to your demand on them — they seldom or never do, but it is not on them but on the Divine and on the Divine Force acting in you that must be your dependence.

Your letter about the sadhana made everything clear and precise as to inner things — but there is not the same clearness and precision about your outer life. What are your present circumstances — what you wish and intend to do, that is what I would like to know more clearly. Especially one thing, what I should do for you on the material plane. When you sent not only the Rs 50,000 first promised for the Asram, but the rest of your share of the estate, you wrote that you had kept something for your needs and would write whenever you needed anything more. I have also arranged on that basis. But I know nothing of what are your needs or how you would like me to meet them. I gathered, I do not know whether rightly, from something you wrote that my sending an insured letter raised comments. I would very [much] like to know what precisely I should send, at what intervals and in what way. It would set my mind at rest if I knew this, for it is difficult to act in material things without such precisions. I hope therefore you will not mind my asking.

Sri Aurobindo

[15]

27.1.35

Durgadas

I have written to you in my last letter about sending money — I would have sent at once on receiving your letter of the 14th, but you have asked me not to do so till you write to me — you indicate also an uncertainty about your address. I hope you will write at once and let me know what you need. There is no reason why you should have to rely on others. But I am in ignorance about your needs and had therefore to depend on your writing to me about it. If a clear and precise arrangement can be made

so that you may not be in embarrassment at any time, that will be the best. Otherwise you ought not to hesitate to write to me each time as soon as it is necessary.

I do not know also very precisely what kind of work you envisage. Your letters have not given me any definite idea. Here in the Ashram all is confined to the preparation for the spiritual change which is the object of the Yoga and work is only a field of practice for that change of the nature. It is a hard thing to achieve, our difficulties internal and external have been many, but until it is accomplished we have denied ourselves any other definite work, except some publication of books, — because the base must be there before there can be any structure. Apart from that, any work in the outside world can be taken in the same way as a field of exercise for perfection, for the harmonising of the inner growth and the outer action. But this is the general principle — the other question is that of the precise field and direction you want to choose.

As to your ill-health, what do you wish me to tell you? Treatment (if it is good) and change of climate when necessary suggest themselves; but at bottom the difficulty is a difficulty experienced by us all — the disharmony between the light and power that is coming down and the obscure body consciousness which is accustomed to respond to disharmonious forces. It is precisely this point at which we are labouring here — and, as always happens, the difficulties to be met become immediately acute. Take treatment if you find it helps you and change climate; but the inner victory here is the means of the final solution.

Sri Aurobindo

[16]

Pondicherry
24.2.35.

Durgadas

I was unable to write all these days as it was round about the 21st of February and at that time we are overflowed with

people and letters and work of all kinds. I am still unable to write more than a few lines.

I am sending you Rs 100 by money order and I shall send the same sum from time to time. I now understand clearly the conditions of the past and what happened — those of the present are not quite as precise to me. I hope that if the money is exhausted before you receive the next instalment or if you need some special sum for a special purpose you will without hesitation write to me.

About other matters I hope to write more at length when I find a little breathing space.

Sri Aurobindo

[17]

Durgadas

I received your letter from Dehradun later than the day you had fixed for your departure, so I had to wire to ascertain if by any chance you were still there. Your frequent changes of address have stood in the way of any correspondence from here. It is impossible for me to write promptly and by the time I have written, you have generally moved away with no precise indication of the new address. I had sent you a money order for Rs 100 and a letter to Benares, but they were crossed by your letter announcing your departure and came back to me.

I had always wished to send you money for your expenses, but I did not know what you needed and it is difficult for me to fix anything, — that was why I had asked you. I have sent Rs 100. I do not know if Rs 50 a month would be sufficient; if it is not, you must not hesitate to tell me. You can also let me know the amount you owe to your friends so that I may remit the sum to you. All that is simply a matter of clear understanding and arrangement.

I am less clear as to the place where you should stay. If the atmosphere of the Asram were less troubled and there was less illness and attacks of turbulent forces, I would ask you to

come and stay here. But considering your bad health and the sensitiveness and delicacy of your vital nature, I hesitate to do so, because I do not know whether you would be able vitally and physically to be at ease amidst this fierce struggle of forces on the physical and lower vital plane. On the other hand I am not fixed as to what climate or surroundings would suit you elsewhere or of any place where you could have what is necessary for me. If you could let me have some information as to possible places and their circumstances, it would be easier for me to decide.

You need not think that I am likely to abandon you or withdraw my spiritual and practical support for any reason or that I find any fault with you. You may be sure of my help and blessings always. In the inner being you know that I am with you, in the outer life I hope that developments will soon take place which will make it possible for the nearness to be externally realisable.

1.12.35

Sri Aurobindo

[18]

Durgadas

I am afraid I have delayed too long in sending you money. I hope you have not been put to inconvenience. In the heavy pressure of work I had not realised that so long a time had gone. I am sending a money order.

I have been unable to make a satisfactory arrangement anywhere for your staying. The only one that looks possible is an offer of Srish Goswami (formerly of Howrah, now in Jalpaiguri) to take a house for you near his in Jalpaiguri and look after you. He had not at that time room in his own house, which would have been the best arrangement. I do not know how Jalpaiguri would suit you. If you think it feasible, I can ask him to make the necessary arrangements and you can join him there as soon as things are ready.

I write this briefly only, so that the post may not be delayed.

I shall answer your last letter before the 21st as I hope to have a little more time now.

Sri Aurobindo

12.2.36.

[19]

Pondicherry

8.6.36

Durgadas

I am glad you have informed me of your new address, but regret to see that the condition of your mind is so depressed and hopeless. Suicide is no solution of any spiritual problem or difficulty — it does not liberate from suffering after death, for the suffering in the vital continues; nor does it prepare better conditions hereafter, for the conditions created for the next life are worse and the same difficulties present then for solution. All suggestions of suicide come from a hostile force which wants to break the life and the sadhana. I hope that you will put away this thought from you altogether and for good. There is only one way [for]⁶ the sadhak and that is to maintain his trust in the Divine through all difficulties and sufferings, try to gather more and more fortitude and equality and freedom from all attachments till there is that strength and calm within on which the realisation can be securely founded.

As to the question you put me it is in the affirmative. Whatever help I can give you, I will give.

I do not write any more now than what is necessary as an answer to what you have written in your letter, so that this may not be delayed in posting.

I send my blessing. There is a Power of which you have at times been conscious which can carry you through. May it restore your faith and reliance and lead you to the conquest of yourself and Nature.

Sri Aurobindo

P.S I send you a money order for Rs 100. I hope it will find you.

⁶ MS from

[20]

Pondicherry

29.6.36

Durgadas

I got your letter late and could not telegraph on Saturday, but as you mentioned Monday morning, I sent an urgent wire the first thing on Monday (this morning). I am writing you a letter (referring back for the purpose to your past letters so as to understand better if I can what you say on certain matters here), but as this takes long, I could not finish the reply — so I am writing this in the meanwhile. If you cannot wait (you speak of going away on Thursday) as I have asked in the wire, at least let me know that you have gone and give me your new address so that I may send it there.

Meanwhile very briefly I may say that I have failed to grasp clearly and distinctly what is the offence you consider yourself to have committed against the Truth (your Truth) which demands a punishment, no less than death. You are nowhere explicit in this matter so as to say to me “This or this is the offence and this the Truth against which I have offended.” You touch on several points, your own offence, the evil men have done you, the evil I myself have done you (of which I was myself perfectly unconscious and certainly had no intention to do any,) the proposed marriage and my withholding of sanction, but on no point are there any precisions. I have therefore to answer in a general way and that cannot be very satisfactory to you.

Nevertheless let me say at once that suicide or letting oneself die — it comes to the same thing — can never be in my eyes a step in consonance with the Truth of things — it seems to me to be in itself an offence against Truth. If a punishment is to be inflicted on oneself for anything, it should be in the nature of an atonement — but the only atonement for a fall from Truth (supposing that there is one) is to persevere, to correct, to attempt again resolutely to embody the Truth in one’s life till it is done.

Then again, for your marriage, if you firmly feel that to be

the Truth for you or an indispensable part of it, I would be the last person to dissuade you from it. I have not done so and have left it to the Truth in you to work out your course as it did formerly in other matters. For the rest I shall explain what I mean in the longer letter. I write this only to make it clear that there is no opposition on my part, if your being demands this as a step to be taken in pursuit of its inner need. There is no reason, if that is a main point where you feel yourself unfulfilled, to despair and seek an issue out which is no issue.

Try to calm and control the agitation in you and do not allow yourself to be swept towards decisions which merely mean failure and disaster.

Sri Aurobindo

[21]

21.7.36

Durgadas

I have received your letter today and am sending the money, Rs 100 for July and August and Rs 150 for extra expenses, 250 in all. This is only to announce the despatch; as I do not want to delay it I do not write a letter.

I trust that the despair of the future will go and give place to renewed hope and strength to face life and journey towards the divine realisation.

Sri Aurobindo

[22]

25.6.37

Durgadas

I received your letter and take the opportunity of the first leisure I have had since to write just a line in answer.

I am glad to know that all is right and there is no such trouble or difficulty as you apprehended. I shall certainly do what I can spiritually for her welfare in the future.

Convey my blessing and the Mother's to all your friends who have helped you. With yourself our love and blessings.

Sri Aurobindo

[23]

Pondicherry

24.5.38

Durgadas

I was glad to receive your letter and have news of you after so long a time. In your letter at the end you express your wish to live independently in a solitary place if you can get the help you need for that. I shall willingly give you all help for that. Will you let me know at once more in detail where or to what kind of solitary place you wish to go and what help you need (special and standing monthly expenses included) and I will see immediately to provide you.

If you wish at any time to come over here to the Asram for a period or permanently, you have only to let us know. It is not a solitary place — there are now some 170 people living a collective existence though each has his separate room and can, if he likes, live a retired life there; but it is not an independent and solitary life such as one can have when living apart in one's own individual way. Whenever you feel inclined, you might come here and see what it is and whether, in its present form, it will at all suit you. Later on, when we have the means, I hope to have a more elastic organisation when different ways of living, separate or close, may be possible.

As for what I wish about you, it had always been my intention as soon as I could do so in a way satisfactory to you and suitable, to ask you to join the life and work that I am preparing. I have not asked you so far because there is only this Asram where people are being prepared and nothing but the small internal work of the Asram itself — I did not want to start anything larger before everything was spiritually and otherwise ready. But if at any time you feel inclined and able to fit yourself

into things as they are here, I shall be very glad to call you here at once. That would be altogether for you to decide in full freedom according to the needs of your nature.

Sri Aurobindo

To and about Punamchand M. Shah

[1]

To
Punamchand

I. Separation of Purusha and Prakriti to establish tranquility of heart and mind.

(a) Separated Purusha, calm, observing Prakriti.

(b) Prakriti in the heart and mind attending calmness.

II. Offering of all the actions, all that is done in your life as a sacrifice to the Lord.

III. Realisation of the Higher Divine Shakti doing all the works.

(a) Living with the constant idea that it is the Shakti which does the work.

(b) Feeling of the Divine Shakti descending from above the mind and moving the whole being.

1921

[2]

Pondicherry
August 15th 1923

The bearer Punamchand Mohanlal Shah is my disciple and is now with me practising Yoga in Pondicherry. He is trustworthy and faithful in all matters and enjoys my entire confidence.

Aurobindo Ghose

[3]

Punamchand

The ornaments offered by Chandulal's mother.

Certainly, you can accept and send them. I do not know why you felt any scruple in this matter. Whatever is given with Bhakti can and ought to be received and not rejected whether it is money, things of value or useful things. There may be exceptions, as for instance where the gift is of a quite unsuitable or cumbrous kind, but this is obviously not the case here.

(2) The talk with Haribhai

Think no more about it except to retain the lesson. Your mistake was to interfere with your ignorant mind in a matter which had been decided by the Mother, as if it could know better than she did. As usually happens when the physical mind acts in this way, it made wrong reasoning and foolish blunder. It was as if you gave Haribhai a choice between giving money or giving the clothes and other articles. He was to give both and there was no question of a choice between them; nor could this kind of balancing and reduction on one side or the other be good for his spiritual progress. The fact that other clothes were coming from a Mill could make no difference: that was quite another list and did not meet the same needs. As for the other possibilities you speak of, they have nothing to do with previous arrangements and present requirements; they are only a possibility of the future. I write this much only to show you how mistaken these mental movements are; but you need not worry about it any longer.

(3) The "Four Aspects" is half written and will be finished in a few days. It has been decided to publish these four writings with the February message in Calcutta. Motilal Mehta can use them instead of the August 15th utterances.

October 3, 1927

[4]

Pondicherry
1st January 1928

To

Punamchand. M. Shah.

I have received your letter and am sending this answer with Haribhai. I do not consider it necessary or advisable to make a public appeal for the sum of money I have asked you to raise for me in Gujerat. If a public appeal is to be made, it can only be when the time comes for my work to be laid on larger foundations and I can create the model form or outward material organisation of the new life which will be multiplied throughout India and, with India as a spiritual nucleus and centre, in other countries. Then large sums of money will be indispensable and a public appeal may become advisable.

At present I am making a smaller preliminary foundation, a spiritual training-ground and the first form of a community of spiritual workers. Here they will practise and grow in the Yoga and learn to act from the true consciousness and with the true knowledge and power. Here too some first work will be undertaken and institutions founded on a small scale which will prepare for the larger and more definite work of the future. I need money to buy land and houses, to get equipment for these first institutions and to accommodate and maintain an increasing number of sadhakas and workers. A public appeal is not necessary to raise the sums that are at present indispensable. I prefer to make it only when I have already created a sufficient external form that all can see. It will be easy for you to raise privately the money I now want if you are inspired to get into touch with the right and chosen people.

As you can judge, even this preliminary work will be a matter not of one but several lakhs, but I have named one lakh as the minimum immediately needed in order that we may start solidly and go on without being hampered at each step for want of funds. If you can raise more than the initial minimum, so much the better. The work will proceed more easily and quickly and with a surer immediate prospect. Preserve the right

consciousness and attitude, keep yourself open to the Divine Shakti and let her will be done through you.

[5]

Punamchand

I am surprised to see from your letter that you have received from Vithaldas an offer of Rs 500 a month towards the expenses of the Asram and that you have not immediately accepted it. In fact the language of the letter would almost mean that it was rejected almost with impolite disdain; but I suppose this could be a wrong impression. It is precisely help of this kind that we are feeling the most need of just now. For so long as this monthly deficit is not filled, we are obliged to spend on our monthly upkeep sums that ought to go for capital outlay and under such circumstances the very foundation of the Asram from the pecuniary point of view remains insecure. If the monthly expenses are secured, the Asram will be put on a safe foundation and the work for bringing the lakh and other large sums can go forward on a much sounder basis. Besides the forces will not be diverted from their proper work by the harassment of daily needs. Therefore, recently, it is just contributions of this kind that we have been pressing for as the first necessity. Vithaldas seems to have received an inspiration from this pressure and made a magnificent answer. And you do not immediately seize on this response! This is an example of what I meant when I warned you to keep yourself open to the Mother's force and not to follow merely your own ideas and plans. Now the only thing to do is to speak to Vithaldas at once and see whether he keeps to his offer. If so, you should accept it at once. The sooner we get the money the better. Our deficit is really more than Rs 800, for the number of disciples is constantly increasing and the expenses also. If Vithaldas can be relied upon to give *regularly* Rs 500 a month, the gap will be almost filled and once that is done, the obstruction we have felt hitherto in this matter is likely to disappear and the rest to come in with greater ease. If you have not already accepted his offer and made arrangements for

the regular transmission of the money, then act at once.

The Mother does not want to buy saris for herself with the money raised; in the present state of the finances the idea is altogether out of the question. The income and expenses must be balanced; money must be found for the work of building up the Asram. All the rest comes after.

Sri Aurobindo

Pondicherry

June 2. 1928

[6]

Punamchand

As regards the amount of Rs 500/- monthly from Vithaldas and your note in the account, I presume it is clearly understood that this sum has nothing to do with the account. It must be kept quite separate and remitted here every month as soon as it is received; it must on no account and in no circumstances be detained or used for any other purpose whatsoever.

As to the expenses shown in the account, you asked originally for Rs 70/- a month in Bombay or Rs 30/- in Patan; but the actual expenditure has been for months above Rs 200/-. This is an enormous amount and, as I have already pointed out, it is swallowing up all you collect. I do not see how you expect to be able to maintain this rate of expenditure for an indefinite period or what purpose it serves.

[7]

Champaklal

Write to Punamchand that now that Vithaldas has seen the Mother, he should communicate his experience or his difficulties direct to her. It is not desirable that in matters of the Sadhana Punamchand or anybody else should come in between, even as a channel of communication. The Mother's force must go direct undisturbed by any other influence.

December 1928

[8]

Champaklal

As regards the Vedic “Dictionary” write to Punamchand that I do not want anything of this kind to be made out of my unfinished work. If it is to be done, it will be in the future and must be only under my express directions and supervision.

December 1928

[9]

Write to Punamchand asking what are the Rs 500 that reached us today. Whenever he sends money, he should inform us at the same time what it is and who has given it.

Write to him also with regard to the letter he wrote about the detective’s visit and his proposals. He has only to send regular accounts with details of sums, names etc to me, and he is on safe ground. He can simply answer that all moneys given are accounted for and full details sent to me. If on the other hand he is loose in his accounts and dealings with the money, he gives room for this kind of rumour and creates a wrong atmosphere. Nor in the absence of accounts can I myself have any ground to go upon if I am questioned whether I received or not the sums paid to him for me. In this connection note that he has not sent, as promised, the accounts for the last few months. Since his visit and return we have received nothing.

16 April 1929

[10]

Punamchand

If you wish to take your monthly expenses from the money of Vithaldas, you ought first to try to persuade him to assign separately a sum of Rs 150 for the purpose without diminishing his contribution to Pondicherry. If he is not willing, then you may take from him the sum of Rs 150 and send Rs 550 to Pondicherry, but on the following conditions.

(1) You will take this money from Vithaldas' contribution only and you will draw on no other sum.

(2) All other sums of money contributed through you must be sent without fail and without delay to Pondicherry.

(3) There must be no expenditure for yourself beyond the amount fixed and no borrowing of money for which you will make us responsible or draw for its return on money contributed for the Asram.

(4) The Mother will enter into her accounts Rs 550 only as Vithaldas's contribution. The Rs 150 must be considered as his help to you directly.

As regards Narangi, it was evident that he had no enthusiasm for helping you in the way you propose. He must have his own reasons for that and the Mother did not care to press him to do it. He is already doing wholeheartedly as much as can be reasonably asked from him; it is no use exacting from him what he has no heart for. It seems to me that if you can make yourself a true channel for the force, you ought to be able to succeed without his assistance.

In this connection I feel it necessary to say one thing once for all, which I have refrained from writing before because I did not think it would be of much use. The difficulties you have experienced in the work you undertook arose partly from the general opposition of the money-power to the divine call, but also and very largely from your own vital being and its desires and self-regarding attitude. This vital nature of yours was always full of demands and desires and it came to regard their satisfaction as perfectly legitimate and even the right thing to do. As respects money, it had the habit of spending loosely and freely whatever came into your hand; it had the habit too of borrowing and lending freely without regard to your capacity either to give or to repay; and, as always results from this kind of looseness, it treated whatever money came into your hands as it would have treated your own—I may give as a slight but significant example your lending to your personal friends out of the Mother's money which was never intended for such a purpose. These habits might pass in a man freely supplied by

Fortune with resources; but they were bound to have undesirable effects in your position and especially in one entrusted with your task and practising Yoga.

At first you had some, though not a large success; but, with money flowing through your hands, you could not refrain from a free and increasing expenditure on yourself, Champa and Dikshit. Instead of the Rs 70 allowed to you by the Mother, you began to spend more and more, the amount of your total expenses rising in the end to well above Rs 200 in a single month. This need created by you for yourself — of course, with all sorts of plausible reasons to back it — affected your whole attitude. The right attitude would have been to put the Mother's work first and yourself last. Your whole and sole desire should have been to send as much money as possible to the Asram and spend as little as possible on yourself, only your actual needs and the collection expenses. If that had remained your attitude, circumstances moulded by the Divine Force would have arranged themselves accordingly and you would have had enough and to spare for your personal expenses. But in practice the position became quite the opposite. Your first care was to draw money for your expenses there; if anything remained, it could be sent to the Mother. Only express contributions marked for the Asram like Vithaldas' and Kanta's escaped this law — up till now. As a matter of fact except these sums and some two or three thousand rupees at the beginning, you have, acting on these lines, been unable to send money or to do anything except to meet with the sums given to you your Bombay expenses. For the consequences of this attitude were inevitable. Circumstances shaped themselves accordingly; money came in for your personal expenditure, but for the Asram it dwindled and grew less and less; only Vithaldas' money saved it from becoming a zero. Next, the money for your expenses became more and more difficult to get and for that too you are compelled now to fall back on the contribution of Vithaldas. That was the first result; the second was that people in Bombay lost all confidence in you and in the collection for the Asram and began even to suspect your *bona fides*. And the last result was that your attitude came

between the people you approached and us, keeping them tied to you but cut off from our influence. It was only as a result of our putting a strong force out that some change has become possible and even now the resistance is very great in the Bombay atmosphere.

I am perfectly aware that you can advance many explanations justifying your action as against what I have written. All that makes no difference. It is always the habit of the vital being to find out things by which it persuades the mind and justifies its desires; and circumstances usually shape themselves to justify it still farther. For what we have within us creates the circumstances outside us. What matters is that you should take inwardly a different position in the future. If nothing happens to prevent this arrangement of Vithaldas's money, you must see to it that henceforward you confine yourself to the arrangement, keeping to it strictly, put all preoccupation with yourself behind and think only of the work you went for which is to get support for the Asram — that and nothing else. You have no other work in Gujerat — as you have sometimes vainly imagined. You may be right in thinking that the only thing you can do now is to get people with means interested in the Asram, but in that case you must see that they are put into direct touch without which the interest cannot be real and effective. Their money must come here and not stop in Bombay and when they are ready, they themselves must come and receive what they can of the influence.

The vision of which you give a description is the indication of a vital attack or of a vital danger throwing itself upon you. The form you saw was evidently a strong Power of the hostile vital world — a red hot copper-like bust can mean nothing else. If you thought it was your being, it must have been because something in your vital nature responded to the force which this form embodied. The serpent was the indication of the evil force contained in him. The nature of the bust would seem to indicate that the force was that of vital greed (*lobha* of all kinds) and desire. The fact that the blow given was on the mouth would confirm this interpretation — but that would also be consistent with the force being that of falsehood, (*moha*, *mithyâ*). The

grace and protection have always been with you in spite of everything, but for it to work fully you must get rid of all in you that responds to the power that threatens you. The blow and the smashing of the face or hood and drawing out and upward of the serpent are an indication that now you have a chance of getting free from this force and throwing away from your vital nature greed, egoism and desire. It is for you to fulfil the favourable end of the vision by taking the chance.

Sri Aurobindo

Pondicherry

14 September 1930

[11]

Re Punamchand.

- (1) To give up his Bombay work and stay here.
- (2) To return to Bombay. If so, for what work and in what conditions?

—

For (1) —

I doubt whether he will be able, after the very different conditions to which he has been accustomed in Bombay, to settle down to the discipline of the Asram which itself is very different from what it was when he was last here. And where to put them, if they stay?

—

For (2)

On the other hand, if he goes back, how is he to live? It is out of the question for us to send him money and he must not even think of it. In future also we cannot make ourselves responsible for any loans he may contract; that too must be understood clearly.

If he collects money and spends all or most of what he gets on his own expenses, that is about the worst thing that can be done. It discredits him in people's eyes and discredits the collection and the Asram. As soon as it is known people cease

to give money. Moreover, what is the meaning of a collection in which all the money realised goes to collection expenses and nothing goes to the fund for which the collection is made.

There is therefore only one possible solution, for him to fix a maximum amount for his expenses and find someone (now that Vithaldas is no more) who will give him that sum monthly. All other amounts must be strictly sent here. And on no account must his expenses exceed the sum fixed. This seems to me the only solution if he goes back to Bombay.

For the work —

It seems no longer possible for him to collect money in the way he and Dixit first did — approaching anybody and everybody for contributions. The one thing he might possibly do is what he has done with Narainji and Ramnarayan, — to make the acquaintance of people, get them interested in the Asram and its work, and prepare them for coming over here for us to see what can be done with them; if he can get them meanwhile to contribute, so much the better. But they must be men who can give assistance, either in a large sum or as a substantial assistance to the monthly expenses.

—

[12]

Pondicherry, September 1931

He (Punamchand) can let Narainji have Veda translations, but I do not want them widely circulated because they are a first draft, not final. Messages and letters he may have. But the evening talks must not get about. I have not seen these reports and therefore they are not authorised, and there must be any number of things in them which either ought not to be published or for which in the form they have there, I cannot accept responsibility.

[13]

Punamchand

No use doing the Vocabulary of the Atri Hymns till the new translation is ready. The old translation is too free for this purpose.

Atri hymns not yet ready.

Not much use to collect words from the Secret of the Veda.

The Vocabulary of the Bharadwaja hymns is very well done; perhaps it is best to do all like that and they could be put together afterwards.

No. The Vocabularies of the Revised Hymns have to be kept separate from the others. I shall look through the others when I have time and see what is to be done.

The comma is a mistake; it has to be omitted.

To and about Public Figures 1930–1937

Draft of a Letter to Maharani Chimnabai II

To H.H the Maharani of Baroda

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.

I have written so much in order to explain my position and the nature of my Yogic power. I do not usually ask anyone to practise this Yoga, because it is possible only for those who have from the beginning or who develop a strong call to it; others cannot go through it []¹ to the end. Nor [do I]² often go out of my way to help those who are merely in need of some kind of quietude of [the] external nature as many Yogins do — though I do not refuse to do it in certain cases. 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

¹ MS with

² MS I do

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.

This is all I can answer to Your Highness at present. It is for Your Highness to decide³ whether what you seek has anything to do with what I have explained in this letter. 1930

On a Proposed Visit by Mahatma Gandhi

[1]

GOVINDBHAI PATEL: Here is a postcard from Gandhi. If you think he can receive something from you, please grant him permission to meet you.

You will have to write that I am unable to see him because for a long time past I have made it an absolute rule not to have any interview with anyone — that I do not even speak with my disciples and only give a silent blessing to them three times a year. All requests for an interview from others I have been obliged to refuse. This rule has been imposed on me by the necessity of my sadhana and is not at all a matter of convenience or anything else. The time has not come when I can depart from it.

28 December 1933

[2]

M. K. GANDHI: . . . Perhaps you know that ever since my return to India I have been anxious to meet you face to face. Not being able to do that, I sent my son to you. Now that it is almost certain that I am to be in Pondicherry, will you spare me a few minutes & see me! I know how reluctant you are to see anybody. But if you are under no positive vow of abstinence, I hope you will give me a few minutes of your time. . . .

2 January 1934

³ *Alternative:* see for yourself

7.1.34

Dear Mahatmaji

It is true that I have made no vow, for I never make one, but my retirement is not less binding on me so long as it — and the reason for it — lasts. I think you will understand that it is not a personal or mental choice but something impersonal from a deeper source for the inner necessity of work and sadhana. It prevents me from receiving you but I cannot do otherwise than keep to the rule I have adhered to for some years past.

Sri Aurobindo

[3]

GOVINDBHAI PATEL: I hear that you have already sent him the answer. Has he really written anything? [*Rest of letter missing.*]

In the absence of the letter I cannot say. In his letter he simply expressed the desire he had long had to meet me and asked me to see him if my retirement was not a vow. I have written that I cannot depart from the rule so long as the reason for it lasts.

9 January 1934

[4]

GOVINDBHAI PATEL: Gandhi writes that he has not yet received Sri Aurobindo's answer.

I hear that he asked at least a line in Sri Aurobindo's hand; and that Sri Aurobindo has written a full letter in his own hand — which he does not usually do. Is this a fact?

Yes. I wrote to him a short letter explaining the nature of my retirement and regretting that I could not break my rule so long as the reason for it existed. It was addressed to Bangalore I believe and ought to have reached him, unless it has been pocketed by the C.I.D. I suppose even if he had left Bangalore it would have been forwarded to him. You can write and inform him of the fact.

12 January 1934

[5]

GOVINDBHAI PATEL: I am sure he will prolong his stay to see the Mother. And the Mother is Mother after all, let him have Her touch. I am sure he is not going to bother Mother by political topics. If he talks at all, he will talk about his search after Truth.

With his programme it is impossible. Also I do not see any utility. You must on no account ask him to delay his departure, that is quite contrary to what we wish. His search for Truth is on fixed lines of his own and the Mother can say nothing to help him there — nor has he said that he wants any help — and the Asram would hardly please him since it is run on quite unascetic lines contrary to his ideal.

24 January 1934

[6]

GOVINDBHAI PATEL: As he has written to me to inform you, shall I answer that the Mother cannot see him or shall I remain silent? If he enquires about seeing Mother, shall I say that she will not be able to see him?

You can tell him that just now the circumstances are such that it is impossible for the Mother to receive his visit.⁴

16 February 1934

To Dr. S. Radhakrishnan

2.10.34

My dear Professor Radhakrishnan,

I regret that you should have had to wait for the publication of your book on account of the contribution I could not write. I had intimated to Dilip that it would be practically impossible for me and I could not make a promise I would most likely be

⁴ The "circumstances" to which Sri Aurobindo refers were those created by an inquiry instituted by the government of French India into the status and finances of the Ashram. Sri Aurobindo learned about this inquiry on or shortly before 16 February 1934. See *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. — Ed.

unable to fulfil. I think he hoped I would still find time somehow to write.

I am entirely taken up by my present work which is exceedingly heavy and pressing and from which I cannot take my hands for a moment or spare the necessary energy or time for anything else. I have been obliged to put aside all mental or literary work and even to suspend sine die the revision for publication of the unpublished works in the “Arya” which I had undertaken. There is no chance of any alteration in this state of affairs in any near future. It is not a matter of choice but of necessity for me. I hope therefore you will excuse me for not being able to comply with your request. I regret very much that I have to disappoint you, but it is not possible for me to avoid it.

Sri Aurobindo

To and about Morarji Desai

[1]

A. B. PURANI: This is a telegram from Dr. Chandulal Manilal Desai. . . . The other gentleman about whom he writes is Mr. Morarji Desai, originally a district deputy collector who resigned his post in the Non-cooperation movement and has been in public life since. I heard that he had spiritual inclinations.

In case they are permitted [for darshan], they would naturally remain outside. The wire can be sent even tomorrow, on the 16th — and they would have time to reach in time.

It is better if they have no time. Why should prominent politicians come trooping down here like this? I don't understand. Better wire that it is too late.

15 February 1935

[2]

MORARJI DESAI: Since 1930 I have been making an effort to put the Yoga preached by the Gita in practice as I understand it. . . . I cannot however say that I am on the right path and every day I realise how immensely difficult it is to give

up attachment in every form & still live the ordinary life.

I have come here as a humble seeker for guidance in this quest of mine & request you to give me a guidance as to whether I should continue on the path I am treading at present or whether I am on a wrong track & should follow another path. If you consider that I should continue in the path followed by me at present I request you to guide me as to what I should do to give up all attachment and if you advise me to change the path, the new path may kindly be indicated and explained to me.

[17 August 1935]

Shri Morarji Desai,

I do not know that it is possible for me to give you any guidance on the path you have chosen — it is at any rate difficult for me to say anything definite without more precise data than those contained in your letter.

There is no need for you to change the line of life and work you have chosen so long as you feel that to be the way of your nature (*svabhava*) or dictated to you by your inner being, or, for some reason, it is seen to be your proper *dharma*. These are the three tests and apart from that I do not think there is any fixed line of conduct or way of work or life that can be laid down for the Yoga of the Gita. It is the spirit or consciousness in which the work is done that matters most; the outer form can vary greatly for different natures. Thus, so long as one does not get the settled experience of the Divine Power taking up one's work and doing it, one acts according to one's nature; afterwards it is that Power which determines what is to be done or not done.

The overcoming of all attachments must necessarily be difficult and cannot come except as the fruit of a long *sadhana*, unless there is a rapid general growth in the inner spiritual experience which is the substance of the Gita's teaching. The cessation of desire of the fruit or attachment to the work itself, the growth of equality to all beings, to all happenings, to good repute or ill repute, the dropping of the ego, which are necessary for the loss of all attachments, can come completely only when

all work becomes a spontaneous sacrifice to the Divine, the heart is offered up to Him and one has the settled experience of the Divine in all things and all beings. This consciousness or experience must come in all parts and movements of the being (*sarvabhavena*), not only in the mind and idea; then the falling away of all attachments becomes easy. I speak of the Gita's way of Yoga; for in the ascetic life one obtains the same objects differently by cutting away from all the objects of attachment and the consequent atrophy of the attachment itself through rejection and disuse.

Sri Aurobindo

On a Proposed Visit by Jawaharlal Nehru

DILIP KUMAR ROY: Nehru may be here about the 17th of this month. What do you think of my asking him to spend the day (or two) at my flat? Then surely he would want to ask the Mother for an interview. Your force will do the chief thing, of course.

I am afraid what you propose is impossible. Jawaharlal is coming on a political mission and as president of the Congress, while we have to steer clear not only of politics but of the shadow of politics. If he put up in a house of the Asram, we would be in for it! A flaming report from the British Consul to Delhi to be forwarded to London and from London to Paris. Just now we have to be specially careful, as the friendly Governor is going away — perhaps to return in March, perhaps not. If the Colonial Minister there questions him about us, he must be able to give a spotless report in our favour. The future also may possibly be turbulent and the wash of the turmoil may reach Pondicherry — we have to be on our guard from now onwards. So *don't* make Jawaharlal pray for an interview — it is not possible. Let us be patient and let things develop. If Jawaharlal is to be at all led forcewards, it is more likely to happen when he is less occupied with outer stress and turmoil.

Of course I will seem to do it on my own, so that it will look like I have invited him out of courtesy more or less as a friend to a friend.

That won't go down with the Br. Consul and other watchers. He will neigh "Ah ha! Ah ha! Ahh! that's their little game, is it?" Besides Nehru won't come alone — he will have his retinue or his staff with him, I suppose. At least all Congress Presidents used to go about in that way in my time. Pondicherry besides is an unimportant place — they are not likely to let him tarry and dally here.

5 October 1936

To Birendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury

21.2.37

Birendra Kishore

I have made it a rule not to write anything about politics. Also the question of what to do in a body like the Assembly depends on circumstances, on the practical needs of the situation which can change rapidly. In such a body the work is not of a spiritual character. All kinds of work can be done with the spiritual consciousness behind, but unless one has advanced very far, one must in the front be guided by the necessities of the work itself and its characteristic nature. Since you have joined this party, its programme must be yours and what you have to do is to bring to it all the consciousness, ability and selflessness which you can command. You are right in not taking office, as you have made the promise. In any case a sadhak entering politics should work not for himself but for the country. If he takes office, it should be only when he can do something for the country by it and not until he has proved his character and ability and fitness for position. You should walk by a high standard which will bring you the respect even of opponents and justify the choice of the electors.

Sri Aurobindo

Part Three

Public Statements and
Other Communications on
Indian and World Events
1940–1950

Section One

Public Statements, Messages,
Letters and Telegrams on
Indian and World Events
1940–1950

On the Second World War 1940–1943

Contributions to Allied War Funds

We are placing herewith at the disposal of H.E. the Governor of Madras a sum of Rs. 500 as our joint contribution to the Madras War Fund. This donation, which is in continuation of previous sums given by us for the cause of the Allies (10,000 francs to the French Caisse de Défense Nationale before the unhappy collapse of France and Rs. 1000 to the Viceroy's War Fund immediately after the Armistice) is sent as an expression of our entire support for the British people and the Empire in their struggle against the aggressions of the Nazi Reich and our complete sympathy with the cause for which they are fighting.

We feel that not only is this a battle waged in just self-defence and in defence of the nations threatened with the world-domination of Germany and the Nazi system of life, but that it is a defence of civilisation and its highest attained social, cultural and spiritual values and of the whole future of humanity. To this cause our support and sympathy will be unswerving whatever may happen; we look forward to the victory of Britain and, as the eventual result, an era of peace and union among the nations and a better and more secure world-order. 19 September 1940

Notes about the War Fund Contributions

[1]

As to your suggestion about a note on the subject of the contribution to the War Fund Sri Aurobindo does not feel very much inclined to enter into any public explanation of his action or any controversy on the subject. In his letter he made it very clear that it was on the War issue that he gave his full support and he indicated the reason for it. Hitler and Nazism and its

push towards world domination are in his view an assault by a formidable reactionary Force, a purely Asuric force, on the highest values of civilisation and their success would mean the destruction of individual liberty, national freedom, liberty of thought, liberty of life, religious and spiritual freedom in at least three continents. In Europe already these things have gone down for the time being except, precariously, in a few small countries; if Britain were defeated, that result would be made permanent and in Asia also all the recent development such as the rise of new or renovated Asiatic peoples would be miserably undone, and India's hope of liberty would become a dead dream of the past or a struggling dream of a far-off future. The abject position to which the Nazi theory relegates the coloured races is well known and that would be the fate of India if it conquered and dominated the world. Mankind itself as a whole would be flung back into a relapse towards barbarism, a social condition and an ethics which would admit only the brute force of the master and the docile submission of the slave. It is only by Britain's victory in the struggle to which she has challenged this destructive Force that the danger can be nullified, since she alone has shown at once the courage and power to resist and survive. This is Sri Aurobindo's view and, holding it, he could do nothing else than what he has done. There is no just reason here for any misunderstanding. This is what you can explain to anybody who questions, if it is necessary.

[2]

This letter should not be sent.¹ This is a time to remain quiet. I did not intend by my contribution and letter to the Madras Governor to start any political action or political controversy. Let them stand for themselves. If anything farther is necessary at any time about it, I shall myself see to it.

22 October 1940

¹ *The letter referred to was written by Anilbaran Roy, a disciple of Sri Aurobindo's, in answer to questions raised by an acquaintance. — Ed.*

On the War: An Unreleased Statement

Sri Aurobindo's decision to give his moral support to the struggle against Hitler, which was made at the very beginning of the war, was based like all his actions on his inner view of things and on intimations from within.² It was founded on his consciousness of the forces at work, of their significance in the Divine's leading of the world, of the necessary outer conditions for the spiritual development in which he sees the real hope of humanity. It would not serve any purpose to speak here of this view of things: but some outer considerations of a most material kind easily understandable by everyone can be put forward which might help to explain his action to the general mind, although they do not give the whole meaning of it; it is only these that are developed here.

The struggle that is going on is not fundamentally a conflict between two imperialisms — German and English, — one attacking, the other defending itself. That is only an outward aspect, and not the whole even of the outward aspect. For the Germans and Italians believe that they are establishing a new civilisation and a new world-order. The English believe that they are defending not only their empire but their very existence as a free nation and the freedom also of other nations conquered by Germany or threatened by the push to empire of the Axis powers; they have made it a condition for making peace that the nations conquered shall be liberated and the others guaranteed against farther aggression. They believe also that they are standing up for the principles of civilisation which a Nazi victory would destroy. These beliefs have to be taken into consideration in assessing the significance of the struggle.

It is in fact a clash between two world-forces which are contending for the control of the whole future of humanity. One

² *The textual basis of this statement was an essay written by Anilbaran Roy and submitted to Sri Aurobindo for approval. Sri Aurobindo thoroughly revised and enlarged the first four paragraphs and added seven new ones, transforming Anilbaran's essay into an entirely new piece that may be considered his own writing. In revising, he retained Anilbaran's third-person "Sri Aurobindo". — Ed.*

force seeks to destroy the past civilisation and substitute a new one; but this new civilisation is in substance a reversion to the old principles of dominant Force and a rigid external order and denies the established values, social, political, ethical, spiritual, altogether. Among these values are those which were hitherto held to be the most precious, the liberty of the individual, the right to national liberty, freedom of thought; even religious liberty is to be crushed and replaced by the subjection of religion to State control. The new ethics condemn and reject all the principles that can be summed up in the word "humanitarianism"; all that is to it a falsehood and a weakness. The only ethical values admitted are those of dominant Force on the one side and, on the other, of blind obedience and submission, self-effacement and labour in the service of the State. Wherever this new idea conquers or can make its power felt, it is this order of things that it seeks to establish; it is not satisfied with setting itself up in one country or another, it is pushing for world conquest, for the enforcement of the new order everywhere, securing it, — this at least Germany, its principal agent, conceives to be the right method and carries it out with a scientific thoroughness by a ruthless repression of all opposition and a single iron rule.

The other Force is that of the evolutionary tendencies which have been directing the course of humanity for some time past and, till recently, seemed destined to shape its future. Its workings had their good and bad sides, but among the greater values it had developed stood the very things against which the new Force is most aggressive, the liberty of the individual, national liberty, freedom of thought, political and social freedom with an increasing bent towards equality, complete religious liberty, the humanitarian principle with all its consequences and, latterly, a seeking after a more complete social order, which will organise the life of the community, but will respect the liberty of the individual while perfecting his means of life and helping in every way possible his development. This evolutionary world-force has not been perfect in its action, its working is still partial and incomplete: it contains many strong survivals from the past which have to disappear; it has, on the other hand, lost

or diminished some spiritual elements of a past human culture which ought to recover or survive. There are still many denials of national freedom and of the other principles which are yet admitted as the ideal to be put in practice. In the working of that force as represented by Britain and other democracies there may not be anywhere full individual freedom or full national liberty. But the movement has been more and more towards a greater development of these things and, if this evolutionary force still remains dominant, their complete development is inevitable.

Neither of these forces are altogether what we need for the future. There are ideas and elements in the first which may have their separate value in a total human movement; but on the whole, in system and in practice, its gospel is a worship of Force and its effect is the rule of a brutal and pitiless violence, the repression of the individual, not only a fierce repression but a savage extinction of all that opposes or differs from it, the suppression of all freedom of thought, an interference with religious belief and freedom of spiritual life and, in an extreme tendency, the deliberate will to "liquidate" all forms of religion and spirituality. On the side of the other more progressive force there are, often, a limited view, grievous defects of practice, an undue clinging to the past, a frequent violation of the ideal; but at the same time the necessary elements and many of the necessary conditions of progress are there, a tendency towards an enlargement of the human mind and spirit, towards an increasing idealism in the relation of men with men and of nation with nation and a tolerant and humane mentality. Both are, at present, or have been largely materialistic in their thought, but the difference is between a materialism that suppresses the spirit and a materialism that tolerates it and leaves room for its growth if it can affirm its strength to survive and conquer.

At present the balance in the development of human thought and action has been turning for some time against the larger evolutionary force and in favour of a revolutionary reaction against it. This reaction is now represented by totalitarian governments and societies, the other tendency by the democracies;

but democracy is on the wane everywhere in Europe, the totalitarian idea was gaining ground on all sides even before the war. Now with Hitler as its chief representative, this Force has thrown itself out for world-domination. Everywhere the results are the same, the disappearance of individual and national liberty, a rigid “New Order”, the total suppression of free thought and speech, a systematic cruelty and intolerance, the persecution of all opposition, and, wherever the Nazi idea spreads, a violent racialism denying the human idea; outside Europe what is promised is the degradation of the coloured peoples to helotry as an inferior, even a subhuman race. Hitler, carrying with him everywhere the new idea and the new order, is now master of almost all Europe minus Great Britain and Russia. [Faced with the stubborn opposition of Britain he is turning southwards and if the plan attributed to him of taking Gibraltar and the Suez Canal and forcing the British fleet out of the Mediterranean and its coasts were to succeed, he would be able with his Italian]³ ally to dominate Africa also and to turn towards Asia, through Syria and Palestine. There []⁴ would be then nothing that could stand in his way except Russia; but Russia has helped his projects by her attitude and seems in no mood to oppose him. The independence of the peoples of the Middle East and Central Asia would disappear as the independence of so many European nations has disappeared and a deadly and imminent peril would stand at the gates of India.

These are patent facts of the situation, its dangerous possibilities and menacing consequences. What is there that can prevent them from coming into realisation? The only material force that now stands between is the obstinate and heroic resistance of Great Britain and her fixed determination to fight the battle to the end. It is the British Navy alone that keeps the war from our gates and confines it to European lands and seas and a strip of North Africa. If there were defeat and the strength of Britain and her colonies were to go down before the totalitarian nations,

³ *Sri Aurobindo cancelled the bracketed passage during revision but did not write anything to replace it. — Ed.*

⁴ MS there

all Europe, Africa and Asia would be doomed to domination by three or four Powers all anti-democratic and all pushing for expansion, powers with regimes and theories of life which take no account of liberty of any kind; the surviving democracies would perish, nor would any free government with free institutions be any longer possible anywhere. It is not likely that India poor and ill-armed would be able to resist forces which had brought down the great nations of Europe; her chance of gaining the liberty which is now so close to her would disappear for a long time to come. On the contrary, if the victory goes to Britain, the situation will be reversed, the progressive evolutionary forces will triumph and the field will lie open for the fulfilment of the tendencies which were making India's full control of her own life a certainty of the near future.

It is hardly possible that after the war the old order of things can survive unchanged; if that happened, there would again be a repetition of unrest, chaos, economic disorder and armed strife till the necessary change is made. The reason is that the life of mankind has become in fact a large though loosely complex unit and a world-order recognising this fact is inevitable. It is ceasing to be possible for national egoisms to entrench themselves in their isolated independence and be sufficient for themselves, for all are now dependent on the whole. The professed separate self-sufficiency of Germany ended in a push for life-room which threatens all other peoples; nations which tried to isolate themselves in a self-regarding neutrality have paid the penalty of their blindness and the others who still maintain that attitude are likely sooner or later to share the same fate; either they must become the slaves or subservient vassals of three or four greater Powers, or a world-order must be found in which all can be safe in their freedom and yet united for the common good. It will be well for India, if in spite of the absorption of her pressing need, she recognises that national egoism is no longer sufficient. She must claim freedom and equality for herself in whatever new order is to come or any post-war arrangement, but recognise also that the international idea and its realisation are something that is becoming equally insistent, necessary and

inevitable. If the totalitarian Powers win, there will indeed be a new world-order, — it may be in the end, a unification; but it will be a new order of naked brute Force, repression and exploitation, and for the people of Asia and Africa a subjection worse than anything they had experienced before. This has been recognised even by the Arabs who were fighting England in Palestine before the war; they have turned to her side. Not only Europe, Asia and Africa, but distant America with all her power and resources is no longer safe, and she has shown that she knows it; she has felt the peril and is arming herself in haste to meet it. In the other contingency, there will be not only the necessity for a freer new order, but every possibility of its formation; for the idea is growing; it is already recognised as an actual programme by advanced progressive forces in England and elsewhere. It may not be likely that it will materialise at once or that it will be perfect when it comes, but it is bound to take some kind of initial shape as an eventual result in the not distant future.

These are some of the more obvious external considerations which have taken form in Sri Aurobindo's contribution to the War Fund accompanied by his letter. It is a simple recognition of the fact that the victory of Great Britain in this war is not only to the interest of the whole of humanity including India, but necessary for the safeguarding of its future. If that is so, the obligation of at least a complete moral support follows as a necessary consequence.

It is objected that Britain has refused freedom to India and that therefore no Indian should support her in the War. The answer arises inevitably from the considerations stated above. The dominant need for India and the World is to survive the tremendous attack of Asuric Force which is now sweeping over the earth. The freedom of India, in whatever form, will be a consequence of that victory. The working towards freedom was clear already in the world and in the British Empire itself before the War; Eire, Egypt had gained their independence, Iraq had been granted hers; many free nationalities had arisen in Europe and Asia; India herself was drawing nearer to her goal and the

attainment of it was coming to be recognised as inevitable. If the totalitarian new order extends over Asia, all that will disappear; the whole work done will be undone. If there is the opposite result, nothing can prevent India attaining to the object of her aspirations; even if restrictions are put upon the national self-government that is bound to come, they cannot last for long. In any case, there is no moral incompatibility between India's claim to freedom and support to Britain in the struggle against Hitler, since it would be a support given for the preservation of her own chance of complete liberty and the preservation also of three continents or even of the whole earth from a heavy yoke of servitude.

There remains the objection that all War is evil and no war can be supported; soul-force or some kind of spiritual or ethical force is the only force that should be used; the only resistance permissible is passive resistance, non-cooperation or Satyagraha. But this kind of resistance though it has been used in the past with some effect by individuals or on a limited scale, cannot stop the invasion of a foreign army, least of all, a Nazi army, or expel it, once it is inside and in possession; it can at most be used as a means of opposition to an already established oppressive rule. The question then arises whether a nation can be asked to undergo voluntarily the menace of a foreign invasion or the scourge of a foreign occupation without using whatever material means of resistance are available. It is also a question whether any nation in the world is capable of this kind of resistance long-enduring and wholesale or is sufficiently developed ethically and spiritually to satisfy the conditions which would make it successful, especially against an organised and ruthless military oppression such as the Nazi rule; at any rate it is permissible not to wish to risk the adventure so long as there is another choice. War is physically an evil, a calamity; morally it has been like most human institutions a mixture, in most but not all cases a mixture of some good and much evil: but it is sometimes necessary to face it rather than invite or undergo a worse evil, a greater calamity. One can hold that, so long as life and mankind are what they are, there can be such a thing as a righteous war, — *dharmya*

yuddha. No doubt, in a spiritualised life of humanity or in a perfect civilisation there would be no room for war or violence, — it is clear that this is the highest ideal state. But mankind is psychologically and materially still far from this ideal state. To bring it to that state needs either an immediate spiritual change of which there is no present evidence or a change of mentality and habits which the victory of the totalitarian idea and its system would render impossible; for it would impose quite the opposite mentality, the mentality and habits on one side of a dominant brute force and violence and on the other a servile and prostrate non-resistance. 1940

India and the War

[1]

Calcutta is now in the danger zone. But the Mother does not wish that anyone should leave his post because of the danger. Those who are very eager to remove their children can do so, but no one should be under the illusion that there is any safe place anywhere. 6 April 1942

[2]

It appears that there are some who think of Pondicherry as a safe place and this is one of their reasons for remaining. This may turn out to be a serious error. Pondicherry can be a safe place only if the Japanese think it not worth their attention because it has no military objectives and no importance as a port or an industrial centre. Even then bombs might fall by accident or mistake, as the town is well in the war-area. But there are local circumstances which might lead them to think it a place of capital importance from the military point of view and in that case it would be exposed to all the dangers and horrors of modern warfare, a place under military occupation and a field of battle. Those who elect to remain here, must dismiss all idea of an assured personal security. Either they should be

those who prefer to die here rather than live elsewhere or, at the least, they must be prepared to face any eventuality, any risk, discomfort or suffering. These are not times when there can be a guarantee of safety or ease. It is a time of great ordeals, an hour for calm, patience and the highest courage. Reliance on the Divine Will should be there, but not the lower vital's bargain for a guaranteed or comfortably guarded existence.

On the War: Private Letters That Were Made Public

[1]

You have said that you have begun to doubt whether it was the Mother's war and ask me to make you feel again that it is. I affirm again to you most strongly that this is the Mother's war. You should not think of it as a fight for certain nations against others or even for India; it is a struggle for an ideal that has to establish itself on earth in the life of humanity, for a Truth that has yet to realise itself fully and against a darkness and falsehood that are trying to overwhelm the earth and mankind in the immediate future. It is the forces behind the battle that have to be seen and not this or that superficial circumstance. It is no use concentrating on the defects or mistakes of nations; all have defects and commit serious mistakes; but what matters is on what side they have ranged themselves in the struggle. It is a struggle for the liberty of mankind to develop, for conditions in which men have freedom and room to think and act according to the light in them and grow in the Truth, grow in the Spirit. There cannot be the slightest doubt that if one side wins, there will be an end of all such freedom and hope of light and truth and the work that has to be done will be subjected to conditions which would make it humanly impossible; there will be a reign of falsehood and darkness, a cruel oppression and degradation for most of the human race such as people in this country do not dream of and cannot yet at all realise. If the other side that has declared itself for the free future of humanity triumphs, this terrible danger will have been averted and conditions will have

been created in which there will be a chance for the Ideal to grow, for the Divine Work to be done, for the spiritual Truth for which we stand to establish itself on the earth. Those who fight for this cause are fighting for the Divine and against the threatened reign of the Asura.

July 29th, 1942.

Sri Aurobindo

[2]

What we say is not that the Allies have not done wrong things, but that they stand on the side of the evolutionary forces.⁵ I have not said that at random, but on what to me are clear grounds of fact. What you speak of is the dark side. All nations and governments have been that in their dealings with each other, — at least all who had the strength and got the chance. I hope you are not expecting me to believe that there are or have been virtuous governments and unselfish and sinless peoples? But there is the other side also. You are condemning the Allies on grounds that people in the past would have stared at, on the basis of modern ideals of international conduct; looked at like that all have black records. But who created these ideals or did most to create them (liberty, democracy, equality, international justice and the rest)? Well, America, France, England — the present Allied nations. They have all been imperialistic and still bear the burden of their past, but they have also deliberately spread these ideals and spread too the institutions which try to embody them. Whatever the relative worth of these things — they have been a stage, even if a still imperfect stage of the forward evolution. (What about the others? Hitler, for example, says it is a crime to educate the coloured peoples, they must be kept as serfs and labourers.) England has helped certain nations to be

⁵ *The paragraphs that follow were extracted from a letter that Sri Aurobindo wrote to a disciple in answer to questions raised by him. The complete letter is reproduced in Letters on Himself and the Ashram, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. The extracted passages were revised by Sri Aurobindo and published in 1944 in The Advent, an Ashram-related journal, and in a booklet issued by the Ashram. — Ed.*

free without seeking any personal gain; she has also conceded independence to Egypt and Eire after a struggle, to Iraq without a struggle. She has been moving away steadily, if slowly, from imperialism towards co-operation; the British Commonwealth of England and the Dominions is something unique and unprecedented, a beginning of new things in that direction: she is moving in idea towards a world-union of some kind in which aggression is to be made impossible; her new generation has no longer the old firm belief in mission and empire; she has offered India Dominion independence — or even sheer isolated independence, if she wants that, — after the war, with an agreed free constitution to be chosen by Indians themselves. . . . All that is what I call evolution in the right direction — however slow and imperfect and hesitating it may still be. As for America she has forsworn her past imperialistic policies in regard to Central and South America, she has conceded independence to Cuba and the Philippines. . . . Is there a similar trend on the side of the Axis? One has to look at things on all sides, to see them steadily and whole. Once again, it is the forces working behind that I have to look at, I don't want to go blind among surface details. The future has to be safeguarded; only then can present troubles and contradictions have a chance to be solved and eliminated. . . .

* * *

For us the question does not arise. We made it plain in a letter which has been made public that we did not consider the war as a fight between nations and governments (still less between good people and bad people) but between two forces, the Divine and the Asuric. What we have to see is on which side men and nations put themselves; if they put themselves on the right side, they at once make themselves instruments of the Divine purpose in spite of all defects, errors, wrong movements and actions which are common to human nature and all human collectivities. The victory of one side (the Allies) would keep the path open for the evolutionary forces: the victory of the other side would drag back humanity, degrade it horribly

and might lead even, at the worst, to its eventual failure as a race, as others in the past evolution failed and perished. That is the whole question and all other considerations are either irrelevant or of a minor importance. The Allies at least have stood for human values, though they may often act against their own best ideals (human beings always do that); Hitler stands for diabolical values or for human values exaggerated in the wrong way until they become diabolical (e.g. the virtues of the *Herrenvolk*, the master race). That does not make the English or Americans nations of spotless angels nor the Germans a wicked and sinful race, but as an indicator it has a primary importance. . . .

* * *

The Kurukshetra example is not to be taken as an exact parallel but rather as a traditional instance of the war between two world-forces in which the side favoured by the Divine triumphed, because the leaders made themselves His instruments.⁶ It is not to be envisaged as a battle between virtue and wickedness, the good and the evil men. After all, were even the Pandavas virtuous without defect, quite unselfish and without passions? . . .

Were not the Pandavas fighting to establish their own claims and interests — just and right, no doubt, but still personal claims and self-interest? Theirs was a righteous battle, *dharmya-yuddha*, but it was for right and justice in their own case. And if imperialism, empire-building by armed force, is under all circumstances a wickedness, then the Pandavas are tainted with that brush, for they used their victory to establish their empire, continued after them by Parikshit and Janamejaya. Could not modern humanism and pacifism make it a reproach against the Pandavas that these virtuous men (including Krishna) brought about a huge slaughter that they might become supreme rulers over all the numerous free and independent peoples of India?

⁶ Sri Aurobindo's correspondent had objected to a paragraph in an essay written by Nolini Kanta Gupta and published by the Ashram, in which Nolini compared the Allies to the Pandavas and the Axis powers to the Kauravas. — Ed.

That would be the result of weighing old happenings in the scales of modern ideals. As a matter of fact such an empire was a step in the right direction then, just as a world-union of free peoples would be a step in the right direction now, — in both cases the right consequences of a terrific slaughter. . . .

We should remember that conquest and rule over subject peoples were not regarded as wrong either in ancient or mediaeval or quite recent times, but as something great and glorious; men did not see any special wickedness in conquerors or conquering nations. Just government of subject peoples was envisaged but nothing more — exploitation was not excluded. The modern ideas on the subject, the right of all to liberty, both individuals and nations, the immorality of conquest and empire, or such compromises as the British idea of training subject races for democratic freedom, are new values, an evolutionary movement; this is a new Dharma which has only begun slowly and initially to influence practice, — an infant Dharma which would have been throttled for good if Hitler succeeded in his “Avataric” mission and established his new “religion” over all the earth. Subject nations naturally accept the new Dharma and severely criticise the old imperialisms; it is to be hoped that they will practise what they now preach when they themselves become strong and rich and powerful. But the best will be if a new world-order evolves, even if at first stumblingly or incompletely, which will make the old things impossible — a difficult task, but not absolutely impossible.

The Divine takes men as they are and uses men as His instruments even if they are not flawless in virtue, angelic, holy and pure. If they are of good will, if, to use the Biblical phrase, they are on the Lord’s side, that is enough for the work to be done. Even if I knew that the Allies would misuse their victory or bungle the peace or partially at least spoil the opportunities opened to the human world by that victory, I would still put my force behind them. At any rate things could not be one-hundredth part as bad as they would be under Hitler. The ways of the Lord would still be open — to keep them open is what matters. Let us stick to the real, the central fact, the need to remove

the peril of black servitude and revived barbarism threatening India and the world, and leave for a later time all side-issues and minor issues or hypothetical problems that would cloud the one all-important tragic issue before us.

Sri Aurobindo

3. 9. 1943

On Indian Independence 1942 – 1947

On the Cripps Proposal

[1]

Sir Stafford Cripps
New Delhi

I have heard your broadcast. As one who has been a nationalist leader and worker for India's independence though now my activity is no longer in the political but in the spiritual field, I wish to express my appreciation of all you have done to bring about this offer. I welcome it as an opportunity given to India to determine for herself and organise in all liberty of choice her freedom and unity and take an effective place among the world's free nations. I hope that it will be accepted and the right use made of it putting aside all discords and divisions. I hope too that a friendly relation between Britain and India replacing past struggles will be a step towards a greater world union in which as a free nation her spiritual force will contribute to build for mankind a better and happier life. In this light I offer my public adhesion in case it can be of any help in your work.¹

Sri Aurobindo
The Asram
Pondicherry
31 March 1942

¹ *Sir Stafford Cripps's telegram in reply, dated 1 April 1942:*

I AM MOST TOUCHED AND GRATIFIED BY YOUR KIND MESSAGE ALLOWING ME TO INFORM INDIA THAT YOU WHO OCCUPY UNIQUE POSITION IN IMAGINATION OF INDIAN YOUTH ARE CONVINCED THAT DECLARATION OF HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT SUBSTANTIALLY CONFERS THAT FREEDOM FOR WHICH INDIAN NATIONALISM HAS SO LONG STRUGGLED.

STAFFORD CRIPPS

[2]

In view of the urgency of the situation I am sending M^r Duraiswami Iyer to convey my views on the present negotiations and my reasons for pressing on Indian leaders the need of a settlement. He is accredited to speak for me.²

Sri Aurobindo

April 1. 1942

[3]

[Telegram to Dr. B. S. Moonje]

DR MOONJE HINDU MAHASABHA NEW DELHI

SETTLEMENT INDIA BRITAIN URGENT, FACE APPROACH GRAVE PERIL MENACING FUTURE INDIA. IS THERE NO WAY WHILE RESERVING RIGHT REPUDIATE RESIST PARTITION MOTHERLAND TO ACCEPT COOPERATION PURPOSE WAR INDIA UNION. CANNOT COMBINATION MAHASABHA CONGRESS NATIONALIST AND ANTI-JINNAH MUSLIMS DEFEAT LEAGUE IN ELECTIONS BENGAL PUNJAB SIND. HAVE SENT ADVOCATE DURAISWAMI IYER TO MEET YOU.

SRI AUROBINDO

2 April 1942

[4]

[Telegram to C. Rajagopalachari]

RAJAGOPALACHARI BIRLA HOUSE NEW DELHI

IS NOT COMPROMISE DEFENCE QUESTION BETTER THAN RUPTURE. SOME IMMEDIATE SETTLEMENT URGENT FACE GRAVE PERIL. HAVE SENT DURAISWAMI INSIST URGENCY. APPEAL TO YOU TO SAVE INDIA FORMIDABLE DANGER NEW FOREIGN DOMINATION WHEN OLD ON WAY TO SELF-ELIMINATION.

SRI AUROBINDO

2 April 1942

² Sri Aurobindo gave this note to his disciple Duraiswami Iyer, an advocate of Madras, whom he sent to Delhi to speak with members of the Congress Working Committee about the Cripps Proposal. — Ed.

[5]

[*Telegram to Amarendra Chatterjee*]

AMARENDRA CHATTERJEE M.L.A.
DELHI

UNABLE LEAVE PONDICHERRY. AWAITING CONGRESS DECISION NECESSARY FOR TOTAL NATIONAL ACTION. HAVE APPEALED PRIVATELY CONGRESS LEADERS FOR UNDERSTANDING WITH BRITAIN AND FIGHT DEFENCE INDIA.

Sri Aurobindo
April 9, 1942

[6]

[*Second telegram to Amarendra Chatterjee*]

MY BLESSINGS ON YOUR EFFORTS TO SERVE AND DEFEND MOTHERLAND NOW IN DANGER.

Sri Aurobindo

On the Wavell Plan

[1]

Sri Aurobindo Asram
Pondicherry
June 15, 1945

We heard the Viceroy's broadcast yesterday.³ Sri Aurobindo says the proposals are decent enough and seem to be even better than Cripps' in certain respects. An Indian will be in charge of foreign affairs and India will have her own representative in foreign countries. This and other circumstances are an approach practically towards Dominion Status. Of course, there are a few features which personally Sri Aurobindo would not advocate, e.g. the apparent foundation of the Ministry on a communal

³ This press release was dictated by Sri Aurobindo and issued over the signature of his secretary, Nolini Kanta Gupta. — Ed.

basis instead of a coalition of parties. Still these should not be a reason for the rejection of the proposals. A fair trial should be given and the scheme tested in its actual working out.

[2]

[*Telegram to Dr. Syed Mahmood*]

PROPOSALS BETTER THAN CRIPPS' OFFER ACCEPTANCE ADVISABLE.

15 June 1945

On the Cabinet Mission Proposals

[1]

Sri Aurobindo thinks it unnecessary to volunteer a personal pronouncement, though he would give his views if officially approached for them.⁴ His position is known. He has always stood for India's complete independence which he was the first to advocate publicly and without compromise as the only ideal worthy of a self-respecting nation. In 1910 he authorised the publication of his prediction that after a long period of wars, world-wide upheavals and revolutions beginning after four years, India would achieve her freedom. Lately he has said that freedom was coming soon and nothing could prevent it. He has always foreseen that eventually Britain would approach India for an amicable agreement conceding her freedom. What he had foreseen is now coming to pass and the British Cabinet Mission is the sign. It remains for the nation's leaders to make a right and full use of the opportunity. In any case, whatever the immediate outcome, the Power that has been working out this event will not be denied, the final result, India's liberation, is sure.

24.3.1946

⁴ *This press release was written by Sri Aurobindo and issued over the signature of Nolini Kanta Gupta. — Ed.*

[2]

Dec. 16, 1946

Dear Surendra Mohan

I have shown your letter to Sri Aurobindo. It raises some serious misgivings.⁵

What do you mean by saying that the Congress may have to accept the group system? Do you mean to say that the Moslem League majority on both sides of India are to be allowed to have their way and dictate the constitution for all the provinces in the two groups and also a general constitution for each of the two groups overriding the autonomy of the provinces? That would mean that the Sikhs, the Frontier Province and Assam are to be thrown to the wolves, offered as an appeasing sacrifice to Jinnah. It would mean the establishment of a divided Pakistan of which the two portions, Eastern and Western, would ultimately and indeed very soon unite and secede from any All-India Union that might be established; for that is the policy of the League. Will the Sikhs consent to be thus placed under Mussulman domination? They have declared emphatically that they will not, they will follow the Congress only so long as the Congress keeps to its promise not to support any constitution disapproved by the Sikhs. As for Assam, will the Assamese consent to commit suicide? For that is what the grouping means if it is a majority vote that decides in the group. The Hindus of Bengal and Assam joining together in the section of the Assembly will not have a majority. This opens a prospect that the League in this group may dictate a constitution which will mean the end of the Assamese people and of Hinduism in Assam. They may so arrange that the tribes of Assam are constituted into a separate element not participating in the Assam Provincial Assembly but parked off

⁵ This letter was sent over the signature of Nolini Kanta Gupta. The recipient was Surendramohan Ghosh, a Bengal Congress leader who was then serving as a member of the Constituent Assembly in Delhi. Surendramohan had written to Nolini explaining some of the provisions of the Cabinet Mission proposals. Sri Aurobindo's dictated reply was written down by his amanuensis, Nirodbaran. In transcribing this, Nolini made some necessary changes to the opening, putting for instance "what do you mean by" where Sri Aurobindo had said "He might be asked what is meant by". — Ed.

from it. The constituencies of the province could then be so arranged as to give the Mussulmans an automatic majority. Assam could then be flooded with Mahomedan colonies from Bengal and Assam be made safe for Pakistan; after that the obliteration of Hinduism in the province could be carried out either by an immediate and violent or a gradual process once the separation of India into Pakistan and Hindusthan had been effected.

We hope your leaders are alive to the dangers of the situation. I am eagerly awaiting an answer from you.

The Fifteenth of August 1947

[1]

[*Long Version*]⁶

August 15th is the birthday of free India. It marks for her the end of an old era, the beginning of a new age. But it has a significance not only for us, but for Asia and the whole world; for it signifies the entry into the comity of nations of a new power with untold potentialities which has a great part to play in determining the political, social, cultural and spiritual future of humanity. To me personally it must naturally be gratifying that this date which was notable only for me because it was my own birthday celebrated annually by those who have accepted my gospel of life, should have acquired this vast significance. As a mystic, I take this identification, not as a coincidence or fortuitous accident, but as a sanction and seal of the Divine Power which guides my steps on the work with which I began life. Indeed almost all the world movements which I hoped to see fulfilled in my lifetime, though at that time they looked like impossible dreams, I can observe on this day either approaching fruition or initiated and on the way to their achievement.

I have been asked for a message on this great occasion, but

⁶ *Sri Aurobindo wrote this message at the request of All India Radio, Tiruchirapalli, for broadcast on the eve of the day when India achieved independence, 15 August 1947. The text submitted was found to be too long for the allotted time-slot. Sri Aurobindo revised it, and the shorter version (pages 478–80) was broadcast on 14 August 1947.*

I am perhaps hardly in a position to give one. All I can do is to make a personal declaration of the aims and ideals conceived in my childhood and youth and now watched in their beginning of fulfilment, because they are relevant to the freedom of India, since they are a part of what I believe to be India's future work, something in which she cannot but take a leading position. For I have always held and said that India was arising, not to serve her own material interests only, to achieve expansion, greatness, power and prosperity, — though these too she must not neglect, — and certainly not like others to acquire domination of other peoples, but to live also for God and the world as a helper and leader of the whole human race. Those aims and ideals were in their natural order these: a revolution which would achieve India's freedom and her unity; the resurgence and liberation of Asia and her return to the great role which she had played in the progress of human civilisation; the rise of a new, a greater, brighter and nobler life for mankind which for its entire realisation would rest outwardly on an international unification of the separate existence of the peoples, preserving and securing their national life but drawing them together into an overriding and consummating oneness; the gift by India of her spiritual knowledge and her means for the spiritualisation of life to the whole race; finally, a new step in the evolution which, by uplifting the consciousness to a higher level, would begin the solution of the many problems of existence which have perplexed and vexed humanity, since men began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society.

India is free but she has not achieved unity, only a fissured and broken freedom. At one time it almost seemed as if she might relapse into the chaos of separate States which preceded the British conquest. Fortunately there has now developed a strong possibility that this disastrous relapse will be avoided. The wisely drastic policy of the Constituent Assembly makes it possible that the problem of the depressed classes will be solved without schism or fissure. But the old communal division into Hindu and Muslim seems to have hardened into the figure of a permanent political division of the country. It is to be hoped

that the Congress and the nation will not accept the settled fact as for ever settled or as anything more than a temporary expedient. For if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled: civil strife may remain always possible, possible even a new invasion and foreign conquest. The partition of the country must go, — it is to be hoped by a slackening of tension, by a progressive understanding of the need of peace and concord, by the constant necessity of common and concerted action, even of an instrument of union for that purpose. In this way unity may come about under whatever form — the exact form may have a pragmatic but not a fundamental importance. But by whatever means, the division must and will go. For without it the destiny of India might be seriously impaired and even frustrated. But that must not be.

Asia has arisen and large parts of it have been liberated or are at this moment being liberated; its other still subject parts are moving through whatever struggles towards freedom. Only a little has to be done and that will be done today or tomorrow. There India has her part to play and has begun to play it with an energy and ability which already indicate the measure of her possibilities and the place she can take in the council of the nations.

The unification of mankind is under way, though only in an imperfect initiative, organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and, if the experience of history can be taken as a guide, it must inevitably increase until it conquers. Here too India has begun to play a prominent part and, if she can develop that larger statesmanship which is not limited by the present facts and immediate possibilities but looks into the future and brings it nearer, her presence may make all the difference between a slow and timid and a bold and swift development. A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For in any case the unification is a necessity in the course of Nature, an inevitable movement and its achievement can be safely foretold. Its necessity for the nations also is clear, for without it the freedom of the small peoples can never be safe

hereafter and even large and powerful nations cannot really be secure. India, if she remains divided, will not herself be sure of her safety. It is therefore to the interest of all that union should take place. Only human imbecility and stupid selfishness could prevent it. Against that, it has been said, even the gods strive in vain; but it cannot stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will. Nationalism will then have fulfilled itself; an international spirit and outlook must grow up and international forms and institutions; even it may be such developments as dual or multilateral citizenship and a voluntary fusion of cultures may appear in the process of the change and the spirit of nationalism losing its militancy may find these things perfectly compatible with the integrity of its own outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.

The spiritual gift of India to the world has already begun. India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever increasing measure. That movement will grow; amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice.

The rest is still a personal hope and an idea and ideal which has begun to take hold both in India and in the West on forward-looking minds. The difficulties in the way are more formidable than in any other field of endeavour, but difficulties were made to be overcome and if the Supreme Will is there, they will be overcome. Here too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must come through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers.

Such is the content which I put into this date of India's liberation; whether or how far or how soon this connection will be fulfilled, depends upon this new and free India.

[2]

[*Short Version*]

August 15th, 1947 is the birthday of free India. It marks for her the end of an old era, the beginning of a new age. But we can also make it by our life and acts as a free nation an important date in a new age opening for the whole world, for the political, social, cultural and spiritual future of humanity.

August 15th is my own birthday and it is naturally gratifying to me that it should have assumed this vast significance. I take this coincidence, not as a fortuitous accident, but as the sanction and seal of the Divine Force that guides my steps on the work with which I began life, the beginning of its full fruition. Indeed, on this day I can watch almost all the world-movements which I hoped to see fulfilled in my lifetime, though then they looked like impracticable dreams, arriving at fruition or on their way to achievement. In all these movements free India may well play a large part and take a leading position.

The first of these dreams was a revolutionary movement which would create a free and united India. India today is free but she has not achieved unity. At one moment it almost seemed as if in the very act of liberation she would fall back into the chaos of separate States which preceded the British conquest. But fortunately it now seems probable that this danger will be averted and a large and powerful, though not yet a complete union will be established. Also, the wisely drastic policy of the Constituent Assembly has made it probable that the problem of the depressed classes will be solved without schism or fissure. But the old communal division into Hindus and Muslims seems now to have hardened into a permanent political division of the country. It is to be hoped that this settled fact will not be accepted as settled for ever or as anything more than a temporary expedient. For if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled: civil strife may remain always possible, possible even a new invasion and foreign conquest. India's internal development and prosperity may be impeded, her position among the nations weakened, her destiny impaired or even frustrated. This must

not be; the partition must go. Let us hope that that may come about naturally, by an increasing recognition of the necessity not only of peace and concord but of common action, by the practice of common action and the creation of means for that purpose. In this way unity may finally come about under whatever form—the exact form may have a pragmatic but not a fundamental importance. But by whatever means, in whatever way, the division must go; unity must and will be achieved, for it is necessary for the greatness of India's future.

Another dream was for the resurgence and liberation of the peoples of Asia and her return to her great role in the progress of human civilisation. Asia has arisen; large parts are now quite free or are at this moment being liberated: its other still subject or partly subject parts are moving through whatever struggles towards freedom. Only a little has to be done and that will be done today or tomorrow. There India has her part to play and has begun to play it with an energy and ability which already indicate the measure of her possibilities and the place she can take in the council of the nations.

The third dream was a world-union forming the outer basis of a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind. That unification of the human world is under way; there is an imperfect initiation organised but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and it must inevitably increase and conquer. Here too India has begun to play a prominent part and, if she can develop that larger statesmanship which is not limited by the present facts and immediate possibilities but looks into the future and brings it nearer, her presence may make all the difference between a slow and timid and a bold and swift development. A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For unification is a necessity of Nature, an inevitable movement. Its necessity for the nations is also clear, for without it the freedom of the small nations may be at any moment in peril and the life even of the large and powerful nations insecure. The unification is therefore to the interests of all, and only human imbecility and stupid selfishness can prevent it; but these cannot

stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will. But an outward basis is not enough; there must grow up an international spirit and outlook, international forms and institutions must appear, perhaps such developments as dual or multilateral citizenship, willed interchange or voluntary fusion of cultures. Nationalism will have fulfilled itself and lost its militancy and would no longer find these things incompatible with self-preservation and the integrality of its outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race.

Another dream, the spiritual gift of India to the world has already begun. India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever increasing measure. That movement will grow; amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice.

The final dream was a step in evolution which would raise man to a higher and larger consciousness and begin the solution of the problems which have perplexed and vexed him since he first began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society. This is still a personal hope and an idea, an ideal which has begun to take hold both in India and in the West on forward-looking minds. The difficulties in the way are more formidable than in any other field of endeavour, but difficulties were made to be overcome and if the Supreme Will is there, they will be overcome. Here too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must proceed through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and, although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers.

Such is the content which I put into this date of India's liberation; whether or how far this hope will be justified depends upon the new and free India.

On the Integration of the French Settlements in India 1947–1950

The Future Union (A Programme)

In this period of epoch-making changes when India is achieving at this very moment a first form of freedom and the power to determine her own destiny, it behoves us in French India to consider our situation and make decisions for our own future which will enable us to live in harmony with the new India and the new world around us. At this juncture, we of the Socialist Party wish to define our own policy and the future prospects of the French Settlements as we envisage them.¹

For a long time past we in these Settlements have watched with an eager sympathy the struggle that has been going on in British India for self-government and independence and, though we could not take part, have felt it as if it were part of our own destiny since the achievement of these things could not but herald or accompany our own passage from the state of dependence as a colony to the freedom and autonomy which all peoples must desire. India has achieved her freedom but as yet with limitations and under circumstances which it did not desire and which do not admit of a complete rejoicing at the victory; for it is not the united India for which we had hoped that has emerged, but an India parcelled out and divided and threatened with perils and difficulties and disadvantages which would not

¹ *Sri Aurobindo wrote (rather, dictated) this "programme" for the use of the French India Socialist Party, whose position on the issue of the integration of the French Settlements in India corresponded with his in some respects. It should not be taken as a definitive statement of his own opinion on the matter. The text was published in a manifesto issued by the party in June 1947. — Ed.*

have been there but for the disunion and the internal quarrels which brought about this unhappy result. Among the leaders of the country who have reluctantly consented to the settlement made there is no enthusiasm over it but only a regretful acceptance and a firm determination to make the most of what has been won, overcome the difficulties and dangers and achieve for the country as great a position in the world and as much power and prosperity as is possible for a divided India. For our part we have received a promise of an autonomy which will make us a free people within the French Union, but this is as yet only a promise, or a declared policy and the steps have not yet been taken which would make it a practical reality. We have been demanding a fulfilment of this policy as rapid as possible and there is no real reason why it should not be carried out with something of the same speed that is marking developments in British India. There there have been complexities and differences which stood in the way of an easy and early solution, but there are none such here; we have been and are united in our demand and the change already decided can be and ought to be carried out at once.

But one complexity has begun to arise and threatens to increase if there is further delay in satisfying the aspirations of our people. The life of French India has had, since its inception, a dual character which points to two different possibilities for its future destiny if a third solution does not intervene which reconciles the two possibilities. On one side, we in French India are not in the essentials of our existence a separate people: we and those on the other side of the borders of the five Settlements are brothers, we are kith and kin, we have the same nationality, the same way and habits of life, the same religions, the same general culture and outlook, the same languages and literatures, the same traditions; we are Indians, belong to the same society, we do not feel separate, we have the same feeling of patriotism for our common country; our land is an intimate part of India. All this would push us naturally to desire to unite together and become parts of a single India. That feeling has not been absent in the past, but now it is becoming vocal and is the declared

policy and demand of a number among us while others stand on the line between the two possibilities before us and have a natural inclination to prefer this solution; for it is difficult for any Indian not to look forward towards such a unification in the future. On the other hand, the history of the past two centuries has developed a certain individuality of the people of French India and made them a common entity amid the rest. French India has developed different institutions of its own, political, administrative, judicial, educational, it has its own industries, its own labour legislation and other differentiating characteristics. There is also the impress of the French language and French culture. All Asiatic countries have been developing a mixed intellectuality, public life and social ideas; our life is Asiatic in its basis with a structure at the top adopted from Europe. In British India this superstructure has been formed by the use of English as a common language of the educated classes and by the study of English political ideas and institutions and English literature: in French India the superstructure is French, it is the French language through which there has been communication and a common public life between the Bengalees, Tamils, Andhras and Malayalees who constitute the people of French India; we have been looking at the world outside through a study of the French language and French institutions and French literature. All this has made a difference; it has made it possible and natural for us to accept the offer made that we should become a free people within the French Union. But this solution can be durable only if there is some kind of close connection and even union with the rest of India industrial, economic and other, for we depend on the rest of India for our very food and the necessities of our life and our general prosperity and, if cut off from it, we could not even live. Apart from all feelings and sentiments this stark necessity demands an intimate co-operation between the new India and French India.

Under the push of a common Indian patriotism and the feeling of oneness with the rest of India some are putting forward the claim that we should join immediately whatever Indian Union emerges from the present embroilments without any other

consideration of any kind. This is a rash and one-sided view of things which we cannot accept. In our political decisions we must take into account the developments in British India, but it would be erroneous to hold that in all political affairs we should imitate her. This would show on our part a lack of understanding of local conditions as well as an utter failure of creative thought so needed at a most critical and constructive period of the history of India. Some go so far as to propose a kind of self-extinction of each French territory by their merging in a suicidal way into the Indian Union. This would mean that our towns would become mostly small and unimportant mofussil towns in the mass of what has been British India and would lose their present status and dignity and vigour of their life and distinctive institutions and much loss and damage to existing popular interests might ensue. A drastic change and obliteration of this kind seems to us most undesirable; it would bring no enrichment of life or advantage to the rest of India and no advantage but rather impoverishment of life to French India. If French India is to enter the Indian Union, it should not be in this way but as an autonomous unit preserving its individual body and character. All should be done with due regard to its particular position and all decisions should be made according to the will of her elected representatives: we should also ascertain exactly our economic, social and administrative position so that any change should not affect adversely any section of the people. Moreover without having any precision about the future States of India and our place among them it would be utter folly to break our social, cultural, administrative and judicial structure without any concrete scheme to replace it. The existence of autonomous units with a vivid life and individuality of their own has always been a characteristic of our country, part of its polity and civilisation and one of the causes of its greatness and the variety and opulence of Indian culture. The unity of India is desirable but not a mechanical unification and that is indeed no part of the scheme envisaged by the leaders of India; they envisage a union of autonomous units with a strong centre. In seeking political unity and independence we must not go on

thinking and working under subjection to imported Western and British notions of political and economic structure. It is patent through recent developments that a political and purely outward unity with a mechanical uniformity and centralisation would prove a failure. Whatever we decide let us preserve the principle peculiarly suited to the unique psychological and physical conditions of this great land and the life of its people which was to develop through numerous autonomous centres of culture and power.

But there are also other considerations which militate against any such hasty action as has been proposed; we must consider carefully the actual position and possibilities in India under the peculiar and very unsatisfactory arrangement that has been made. This arrangement has not been freely chosen by the people and their leaders and does not create a free and united nation; it is a British plan accepted under the duress of circumstances as unavoidable in order to find a way out of the present state of indecision and drift and put an end to internal disorder and strife. It is not a definite solution; it seems rather like an opening of a new stage, a further period of trial and effort towards the true goal. What immediately emerges is not independence but the establishment of two British Dominions independent of each other and without any arrangement for harmonisation or common action; it is expected that within a year or so two independent Indias will be the result with different constitutions of their own animated by different and, it may well be, opposing principles and motives. It is hoped also that this division will be accepted by all as a final solution, both Indias settling down separately into a peaceful internal development, and that the fierce dissensions, violent and ruinous disturbances and sanguinary conflicts of recent times will finally disappear. But this is not certain; the solution has not been satisfactory to any party to the internal struggle and if the new States continue to be divided within themselves into communal camps led by communal bodies one of which will look outside the State to the other for inspiration and guidance and for the protection of the community, then tension will continue and the latent

struggle may break out in disturbances, bloodshed and perhaps finally in open war. Into such a condition of things French India would not care to enter; among us communal dissensions have not been rife, all communities have lived amicably together and participated peacefully in a common public life; but if we entered into such a state of tension and continued conflict, the infection would inevitably seize us and there would be the same communal formations and the same undesirable features. We should be careful therefore not to make any such rash and hasty decisions as some propose but stand apart in our own separate status and wait for more certain developments. A closer relation with the new India is desirable and necessary, since we are Indians and French India a part of India intimately connected and dependent on the rest for her prosperity and for her very existence. But this need not take the form suggested or involve the obliteration of our separate status, a destruction of our past and its results and the loss of our individual existence. A reconciliation between the two elements of our existence and its historical development is desirable and possible.

It seems to be supposed by some that we have only to ask the new Indian Union for inclusion within it and this would automatically accomplish itself without any further difficulty; but things are not so simple as that. Undoubtedly the sentiment of the Indian people had in the past envisaged an India one and indivisible and the abolition of the small enclaves of foreign rule such as Portuguese and French India as imperative and inevitable. But circumstances have shaped differently; India one and indivisible has not emerged and the Indian Union which is nearest to it and with which alone a fusion would be possible, is not yet established, has still to affirm itself and find and confirm its strength in very difficult circumstances. In that process it is seeking to establish amicable relations with all foreign powers and is already in such relations with France. It will desire no doubt either union or a closer relation with French India but it is not likely to be in a hurry to achieve it through a dispute or conflict with France. It could indeed use means of pressure without the use of military force which would make the existence

of a separate French India not only difficult and painful but impossible, but it would be likely to prefer a settlement and a *modus vivendi* which would respect the wishes of the people of French India, create the necessary co-ordination of economic and other interests and would be consistent with agreement and friendly relations with the Government and people of France. If, using the right of self-determination, we in French India freely decided to remain as an autonomous people within the French Union, the Government of the Indian Union would certainly respect such a choice and might welcome an arrangement which would make French India not a thorn of irritation but a cultural link and a field of union and co-operation, and perhaps even a base for a standing friendship and alliance between France and India. In consideration of all these circumstances we are led to conclude that our best immediate course is to keep our individuality and concentrate on the development of our freedom as an autonomous people accepting the offer of France to concede to us that status within the French Union and on the basis of that formula to establish that closer relation and co-operation with the new India which would satisfy our sentiments and is imperative for our prosperity and even for our existence.

After due examination of all these considerations the Socialist Party puts forward the following programme and asks for the adhesion of all citizens of French India to implement it.

(1) French India to form an autonomous territory within the French Union.

(2) For this the present colonial system and its bureaucratic government must cease to exist, and this should be done as soon as possible. Neither the people nor any party are willing to remain subjected to the old system, only a few whose professional interests are bound up with the old state of things are in its favour, and any long continuance of it would be a severe strain on the feelings of the population and would encourage increasing adhesion to the party that favours immediate and complete severance of all ties with France and the precipitate merging of French India without any further consideration into whatever new India may emerge from the present situation.

(3) There should be an immediate transfer of powers to the French India Representative Assembly which should have the general direction of the country's affairs and the sole power of local legislation. The power of the Governor to govern by decrees should disappear.

(4) The administration to be responsible to the Assembly. A Governor should be appointed by the French Government in consultation with the Assembly who will be the link between France and French India and who will preside over the administration with the assistance of an executive council of ministers.

(5) The status of the population of French India should be that of a free self-governing people freely consenting to remain in the French Union and freely accepting such relations as are necessary for that Union.

In this free French India the present recognised institutions commercial, industrial and others will remain in vigour except in so far as they are legally modified by the Representative Assembly. The French language will continue as a means of communication between the different parts of French India and of discussion in the Assembly and of general administration. The educational system, the new University and the Colleges will be linked with the University and educational system in France. The links with French culture will be retained and enlarged but also, inevitably a much larger place will be given to our own Indian culture. It is to be hoped this autonomous French India will become a powerful centre of intellectual development and interchange and meeting place of European and Asiatic culture and [a] spiritual factor of the world unification which is making its tentative beginning as the most important tendency of the present day. Thus French India will retain its individuality and historical development but will at the same time proceed towards a larger future.

On the other side we propose as an important part of our programme the development of a closer unity with the rest of India. Already we have the standing arrangements by which the Indian Government has the control and bears the burden

of Posts and Railways and we have also the Customs Union by which Customs barriers between British and French India were removed; the advantages and even the necessity of such a unification of the system of communications in view of the small size and geographical separation of the French Settlements are obvious. In the Customs Union some modifications might be desirable from our point of view, but the principle of it removing the handicap and the previous irritation and conflict caused by the existence of the Customs barriers must remain acceptable. But there is also needed for our economic future a co-ordination of the industry and commerce of the country and for that purpose an agreement and a machinery for consultation and co-ordination should be created.

We further propose that the artificial barriers separating us into two mutually exclusive nationalities should be laid open and an understanding arrived at by which the nationals of free India resident in French India should automatically have civic rights and the same should obtain for nationals of French India resident in the new free India. There should be facilities for any French Indian to occupy Government posts and join Indian armed forces and to get admission to educational institutions and have access to the opportunities for research and scientific training and knowledge available in India, while these things should be also available to all Indian nationals in French India. Thus the advantages of the University which it is proposed to establish in French India should be available to students belonging to the other parts of the country. Possibly even other arrangements might be made by which there should be closer participation in the political life of the country as a whole.

The final logical outcome of the dual situation of the French Indian people would be a dual citizenship under certain conditions through which French India could be in the French Union and participate without artificial barriers in the life of India as a whole. The present state of International Law is opposed to such a dual citizenship but it would be the natural expression of the two sides of our life situated as we are in India and having the same fundamental nationality, culture and religion

and social and economic life but also united for a long time by cultural influences and a historical connection with France. It may well be that such arrangements might become a natural part of the development and turn towards greater unity between peoples and the breaking down of old barriers which began at San Francisco and a not unimportant step in the movement towards the removal of the old separatism, oppositions and incompatibilities which are the undesirable side of nationalism and towards international unity and the growth of a new world and one world which is the future of humanity.

We are of the opinion that if this programme is properly carried out with the approval of public opinion, it will assure our future evolution and progress without violence or strife. We would be able to take a fuller part in the total life of the Indian nation and be at the same time an instrument for the closer drawing together of nations and play a part in the international life of mankind.

We appeal to all progressive forces in France to favour this line of development so that the actual relation between ourselves which is now that of suzerainty and vassalage should be transformed into one of brotherhood and mutual understanding so that France and India should stand before the world as closely united.

We fervently appeal to all our brothers and sisters of Chandernagore, Yanon, Mahe, Karikal and Pondicherry, to the Tamilians, Malayalees, Andhras and Bengalees who for centuries past have lived together irrespective of caste and creed without any internal strife — which is our greatest achievement — not to sever our mutual connection but to show an example of unity transcending all compartmentalism or provincialism. Let us be united as before. When decisive steps have to be taken for the welfare of the country it is of no avail to be led by hasty moves and to propose rapid solutions from purely egoistic motives or idleness of thought.

We pray our brothers and sisters not to be led by the fallacies of those who want the continuance of French imperialistic administration or of those who under whatever specious pretences

look forward to the prevalence of chaos and disorder.

Let us rise to the task that awaits us and build a strong front of the people to implement our scheme and with an upsurge transgressing all petty differences let us play our part and create a free and united people in a free India and help at the same time towards the creation of a united human world.

published June 1947

On the Disturbances of 15 August 1947 in Pondicherry

To

The Editor

The Statesman, Calcutta

Dated, Pondicherry, the 20th August 1947.

Dear Sir,

There is no foundation [in]² fact for the rumour which we understand has been published in your columns that Satyagraha has been offered before Sri Aurobindo Ashram.³ There was no Satyagraha of any kind. There was an attack on the Ashram in which one member was stabbed to death and others injured and Ashram buildings stoned. This would surely be a curious and unprecedented form of Satyagraha. The attack took place on August the 15th some hours after the Darshan, which was very successful and attended by thousands of people, was over. The attackers were mostly professional goondas of the town hired and organised for the purpose. We consider it as the result or culmination of a long campaign by a political party which has been making speeches and publishing articles and pamphlets against the Ashram and trying in all ways to damage it in the eyes of the public for the last two years. This was not on political grounds and the attack had nothing to do with the political question. The Ashram is a non-political body. But there are three sections of the people here who are violently opposed to the existence

² MS or

³ *This letter was dictated by Sri Aurobindo to his amanuensis, Nirodbaran, and sent over the signature of his secretary. — Ed.*

of the Ashram, the advocates of Dravidisthan, extreme Indian Catholics and the Communists. Everybody in Pondicherry without exception supports the right of self-determination for the people of French India and Sri Aurobindo has always been a firm supporter of that right for all peoples everywhere. Nobody here is for the “continuation of French rule”, but the people were prepared to accept the French proposal of a free and completely autonomous French India within the French Union. It was only when it appeared that the reforms offered by the French Government would fall short of what was promised that the cry arose for the immediate transfer of power and the merging of French India in the Indian Union. Sri Aurobindo, not being a citizen of French India, made no public declaration of his views, but privately supported the views set forth in a manifesto of the French India Socialist party demanding the end of colonial rule and a complete autonomy within the French Union accompanied by a dual citizenship and a close association with the Indian Union which should control Customs, Communications and a common system of Industry and Commerce.⁴ There was therefore no ground or cause for any Satyagraha. I am writing this as an official contradiction on behalf of the Ashram under the instructions and with the full authority of Sri Aurobindo.

Your most sincerely
The Secretary

Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Pondicherry

Letters to Surendra Mohan Ghosh

[1]

I had wired that I would write a letter of explanation, but I have been unable to do so because we could get no definite information on the points I have mentioned, not even the

⁴ *The reference is to “The Future Union” (pages 481–91), which was written by Sri Aurobindo. — Ed.*

question of the alleged refusal to send the money order. It is now suggested that it may have been only a doubt due possibly to a mistaken impression that French territory in India was like France and other French territories a hard currency area subject to restrictions in this matter because of the difficulties created by the dollar exchange. But French India has been declared a soft currency area where the exchange is in rupees and in pounds; so this difficulty cannot arise. Up to now money orders are still coming in.

As to the food question, it is now stated that vegetables and fruit from Bangalore will be allowed to come in without hindrance and other food commodities which come under the mischief of the Customs will also be allowed subject to the taking out of a permit by the merchants. The rumour of prohibition was due to a panic among the merchants both of the Union and Pondicherry caused by the creation of the Customs line which comes into operation from today and the additional rumour of drastic measures to be taken to bring pressure on French India to join the Union. If things go well, there may be a difficulty of high prices but nothing worse.

At the same time there are signs of tension and we do not know what may develop from these. For instance, it is said that booking of goods of Pondicherry has been stopped on the Railway except for newspaper packages and perishable goods; equally it has been stated that the French authorities are forbidden a transit of local goods out of French India into the Union and have created a post to prevent their passage. That is all for the present. I suppose we shall get some clearer indications once the Customs are in vigour.

I shall write afterwards about our own threatened difficulties in French India itself, if they develop. But we badly need some reliable information as to what is likely to be the fate of French India. On the one side the French India municipalities have fixed December for the proposed referendum. If there is a referendum, the voting will go by the usual methods and the result will be whatever the local Government here dictates and not a genuine plebiscite; there would be no chance of an accession

to the Indian Union or a merger unless Goubert and Co would make, as they once tried, a bargain with the Government in Madras or in Delhi. On the other hand, it has been broadly hinted that there will be no plebiscite and the fate of French India will be determined by direct negotiations between the Governments in Paris and in Delhi. But when? We were once informed that it would be in April or June after the return of Baron as High Commissioner but the politicians here are resolute not to allow the return of Baron because he will [be] under the influence of the Ashram — just as Saravane, Counouma, André etc. are to be kept out of all positions of authority for the same reason and because they are supposed to be in favour of accession to the Indian Union.

1 April 1949

[2]

I am sending you a statement made regarding our food situation and prospects by Dyuman who is in charge of that department. This is a new situation; formerly, the fruit was stopped, vegetables were passing through the Customs and the Customs officers were very favourable to the Ashram and made no difficulties. All that is now finished; it appears that very strict orders have been given and nothing can pass. Personal supplies in small quantities sent as offerings from Madras no longer arrive. Even the Calcutta merchants who supplied us with food and other goods say that they cannot get permits any longer. We are told that the Railway is no longer booking goods to Pondicherry. A certain number of vegetables of a very high quality are grown in our vegetable gardens; it is not quite certain that the supply of seeds which necessarily comes from outside will not fail us and in that case that resource will go. There are other statements that have been made by responsible people in Madras which indicate a sort of blockade of goods against the French Settlements. The one good thing is that the Railway people here have withdrawn their statement that our books were prohibited and have begun to send by Railway large parcels of our magazines (*Advent*, *Bombay Annual*, *Path Mandir Annual*,

Aditi etc.), so that there is no fear of loss or stoppage there. I may add that we can no longer get our full supply of milk here as the milkmen have no sufficient supply of fodder and Nestlé which helped us is cut off with the rest.

At present we have no final or definite news about the things for which we were to rely on Kamraj Nadar. He has only recently returned from Ceylon after which he was to deal with our affairs. Our representatives in Madras were told by him, we hear, that some of these affairs were the province of Madras Government and some could only [be decided]⁵ at Delhi; he would find out exactly which was which and do what he could [for]⁶ us; each case will have to be dealt with on its merits. It is now the 6th May and as yet we have heard nothing. So for the moment that is all.

6 May 1949

Note on a *Projet de loi*

NOTE

I do not know that it is necessary for me to say much about the details of this *projet*, except that it seems to me to need to be elaborated and elucidated so as to give a more complete and exact idea of the constitution meant for the new territory, the powers reserved for it and those reserved for the central authority and the scope and limits of the rights to be conceded by the India Government to France and French nationals under the agreement.

Incidentally, what exactly is meant by the “droits de douanes” to be exercised by the local Government? I presume that the old Customs will be reestablished at the Port and there will be none between the Territory and the rest of India: only, certain limited rights will be given for the introduction of goods from France to be carefully restricted to the amount necessary for local use; if so, there can be no scope for any levy of Customs by the local authority. As to the U.N.O., I presume

⁵ MS (*dictated*) decide

⁶ MS (*dictated*) from

that as between the India Government and the Government of people of a Territory subordinate to it there could not be, as things now stand, any intervention on any matter between them but only as between the India Government and the Government of France.

There is one point on which I would like to make an observation which I consider of primary importance. The French Government would naturally want the democratic rights it has conceded to the local Assembly and local bodies to continue in full and the India Government would also, no doubt, like this new Territory of its own to have a constitution as democratic as that of the other parts of India. But if nothing is changed in local conditions and freedom is left for a certain type of politicians and party leaders to make use of their opportunities to pervert everything to their own profit, how are they to be prevented from prolonging the old state of things, in which case the Territory would easily be turned into a sink of misgovernment and corruption and things will become worse even than in the past. Only a strong control, a thorough purification of the administration and a period of political discipline in which the population could develop public spirit, the use and the right use of the powers and the democratic institutions placed at their disposal, could ensure a change for the better and even that only after a long lapse of time. It cannot be ensured by a paper constitution; the right type of men in the right place could alone ensure it.

I would myself have thought it safer if the principle of the agreement between the two Governments and its main features [had] at first been agreed upon and the rest worked out afterwards by careful consideration and discussion. Otherwise there is a risk of disagreements and disaccord in the points of view arising and holding up or even endangering the successful working out of the agreement. But I understand that their position in this matter has obliged the Government in Paris to prefer the method actually taken. I hope that the advice you will give will help the India Government to make the best of things as they are.

Messages on Indian and World Events 1948 – 1950

On the Assassination of Mahatma Gandhi

[1]

REMAIN FIRM THROUGH THE DARKNESS THE LIGHT IS THERE AND
WILL CONQUER.¹

4 February 1948

[2]

I would have preferred silence in the face of these circumstances that surround us. For any words we can find fall flat amid such happenings. This much, however, I will say that the Light which led us to freedom, though not yet to unity, still burns and will burn on till it conquers. I believe firmly that a great and united future is the destiny of this nation and its peoples. The Power that brought us through so much struggle and suffering to freedom, will achieve also, through whatever strife or trouble, the aim which so poignantly occupied the thoughts of the fallen leader at the time of his tragic ending; as it brought us freedom, it will bring us unity. A free and united India will be there and the Mother will gather around her her sons and weld them into a single national strength in the life of a great and united people.²

Sri Aurobindo

February 5, 1948

¹ *Telegram sent to Mr. Kumbi of Gadag, in reply to his telegram "DARKNESS SORROW SPREADS FAST INDIA BAPUJI DEATH CHILDREN PRAY MESSAGE."* Sri Aurobindo's telegram was later released to the newspapers. — Ed.

² *This piece was sent to All India Radio, Tiruchirapalli, in response to a request for a message. It later was published by the Ashram in the form of a leaflet.* — Ed.

On the World Situation (July 1948)

I am afraid I can hold out but cold comfort for the present at least to those of your correspondents who are lamenting the present state of things. Things *are* bad, are growing worse and may at any time grow worst or worse than worst if that is possible — and anything however paradoxical seems possible in the present perturbed world. The best thing for them is to realise that all this was necessary because certain possibilities had to emerge and be got rid of if a new and better world was at all to come into being; it would not have done to postpone them for a later time. It is as in Yoga where things active or latent in the being have to be put into action in the light so that they may be grappled with and thrown out or to emerge from latency in the depths for the same purificatory purpose. Also they can remember the adage that night is darkest before dawn and that the coming of dawn is inevitable. But they must remember too that the new world whose coming we envisage is not to be made of the same texture as the old and different only in pattern and that it must come by other means, from within and not from without — so the best way is not to be too much preoccupied with the lamentable things that are happening outside, but themselves to grow within so that they may be ready for the new world whatever form it may take.

July 18, 1948

Sri Aurobindo

**On Linguistic Provinces
(Message to Andhra University)**

You have asked me for a message and anything I write, since it is to the Andhra University that I am addressing my message, if it can be called by that name, should be pertinent to your University, its function, its character and the work it has to do. But it is difficult for me at this juncture when momentous decisions are being taken which are likely to determine not only the form and pattern of this country's Government and administration but the pattern of its destiny, the build and make-up of the

nation's character, its position in the world with regard to other nations, its choice of what itself shall be, not to turn my eyes in that direction. There is one problem facing the country which concerns us nearly and to this I shall now turn and deal with it, however inadequately, — the demand for the reconstruction of the artificial British-made Presidencies and Provinces into natural divisions forming a new system, new and yet founded on the principle of diversity in unity attempted by ancient India. India, shut into a separate existence by the Himalayas and the ocean, has always been the home of a peculiar people with characteristics of its own recognisably distinct from all others, with its own distinct civilisation, way of life, way of the spirit, a separate culture, arts, building of society. It has absorbed all that has entered into it, put upon all the Indian stamp, welded the most diverse elements into its fundamental unity. But it has also been throughout a congeries of diverse peoples, lands, kingdoms and, in earlier times, republics also, diverse races, sub-nations with a marked character of their own, developing different brands or forms of civilisation and culture, many schools of art and architecture which yet succeeded in fitting into the general Indian type of civilisation and culture. India's history throughout has been marked by a tendency, a constant effort to unite all this diversity of elements into a single political whole under a central imperial rule so that India might be politically as well as culturally one. Even after a rift had been created by the irruption of the Mohammedan peoples with their very different religion and social structure, there continued a constant effort of political unification and there was a tendency towards a mingling of cultures and their mutual influence on each other; even some heroic attempts were made to discover or create a common religion built out of these two apparently irreconcilable faiths and here too there were mutual influences. But throughout India's history the political unity was never entirely attained and for this there were several causes, — first, vastness of space and insufficiency of communications preventing the drawing close of all these different peoples; secondly, the method used which was the military domination by one people or one imperial dynasty over the rest

of the country which led to a succession of empires, none of them permanent; lastly, the absence of any will to crush out of existence all these different kingdoms and fuse together these different peoples and force them into a single substance and a single shape. Then came the British Empire in India which recast the whole country into artificial provinces made for its own convenience, disregarding the principle of division into regional peoples but not abolishing that division. For there had grown up out of the original elements a natural system of subnations with different languages, literatures and other traditions of their own, the four Dravidian peoples, Bengal, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Sind, Assam, Orissa, Nepal, the Hindi-speaking peoples of the North, Rajputana and Behar. British rule with its provincial administration did not unite these peoples but it did impose upon them the habit of a common type of administration, a closer intercommunication through the English language and by the education it gave there was created a more diffused and more militant form of patriotism, the desire for liberation and the need of unity in the struggle to achieve that liberation. A sufficient fighting unity was brought about to win freedom, but freedom obtained did not carry with it a complete union of the country. On the contrary, India was deliberately split on the basis of the two-nation theory into Pakistan and Hindustan with the deadly consequences which we know.

In taking over the administration from Britain we had inevitably to follow the line of least resistance and proceed on the basis of the artificial British-made provinces, at least for the time; this provisional arrangement now threatens to become permanent, at least in the main and some see an advantage in this permanence. For they think it will help the unification of the country and save us from the necessity of preserving regional subnations which in the past kept a country from an entire and thoroughgoing unification and uniformity. In a rigorous unification they see the only true union, a single nation with a standardised and uniform administration, language, literature, culture, art, education,—all carried on through the agency of one national tongue. How far such a conception can be

carried out in the future one cannot forecast, but at present it is obviously impracticable, and it is doubtful if it is for India truly desirable. The ancient diversities of the country carried in them great advantages as well as drawbacks. By these differences the country was made the home of many living and pulsating centres of life, art, culture, a richly and brilliantly coloured diversity in unity; all was not drawn up into a few provincial capitals or an imperial metropolis, other towns and regions remaining subordinated and indistinctive or even culturally asleep; the whole nation lived with a full life in its many parts and this increased enormously the creative energy of the whole. There is no possibility any longer that this diversity will endanger or diminish the unity of India. Those vast spaces which kept her people from closeness and a full interplay have been abolished in their separating effect by the march of Science and the swiftness of the means of communication. The idea of federation and a complete machinery for its perfect working have been discovered and will be at full work. Above all, the spirit of patriotic unity has been too firmly established in the people to be easily effaced or diminished, and it would be more endangered by refusing to allow the natural play of life of the subnations than by satisfying their legitimate aspirations. The Congress itself in the days before liberation came had pledged itself to the formation of linguistic provinces, and to follow it out, if not immediately, yet as early as may conveniently be, might well be considered the wisest course. India's national life will then be founded on her natural strengths and the principle of unity in diversity which has always been normal to her and its fulfilment the fundamental course of her being and its very nature, the Many in the One, would place her on the sure foundation of her Swabhava and Swadharma.

This development might well be regarded as the inevitable trend of her future. For the Dravidian regional peoples are demanding their separate right to a self-governing existence; Maharashtra expects a similar concession and this would mean a similar development in Gujarat and then the British-made Presidencies of Madras and Bombay would have disappeared. The old Bengal Presidency had already been split up and Orissa,

Bihar and Assam are now self-governing regional peoples. A merger of the Hindi-speaking part of the Central Provinces and the U.P. would complete the process. An annulment of the partition of India might modify but would not materially alter this result of the general tendency. A union of States and regional peoples would again be the form of a united India.

In this new regime your University will find its function and fulfilment. Its origin has been different from that of other Indian Universities; they were established by the initiative of a foreign Government as a means of introducing their own civilisation into India, situated in the capital towns of the Presidencies and formed as teaching and examining bodies with purely academic aims: Benares and Aligarh had a different origin but were all-India institutions serving the two chief religious communities of the country. Andhra University has been created by a patriotic Andhra initiative, situated not in a Presidency capital but in an Andhra town and serving consciously the life of a regional people. The home of a robust and virile and energetic race, great by the part it had played in the past in the political life of India, great by its achievements in art, architecture, sculpture, music, Andhra looks back upon imperial memories, a place in the succession of empires and imperial dynasties which reigned over a large part of the country; it looks back on the more recent memory of the glories of the last Hindu Empire of Vijayanagar, — a magnificent record for any people. Your University can take its high position as a centre of light and learning, knowledge and culture which can train the youth of Andhra to be worthy of their forefathers: the great past should lead to a future as great or even greater. Not only Science but Art, not only book-knowledge and information but growth in culture and character are parts of a true education; to help the individual to develop his capacities, to help in the forming of thinkers and creators and men of vision and action of the future, this is a part of its work. Moreover, the life of the regional people must not be shut up in itself; its youths have also to contact the life of the other similar peoples of India interacting with them in industry and commerce and the other practical fields of life but also in the things of the mind and spirit.

Also, they have to learn not only to be citizens of Andhra but to be citizens of India; the life of the nation is their life. An elite has to be formed which has an adequate understanding of all great national affairs or problems and be able to represent Andhra in the councils of the nation and in every activity and undertaking of national interest calling for the support and participation of her peoples. There is still a wider field in which India will need the services of men of ability and character from all parts of the country, the international field. For she stands already as a considerable international figure and this will grow as time goes on into vast proportions; she is likely in time to take her place as one of the preponderant States whose voices will be strongest and their lead and their action determinative of the world's future. For all this she needs men whose training as well as their talent, genius and force of character is of the first order. In all these fields your University can be of supreme service and do a work of immeasurable importance.

In this hour, in the second year of its liberation the nation has to awaken to many more very considerable problems, to vast possibilities opening before her but also to dangers and difficulties that may, if not wisely dealt with, become formidable. There is a disordered world-situation left by the war, full of risks and sufferings and shortages and threatening another catastrophe which can only be solved by the united effort of the peoples and can only be truly met by an effort at world-union such as was conceived at San Francisco but has not till now been very successful in the practice; still the effort has to be continued and new devices found which will make easier the difficult transition from the perilous divisions of the past and present to a harmonious world-order; for otherwise there can be no escape from continuous calamity and collapse. There are deeper issues for India herself, since by following certain tempting directions she may conceivably become a nation like many others evolving an opulent industry and commerce, a powerful organisation of social and political life, an immense military strength, practising power-politics with a high degree of success, guarding and extending zealously her gains and her interests, dominating even

a large part of the world, but in this apparently magnificent progression forfeiting its Swadharma, losing its soul. Then ancient India and her spirit might disappear altogether and we would have only one more nation like the others and that would be a real gain neither to the world nor to us. There is a question whether she may prosper more harmlessly in the outward life yet lose altogether her richly massed and firmly held spiritual experience and knowledge. It would be a tragic irony of fate if India were to throw away her spiritual heritage at the very moment when in the rest of the world there is more and more a turning towards her for spiritual help and a saving Light. This must not and will surely not happen; but it cannot be said that the danger is not there. There are indeed other numerous and difficult problems that face this country or will very soon face it. No doubt we will win through, but we must not disguise from ourselves the fact that after these long years of subjection and its cramping and impairing effects a great inner as well as outer liberation and change, a vast inner and outer progress is needed if we are to fulfil India's true destiny. December 1948

Letters Related to the Andhra University Award

[1]

SRI AUROBINDO ASRAM.
PONDICHERRY.

—
July 15, 1948

To
Sir C. R. Reddy
Vice-Chancellor
Andhra University — Waltair

I have been unable to give an early answer to your letter of the 28th June, 1948 which reached me rather late owing to accidental causes. This was due to some hesitation arising from my position as head of the Ashram at Pondicherry. I am not a Sannyasi and my Yoga does not turn away from life; but still I

have always followed the rule of not accepting titles, honours or distinctions from any Government or public institution and have rejected or stood back from even the highest when offered to me. But after long consideration I have felt that the distinction which the Andhra University proposes to confer upon me is not of the same character and need not fall within this rule. In any case I do not feel that I can disregard the choice made by the Andhra University in selecting my name for this distinction, and even if things were otherwise, I would have felt that I must accept this as an exceptional case and I could not disregard the choice by an institution like yours of my name for this prize. I authorise you therefore to consider my name for this award and if the University confirms its choice of me, my acceptance of your National Prize. One difficulty remains; you know perhaps that I have been living in entire retirement, appearing in public only on the occasion of the four Darshans on which I receive the inmates of my Ashram and visitors from all parts of India. Otherwise I do not go out of the rooms in which I live and still less ever leave the Ashram or Pondicherry. This makes it impossible for me to go to Waltair to receive the distinction conferred upon me. I would have therefore to ask for an exception to be made in this matter in my case.

Sri Aurobindo

[2]

Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Pondicherry

[6 November 1948]

To

H.E. The Governor of Madras
Chancellor of the Andhra University

I am in receipt of your letter of 30th October informing me that the Syndicate of the Andhra University has resolved to present to me the "Cattamanchi Ramalinga Reddy National Prize" for this year. I have received with much gratification your

offer of this distinction bestowed on me by your University and I am glad to intimate to you my acceptance. I understand from what you say about Darshan that you will personally come to Pondicherry for this purpose and I look forward with much pleasure to seeing and meeting you.

[3]

Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Dec 5, 1948

To

Shree C. R. Reddy
Vice-chancellor, Andhra University

I am sending herewith the message. But it has developed to an excessive length nearer to half-an-hour's reading than to the minimum five minutes. I hope that the theme which, I am told, is still somewhat controversial, will not be thought for that reason ill-suited to the occasion and that the length of time required will not be found unmanageable. I have felt some scruples on these two points and would be glad to be reassured that it is otherwise.

Sri Aurobindo

The Present Darkness (April 1950)

You have expressed in one of your letters your sense of the present darkness in the world round us and this must have been one of the things that contributed to your being so badly upset and unable immediately to repel the attack. For myself, the dark conditions do not discourage me or convince me of the vanity of my will to "help the world", for I knew they had to come; they were there in the world nature and had to rise up so that they might be exhausted or expelled so that a better world freed from them might be there. After all, something has been done in the outer field and that may help or prepare for getting something done in the inner field also. For instance, India is free and her freedom was necessary if the divine work was to be done. The

difficulties that surround her now and may increase for a time, especially with regard to the Pakistan imbroglio, were also things that had to come and to be cleared out. Nehru's efforts to prevent the inevitable clash are not likely to succeed for more than a short time and so it is not necessary to give him the slap you wanted to go to Delhi and administer to him. Here too there is sure to be a full clearance, though unfortunately a considerable amount of human suffering in the process is inevitable. Afterwards the work for the Divine will become more possible and it may well be that the dream, if it is a dream, of leading the world towards the spiritual Light, may even become a reality. So I am not disposed even now in these dark conditions to consider my will to help the world as condemned to failure. 4 April 1950

On the Korean Conflict

I do not know why you want a line of thought to be indicated to you for your guidance in the affair of Korea. There is nothing to hesitate about there, the whole affair is as plain as a "pikestaff". It is the first move in the Communist plan of campaign to dominate and take possession first of these northern parts and then of South East Asia as a preliminary to their manoeuvres with regard to the rest of the continent — in passing, Tibet as a gate opening to India. If they succeed, there is no reason why domination of the whole world should not follow by steps until they are ready to deal with America. That is provided the war can be staved off with America until Stalin can choose his time. Truman seems to have understood the situation if we can judge from his moves in Korea; but it is to be seen whether he is strong enough and determined enough to carry the matter through. The measures he has taken are likely to be incomplete and unsuccessful, since they do not include any actual military intervention except on sea and in the air. That seems to be the situation, we have to see how it develops. One thing is certain that if there is too much shilly-shallying and if America gives up now her defence of Korea, she may be driven to yield position after position until it is too late; at one point or another she will have to stand and

face the necessity of drastic action even if it leads to war. Stalin also seems not to be ready to face at once the risk of a world war and, if so, Truman can turn the tables on him by constantly facing him with the onus of either taking that risk or yielding position after position to America. I think that is all that I can see at present; for the moment the situation is as grave as it can be.

28.6.1950.

Sri Aurobindo

Section Two

Private Letters to Public Figures
and to the Editor of *Mother India*
1948–1950

Private Letters to Public Figures 1948 – 1950

To Surendra Mohan Ghosh

I have strong objections to your giving up your position as President of the B.P.C.C. But I recognise that there are good reasons for your not wishing to disappoint Jawaharlal, also the great importance of this other work at Dacca. If you finally decide after seeing the full development of the new situation in Bengal that your relinquishing the presidentship will not frustrate or injure the work in West Bengal, then I am ready to withdraw my objection.

12.6.48

To Kailas Nath Katju

Owing to heavy pressure during the last month I am only now able to answer your letter of August 20th forwarding [a] full report of your address on the occasion of the Mahotsav. I had already heard your talk on the radio in connection with [the] Jayanti and I found that it was very much appreciated by those who were trying to do my work in Bengal and they had drawn much encouragement from it and felt heartened by it in their endeavours. I write this to convey to you my blessings for all you have done on the occasion of the Jayanti and the great push it has given to the work and to the workers in Bengal.

I have long been acquainted with your name and what you have done for our country as one of its leaders in the struggle for freedom and after Independence was gained, in the heavy and difficult work that had to be done under trying and arduous circumstances to organise its independence and contend with the growing difficulties of the task.

The difficulties you speak of which beset all who are working for the world's peace and welfare are indeed very great; the

strength to meet them and to support those who are doing the work is less widespread than it ought to be and there is too much fear and demoralisation everywhere in the world and the will to co-operate for the best is deficient and often absent. I am afraid the hour in which one can be confident that these difficulties would be soon overcome is not yet near and men of goodwill will have to persevere with great courage before they can say, "It is done." But I believe that as the labour is arduous so will the outcome be sure and satisfying. It has been a great good fortune for Bengal that you have been sent there as Governor and you may be confident that my blessings will attend you in your work.

3.9.49

To K. M. Munshi

[1]

K. M. MUNSHI: In the Constituent Assembly there is debate about the use of international numerals with the Hindi language. The whole of South India will not accept Hindi as the national language unless international numerals are used. The non-Hindi provinces are supporting South India. The organised Hindi group is fighting against the international numeral on the ground of Aryan Culture.

Sri Aurobindo has no decided opinion on the question. But if the South Indians and other non-Hindi Provinces insist on this arrangement, it seems to him that for the sake of unity in this matter and a unified practice and also for international convenience the Hindi-speaking people might make a concession to the others.¹

3 September 1949

[2]

K. M. MUNSHI: I would like to have your guidance as regards the future of Sanatan Dharma. Starting from your Uttarpara

¹ Reply dictated by Sri Aurobindo to A. B. Purani for sending to Munshi over Purani's signature. — Ed.

Speech, which has been a sort of beacon to me for years, I have been working for the reintegration of Hindu culture . . . But I am neither learned nor a profound thinker. I can contribute only my faith and the little energy which has been vouchsafed to me. I only pray that strength may be given to me to carry forward the message of the Seers of whom, in my opinion, you are the only surviving Apostle. What shall I do now?

My dear Kanubhai

In reply to your letter to him of July 30th 1950 Sri Aurobindo has asked me to write to you the following: —²

“Your feeling that there should be reintegration of Indian Culture under modern conditions is quite right. It is *the* work that has to be done. And as far as Sri Aurobindo can see at present Indian Spiritual Culture has a great and bright future before it. It is the future power that might dominate the world.

So, your efforts in carrying out that work are quite in the right direction and in carrying out that work you would have his full support and blessings.”

3 August 1950

² *The paragraphs that follow were dictated by Sri Aurobindo to A. B. Purani and sent to Munshi over Purani's signature. — Ed.*

Notes and Letters
to the Editor of *Mother India*
on Indian and World Events
1949–1950

On Pakistan

I don't want Pakistan to endure, made perfectly clear. Division must go — does not mean that division must be allowed to last in some form or other. Continued partition of India into two Federations one Hindu and one Muslim even if somehow connected together is no part of my idea of the Union of India.

March 1949

On the Commonwealth and Secularism

India can't remain in Dominion. It had decided to be a free republic and that can't be changed. On that basis it can have relations with Commonwealth if it wants.

Spirituality cannot be affirmed in a political constitution. You can add spirituality in a matter of the Spirit and not of constitutional politics.

April 1949

On the Unity Party

Amal

The Unity Party, Sri Aurobindo says, cannot be said to represent Sri Aurobindo's views [nor can it be said]¹ that its political programme is backed up by him. But perhaps without committing yourself you can say there is a Party, especially in Bengal, which is working for Indian Unity — apart from the

¹ MS (*dictated*) or

well-known Forward Block which has the same end in view though working on a different line.

25.4.1949

On French India and on Pakistan

June 27 1949

Amal,

I sent you a telegram asking you to withhold the spokesman's statement.² It was not to be republished. The statement does not adequately represent Sri Aurobindo's views. It over-stresses one point and leaves out others which are as important, but I see that you have already featured it in Mother India. Anyway Sri Aurobindo doesn't want anything further to be written about his view on the French India question; what is done is done but in future he wishes to remain silent unless an imperative need arises for a statement. Just now Sri Aurobindo does not want strong attacks to be made on the policy of the Congress Government as by their action they have removed many of the difficulties of the Asram and all that it needs for its institutions are coming in freely as a result of special orders given by the Madras Government so he does not want to figure as their enemy or opponent. Certain things in their attitude may seem doubtful but he does not want them too much stressed at present unless it becomes very necessary to do so.

About your Franco-India article, the main objection is that Mother does not want herself to be represented in that way (or in any way) and she objects to figuring in any special way as a representative of France or French culture. The article is inopportune at this moment. It contains many statements that would have to be modified or not put forward at all.

As for the contravention article Sri Aurobindo thought that

² This letter, dictated by Sri Aurobindo, was sent over the signature of Nolini Kanta Gupta. The "spokesman's statement" was an interview that Nolini gave to a press agency on 14 June that was published in Mother India on 25 June. See Note on the Texts, pages 604-5, for details. — Ed.

one could wait to see what was the further action or attitude or inaction of the Government and whether what was meant was a complete prohibition of any dealing with the Pakistan issue before you determined the paper's own attitude towards all that and any extreme action. That does not mean that you will have to postpone indefinitely any necessary decision. If you think it necessary to take advantage of Nehru's speech that can be done while avoiding committing ourselves to any conflict for the moment.

On Cardinal Wyszynski, Catholicism and Communism

As to your proposed article on [Wyszynski]³, it seems to me that it is better to drop the subject. It had and has no value except as a stick with which to beat the Soviets and their allies. The sole question is in that case whether the man was justified in his stand for liberty even in that restricted area of religious freedom and the freedom especially of the Catholic religion to be itself, as every religion has a right to be in all civilised countries and whether it was worth while fighting out that question when the real question is how to get rid, if now it is at all possible, of the Bolshevik monstrosity and the tyranny with which it threatens the world. That can't be done by subtly philosophical and even metaphysical articles balancing the rights and wrongs on each side and the relative wickedness of the Soviets and the Western nations. Many readers might even take it as a justification or at least a partial condemnation of the prosecuting Government and the martyrdom it has chosen to inflict on the rebellious Cardinal. And what is the pertinence of the past history of the Roman Catholic Church, especially at a time when we have one of the most liberal minded Popes or even the most liberal minded Pope in Roman Catholic history? Even if it is only a fight between the Holy See of Rome and the unholy See of the Kremlin the fight is between one centre of religious intolerance and another centre of a still more damnable and intolerant religion, — for that is

³ *MS (dictated) Midsentzy*

what Bolshevism is, — still why give any latitude to what is by far the worse of the two? 3 August 1949

On the Kashmir Problem

Now let us come to your article. All you have written up to the X mark against the beginning of a para is very good and needed to be said; but after that there are certain things to which I have to take objection. For instance, why suggest a slur on the whole Mohammedan population of Kashmir by speaking of “fanatic spell of the name of Allah”? This cannot apply to the Kashmiris who follow Abdullah and who are in a large majority, they are for his idea of a secular state. The others in Gilgit and elsewhere are not actuated by religious fanaticism but by political motives. The rest of the sentence should be modified accordingly; the people in the districts who have been rescued from the grip of the rebels have shown strong gratitude for their release and it would be quite impolitic to ignore by such doubts the sincerity of this gratitude. I am not enamoured of your idea of an understanding between Pakistan and India, it is not likely that the Pakistan Government will consent to any understanding except one which will help to perpetuate the partition and be to their advantage. It would be most dangerous to forget Jinnah’s motive and policy in establishing Pakistan which is still the motive and policy of the Pakistan leaders, — although it would not be politic to say anything about it just now. If you keep what you have written it should be with the proviso, if there is a change of heart and if Pakistan becomes willing to effect some kind of junction with India or some overtopping Council of cooperation between the two federations. But the most amazing thing is your disastrous suggestion of a coalition Government between the loyalists and the rebels in Kashmir. That would give a position and influence and control over all the affairs of the State to the supporters of Pakistan which they can never hope to have under the present circumstances. They would be able to appoint their own men in the administration, use intimidation and trickery in order to press people to vote against their will and generally falsify

the plebiscite, and they certainly would not hesitate to do all that they could for that end. It might very well knock all the good cards out of Abdullah's hands and smash up his present predominant chances of a favourable issue of the plebiscite.

There is a passage in your article containing a trenchant suggestion which has puzzled me. You seem to say that India has been beaten on the military ground in Kashmir and there is no hope of her keeping it or clearing out the invaders; her last chance is the plebiscite and that is the reason why she is insisting on the plebiscite. Is that at all true? It would mean that Indian military strength is unable to cope with that of Pakistan and then, if she cannot cope with it in Kashmir in spite of her initial advantage, can she do it anywhere? If she gives up Kashmir because of her military weakness that encourages Pakistan to carry through Jinnah's plan with regard to the establishment of Muslim rule in Northern India and they will try it out. I don't think this is really the case. It was for political motives, I take it, and not from a consciousness of military weakness that India did not push her initial advantage, and she insisted on the plebiscite, not because it was her last or only chance but because it gave her the best chance. In a plebiscite on the single and straight issue of joining either Pakistan or India she was and is quite confident of an overwhelming majority in her favour. Moreover, she does not cling to the plebiscite from motives of ideological purity and will even refuse it if it is to be held on any conditions other than those she has herself clearly and insistently laid down. She is quite prepared to withdraw the case from the cognizance of the U.N.O and retain Kashmir by her own means and even, if necessary, by fight to the finish, if that is unavoidable. That Patel has made quite clear and uncompromisingly positive and Nehru has not been less positive. Both of them are determined to resist to the bitter end any attempt to force a solution which is not consistent with the democratic will of the Kashmir people and their right of self-determination of their own destiny. At the same time they are trying to avoid a clash if it is at all possible.

One thing which both Abdullah and the India Government want to avoid and have decided to resist by all possible means

is a partition of Kashmir, especially with Gilgit and Northern Kashmir going to Pakistan. This is the greatest danger but the details and the reasons for the possibility of its materialising, though they are plain enough, have to be kept confidential or, at any rate, not to be discussed in public. But if you take account of it, it will be easier to understand the situation and the whole policy of the India Government. That at least is the stand taken by them and the spirit of the terms they have laid down for the conditions of the plebiscite. These conditions have been just at this moment published in the newspapers and the whole course of negotiations with the U.N.O. Kashmir Commission has been laid bare in a public statement. Practically, the Commission representative has conceded on its part almost all the essential demands and conditions laid down by Nehru. All, however, remains fluid until and unless the Security Council acquiesces in the arrangements proposed by their own Commission or else take a different decision and until the plebiscite Administrator is appointed and makes the final arrangements. What will finally transpire from all this lies as the Greeks used to say on the knees of the Gods, *theōn en gounasi keitai*. It lies also with the reactions of the Pakistan leaders which are more easily calculable, but may not show themselves until a possibly much later date.

In any case, it seems to me that our only course is to support the India Government in the stand they are taking in regard to Kashmir and the terms and conditions they have made, so long as they do not weaken and deviate from their position. Nothing should be said which would discourage the public mind or call away the support which the Government needs in maintaining the right course. What I have written on Kashmir is only my personal view at present based on the information I have and must be kept quite private. But it may perhaps be of some help to you in determining what you may say or not say about Kashmir.

Since the above was written there has appeared Pakistan's interpretation of the Commission's arrangement for the plebiscite. It looks as if Lozano had made his statements as smooth as possible to either party so that they got very different impressions of what was meant to be done. However

there is only one important point and that is about the Azad armies. If these are allowed to remain in arms in the places they now occupy the plebiscite will become a farce. But the India authorities seem to have received a definite promise from Lozano that it will be otherwise. We shall have to wait and see what will be the definite arrangements and how the Commission will get out of this imbroglio. But Pakistan in this matter is showing a mentality that makes one wonder whether it is worth while your suggesting the possibility of an amicable rapprochement between the two parts of partitioned India such as you have gone out of your way to elaborate in your article.

c. September 1949

On "New Year Thoughts"

Some of the statements in your article⁴ do not seem to me quite convincing, as for instance, the suggestion that one cannot be highly ethical or exaltedly ethical without being religious or highly religious or even a mystic without knowing it. The article is tremendously manysided and some readers might find it difficult to fit all the sides together; but I put this remark forward as an observation and not as an objection. Manysidedness is a merit and cannot be regarded as objectionable. Finally I want my "face" in the last sentence to be left out of the picture. I feel its appearance as an unexpected intrusion there; it had better retire into privacy. As for Nehru, I suppose the fling at him cannot be regarded as offensive, but I would rather like it, for reasons of my own, if there came upon you a temporary amnesia about his existence.

1 January 1950

Rishis as Leaders

The article can go as the editorial as you propose and the other arrangements are all right. But I must insist that the last words

⁴ "New Year Thoughts on Pacifism", by K. D. Sethna. This article was published in *Mother India* on 7 January 1951. The printed version incorporated changes suggested by Sri Aurobindo in this letter. — Ed.

“till we put ourselves in the care of some Rishis among leaders” shall go out. I do not know of course who may be acclaimed as the Rishi in question, — the only one with a recognised claim to the title is not likely to be called from Tiruvannamalai to Delhi and would certainly refuse his consent to the transfer. But it is evident that the eyes of your readers will turn at once towards Pondicherry and consider that it is a claim for my appointment either to the place filled so worthily by C. R. or the kindred place admirably occupied by Nehru. I am a candidate for neither office and any suggestion of my promotion to these high offices should be left to other announcers and the last place in which it should occur is Mother India. So out with the “Rishi”. You may say if you like “till the eyes of India’s leaders see more clearly and we can take our place at your side” or any other equally innocent phrase.

January 1950

On Military Action

Amal,

Sri Aurobindo’s information is that the India Government cannot be justly taxed with unwillingness to take even the strongest action demanded by the situation. But there are difficulties in the way hinging on the [attitude]⁵ of the U.N.O. and the possibility of taking action which could from the military point of view disable a successful prosecution of the necessary action involved in the step we want them to take. Certain means are necessary for military success and we can have them only from America. So it is better not to write in haste or to get the facts of the situation and base what you write upon that. This does not mean that the action has not to be taken but that it cannot be lightly done; if by a little delay and some secrecy and caution the difficulty can be overcome or avoided, that may be necessary however unpalatable.

6.3.50

⁵ MS (*dictated*) altitude

The Nehru-Liaquat Pact and After

Amal

I am writing to explain the indications I had given of my view that a change has taken place in the situation owing to the Nehru-Liaquat Pact making the position I took in the letter to Dilip⁶ no longer quite valid and necessitating a halt for a reconsideration and decision of policy. I gather from what you have written that you are rather surprised by my view of things and think that there is no change in the situation; you seem to regard the Pact as a futile affair not likely to succeed or to make any change in the situation and foredoomed to speedy failure. I would like to know what are the grounds for this view if you really hold it. I am quite prepared to learn that the situation is quite different from what it seems to be but that must be based on facts and the facts published in the newspapers or claimed as true by the Congress leaders point in a different direction. There seems to be something, initially at least, like a radical change in the situation and I have to face it, look at the possible and probable consequences and decide what has to be done.

What was the situation when the Dilip letter was written and what is it today? At that time everything had been pushed to a point at which war still seemed inevitable. The tension between Pakistan and India had grown more and more intolerable in every aspect, the massacres in East Bengal still seemed to make war inevitable and the India Government had just before Nehru's attempt to patch up a compromise made ready to march its army over the East Bengal borders once a few preliminaries had been arranged and war in Kashmir would have inevitably followed. America and Britain would not have been able to support Pakistan and, if our information is correct, had already intimated their inability to prevent India Government from taking the only possible course open to it in face of the massacres. In the circumstances the end of Pakistan would have been the certain consequence of war. The object we

⁶ See the letter of 4 April 1950, published on pages 506–7. — Ed.

had in view would have been within sight of achievement.

Now all this is changed. After the conclusion of the Pact, after its acceptance by the Congress Party and the Assembly and its initial success of organisation and implementation, its acceptance also in both Western and Eastern Pakistan, no outbreak of war can take place at least for some time to come and, unless the Pact fails, it may not take place. That may mean in certain contingencies the indefinite perpetuation of the existence of Pakistan and disappearance of the prospect of any unification of India. I regard the Pact as an exceedingly clever move of Liaquat Ali to fish his "nation" out of the desperate situation into which it had run itself and to secure its safe survival. I will not go elaborately into the reasons for my view and I am quite prepared for events breaking out which will alter the situation once more in an opposite sense. But I had to take things as they are or seem to be, weigh everything and estimate the position and make my decisions. I will not say more in this letter, though I may have much to say hereafter: you should be able to understand from what I have written why I have reversed my course. Our central object and the real policy of the paper stands, but what steps have to be taken or can be taken in the new circumstances can only be seen in the light of future developments.

Meanwhile I await your answer with regard to the question I have put you. Afterwards I shall write again especially about the stand to be taken by Mother India.

3.5.50

On the Communist Movement

September 19, 1950

Naturally I am in agreement with the views expressed about Communism in the Manifesto,⁷ but before associating myself fully with Masani's organisation and his movement I will have to wait and see how it develops in the field of practical politics.

⁷ "Manifesto for the Defence of Democracy and Independence in Asia", by Swatantra Party leader Minoo Masani. — Ed.

For similar reasons I might expect you as editor of M.I. to wait and see and in that case it would be logical to withhold your signature while expressing your sympathy with the movement. Whatever is done must be something strong and effective, a blow that can tell; otherwise, the Communist movement has become so powerful that it can feed upon the shocks one tries to give it as one can see in the tussle that is going on in the UNO. As to Desai's objections, it seems to me that if any movement of the kind is made it would be worth while to make it as widely representative as possible and in that case the Socialists like Jai Prakash who distrust and are opposed to Communism would have to be included. There is such a thing as social democracy which need not be confused with Communism as it has its own more manageable standpoints: of course I agree with Desai as regards our standing on the side of Western democracies.

Part Four

Public Statements and Notices
concerning
Sri Aurobindo's Ashram and Yoga
1927–1949

Section One

Public Statements and Notices concerning the Ashram 1927–1937

Public Statements about the Ashram 1927 and 1934

On the Ashram's Finances (1927)

Many would like to know how the Ashrama here is maintained.¹ As a matter of fact there is as yet no regular source of income; it has been carried on in the past by the contributions of a few who are in sympathy with the work and can afford to give some help. But these means are not likely to be sufficient for the future. I understand that Sri Aurobindo's work has to pass through three stages, the first when he was finding out the spiritual path and laying the foundations of his sadhana, a second, now begun, for creating a nucleus of spiritual workers and a number of institutions as the basis for his work, and last, the full work in India and abroad which will be very wide. For Sri Aurobindo's Sadhana is not merely for himself or a few disciples; it is a foundation for a great spiritual work for India and for all the world. In the first stage, the personal wants of Sri Aurobindo and the few disciples who lived with him being few and simple, much help was not needed; for there were no other expenses. But now in the second stage of his work this is no longer the case. The Ashrama will have to buy the houses it is now renting in order to prevent any possibility of dispersion. Numbers of disciples are beginning to stream in and, however economical the style of living, the cost of maintenance is greatly increasing and will go on increasing; the institutions to be started will need equipment and funds for maintenance. All this means large financial means which must come in from now onward and go on growing in the future. The members of the Ashrama expect that if the means are forthcoming, the second stage of the work will be not only carried on but thoroughly consolidated in the next two or three

¹ Sri Aurobindo wrote this paragraph for insertion in an article written by Jatindranath Sen Gupta and published in the *Hindu (Madras)* on 6 May 1927. This explains Sri Aurobindo's use of the third person. — Ed.

years and the third started. There ought surely to be no difficulty about satisfying this condition. In India Sri Aurobindo's is still a name to conjure with and, when the need is known I think those who have the power among the thousands who have faith in him and revere him, will not fail to send in their assistance. 1927

On the Ashram (1934)

Sri Aurobindo's Asram

In order to remove many misunderstandings which seem to have grown up about his Asram in Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo considers it necessary to issue the following explicit statement.²

An Asram means the house or houses of a Teacher or Master of spiritual philosophy in which he receives and lodges those who come to him for the teaching and practice. An Asram is not an association or a religious body or a monastery — it is only what has been indicated above and nothing more.

Everything in the Asram belongs to the Teacher; the sadhaks (those who practise under him) have no claim, right or voice in any matter. They remain or go according to his will. Whatever money he receives is his property and not that of a public body. It is not a trust or a fund, for there is no public institution. Such Asrams have existed in India since many centuries before Christ and still exist in large numbers. All depends on the Teacher and ends with his life-time, unless there is another Teacher who can take his place.

The Asram in Pondicherry came into being in this way. Sri Aurobindo at first lived in Pondicherry with a few inmates in his house; afterwards a few more joined him. Later on after the Mother joined him, in 1920, the numbers began so much to increase that it was thought necessary to make an arrangement for lodging those who came and houses were bought and rented according to need for the purpose. Arrangements had also to be

² This statement was published anonymously in the *Hindu of Madras* on 20 February 1934 and in pamphlets entitled "The Teaching and the Asram of Sri Aurobindo" in March and August 1934. In every case it was followed by "Sri Aurobindo's Teaching" (see pages 547–50). It is reproduced here for its historical interest. — Ed.

made for the maintenance, repair, rebuilding of houses, for the service of food and for decent living and hygiene. All those were private rules made by the Mother and entirely at her discretion to increase, modify or alter — there is nothing in them of a public character.

All houses of the Ashram are owned either by Sri Aurobindo or by the Mother. All the money spent belongs either to Sri Aurobindo or the Mother. Money is given by many to help in Sri Aurobindo's work. Some who are here give their earnings, but it is given to Sri Aurobindo or the Mother and not to the Ashram as a public body, for there is no such body.

The Ashram is not an association; there is no constituted body, no officials, no common property owned by an association, no governing council or committee, no activity undertaken of a public character.

The Ashram is not a political institution; all association with political activities is renounced by those who live here. All propaganda, religious, political or social, has to be eschewed by the inmates.

The Ashram is not a religious association. Those who are here come from all religions and some are of no religion. There is no creed or set of dogmas, no governing religious body; there are only the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and certain psychological practices of concentration and meditation, etc., for the enlarging of the consciousness, receptivity to the Truth, mastery over the desires, the discovery of the divine self and consciousness concealed within each human being, a higher evolution of the nature.

February 1934

Notices for Members of the Ashram 1928 – 1937

Notices of May 1928

[1]

It has been found necessary to change some of the forms and methods hitherto used to help by external means the individual and collective sadhana. This has to be done especially in regard to the consecration of food, the collective meditation and the individual contact of the sadhaka with the Mother. The existing forms were originally arranged in order to make possible a spiritual and psychic communion on the most physical and external planes by which there would be an interchange of forces, a continuous increase of the higher consciousness on the physical plane, a more and more rapid change of the external nature of the sadhakas and afterwards an increasing descent of the supramental light and power into Matter. But for this to be done there was needed a true and harmonious interchange, the Mother leading, the sadhakas following her realisation and progress. The Mother would raise all by a free self-giving of her forces, the sadhakas would realise in themselves her realisations and would by the force of an unfaltering aspiration and a surrender free from narrow personal demand and self-regarding littleness, consecrated wholly to the divine work, return her forces for a new progress. At first partly realised, this rhythm of interchange has existed less and less. The whole burden of the progress has fallen physically on the body of the Mother; for the forces it gives it receives little or nothing in exchange; the more its consciousness advances in the light, the more it is pulled back towards the unchanged obscurity of an unprogressive external nature. These conditions create an intolerable and useless strain and make the forms used at once unprofitable and unsafe. Other means will have to be found hereafter for the purpose.

Meanwhile modifications of form will have to be made in several details and others suppressed altogether. 26 May 1928

[2]

Meditation on all days of the week except Wednesday and Friday.

Flower offering on Tuesday and Thursday; none on Saturday, Sunday and Monday. May 1928

[3]

Meditation at 7.0 a.m. as before.

All fixed or daily times for sadhakas seeing the Mother are cancelled. Every day the Mother will call those whom she wants to see. Any others who need to see her will inform Nalini early in the morning or the night before and write the reason for their request which will be acceded to or otherwise dealt with according to circumstances and possibilities.

The soup will be distributed in the evening in the downstairs verandah of Sri Aurobindo's house. All who take it must be present at 8.30 and remain seated in silence till the Mother comes. Before the distribution there will be a few minutes concentration all together.

The night meditations are cancelled for a time.

—
On the 1st of each month the distribution from the stores will be made in the store-room in the presence of the Mother at 8 P.M.

==
May 1928

Notices of 1929–1937

[*These notices were written by Sri Aurobindo, typed by his secretary and posted on the Ashram notice-board.*]

[1]

NOTICE

All who wish to be present at the drawing of the lottery, must come to the verandah downstairs in Sri Aurobindo's house after soup on Saturday, the 7th. Tickets will be distributed to them there.

September 5, 1929

[2]

NOTICE

It is not advisable that all should give up milk immediately. If it is to be done, it can only be when arrangements have been made for a substitute.

The only objection to the milk was that two cows were sick and their unhealthy milk was being mixed with the rest. But these two have now been sent away and there is no farther danger.

September 17, 1929

[3]

Notice

There have been several instances recently in which members of the Asram have been rude and overbearing in their behaviour to the French police when they come to the Asram in connection with the registration of new arrivals. There can be no possible excuse for this kind of conduct, especially as the police authorities have agreed to our own proposals in the matter and we have undertaken to help them with all necessary information. Sri Aurobindo has already given a warning against

making trouble for the Asram with the authorities; it ought not to be necessary to repeat it.

Especial care must be taken during these days when many are arriving from outside. If the police come for information, they must not be sent rudely away; they should be asked to wait and information must immediately be given to Purani who will deal with the matter.

1 August 1929

[4]

This Asram, maintaining almost a hundred people, has to be run at a heavy expense; it is therefore the understanding that while those who have nothing (the majority) are admitted free and nothing is asked from them, the few who have something are expected to give what they have. If they wish to have the charge of their whole spiritual and material future taken over by us, it is at least fair that they should make the offering of all their possessions.

December 1, 1929

Sri Aurobindo

[5]

An unique opportunity presents itself for the acquisition of a land of great value, specially prepared and large enough to supply all that the Asram needs of rice, of vegetables and more and also to maintain cows and a dairy so that the Asram can consume its own milk. The land is offered at an extraordinarily favourable rate. Originally offered at 66,000, it is now to be had at Rs 25,000.

The Mother wants to know if there is anyone in the Asram or connected with it or sympathetic with it who can get or procure the sum needed so that we may not lose the opportunity for this purchase.

3.3.33

Sri Aurobindo

[6]

In view of the approaching intended visit of Mahatma Gandhi the sadhaks are reminded that it is contrary to the rule of the Asram to join in any public demonstration such as meetings, lectures, receptions or departures. It is expected that they will observe strictly this rule.

3-2-34

Sri Aurobindo

[7]

Notice

As the Mother needs complete rest, there will be no pronam or evening darshan. All interviews are countermanded until farther notice and no books or letters are to be sent to her.

Sri Aurobindo

For today also it will be better if the sadhaks send no work to me.

14.6.34

[8]

Notice.

There will be no pronam or interviews today. No books or correspondence are to be sent.

The answers to yesterday's correspondence to which Sri Aurobindo had no time to attend last night, will be sent today or tomorrow as soon as he has time.

Sri Aurobindo

Tuesday. 17 July. [1934]

[9]

NOTICE

1. All letters in the evening should henceforth be sent in by 8.30 and all books by 9.30. After these times only communications on urgent matters such as illness etc can be received. Those who send in books and letters after the fixed hours cannot be sure of their communications being dealt with and must not expect an answer.

2. From now to the 15th August and afterwards sadhaks are asked to limit their letters as much as possible to what is necessary and important.

3. Those who send books daily to the Mother (apart from departmental reports) are asked to send them only twice a week or at most thrice on fixed days.

These recommendations have to be made because at present there is an excess of work for the Mother which prevents both sufficient rest and the concentration necessary for more important things that have to be done. The correspondence has come to engross all the time not given to Pranam and interviews and interferes with or entirely prevents more important sides of the work. It is necessary to impose a more reasonable proportion and set right the balance. It is to be hoped that the sadhaks will themselves cooperate willingly in getting this done.

July 17, 1934.

Sri Aurobindo

[10]

Notice about the Rosary terrace¹

Those who are not inmates of this compound cannot come on the Rosary terrace without special permission from the Mother.

4 August 1934

¹ *The heading of this notice was written by the Mother. — Ed.*

[11]

NOTICE

1. Those who are waiting for the Pranam before the Mother comes down, should remain quiet and silent so that all who wish to prepare themselves by concentration may be able to do so and the right atmosphere may be created for the Meditation.

2. No one should come out or go in from the time the Meditation has begun up to its ending.

3. Laughing, whispering or talk should not be indulged in in the Pranam hall while the Pranam is going on.

4. No one should look upon the Pranam either as a formal routine or an obligatory ceremony or think himself under any compulsion to come there. The object of the Pranam is not that sadhaks should offer a formal or a ritual daily homage to the Mother, but that the sadhaks may receive along with the Mother's blessing whatever spiritual help or influence they are in a condition to receive and assimilate. It is important to maintain a quiet and collected atmosphere favourable for that purpose.

11 August, 1934

Sri Aurobindo

[12]

NOTICE

From today onward till a week after the 24th the sending of books and correspondence is suspended. Only urgent communications (e.g. medical reports), necessary information and things of importance that cannot wait should be sent during this time.

16 November 1934

Sri Aurobindo

[13]

NOTICE

Correspondence can be resumed from Monday the 3^d December. At the same time I am obliged to remind the sadhaks of what I had written in my notice before the 15th August last. Since then the situation is no better. On the contrary the volume of correspondence, books and reports had considerably increased and the Mother had often less than four hours rest out of the twenty-four. This is a strain that cannot be allowed to continue. I must therefore again ask the sadhaks to use more discretion in this matter so that it may not be necessary to multiply the non-correspondence days or make restrictive rules so as to limit the amount of correspondence.

1.12.1934

Sri Aurobindo

[14]

Until farther notice sadhaks are requested not to go to the Dispensary for medicines or treatment without special permission or order from the Mother. late 1934

[15]

Notice

When the Ashram is shown to visitors, the Dispensary must be omitted from the parts shown hereafter. late 1934

[16]

NOTICE

As usual in view of the coming Darshan, books and regular correspondence have to be suspended until after the 21st. Notice will be given when they can be resumed.

Medical reports are not to be discontinued. Letters giving

urgent or necessary information or communications of importance that cannot be delayed can be sent. But all such correspondence should as a rule be as brief as possible.²

7.2.35

Sri Aurobindo

[17]

NOTICE

The withdrawal of the previous notice about correspondence does not mean that books, letters etc. can be sent as before. Only what is necessary or important should be sent for the present.

20-3-35

Sri Aurobindo

[18]

NOTICE

In view of the approach of the darshan day books and correspondence are suspended from Saturday the 27th July until farther notice. This notice is necessary because correspondence for 2 or 3 months had become as heavy as before.

Are excepted medical reports and such departmental reports as the Mother may direct to continue; also communications on matters of urgent importance.

Those who are accustomed to write regularly about their sadhana may continue to write once a week during this period if they find it necessary.

July 26, 1935

Sri Aurobindo

² *When this notice was taken down, Sri Aurobindo wrote to his secretary on the bottom of the typed copy:*

Nolini

Tajdar has taken off this notice—but I do not want all the floods of books and correspondence back again. You should put up a notice that the withdrawal does not mean that all the books and correspondence can come as before. Only what is necessary or important should be sent for the present.

In response to this Nolini drafted the notice of 20 March 1935. — Ed.

[19]

NOTICE

As at this time the number of those taking meals increases greatly, all are requested to keep regularly to the fixed hours. The arrangement for late comers can be allowed only for those who are detained by the Mother's work and for no one else.

7.8.1935

[20]

NOTICE

In view of the coming Darshan correspondence is suspended for the rest of the month except for urgent or indispensable communications. Medical reports to be sent as usual and any other departmental reports the continuance of which the Mother may think necessary.

Sri Aurobindo

November 10, 1935

[21]

NOTICE

The withdrawal of the previous notice about correspondence does not mean that books, letters etc. can be sent as before. Only what is necessary or important should be sent for the present.

In future letters and personal books should be sent in by 7 P.M. and not later.

It may be necessary, as there is no longer sufficient time in the afternoon, to discontinue the afternoon mail except for urgent answers.³

December 2, 1935

Sri Aurobindo

³ This is an enlarged version of the notice of 20 March 1935 (see notice 17 above). Sri Aurobindo added the last two paragraphs by hand. — Ed.

[22]

The attention of the sadhaks is called to the terms of the Notice of the 2^d December.

It is quite impossible for us at the present time to go on again dealing with masses of correspondence which keep the Mother after her day's work still occupied up to the small hours of the morning and myself answering letters all the night. Under such conditions the really important work we have to do cannot be done.

The sadhaks are asked to restrict their correspondence to what is necessary only, to a minimum.

The rule that no letters should be sent after 7 pm must also be observed. We cannot have personal books and letters pouring in till late at night.

It is also necessary to recall the fact that Sunday is a complete non-correspondence day. Latterly this rule seems to have been too much ignored, often forgotten altogether.

Sri Aurobindo

[23]

NOTICE

In view of the coming darshan correspondence is suspended till farther notice. Departmental and medical reports as usual.

July 31, 1936

Sri Aurobindo

[24]

It has become necessary to remind the sadhaks of two of the rules about correspondence which are now being disregarded —

(1) that Sunday is a non-correspondence day.

(2) that letters have to be given in by 7 pm or at the latest before 8 pm. Only departmental books and reports can be sent in later, but these also not too late.

If letters continue to come in at all hours, it will become impossible to deal with the correspondence.

August 31, 1936

Sri Aurobindo

[25]

NOTICE

In view of the coming darshan correspondence is suspended; subject to the usual exceptions (medical reports etc), throughout the month of November.

November 1, 1936

Sri Aurobindo

[26]

NOTICE

It has been found necessary to extend the non-correspondence period; it will continue until further orders.

28.2.37

Sri Aurobindo

[27]

NOTICE

During the Darshan time from today correspondence should be suspended.

August 1, 1937

Sri Aurobindo

Section Two

Public Statements about Sri Aurobindo's Path of Yoga 1934 and 1949

Sri Aurobindo's Teaching¹

The teaching of Sri Aurobindo starts from that of the ancient sages of India that behind the appearances of the universe there is the Reality of a Being and Consciousness, a Self of all things one and eternal. All beings are united in that One Self and Spirit but divided by a certain separativity of consciousness, an ignorance of their true Self and Reality in the mind, life and body. It is possible by a certain psychological discipline to remove this veil of separative consciousness and become aware of the true Self, the Divinity within us and all.

Sri Aurobindo's teaching states that this One Being and Consciousness is involved here in Matter. Evolution is the method by which it liberates itself; consciousness appears in what seems to be inconscient, and once having appeared is self-impelled to grow higher and higher and at the same time to enlarge and develop towards a greater and greater perfection. Life is the first step of this release of consciousness; mind is the second; but the evolution does not finish with mind, it awaits a release into something greater, a consciousness which is spiritual and supramental. The next step of the evolution must be towards the development of Supermind and Spirit as the dominant power in the conscious being. For only then will the involved Divinity in things release itself entirely and it become possible for life to manifest perfection.

But while the former steps in evolution were taken by Nature without a conscious will in the plant and animal life, in man Nature becomes able to evolve by a conscious will in the instrument. It is not however by the mental will in man that this can be

¹ *This statement was published along with "Sri Aurobindo's Asram" (see pages 530–31) in the Hindu of Madras on 20 February 1934 and in pamphlets entitled "The Teaching and the Asram of Sri Aurobindo" in March and August 1934. It has been reproduced many times since then. — Ed.*

wholly done, for the mind goes only to a certain point and after that can only move in a circle. A conversion has to be made, a turning of the consciousness by which mind has to change into the higher principle. This method is to be found through the ancient psychological discipline and practice of Yoga. In the past it has been attempted by a drawing away from the world and a disappearance into the height of the Self or Spirit. Sri Aurobindo teaches that a descent of the higher principle is possible which will not merely release the spiritual Self out of the world, but release it in the world, replace the mind's ignorance or its very limited knowledge by a supramental truth-consciousness which will be a sufficient instrument of the inner Self and make it possible for the human being to find himself dynamically as well as inwardly and grow out of his still animal humanity into a diviner race. The psychological discipline of Yoga can be used to that end by opening all the parts of the being to a conversion or transformation through the descent and working of the higher still concealed supramental principle.

This however cannot be done at once or in a short time or by any rapid or miraculous transformation. Many steps have to be taken by the seeker before the supramental descent is possible. Man lives mostly in his surface mind, life and body but there is an inner being within him with greater possibilities to which he has to awake — for it is only a very restricted influence from it that he receives now and that pushes him to a constant pursuit of a greater beauty, harmony, power and knowledge. The first process of Yoga is therefore to open the ranges of this inner being and to live from there outward, governing his outward life by an inner light and force. In doing so he discovers in himself his true soul which is not this outer mixture of mental, vital and physical elements but something of the Reality behind them, a spark from the one Divine Fire. He has to learn to live in his soul and purify and orientate by its drive towards the Truth the rest of the nature. There can follow afterwards an opening upward and descent of a higher principle of the Being. But even then it is not at once the full supramental Light and Force. For there are several ranges of consciousness

between the ordinary human mind and the supramental Truth-consciousness. These intervening ranges have to be opened up and their power brought down into the mind, life and body. Only afterwards can the full power of the Truth-consciousness work in the nature. The process of this self-discipline or sadhana is therefore long and difficult, but even a little of it is so much gained because it makes the ultimate release and perfection more possible.

There are many things belonging to older systems that are necessary on the way — an opening of the mind to a greater wideness and to the sense of the Self and the Infinite, an emergence into what has been called the cosmic consciousness, mastery over the desires and passions; an outward asceticism is not essential, but the conquest of desire and attachment and a control over the body and its needs, greeds and instincts is indispensable. There is a combination of the old systems: the way of knowledge through the mind's discernment between Reality and the appearance, the heart's way of devotion, love and surrender and the way of works turning the will away from motives of self-interest to the Truth and the service of a greater Reality than the ego. For the whole being has to be trained so that it can respond and be transformed when it is possible for that greater Light and Force to work in the nature.

In this discipline, the inspiration of the Master, and in the difficult stages his control and his presence are indispensable — for it would be impossible otherwise to go through it without much stumbling and error which would prevent all chance of success. The Master is one who has risen to a higher consciousness and being and he is often regarded as its manifestation or representative. He not only helps by his teaching and still more by his influence and example but by a power to communicate his own experience to others.

This is Sri Aurobindo's teaching and method of practice. It is not his object to develop any one religion or to amalgamate the older religions or to found any new religion, for any of these things would lead away from his central purpose. The one aim of his Yoga is an inner self-development by which each

one who follows it can in time discover the one Self in all and evolve a higher consciousness than the mental, a spiritual and supramental consciousness which will transform and divinise human nature.

February 1934

A Message to America

I have been asked to send on this occasion of the fifteenth August a message to the West, but what I have to say might be delivered equally as a message to the East. It has been customary to dwell on the division and difference between these two sections of the human family and even oppose them to each other; but, for myself I would rather be disposed to dwell on oneness and unity than on division and difference. East and West have the same human nature, a common human destiny, the same aspiration after a greater perfection, the same seeking after something higher than itself, something towards which inwardly and even outwardly we move. There has been a tendency in some minds to dwell on the spirituality or mysticism of the East and the materialism of the West; but the West has had no less than the East its spiritual seekings and, though not in such profusion, its saints and sages and mystics, the East has had its materialistic tendencies, its material splendours, its similar or identical dealings with life and Matter and the world in which we live. East and West have always met and mixed more or less closely, they have powerfully influenced each other and at the present day are under an increasing compulsion of Nature and Fate to do so more than ever before.

There is a common hope, a common destiny, both spiritual and material, for which both are needed as co-workers. It is no longer towards division and difference that we should turn our minds, but on unity, union, even oneness necessary for the pursuit and realisation of a common ideal, the destined goal, the fulfilment towards which Nature in her beginning obscurely set out and must in an increasing light of knowledge replacing her first ignorance constantly persevere.

But what shall be that ideal and that goal? That depends on our conception of the realities of life and the supreme Reality.

Here we have to take into account that there has been, not any absolute difference but an increasing divergence between the tendencies of the East and the West. The highest truth is truth of the Spirit; a Spirit supreme above the world and yet immanent in the world and in all that exists, sustaining and leading all towards whatever is the aim and goal and the fulfilment of Nature since her obscure unconscious beginnings through the growth of consciousness is the one aspect of existence which gives a clue to the secret of our being and a meaning to the world. The East has always and increasingly put the highest emphasis on the supreme truth of the Spirit; it has, even in its extreme philosophies, put the world away as an illusion and regarded the Spirit as the sole reality. The West has concentrated more and more increasingly on the world, on the dealings of mind and life with our material existence, on our mastery over it, on the perfection of mind and life and some fulfilment of the human being here: latterly this has gone so far as the denial of the Spirit and even the enthronement of Matter as the sole reality. Spiritual perfection as the sole ideal on one side, on the other, the perfectibility of the race, the perfect society, a perfect development of the human mind and life and man's material existence have become the largest dream of the future. Yet both are truths and can be regarded as part of the intention of the Spirit in world-nature; they are not incompatible with each other: rather their divergence has to be healed and both have to be included and reconciled in our view of the future.

The Science of the West has discovered evolution as the secret of life and its process in this material world; but it has laid more stress on the growth of form and species than on the growth of consciousness: even, consciousness has been regarded as an incident and not the whole secret of the meaning of the evolution. An evolution has been admitted by certain minds in the East, certain philosophies and Scriptures, but there its sense has been the growth of the soul through developing or successive forms and many lives of the individual to its own highest reality. For if there is a conscious being in the form, that being can hardly be a temporary phenomenon of consciousness; it must

be a soul fulfilling itself and this fulfilment can only take place if there is a return of the soul to earth in many successive lives, in many successive bodies.

The process of evolution has been the development from and in inconscient Matter of a subconscient and then a conscious Life, of conscious mind first in animal life and then fully in conscious and thinking man, the highest present achievement of evolutionary Nature. The achievement of mental being is at present her highest and tends to be regarded as her final work; but it is possible to conceive a still further step of the evolution: Nature may have in view beyond the imperfect mind of man a consciousness that passes out of the mind's ignorance and possesses truth as its inherent right and nature. There is a truth-consciousness as it is called in the Veda, a supermind, as I have termed it, possessing Knowledge, not having to seek after it and constantly miss it. In one of the Upanishads a being of knowledge is stated to be the next step above the mental being; into that the soul has to rise and through it to attain the perfect bliss of spiritual existence. If that could be achieved as the next evolutionary step of Nature here, then she would be fulfilled and we could conceive of the perfection of life even here, its attainment of a full spiritual living even in this body or it may be in a perfected body. We could even speak of a divine life on earth; our human dream of perfectibility would be accomplished and at the same time the aspiration to a heaven on earth common to several religions and spiritual seers and thinkers.

The ascent of the human soul to the supreme Spirit is that soul's highest aim and necessity, for that is the supreme reality; but there can be too the descent of the Spirit and its powers into the world and that would justify the existence of the material world also, give a meaning, a divine purpose to the creation and solve its riddle. East and West could be reconciled in the pursuit of the highest and largest ideal, Spirit embrace Matter and Matter find its own true reality and the hidden Reality in all things in the Spirit.

Note on the Texts

Note on the Texts

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTES AND OTHER WRITINGS OF HISTORICAL INTEREST consists of notes, letters, telegrams and public statements written by Sri Aurobindo at various times that are of special interest to students of his life. The volume does not, as a rule, include letters written between 1927 and 1950. Most letters of biographical or historical interest from that period are included in *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.

The contents of the present volume have been arranged by the editors in four parts, each of which is divided into two or three sections.

PART ONE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Sri Aurobindo never wrote, of his own volition, anything autobiographical in the ordinary sense of the word. He wrote most of the notes in this part to correct statements made by others.

Section One Life Sketches and Other Autobiographical Notes

Sri Aurobindo: A Life Sketch. Sri Aurobindo wrote this piece in June 1930 for publication in *Among the Great*, a book written by his disciple Dilip Kumar Roy. He used the third person because he wished the piece to appear as an impersonal statement from an anonymous “authoritative source”. *Among the Great* consists of accounts of Dilip’s meetings and excerpts from his correspondence with five eminent contemporaries — Romain Rolland, Mahatma Gandhi, Bertrand Russell, Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo. Dilip began working on his manuscript sometime during the late 1920s. Around September 1928, he sent portions of it, including a life sketch written by him, to Sri

Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo's remarks on this life sketch are published as item [1] of the Appendix (see page 11). In November 1928, Dilip became a member of the Ashram. A year and a half later, in March 1930, he learned that a publisher in New York was interested in his book. On the fifteenth of that month, he wrote giving this information to Sri Aurobindo and submitting some material he wished to have included in the book. Sri Aurobindo's response is reproduced as item [2] of the Appendix (page 11). Dilip was unwilling to accept Sri Aurobindo's suggestion to "omit all account or narrative". He sent another draft of a life sketch, which Sri Aurobindo commented on in a letter of 25 March (pages 11–12). Finally Sri Aurobindo agreed to write a brief life sketch himself. On 1 June, in the course of a letter on another subject, he noted: "I shall see whether I can get the thing done (the facts of the life) in these ten days." The work was completed before 27 June, the date of the letter published on pages 12–13.

Among the Great was not accepted by the New York publisher. It was first brought out in India in 1945 (Bombay: Nalanda Publications). The "Life Sketch" appeared as an appendix to this edition, below the following note by Dilip: "*For the benefit of Western readers I append here a brief statement of the principal facts of Sri Aurobindo's public and merely outward life from an authoritative source.*" But the text of the "Life Sketch" had already been in print for several years. On 15 August 1934 the Calcutta fortnightly journal *Onward* reproduced an abridged version. (Other newspapers subsequently printed the complete text.) In 1937 Radhakanta Nag of the Arya Publishing House proposed bringing it out as a pamphlet. This idea was put before Sri Aurobindo on 23 February 1937. He gave his consent with a lukewarm "Very well." The booklet was published later the same year. In 1948 the text was reproduced, with a few editorial additions, in a booklet entitled "Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram" (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House). In subsequent editions of this booklet, the text of the "Life Sketch" underwent further editorial modifications. In 1975 a modified text appeared in Volume 30, *Index and Glossary*, of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library. In April 1985 the original text was reproduced in *Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research*. This was the first time that the "Life Sketch" was published as a text written by Sri Aurobindo. The editors of *Archives and Research* added two letters

from Sri Aurobindo's correspondence with Dilip, which explain the circumstances of the text's composition and make it clear why he did not want it to be published as his. The same letters, along with three others, are published in the Appendix that follows the "Life Sketch" in the present volume.

Appendix: Letters on "Sri Aurobindo: A Life Sketch". [1] Circa September–October 1928. Sri Aurobindo wrote these sentences in the margin of a letter written by Dilip Kumar Roy shortly before he joined the Ashram in November 1928. [2] This paragraph is part of a letter from Sri Aurobindo to Dilip dated 16 March 1930. The balance of the letter deals with various writings by Sri Aurobindo that Dilip wanted to include in *Among the Great*. [3] 25 March 1930. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter after reading a "biography" (that is, a life sketch) written by Dilip for *Among the Great*. [4] The manuscript of this letter is not dated, but it apparently was written in June 1930. [5] 27 June 1930. This letter deals with the draft of a proposed note on Sri Aurobindo's "occidental education" (see the last sentence of letter [4]), which Dilip intended to add to Sri Aurobindo's "Life Sketch". In the printed text of the "Life Sketch" the paragraph that Sri Aurobindo placed here between inverted commas was printed as a footnote. The sentence about Sri Aurobindo's prizes and examinations, which he wanted to have omitted, was tacked on rather awkwardly as a closing parenthesis. In a typescript of the text that was submitted to him, Sri Aurobindo emended "to study Goethe and Dante" to "to read Goethe and Dante".

Incomplete Life Sketches. These pieces are from Sri Aurobindo's manuscripts of the 1920s. The circumstances of their writing are not known.

Incomplete Life Sketch in Outline Form, c. 1922. Sri Aurobindo wrote this outline of his life up to 1914 sometime during the early 1920s. (The non-cooperation movement, mentioned in the text, began in August 1920 and ended in February 1922.)

Fragmentary Life Sketch, c. 1928. Sri Aurobindo wrote this isolated passage in 1928 or 1929 in a notebook used otherwise for notes on philosophy and yoga.

Autobiographical Notes. Two of these unrelated pieces are from the year 1903. The third (a revision of the second) is from 1928.

A Day in Srinagar. 1903, probably 30 May. Sri Aurobindo was in Kashmir from late May to mid September 1903. During this time he served as the private secretary to the Maharaja of Baroda. Letters that he wrote for the Maharaja while in Kashmir show that the royal party was in Srinagar at least three times: from 28 May (or slightly before) to 6 or 7 June, for a few days around 23 June, and again for ten days or more after 5 September. References in these diary notations make it seem likely that they were written during the first of the visits to the Kashmiri capital, that is, between 28 May and 6 June. The only Saturday during this period (omitting 6 June itself, which must have been spent making preparations to go to Icchabal, or “Archibal”, as Sri Aurobindo spelled it) was 30 May 1903. This then is the likely date of these notes. The longer and shorter pieces separated here by an asterisk were written by Sri Aurobindo on separate pages of his notebook. The Sardesai mentioned in the first piece is no doubt Govind Sakharam Sardesai, the Marathi historian, who was an officer in the Maharaja’s service. The Maharaja was often referred to as His Highness (H.H.). His chief Baroda residence was Lakshmi Vilas Palace, an imposing building that unsuccessfully tries to combine Italian, Indian and other architectural elements.

Information Supplied to the *King’s College Register*. [1] 16 September 1903. While in Srinagar, Sri Aurobindo received a form from the editors of the *Register of Admissions* of his Cambridge college, asking him for information about his university and subsequent career. He filled out the form on 16 September and returned it. The text is reproduced here from the original form, which is preserved in the King’s College Library. [2] 31 August 1928. A short biographical entry based on the information Sri Aurobindo submitted in 1903 was published in *A Register of Admissions to King’s College Cambridge 1850–1900*, compiled by John J. Withers (London, 1903). In 1928 the editors of the second edition of this work sent a copy of the 1903 entry to Sri Aurobindo, asking him to correct and update it in the spaces provided. In the present text, the old entry is printed as it was submitted to Sri Aurobindo. Passages cancelled by him are set in “strike-out” mode, his additions in regular type. The text is reproduced from the original form, which is preserved in the King’s College Library. The revised entry was published in *A Register of Admissions to King’s College*

Cambridge 1797–1928, compiled by John J. Withers (London, 1929).

Section Two
Corrections of Statements Made in Biographies
and Other Publications

Sri Aurobindo wrote these notes between 1943 and 1947 to correct erroneous or misleading statements about his life made in biographies, other books or newspaper articles that were submitted to him by the authors before publication or brought to his attention by others after publication. For the convenience of readers, the editors of the present volume have arranged the notes according to the dates of the events dealt with. In the paragraphs that follow, however, the editors discuss the notes in the approximate order in which Sri Aurobindo wrote them, treating notes occasioned by a given biography or article as a group.

(1) Notes on *Sri Aurobindo*, by K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar. In February 1943, Dr. Iyengar, then Professor of English at Basaveshvar College, Bagalkot, brought to the Ashram the 133-page manuscript of a biography of Sri Aurobindo that he had written, in the hope that Sri Aurobindo would read and comment on it. Sri Aurobindo agreed, and made numerous corrections directly on Iyengar's manuscript. Around 35 of these corrections were typed, further corrected by Sri Aurobindo, retyped and corrected again. A copy of the final typed pages, consisting now of 39 notes, was given to Iyengar for incorporation in his book. Over the next ten months, Iyengar enlarged his manuscript to more than 300 pages. In November 1943 he brought it to the Ashram and left it with Sri Aurobindo for further correction. Sri Aurobindo did some work directly on the manuscript but wrote longer corrections on small note pads. Twenty-eight of these notes were typed and further revised. He finished this work before May 1944. A copy of his corrections was given to Iyengar, who incorporated them in the final manuscript of his book, which was published by the Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, in 1945. Most of the 67 notes that Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1943 and 1944 for Iyengar's use were published in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* in 1953. They were reprinted in *On Himself: Compiled from Notes and Letters* in 1972. All the published notes, along with a few smaller ones, are included in the present volume.

(2) Notes on *Yogi Arvind*, by V. D. Kulkarni. This book, written in Marathi, was published in 1935. Eight years later, in March 1943, a copy of it was shown to Sri Aurobindo, who wrote eight comments in the margins. These comments were first published in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* in 1953.

(3) Notes on material gathered by A. B. Purani, author of *The Life of Sri Aurobindo*. A disciple of Sri Aurobindo from 1918 and a member of the Ashram from 1923, Purani collected biographical material about Sri Aurobindo for a number of years, and published a biography of him in 1957. Sometime around 1943–45, Purani obtained three typed accounts of Sri Aurobindo's service in Baroda State, which he presented to Sri Aurobindo for correction. Sri Aurobindo wrote nine notes in the margins or between the lines of two of the sheets. He corrected the other account, entitled "Sri Aurobindo — An Officer in the Baroda State", by writing ten notes on separate sheets. All these notes were published for the first time in the journal *Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research* in 1978.

(4) Notes on *Sri Aurobindo o Banglay Swadeshi Jug*, by Girijashankar Raychaudhuri. This work appeared serially in the Bengali monthly *Udbodhan* during the 1940s and was published as a book by Navabharat Publishing, Calcutta, in 1956. Around 1943–45, A. B. Purani typed translations or paraphrases of passages from two *Udbodhan* instalments and gave them to Sri Aurobindo. In response, Sri Aurobindo wrote seven notes of various lengths. Around the same time he made the following comment about Girijashankar's biographical work:

Girija Sankar's statements about Sri Aurobindo cannot be taken as they are; they are often based on false or twisted information, tend towards misrepresentation or are only inferences or guesses.

In one of the chapters of *Sri Aurobindo o Banglay Swadeshi Jug*, Girijashankar cited a letter written to him by Swami Sundarananda of the *Udbodhan* office, in which Sundarananda claimed that Sri Aurobindo visited Saradamani Devi, the widow of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, on his way to Chandernagore in 1910. This and other parts of Girijashankar's articles were shown to Sri Aurobindo, who on 15

December 1944 replied in the form of a letter to Charu Chandra Dutt, the substance of which was published in the *Udbodhan* (Phalgun 1351). The story about Sri Aurobindo's visit to Saradamani Devi was repeated by a certain K. Ghosh in a letter published in the *Hindusthan Standard* of 6 June 1945. In response, Sri Aurobindo dictated another letter, which was published in the *Sunday Times* of Madras on 24 June. Around the same time, Sri Aurobindo's disciple Sureshchandra Chakravarty, who was with him on his trip from Calcutta to Chander-nagore, published an article dealing with that event in the *Baishakh* 1352 issue of *Prabasi*. In reply to this, Ramchandra Majumdar, who was with Sri Aurobindo and Sureshchandra for part of that night, published an article (*Prabasi*, *Sraban* 1352) questioning Sureshchandra's account. When this was brought to Sri Aurobindo's attention, he dictated a final statement in which he tried to set the record straight. This was not published during his lifetime, but it was used by his disciple Nolini Kanta Gupta in writing an article that was published in *Prabasi* in *Phalgun* 1352. The first two letters by Sri Aurobindo referred to above were published in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* in 1953. The third was published in *On Himself* in 1972.

(5) Notes on *Nivedita: Fille de l'Inde*, by Lizelle Reymond. This biography of Sister Nivedita (Margaret Noble) was published by Éditions Victor Attinger, Paris and Neuchâtel, in 1945. In 1946, passages of Reymond's manuscript dealing with Sri Aurobindo were read out to him, and on 13 September of that year he dictated a reply in the form of a letter to his disciple Pavitra (P. B. Saint Hilaire). The letter to Pavitra was first published in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* in 1953.

(6) Notes on *Shri Aurobindo*, by Gabriel E. Monod-Herzen. A scientist and professor, Monod-Herzen lived in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram during the 1940s. In or around 1946, he submitted a manuscript of a biography he had written to Sri Aurobindo, who dictated 38 corrections to his amanuensis. These were typed and given to Monod-Herzen for use in his biography, written in French and published in 1954. Most of these notes were included in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and the Mother* in 1953.

While correcting Monod-Herzen's manuscript, Sri Aurobindo decided to write a separate note on his political life. This eventually

became the twenty-page “General Note on Sri Aurobindo’s Political Life” reproduced on pages 47–66. The typescript of this note is dated “Nov 7 1946”. It was later revised and enlarged and in 1948 published anonymously in the booklet “Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram” (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House). It has appeared in all subsequent editions of that work, and also was included in *On Himself* (1972).

(7) The other notes in this section are corrections of statements made in various publications. The note dealing with Sri Aurobindo’s learning of English (p. 25) was written in reply to a review of Sri Aurobindo’s *Collected Poems and Plays* published in the *Times Literary Supplement* (London) on 8 July 1944. The note was incorporated in a letter by R. Vaidyanathaswamy, editor of the *Advent* (Madras), that was published in the *TLS* on 6 January 1945. The note on Sri Aurobindo’s education and religious background in England (p. 26) and on his “first turn towards spiritual seeking” (p. 106) are from his manuscripts. The circumstances of their writing are not known. The first was written around 1940, the second around 1942. The notes referred to in this paragraph were first published in *Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research* in December 1977.

The origin of the notes in the Appendix is not known. Unlike the other notes, which have been preserved in the form of handwritten or dictated manuscripts, these survive only in printed form. They may be transcriptions of oral remarks by Sri Aurobindo. Some of them were published in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (1953), the others in *On Himself* (1972).

Table 1

Emendations of Matters of Fact (Simple Cases)

This table lists editorial emendations of matters of fact in pieces reproduced in Part One. (Similar emendations in pieces in other Parts are dealt with in the note to the piece in question.) Emendations of matters of fact have been made only in cases of slips involving (1) dates, (2) place names, (3) names of events and offices, and (4) bibliographical details. In every case these slips could be rectified by reference to contemporary documents and reliable secondary sources that are clear and unambiguous. The documents and publications consulted are listed in column four. (Full bibliographical details on printed and internet sources are given on page 569.) More complex problems are listed in Table 2.

| Pg. | MS or first ed. reading | Emended reading | Observations (with documents consulted) |
|-----|-------------------------|-----------------|---|
| 5 | 1885 | 1884 | Sri Aurobindo entered St. Paul's School in September 1884 (Gardiner, ed., <i>Admissions Registers</i> , p. 121; personal communication from the Librarian, St. Paul's School, London). |
| 5 | February | January | The steamship <i>Carthage</i> , by which Aurobindo travelled to India, left London on 12 January 1893 and arrived in Bombay on 6 February (Board of Trade <i>Passenger Lists</i> [BT 27/135], Public Records Office, London; personal communications from National Maritime Museum, London, Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, London, and Lloyds, London). |
| 20 | 1903 | 1893 | Sri Aurobindo began his service in Baroda on 8 February 1893 (Baroda Service List, and other documents, Baroda Record Office, Vadodara; Sri Aurobindo corrected this slip himself in item [2] on p. 21 of the present volume). |
| 20 | June | April | Sri Aurobindo's marriage took place in April 1901, probably on the 29th of the month (handwritten statement by Bhupal Chandra Bose; printed poem written for the occasion dated 16 Baishakh 1308 [29 April 1901]; Baroda State Huzur Order dated 17 April 1901 mentioning a gift of money from the Maharaja to Sri Aurobindo "on the occasion of his marriage" [Baroda Record Office, Vadodara]). |
| 51 | seven | nine | Nine instalments of <i>New Lamps for Old</i> were published in the <i>Indu Prakash</i> between 7 August 1893 and 6 March 1894 (Sri Aurobindo, <i>Bande Mataram: Political Writings and Speeches 1890–1908</i> , pp. 11–62). |
| 56 | Karachi | Lahore | A resolution affirming complete independence as the goal of the Indian National Congress was first passed at the Lahore session in December 1929. A resolution passed at the Karachi session in March 1931 noted in passing that complete independence was still the goal of the Congress (Zaidi, et al., eds., vol. 9, pp. 670–71, vol. 10, p. 145). |
| 59 | Bengal Provincial | district | The conference held in Midnapore in December 1907, which Sri Aurobindo attended, was a district conference. In contemporary newspaper accounts it is referred to as the "Midnapore District Conference" or simply the "Midnapore Conference" (Sri Aurobindo, <i>Bande Mataram</i> , pp. 788–89, 790–94; <i>Bande Mataram</i> weekly edition, 15 December 1907, pp. 7–10). The 1907 Bengal Provincial Conference was held in Berhampur at the end of March (Sri Aurobindo, <i>Bande Mataram</i> , pp. 224–27). |

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- 61 Barisal Hooghly For the Hooghly Conference, see Sri Aurobindo: *Karmayogin: Political Writings and Speeches 1909–1910*, pp. 209–35. See also p. 59 of the present volume, where the events of the Hooghly Conference (September 1909) are discussed between events of late 1907–early 1908 and events of May 1908). The Bengal Provincial Conference was held in Barisal in April 1906. Note that Sri Aurobindo spoke at the Bakarganj District Conference on 19 June 1909 (Sri Aurobindo, *Karmayogin*, pp. 33–42). Bakarganj District was sometimes referred to as Barisal District.
- 61 Hooghly Pabna For the compromise at the Hooghly Conference of September 1909, see p. 59 of the present volume. An earlier compromise had been reached at the provincial conference held in Pabna, East Bengal, in February 1908 (Sri Aurobindo, *Bande Mataram*, pp. 871–76, 902, 918 [where Sri Aurobindo specifically mentions “the compromise arrived at at Pabna”], 919, etc.; *Bande Mataram*, weekly edition, 16 February 1908, pp. 12–17; 25 February 1908, pp. 8–9).
- 62 Benares Lahore The negotiations for a united Congress in Bengal were held in December 1909 (Sri Aurobindo, *Karmayogin*, pp. 340–42, 363–71). This was before the third Lahore session of the Indian National Congress (December 1909). The Benares session of Congress was held in December 1905, two years before Sri Aurobindo emerged as a political leader.
- 76 Bengal district See above, emendation to statement on p. 59.
- 79 Serpentine Mott’s The illness to which Sri Aurobindo refers in this note occurred in November–December 1906. At that time he stayed in the house of his father-in-law Bhupal Chandra Bose, in Mott’s Lane, Calcutta (Sri Aurobindo’s statement in the *Bande Mataram* Case [September 1907]; testimony of Subodh Chandra Mullick in the same case; deposition of Sukumar Sen in the Alipore Bomb Case; a signed document put in as evidence in the same case [Exhibit 77/2] giving Sri Aurobindo’s address on 17 October 1906 as 25/5/1 Mott’s Lane). Several other sources mention that Bhupal Chandra Bose lived in Serpentine Lane after 1906.

Table 2

Other Questions regarding Matters of Fact (Complex Cases)

This table lists statements of matters of fact that are not in accord with contemporary documents and reliable secondary sources, but which cannot be set right by means of simple verbal emendation. Relevant observations are provided in column three along with the documents and publications consulted. (Full bibliographical details on printed and internet sources are given on page 569.)

| Pg. | Text reading | Observations (with documents consulted) |
|-----|---|--|
| 26 | a Senior Classic at Oxford | William H. Drewett (1842/3–1909) is not listed in <i>Alumni Oxonienses 1715–1886</i> , the authoritative register of members of the University of Oxford. He attended Didsbury College, Manchester, in 1860 and 1861, and began work as a probationary minister in 1861 (personal communications from Wesley College, Bristol, and Wesley Historical Society, London). In 1859 and 1860 he was a schoolmaster at Burton on Trent Grammar School, Staffordshire (Lichfield Record Office BD110/114; personal communication from Ferguson Memorial Library, Sydney). Presumably (non-preservation of records makes it impossible to confirm this) he studied Latin at the same school, which in the nineteenth century had a “strong emphasis on classics”, that is, Latin and Greek (“Burton-on-Trent Grammar School”). As the son of a Methodist minister who was planning to become a Methodist minister, Drewett would not have attended Oxford, which did not grant degrees to non-Anglicans before 1866. |
| 28 | Lieutenant Governor of Bengal | Sir Henry Cotton never served as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal. He held various posts in the Bengal administrative and judicial services, including Chief Secretary in the Bengal secretariat, and in 1896 became Chief Commissioner of Assam, a position he held till his resignation in 1902 (Moulton; Ghosh, p. 321; Buckland, p. 96; “Provinces of British India”). |
| 29 | Austen Leigh was not the name of the Provost; | Austen Leigh was Provost of King’s College during the years Sri Aurobindo attended (1890–92). During the same period G. W. Prothero held the post of Praelector (<i>Cambridge University Calendar</i> , 1890, 1891, 1892–93; personal communications from the Provost and the Librarian, King’s College, Cambridge, 1975–77). Prothero took some interest in Sri Aurobindo, writing at least one letter on his behalf (Purani, pp. 327–28). |

- 40 I went on in it uninterruptedly . . . until, in fact, I left Baroda. Numerous documents in the Baroda State and Baroda College archives make it clear that Sri Aurobindo ceased to teach at Baroda College in April 1901, and resumed teaching in September 1904 (see for example letter of 28 September 1904 reproduced on p. 163 of the present volume).
- 40– If I was in the Revenue Department . . . what was I doing there? Numerous documents from various Baroda State departments, including the Baroda Service List, show that Sri Aurobindo drew his salary from the Revenue Department from May 1901 to September 1904. During most of this period he worked directly under the Maharaja, in the beginning without an official appointment. Between May and September 1903, he had the title Acting Secretary. Between the end of 1903 and September 1904, he had the title assistant Huzur Kamdar. In September 1904 he rejoined Baroda College as Vice-Principal and Professor of English (Baroda State Records, multiple items; Baroda College Records, multiple items).
- 59 He led the party again . . . at Hooghly. The first four sentences in this paragraph refer to events that took place late in 1907 and early in 1908. The rest of the paragraph refers to occurrences at the Hooghly session of the Bengal Provincial Conference, which took place in September 1909 (see Sri Aurobindo, *Karmayogin*, pp. 209–35). Sri Aurobindo discusses events at the Hooghly Conference again on pp. 61–62 of the present volume. He places this second discussion in its proper place in the chronological sequence, but calls the conference the “Provincial Conference at Barisal” (see also Table 1 above, emendations to statements on p. 61).
- 76 in the first row Contemporary newspaper accounts agree that the first row of delegates at the Barisal Conference consisted of Surendranath Banerjea, Bhupendranath Bose and Motilal Ghose. These accounts, as well as official reports, note that the police allowed many delegates to pass, not just the first three, before attacking the younger men (*Bengalee*, April 17–18; *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, April 16, 19; Government of India, HPA June 1906, 152–68). Sri Aurobindo, then new to politics, is not mentioned in any of these accounts.
- 84 No. Tied with a rope; In *Karakahini* (Sri Aurobindo, *Bangla Rachana*, p. 8), Sri Aurobindo writes of his arrest: “I was handcuffed and a rope was tied around my waist” (*āmār hāte hātkaḍi, komare daḍi deoa hoilo*). This agrees with contemporary reports in Calcutta newspapers.

Printed and Internet Sources for Data in Tables

[Archival sources are listed in full in the last column of the Tables.]

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- “Burton on Trent Grammar School”, <http://www.burton-on-trent.org/1-History/School%20History/History.htm>
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PART TWO

LETTERS OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

Most of Sri Aurobindo’s published letters were written to members of his Ashram and outside disciples between 1927 and 1950. Such letters are published in the following works: *Letters on Yoga*, *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, *The Mother with Letters on the Mother*, and *Letters on Poetry and Art*. Most of the letters included in Part Two of the present volume were written before 1927. Those that were written after that date are parts of sequences that began earlier, or deal with special subjects, such as Indian politics.

The material in this part has been arranged by the editors in three sections: (1) Letters on Personal, Practical and Political Matters, 1890–1926; (2) Early Letters on Yoga and the Spiritual Life, 1911–1928; and (3) Other Letters of Historical Interest on Yoga and Practical Life, 1921–1938.

Section One

Letters on Personal, Practical and Political Matters, 1890–1926

The letters in this part have been arranged by the editors in five subsections: (1) Family Letters, 1890–1919; (2) Letters Written as a Probationer in the Indian Civil Service, 1892; (3) Letters Written While Employed in the Princely State of Baroda, 1895–1906; (4) Letters and Telegrams to Political and Professional Associates, 1906–1926; (5) Open Letters and Messages Published in Newspapers, 1909–1925.

Family Letters, 1890–1919. Sri Aurobindo passed most of his youth, from 1877 to 1893, in England. Only part of one letter survives from this period. He wrote the next five letters in this subsection while living in Baroda between 1893 and 1906. The two letters to his father-in-law were written from Calcutta in 1906 and Pondicherry in 1919.

Extract from a Letter to His Father. 1890. This passage is from a letter that Sri Aurobindo wrote to his father Dr. K. D. Ghose (1844–1892) shortly after his arrival in Cambridge in October 1890. His father copied out the passage in a letter written to his brother-in-law Jogindranath Bose in December 1890.

To His Grandfather. 11 January 1894. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter to his grandfather Raj Narain Bose (1826–1899), a well-known writer and leader of the Adi Brahma Samaj, while posted in Gujaria, a town in northern Gujarat, which then was part of the princely state of Baroda.

To His Sister. 25 August 1894. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter to his younger sister Sarojini (1877–1956) shortly after his first visit to his home province after his return from England. Sarojini had been an infant when he went to England. The letter was published by their brother Barindra Kumar in *Jugantar* (Puja number 1364 B.S.).

Extract from a Letter to His Brother. 1899–1900. Sri Aurobindo made a typed copy of these pages from a letter written to his second brother Manmohan (1869–1924). His intention was to use them as an introduction to his poem *Love and Death*, written in 1899. At the top of the transcript he typed “To my Brother”. This apparently was meant to be the dedication of the poem and not the salutation of the letter. When he was preparing *Love and Death* for publication

in 1920, he dropped both the dedication and the introduction. The first of the two Latin quotations, from Virgil's *Georgics* (3.8–9), may be translated: "A path . . . by which I too may lift me from the dust, and float triumphant through the mouths of men". The second, from Horace's *Satires* (2.7.21, with a change in the mood of the verb), means "whither does such wretched stuff tend".

To His Uncle. 15 August 1902. Jogindranath Bose, the recipient of this letter, was Sri Aurobindo's eldest maternal uncle (*baḍa māmā*).

To His Wife. 20 August 1902. Sri Aurobindo was married to Mrinalini Bose (1887–1918) in 1901. He generally corresponded with her in Bengali. Several letters from him to her in that language are reproduced in *Writings in Bengali and Sanskrit*, volume 9 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. The present item is the only surviving letter from him to her that was written in English.

To His Father-in-Law. [1] 8 June 1906. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter to his father-in-law Bhupal Chandra Bose (1861–1937) towards the beginning of his active political career. [2] 19 February 1919. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter after Mrinalini's death from influenza in December 1918.

Letters Written as a Probationer in the Indian Civil Service, 1892. Sri Aurobindo passed the open examination for the Indian Civil Service (I.C.S.) in 1890. He completed his course work successfully, but was rejected in 1892 after failing to take advantage of the last chance offered him to pass the mandatory test in horse-riding. According to his own retrospective account, he had developed a distaste for Civil Service work and was delighted to be rejected on these trivial grounds.

To Lord Kimberley. [1] 21 November 1892. After he was rejected from the I.C.S., Sri Aurobindo was advised that his only hope, if he wished to remain in the service, was to write directly to the Secretary of State for India. The holder of this cabinet-level post was John Wodehouse, the first Earl of Kimberley (1826–1902). It is probable that Sri Aurobindo wrote to Kimberley at the insistence of James S. Cotton, who at this time was trying to pull strings to get the rejection overturned (see A. B. Purani, *The Life of Sri Aurobindo* [1978], pp. 326–33). [2] 12 December 1892. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter after Lord Kimberley refused his request to grant him another chance to

take the riding test. As a candidate who had successfully completed all the requirements but riding, he was due the last instalment of the allowance given to probationers. This and the previous letter are reproduced here from the originals preserved in the Oriental and India Office Collections, British Library, London.

Letters Written While Employed in the Princely State of Baroda, 1895–1906. Sri Aurobindo wrote the letters reproduced in this section while working as an administrative officer and professor in the erstwhile princely state of Baroda. Then known as Arvind or Aravind or Aurobindo Ghose, he began work in the state in February 1893, just after his return from England, and continued until March 1906, when he joined the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal. During the first part of this period he worked in various administrative departments. From 1898 to 1901 he was a professor of English and of French in the Baroda College. There followed a stint of three years (1901–4) when he worked in a secretarial capacity under Sayajirao Gaekwar, the Maharaja of Baroda. (In many of the documents the Maharaja is referred to as “the Gaekwar” or “H.H.” [His Highness].) Finally, in 1905, he returned to the College as vice-principal and professor of English. These documents are a representative selection from the scores that have survived. They are arranged in chronological order.

To the Sar Suba, Baroda State. 1 June 1895. In May 1895 Sri Aurobindo was summoned by the Maharaja to Ootacamund, a hill station in South India, in order to prepare a précis of a complex legal case. He wrote this letter to his superior shortly after his arrival in “Ootie”.

To Bhuban Babu. June 1901. This letter (actually a postcard) is the only non-official item in this subsection. It was written by Sri Aurobindo to a friend or acquaintance about whom nothing is known. Sri Aurobindo went to Naini Tal, a resort in what is now Uttaranchal, after his marriage to Mrinalini Bose in April 1901. The Banerji mentioned in the last paragraph was probably Jatindranath Banerji (c. 1877–1930), a young Bengali who had come to Baroda to obtain military training. In 1902 Sri Aurobindo sent Banerji to Calcutta to begin revolutionary work in Bengal.

To an Officer of the Baroda State. 14 February 1903. The “letter

to the Residency” mentioned in this note is the one published next in sequence. Sri Aurobindo was anxious to leave Baroda at this time because he had to go to Bengal to settle a quarrel among members of the revolutionary society he and others had founded the year before.

Draft of Reply to the Resident on the Curzon Circular. 1903. In 1900 Lord Curzon, Viceroy and Governor-General of India, issued a circular letter requiring the rulers of princely states to obtain the permission of the government before leaving the country. Although worded in general terms, the circular was directed specifically against the Maharaja of Baroda, who had refused to return from Europe to meet the Viceroy that year. Two years later the Maharaja informed Baroda’s Resident — the name given to British political agents in the larger states — that he intended to revisit Europe. He was told that the Government of India would not grant him the necessary permission. A protest was submitted to “the Residency” (that is, the office of the Resident). The Resident replied in February. The present document is a draft of a reply to the Resident’s letter. The final version would have been sent over the signature of the Naib Dewan or Dewan.

To the Dewan, on the Government’s Reply to the Letter on the Curzon Circular. 14 August 1903. Unable to go to Europe, the Maharaja passed the summer of 1903 in Kashmir. Sri Aurobindo accompanied him there as his private secretary. The present document, addressed to R. V. Dhamnaskar, the Dewan or prime minister of the state, contains the Maharaja’s first reactions to the Government’s reply to the final version of the previous document.

To the Naib Dewan, on the Infant Marriage Bill. 8 July 1903. Written by Sri Aurobindo during the Kashmir tour of 1903 to an officer working under the Dewan.

A Letter of Condolence. 10 July 1903. Another letter written by Sri Aurobindo as secretary to the Maharaja during the Kashmir tour.

To R. C. Dutt. 30 July 1904. Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848–1909) was an officer in the Indian Civil Service from 1871 to 1897. He rose to the position of Divisional Commissioner of Orissa, the highest post in the British administration yet held by an Indian. A few years after Dutt retired from the I.C.S., the Maharaja of Baroda offered him the position of Councillor (virtually the same as Dewan, a fact that would later cause some difficulties). The correspondence between the Gaekwar and

Dutt was handled by Sri Aurobindo, who had met Dutt earlier.

To the Principal, Baroda College. 18 September 1904. During part of 1904 Sri Aurobindo held the post of assistant Huzur Kamdar (Crown Secretary). This is one of many letters he wrote on behalf of the Maharaja during this period.

To the Dewan, on Rejoining the College. 28 September 1904. In September 1904 Sri Aurobindo was allowed to leave the state administration and to return to Baroda College, where he had served as professor between 1898 and 1901. He was given the post of vice-principal.

To the Maharaja. 29 March 1905. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter to his employer, Sayajirao Gaekwar (1863–1939), Maharaja of Baroda from 1875 to 1939, on behalf of his younger brother, Barindra Kumar Ghose, who then was living with him in Baroda. Barin had just returned from Bengal, where for two or three years he had been helping to organise the revolutionary secret society that Sri Aurobindo, Jatin Banerji and others had set up. The Maharaja agreed to give Barin a job, but Barin went back to Bengal before he could begin work.

A Letter of Recommendation. 28 February 1906. Written just before Sri Aurobindo left Baroda to take part in the Swadeshi Movement. The Vividh Kala Mandir was a photographic studio and metal engraving shop founded by former students of Baroda's Kalabhavan, an art school associated with Baroda College.

Letters and Telegrams to Political and Professional Associates, 1906–1926. In August 1906 Sri Aurobindo began work as principal of the Bengal National College and as an editorial writer for the daily newspaper *Bande Mataram*. In May 1908 he was arrested in connection with the Alipore Bomb Case. A year later he was released. In 1910 he settled in Pondicherry and cut off all direct connection with the freedom movement, though he continued to be regarded by the British government as a dangerous revolutionary. For a while he remained in indirect contact with the movement through Motilal Roy of Chandernagore.

To Bipin Chandra Pal. 1906. Bipin (also spelled “Bepin”) Chandra Pal (1858–1932) was a nationalist speaker and writer. Sri Aurobindo apparently wrote this note to him in September or October 1906. At

this time, Pal was editor-in-chief of the nationalist newspaper *Bande Mataram* and Sri Aurobindo was its chief writer. This note was put in as evidence in the Alipore Bomb Trial (1908–9). The original has been lost. The text is reproduced here from a “paperbook” or printed transcript of the documentary evidence.

A Letter of Acknowledgment. 9 March 1907. Sri Aurobindo was in Deoghar (a hill-resort in what is now Jharkhand) from mid January to early April 1907. He had gone to Deoghar for rest and recuperation after the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress (December 1906). While there he took care of some pending office work, such as writing this acknowledgement of a small donation to the National College Fund. Sri Aurobindo’s note was put in as evidence in the Alipore Bomb Trial (1908–9). The original has been lost. It was reproduced in a British government report on the trial, which was later reprinted in the collection *Terrorism in Bengal*, volume 4 (Calcutta, 1995), p. 682.

To Hemendra Prasad Ghose. 19 April 1907. Hemendra Prasad Ghose (1876–1962) was one of the principal writers for the *Bande Mataram*. Sri Aurobindo wrote this note to him at a moment when there was much internal conflict in the office of the newspaper. Hemendra Prasad copied the note out in his diary, from which it is reproduced.

To Aswinicoomar Banerji. Sri Aurobindo wrote these letters to Aswinicoomar Banerji (1866–1945), a barrister, labour leader and nationalist politician, shortly before Sri Aurobindo was arrested for sedition in August 1907. [1] This letter is dated 26 June 1907. The biography of Garibaldi mentioned is J. Theodore Bent’s *The Life of Giuseppe Garibaldi* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1882). [2] On 7 June 1907 the editors of the newspapers *Jugantar*, *Sandhya* and *Bande Mataram* were warned by the Government of Bengal that they would be prosecuted if they continued to publish inflammatory articles. On 5 July police arrested Bhupendranath Bose, whom they believed to be editor of *Jugantar*. He was tried and sentenced on 24 July. Six days later, the police searched the office of the *Bande Mataram*. It was evidently around this time that Sri Aurobindo wrote this note to Aswinicoomar. The originals of these two letters are in the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Delhi (Banerji papers).

To Dr. S. K. Mullick. 8 February 1908. Dr. Sharat Kumar Mullick (1869/70–1923/4), a physician with an interest in nationalist politics

and national education, was a lecturer in the National Medical College in 1908. Sri Aurobindo was principal of the Bengal National College in 1906 and 1907, and kept some connection with it until May 1908. From the end of 1906, however, his main occupation was the editing of the newspaper *Bande Mataram*. He dated this letter Calcutta, 8 February 1907. The year is certainly wrong. He is known to have been in Deoghar without a break between January and April 1907, and is known to have been in Calcutta on 8 February 1908. On that day he attended a meeting of the *Bande Mataram* company in the office of the newspaper. It may be this meeting to which Sri Aurobindo alludes in his letter.

Telegrams about a Planned Political Reception. 6 March 1908. In September 1907 Bipin Chandra Pal was sentenced to six months imprisonment for refusing to testify in the *Bande Mataram* Sedition Case. He was released in March 1908. On 6 March Sri Aurobindo and some of his colleagues sent telegrams to fifteen nationalist leaders in different parts of the country asking them to organise celebrations and make donations to a purse that would be offered to Pal. Sri Aurobindo varied the wording of his telegrams according to the recipient. A total of seven different versions were sent, all of which are reproduced here. These telegrams were put in as evidence in the Alipore Bomb Trial.

Extract of a Letter to Parthasarathi Aiyangar. 13 July 1911. Parthasarathi (1880–1929) was a friend and associate of Sri Aurobindo's from 1910, when the two met in Calcutta. He was the younger brother of Mandayam Srinivasachari, who was one of Sri Aurobindo's closest friends in Pondicherry.

Note on a Forged Document. April 1912. Early in 1912 a Pondicherry resident named Mayuresan, who was acting as an informer to the British Government, planted some forged documents in the well of the house of V. V. S. Aiyar, a Tamil revolutionary who was living in the French colony. Mayuresan intended the documents to be discovered by the French police, providing support for his claims against Aiyar, Srinivasachari, Sri Aurobindo and others. Unluckily for him, the jar containing the forgeries was discovered by Aiyar's maidservant. Some of the documents were shown to Sri Aurobindo, who wrote out this detailed refutation of one of them.

To Anandrao. Sri Aurobindo mentioned Anandrao Jadhav, the eldest son of his friend Khaserao Jadhav, in his letter to Jogindranath

Bose of 15 August 1902 (see pp. 138–44). He presumably was the recipient of this letter. It is possible that the present letter, undated but apparently written in June 1912, is the “letter to our Marathi friend” mentioned in the second paragraph of the letter to Motilal Roy of 3 July 1912 (but see the note to that letter). The “Baroda friend” mentioned in the first sentence of the letter to Anandrao is probably Keshavrao Ganesh Deshpande, who was a close friend of Sri Aurobindo’s in England and in Baroda.

To Motilal Roy. In February 1910, Sri Aurobindo left Calcutta and took temporary refuge in Chandernagore, a small French enclave on the river Hooghly about thirty kilometres north of Calcutta. There he was looked after by Motilal Roy (1882–1959), a young member of a revolutionary secret society. After leaving Chandernagore for Pondicherry in April, Sri Aurobindo kept in touch with Motilal by letter. It was primarily to Motilal that he was referring when he wrote in the “General Note on Sri Aurobindo’s Political Life” (p. 64 of this volume): “For some years he kept up some private communication with the revolutionary forces he had led through one or two individuals.” In these letters, which were subject to interception by the police, he could not of course write openly about revolutionary matters. He developed a code in which “tantra” meant revolutionary activities, and things connected with tantra (*yogini chakras*, tantric books, etc.) referred to revolutionary implements like guns (see Arun Chandra Dutt, ed., *Light to Superlight* [Calcutta: Prabartak Publishers, 1972], pp. 27–30). The code sometimes got rather complicated (see the note to letter [3] below). Sri Aurobindo did not use his normal signature or initials in the first 22 letters. Instead he signed as Kali, K., A. K. or G. He often referred to other people by initials or pseudonyms. Parthasarathi Aiyangar, for example, became “P. S.” or “the Psalmist”. [1] 3 June 1912. The “letter to our Marathi friend” referred to in the second paragraph may be the letter to Anandrao (see above). Note however that according to Arun Chandra Dutt (*Light to Superlight*, pp. 4–5), the Marathi friend was a merchant named Madgodkar, apparently the same as the Madgaokar mentioned in letter [9] below. The “case” mentioned in the penultimate paragraph is the one that Mayuresan tried to set up; see “Note on a Forged Document” above. [2] August 1912 or after. (In April 1914, Sri Aurobindo wrote of “the

Parabrahma darshana”, apparently the experience mentioned in this letter, as happening “two years ago”; see *Record of Yoga*, volume 10 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 447.) [3] Circa January 1913. According to Arun Chandra Dutt (*Light to Superlight*, pp. 50–51), the “experiment in the smashâna” mentioned in this letter was the attempt to assassinate the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, in Delhi on 23 December 1912. *Śmaśânas* or graveyards are believed to be good places for tantric sadhana. The term applies also to Delhi, the graveyard of vanished empires. Other terms in the letter make use of the same “tantric” metaphor. [4] February 1913. [5] June–July 1913. The “tantric books” referred to are almost certainly revolvers sent from Pondicherry to Chandernagore (see *Light to Superlight*, pp. 27–28). The explanations in cypher concerning these “books” have not survived. [6] June–July 1913. [7] August 1913. The manuscripts (“MSS”) referred to are Sri Aurobindo’s translation of Chittaranjan Das’s Bengali poem cycle *Sagar Sangit*, for which Das agreed to pay him Rs. 1000. [8] Circa 1913. [9] 1913 (between April and October 1913, Sri Aurobindo lived in a house on Mission Street, Pondicherry, for which the rent was Rs. 15). [10] March 1914. Rashbehari Bose was a revolutionary of Chandernagore who orchestrated the bomb-attack against Lord Hardinge in Delhi in December 1912. On 8 March 1914, British police officers, armed with an extradition warrant of arrest, raided Rashbehari’s house in Chandernagore. They were unable to arrest him, as he had slipped out some time before. News of the raid appeared in the newspapers on 12 March or before. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter to Motilal a short while after he read the news. He was interested not only in Rashbehari’s fate, but also in the legal precedent that might be set by the issuance of an extradition warrant against a French subject for a crime committed in British India. [11] April 1914. For Paul Richard, see the note to “Extracts from Letters to the Mother and Paul Richard” in Section Two below. Every four years an election was held in Pondicherry to choose a Deputy to represent the colony in the French Chamber. [12] 17 April 1914. This letter was written shortly after the results of the election were announced. According to the *Journal Officiel*, Bluysen received 33,154 votes, Lemaire 5624, La Porte 368 and Richard 231. [13] 5 May 1914. [14] June 1914. The “New Idea” was officially sanctioned by the government of French

India in June 1914. [15] July 1914. [16] July–August 1914. [17] 29 August 1914. [18] After October 1914. Bijoy Nag, a member of Sri Aurobindo's household, was imprisoned in October 1914 under the Defence of India Act after he entered British India. He remained in jail for the duration of the war. V. V. S. Aiyar was a revolutionary from the Madras Presidency who had taken refuge in Pondicherry. (Despite the "a certain", Sri Aurobindo knew Aiyar well.) [19] Undated, but after the launch of the *Arya* in August 1914. [20] After September 1915, the month in which Motilal began to publish the Bengali journal *Prabartak*. [21] Undated, but apparently shortly after the armistice in November 1918. Haradhan Bakshi (1897–1962), a young man of Chandernagore, served in Mesopotamia during the war. [22] Apparently towards the end of 1919; certainly earlier than the next letter, which refers to the *Standard Bearer* by name. [23] 2 January 1920. A short time before this letter was written, M. K. Gandhi sent his son Devdas to speak to Sri Aurobindo on his behalf (see Gandhi's letter to Sri Aurobindo on page 442). [24] May 1920. Barindra Kumar Ghose (Sri Aurobindo's younger brother, see Section Two below) was released from the penal colony of the Andaman Islands in January 1920. Paul and Mirra Richard returned to Pondicherry from Japan on 24 April 1920. [25] 2 September 1920. For information on the "marriage idea", see *Light to Superlight*, pp. 93–96. [26] 11 November 1920. The portion of this letter placed by Sri Aurobindo within inverted commas was reproduced in the *Standard Bearer* on 21 November 1920. See pages 278–79. [27] In 1922, Motilal's relationship with Sri Aurobindo soured. In May 1925 Motilal wrote asking for permission to visit Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry. This telegram of 13 May was Sri Aurobindo's reply. It is reproduced from a notebook in which A. B. Purani wrote down Sri Aurobindo's conversations and bits of household news. [28] 8 May 1930. When Motilal wrote to Sri Aurobindo in April or May 1930, Sri Aurobindo wrote this draft and asked Nolini Kanta Gupta to reply in Bengali in his own name. This explains Sri Aurobindo's use of the third person.

Draft of Letter to Saurin Bose. June 1914. Saurin Bose, brother of Sri Aurobindo's wife Mrinalini, was a member of Sri Aurobindo's household in Pondicherry between 1911 and 1919. At the time this letter was written, he was on a visit to Bengal. On 30 May 1914, Sri

Aurobindo noted in his diary (*Record of Yoga*) that he had received a letter from Saurin that day. The present draft-letter was evidently written in reply to Saurin's letter. It may be dated, through references to known events, to 1 or 2 June 1914. (Paul and Mirra Richard were planning on 1 June to occupy the house mentioned in the letter "in one or two days". The prospectus that is mentioned in the draft as being due out "later this month" was issued in mid June. Note also that the sum of Rs. 400, mentioned in this letter and in letter [14] to Motilal Roy, is also mentioned in the *Record* of 29 May.) This draft was not sent to Saurin; presumably a fair copy was written and sent in its place.

To K. R. Appadurai. 13 April 1916. Appadurai was the brother-in-law of the poet Subramania Bharati. Bharati was living as a refugee in French Pondicherry at the time this letter was written. The "Mr. K. V. R" to whom Sri Aurobindo refers was K. V. Rangaswami Iyengar, who sometimes helped him out financially.

Fragmentary Draft Letter. 1916–1920. The surviving portion of this draft (its beginning is not available) was written on one side of a sheet of paper that on the other side was used for part of a relatively early draft of the poem *Savitri*. It is not possible to assign an exact date to the *Savitri* draft, but it must have been written between 1916, when Sri Aurobindo began work on the poem, and 1921, when he temporarily stopped all forms of writing. The "volume of poems" mentioned was probably *Ahana and Other Poems* (1915). The intended recipient of the letter is not known for sure, but it is likely that it was Chittaranjan Das (see below).

To a Would-be Contributor to the *Arya*. 3 September 1919. A letter to an unknown person who had sent a poetry manuscript to Sri Aurobindo for publication in the *Arya*.

To Joseph Baptista. 5 January 1920. Joseph Baptista (1864–1930) was a barrister and nationalist politician who was associated with Bal Gangadhar Tilak. In 1919 a group of nationalists of Bombay who took their inspiration from Tilak decided to form a party and to bring out an English daily newspaper. They deputed Baptista to write to Sri Aurobindo and offer him the editorship of the paper. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter in reply.

To Balkrishna Shivaram Moonje. B. S. Moonje (1872–1948) was a medical practitioner and political activist of Nagpur. When Sri

Aurobindo knew him in 1907–8, Moonje was one of the leaders of the Nationalist or Extremist Party. (Later he helped to found the Hindu Mahasabha; see Sri Aurobindo's telegram to Moonje in Part Three, under "On the Cripps Proposal".) Sri Aurobindo stayed with Moonje when he visited Nagpur in January 1908. Twelve years later, Moonje and others invited Sri Aurobindo to preside over the forthcoming Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress. In letter [1], dated 30 August 1920, Sri Aurobindo set forth his reasons for declining this honour. [2] In this telegram, date-stamped on arrival 19 September 1920, he reiterated his decision.

To Chittaranjan Das. 18 November 1922. A barrister of Calcutta who became famous for successfully defending Sri Aurobindo in the Alipore Bomb Case (1908–9), Chittaranjan Das (1870–1925) later entered politics and became the leader of the Swarajya Party, which advocated entering the government's legislative assemblies in order to "wreck them from within". Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter to Das on the same day that he wrote another to his brother Barin (see the first letter under "To Barindra Kumar Ghose and Others" in Section Two below).

To Shyamsundar Chakravarty. 12 March 1926. Shyamsundar Chakravarty (sometimes spelled Chakrabarti or Chakraborty) (1869–1932) was a nationalist writer and orator. When Sri Aurobindo was editor-in-chief of the nationalist newspaper *Bande Mataram*, Chakravarty was one of its main writers. Eighteen years later he became editor of the *Bengalee*, a moderate nationalist newspaper of Calcutta. At that time he wrote to Sri Aurobindo inviting him to send contributions. This letter is Sri Aurobindo's reply. The original manuscript is not available. The text is reproduced from an old typed copy.

Open Letters Published in Newspapers, 1909–1925. In this subsection are included all known letters written by Sri Aurobindo for publication in newspapers, with the exception of the two open letters he published in his own journal *Karmayogin* in 1909 and 1910, and his reply to the writer of a review of his *Secret of the Veda*. (These letters are reproduced in *Karmayogin: Political Writings and Speeches 1909–1910* and *The Secret of the Veda*, volumes 8 and 15 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.)

To the Editor of the *Bengalee*. 14 May 1909. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter eight days after his acquittal from the charges brought against him in the Alipore Bomb Case. It was published in the *Bengalee* on 18 May 1909. The “defence fund” mentioned was set up by his uncle Krishna Kumar Mitra in the name of Sri Aurobindo’s sister Sarojini.

To the Editor of the *Hindu*. [1] 7 November 1910. Sri Aurobindo left Calcutta for Pondicherry on 1 April 1910. Shortly thereafter the Government of Bengal issued a warrant for his arrest on the charge of sedition for an open letter that had been published in the weekly newspaper *Karmayogin* on 25 December 1909. Sri Aurobindo remained incognito in Pondicherry until 7 November 1910, when he wrote this letter announcing his presence in the French enclave and his retirement from politics. He deferred “all explanation or justification of [his] action” until the Calcutta High Court had ruled on the appeal of the conviction of the printer in the *Karmayogin* sedition case. Coincidentally, that same day the Calcutta High Court threw out the printer’s conviction, thus nullifying the charges against Sri Aurobindo. His letter was published in the *Hindu* on 8 November. [2] 23 February 1911. This letter was published in the *Hindu* on 24 February 1911, the day after Sri Aurobindo wrote it. [3] July 1911. On 10 July 1911, the *Madras Times* published a short editorial (“leaderette”) entitled “Anarchism in the French Settlements”, which dealt with “political suspects” who had taken refuge in Pondicherry and were carrying out anti-British activities there. The writer cited a letter “from a correspondent in Pondicherry” that had been “published recently” in its columns, adding “if our correspondent is correctly informed, there is an organised Party in French India which supports Mr. Arabindo Ghosh and his friends”. The next week the same newspaper published an article that spoke openly of Sri Aurobindo as “a criminal and an assassin”, thus connecting him with the assassination of the British Collector Robert Ashe, which had taken place on 17 June 1911. Sri Aurobindo wrote a letter to the editor of the *Madras Times* denying these charges, but was not given “the opportunity of reply”. He therefore wrote this letter to the editor of the *Hindu*. Published in that newspaper on 20 July 1911, it probably was written the previous day. [4] July 1911. This letter, a continuation of the previous one, was published in the *Hindu* on 21 July 1911. It probably was written the previous day. The “exposition” of the

author's views promised in the last sentence has not been found. It does not appear to have been published in the *Hindu*, and possibly was never written.

To the Editor of the *New India*. [1] April 1918. Sri Aurobindo wrote this message on national education at the request of Annie Besant (1847–1933), president of the Theosophical Society, leader of the Indian Home Rule League, and editor of *New India*, a newspaper of Madras. She published it in *New India* on 8 April 1918, under the heading: “MESSAGES FROM SONS OF THE MOTHERLAND TO THEIR BROTHERS”. Sri Aurobindo's was the longest of nine messages contributed by India's “leading patriots”. This item is also published in *Early Cultural Writings*, volume 1 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. [2] July 1918. Besant wrote to Sri Aurobindo again in July 1918, asking him for his opinion of the Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms, which had been announced earlier that month. Sri Aurobindo wrote this letter in reply. After receiving it, Besant wrote asking whether she could “use it (with or without your name) as a valuable opinion on the ‘Reforms’”. Sri Aurobindo consented, and the letter was published in *New India* on 10 August 1918.

To the Editor of the *Hindustan*. 1918. The Hindu Marriages (Validity) Bill was introduced by Vithalbhai Patel (1873–1933) in the Imperial Council on 5 September 1918. Its purpose was to provide legal sanction to marriages between Hindus of different castes. (At that time Hindu Law, as interpreted in the courts, considered inter-caste marriages to be invalid unless sanctioned by custom.) Patel's bill was condemned by the orthodox and considered inadequate by reformers. But certain eminent Indians, among them Rabindranath Tagore and Lala Lajpat Rai, believed that it was a step in the right direction. Sri Aurobindo was asked his opinion of the bill by Lotewalla, Managing Director of *Hindustan*. His reply, undated, but apparently written in the last quarter of 1918, is reproduced here from Gordhanbhai I. Patel's *Vithalbhai Patel: Life and Times*, Book One (Bombay: Shree Laxmi Narayan Press, 1950), p. 305.

To the Editor of the *Independent*. August 1920. This obituary article was written at the request of Bipin Chandra Pal, editor of the *Independent*, after the death of Bal Gangadhar Tilak on 1 August 1920. The piece was published in the *Independent* on 5 August 1920. The

present text has been compared both against the version published in the newspaper and against a draft found among Sri Aurobindo's manuscripts. The same piece is published under the title "A Great Mind, a Great Will" in *Early Cultural Writings*, volume 1 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.

To the Editor of the *Standard Bearer*. On 11 November 1920, Sri Aurobindo wrote to Motilal Roy, editor of the *Standard Bearer*, in regard to certain claims that had been made about his political opinions in the Calcutta press. His letter is published on pages 248–49 of the present volume. In it he wrote, within inverted commas, a statement that he wanted Motilal to publish. Motilal did so on 21 November 1920. The text is reproduced here as it was printed in the *Standard Bearer*.

To the Editor of the *Bombay Chronicle*. June 1925. This message was written at the request of the editor of the *Bombay Chronicle* a day or two after the passing of Chittaranjan Das on 16 June 1925. The message was published in the newspaper on 22 June 1925.

Section Two

Early Letters on Yoga and the Spiritual Life, 1911–1928

Sri Aurobindo began the practice of yoga in 1905. Between then and 1911 he made few references to yoga in his letters. The first people to whom he wrote about spiritual things were Motilal Roy (see Section One above) and Paul and Mirra Richard. Around 1920, he began to reply to letters written to him by people in India and abroad who were interested in practising his system of yoga. At the end of 1926, he stopped seeing even the members of his household (which soon became known as an ashram), but he continued to answer some of the letters written to him by people living outside. Gradually, he began to write to members of the ashram as well. His letters on yoga of 1927–1950 have a different character from those written between 1911 and 1926. All surviving letters on yoga from the early period, along with a few from the late period that are parts of series that began earlier, are included in the present section. All significant letters from the 1927–1950 period are reproduced in *Letters on Yoga*, volumes 28–31 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO.

Extracts from Letters to the Mother and Paul Richard, 1911–c. 1922. Paul Richard (1874–1967) was a French lawyer and writer. He came to Pondicherry in 1910 seeking election to the French Chamber of Deputies, but found that the ticket he had been promised had been given to someone else. Before returning to France, he asked to be introduced to a yogi, and friends arranged a meeting between him and Sri Aurobindo. During the next four years, he and Sri Aurobindo remained in touch by letter. In 1914, Richard returned to Pondicherry to stand for election. This time he was accompanied by his wife Mirra (1878–1973), who later became known as the Mother. Richard was defeated, but he and Mirra remained in India until February 1915, when Paul was ordered to join his regiment. The Richards remained in France until March 1916, when they departed for Japan. After a four-year stay in that country, they returned to Pondicherry in April 1920.

To Paul Richard. Sri Aurobindo wrote these letters to Richard after their meeting in 1910 and before Richard returned to India in 1914.

To the Mother and Paul Richard. These letters presumably were addressed both to Mirra and Paul. The one dated 31 December 1915 deals with an experience of the Mother's which is recorded in her *Prayers and Meditations* under the date 26 November 1915.

Draft of a Letter. 1920s. The circumstances referred to in this letter suggest that it was written during the early 1920s, when Sri Aurobindo was partly retired. The reference to *Le seigneur des nations* ("The Lord of the Nations"), a book by Paul Richard, suggests that Richard was the intended recipient. Sri Aurobindo's reply was meant to be sent over the signature of a secretary. This explains his use of the third person.

To People in India, 1914–1926. Only thirteen of the twenty-three items included in this subsection exist in the form of letters or drafts in Sri Aurobindo's hand. Some of the others were dictated or (in one or two cases) written by someone else following Sri Aurobindo's instructions. Such letters generally were revised by Sri Aurobindo, sometimes extensively, before they were sent.

To N. K. Gogte. Nothing is known about the recipient of these letters, except that he wrote to Sri Aurobindo after the appearance of the first issue of the *Arya* asking some questions about meditation. Gogte was perhaps hoping that his question would be answered in

“The Question of the Month”, a feature in early issues of the journal. Sri Aurobindo in fact wrote an answer to the question “What exactly is meant by meditation in Yoga? And what should be its objects?” in the October 1914 issue (published in *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga*, volume 13 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, pp. 445–47). This essay bears some resemblance to the answer he sent directly to Gogte. [1] 9 September 1914. This is a postcard sent by Sri Aurobindo to Gogte explaining that he was unable to answer his letter immediately. [2] 21 September 1914. This reply of Sri Aurobindo to Gogte was the first of thousands of “letters on yoga” he would eventually write. Towards the end of the letter, Sri Aurobindo referred to a section at the end of the third instalment of *Isha Upanishad*, which was published in the *Arya* in October 1914. He wrote that the heading of this section was “The Vision of the All”. In fact the section is headed “The Vision of the Brahman” both in the *Arya* and in the book edition of *Isha Upanishad* (see *Isha Upanishad*, volume 17 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, p. 30). A section that appeared in the November instalment of the *Arya* is headed “The Vision of the All” (*Isha Upanishad*, p. 35). A partial copy of Sri Aurobindo’s letter to Gogte was published in the *Standard Bearer* on 13 March 1921. Another partial text was included in Sri Aurobindo’s *Letters on Yoga*.

Draft of a Letter to Nolini Kanta Gupta. A young member of Barindra Kumar Ghose’s revolutionary secret society, Nolini Kanta Gupta (1889–1984) was arrested and tried for conspiracy in the Alipore Bomb Case. Acquitted, he worked with Sri Aurobindo on the Bengali weekly *Dharma* in 1909 and 1910. In October or November 1910, he joined Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry. After remaining there for most of the next nine years, he returned to Bengal, where he got married in December 1919. Sri Aurobindo drafted this letter to him a little before that time. The Latin phrase seems to be a variant of the quotation from Horace found on page 137. It would mean “whither does this uncertainty lead”.

To A. B. Purani. 21 February 1920. Ambalal Balkrishna Purani (1894–1965) met Sri Aurobindo in 1918, when he came to Pondicherry to report on the progress of a revolutionary secret society that had been set up in Gujarat under Sri Aurobindo’s inspiration. Sri Aurobindo advised the young man to give his attention to sadhana.

Purani corresponded with members of Sri Aurobindo's household, and with Sri Aurobindo himself, until 1923, when he settled in Pondicherry.

To V. Chandrasekharam. Veluri Chandrasekharam (1896–1964) took his B.A. from Madras University, standing first in his class in philosophy. He often visited Pondicherry during the early 1920s, reading the Veda and practising yoga under Sri Aurobindo's guidance. In 1928 he returned to his village in Andhra Pradesh, where he passed the remainder of his life.

To K. N. Dixit. 30 March 1924. Kesarlal Nanalal Dixit or Dikshit (1891–1988) was from Baroda. He visited Pondicherry five times during the 1920s, and settled in the Ashram in 1929. Sri Aurobindo wrote this paragraph in his own hand at the end of a letter written on his instructions by A. B. Purani. This explains his use of the third person.

To Ramchandran. 30 September 1925. Nothing is known about the recipient of this letter.

To and about V. Tirupati. An enthusiastic sadhak, Tirupati practised an extreme form of bhakti yoga, as a result of which he lost his mental balance. Sri Aurobindo advised him to go back to his home in Vizianagaram, coastal Andhra, to recuperate. From there Tirupati wrote a number of letters to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Sri Aurobindo wrote these twelve replies at this time. [1] 21 February 1926. The manuscript of this letter was written by the Mother but was apparently a transcript of something written or dictated by Sri Aurobindo. [2] 24 February 1926. This telegram was sent by Sri Aurobindo to S. Duraiswami, an advocate of Madras, to whom Tirupati had gone while on his way to Pondicherry. [3] 26 February 1926. Written in reply to a letter from Dasari Narayana Swamy Chetty, Tirupati's father-in-law, explaining Tirupati's condition. [4] February 1926. An incomplete draft of a letter. [5] 4 March 1926. Manuscript in the Mother's hand. [6] 5 March 1926. Manuscript in the Mother's hand. [7] 22 March 1926. [8] 27 March 1926. Manuscript in the Mother's hand. [9] 30 March 1926. Manuscript partly in the Mother's and partly in Sri Aurobindo's hand. [10] Circa March–April 1926. This letter was written in reply to one written by Tirupati on “the 28th”, presumably 28 March 1926. [11] Circa March–April 1926. This draft-letter was written in reply to a letter written by Tirupati on “the 29th”, presumably 29 March 1926. [12] 6 May 1926. Tirupati

came to Pondicherry on 6 May 1926. Sri Aurobindo refused to see him. He gave him this letter instead. It is reproduced here from one of the notebooks of A. B. Purani.

To Daulatram Sharma. 26 March 1926. Little is known about the recipient of this letter. He entered into correspondence with Barindra Kumar Ghose in 1923. After a visit to Pondicherry early in 1926, he wrote to Barin about his sadhana on 17 March. Barin drafted a reply following Sri Aurobindo's instructions. This was so completely revised by Sri Aurobindo that it may be considered his own letter.

To Barindra Kumar Ghose and Others, 1922–1928. Sri Aurobindo wrote or dictated the letters in this section to his brother Barindra Kumar and to some others who were connected with a yoga centre that Barin had opened in Bhawanipore, Calcutta, in 1922. Several of the letters deal with prospective members of the centre, about whom Barin had written. (Many such candidates were asked to submit a photograph for the Mother and Sri Aurobindo to evaluate.) Barin also wrote about the progress and setbacks of those who were staying at the centre. Sri Aurobindo wrote at least two of his replies by hand, but appears to have dictated most of them. Multiple handwritten and typed copies of his replies were made after they were written. Sixteen of the eighteen letters exist only in the form of these copies. The texts published here have been established by collating three or more copies of each letter. The copies were widely circulated during the 1920s. Sri Aurobindo later remarked that he did not want this “out of date stuff” to remain in circulation; but in another letter he stated that it was “not necessary to withdraw anything”, though the pre-1927 letters were not to be circulated as freely as later letters.

To Barindra Kumar Ghose. Sri Aurobindo's youngest brother Barindra Kumar Ghose (1880–1959) was born in England and raised in Bengal. He first got to know Sri Aurobindo after the latter's return from England in 1893. Around 1902 Barin became involved in a nascent revolutionary society that Sri Aurobindo and others had set up in Calcutta. In 1906 Barin and other members of this society began to plan to assassinate British officials. An unsuccessful attempt to kill a British judge in May 1908 led to the arrest of Barin, Sri Aurobindo and two dozen others. The prisoners were tried for conspiring to wage war

against the king. Sri Aurobindo was acquitted, Barin and several others convicted. The death-sentence against Barin was later commuted to life imprisonment in the Andaman Islands penal colony. In 1920, as part of the amnesty declared at the end of the First World War, Barin and the other prisoners were released. Barin visited Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry that year and again in 1921. In 1922 he set up a yoga centre in Bhawanipore, Calcutta. [1] 18 November 1922. This letter was written on the same day as the letter to Chittaranjan Das reproduced on pages 260–62. Both letters were concerned with fund-raising. [2] 1 December 1922. When Das received Sri Aurobindo's letter of 18 November, he wrote for permission to quote certain passages from it. Sri Aurobindo gave his reactions to this proposal in the present letter. [3] 9 December 1922. Written to Barin in response to a letter from Jyotish Ghose, a Bhawanipore sadhak. [4] 30 December 1922. Krishnashashi, a young man from Chittagong, became a member of the Bhawanipore centre, but soon began to experience serious difficulties. This is the first of several letters written by Sri Aurobindo in connection with his case. (There is also a letter written directly to Krishnashashi. See below.) In the present letter he also transmitted to Barin the evaluations of Mirra (the Mother) of three candidates whose photographs had been submitted. [5] January 1923. Another letter about Krishnashashi. [6] 23 January 1923. Another letter about Krishnashashi. [7] January 1923. Apparently written after the letter of the 23rd and before the letter of the 31st. [8] 31 January 1923. About Krishnashashi and other matters. [9] 14 February 1923. About Krishnashashi and other matters. [10] 2 April 1923. About various candidates and also about Rathin, a son of Rajani Palit. (See also the letter to Rajani Palit below.) [11] 16 April 1923. About various candidates. [12] 30 May 1923. [13] 16 June 1923. About Jyotish Mukherjee, a Bhawanipore candidate.

Barindra Kumar returned to Pondicherry from Calcutta in August 1923. The Bhawanipore centre went on for some time, but was closed at Sri Aurobindo's suggestion in September 1925. Barin remained in Pondicherry until December 1929, when he left the Ashram and returned to Bengal. Letter [14], dated 7 June 1928, was written to him a year and a half before his departure. Part of it was included in the collection *Bases of Yoga* in 1936.

To Hrishikesh Kanjilal. Circa 1922. A member of Barin Ghose's revolutionary group, Hrishikesh Kanjilal (born 1879) was one of the defendants in the Alipore Bomb Trial. Convicted, he spent ten years in the Andamans. After his release he visited Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry. In Calcutta he was associated with Barin in his various enterprises, one of which was the Cherry Press.

To Krishnashashi. January 1923. A young sadhak from Chittagong, East Bengal, Krishnashashi went insane while practising yoga at Barin's centre in Bhawanipore. See also letters [4]–[9] to Barindrakumar Ghose above.

To Rajani Palit. 6 April 1923. A government servant, Rajani Palit (born 1891) lived in Calcutta and attended meetings at Barin's Bhawanipore centre. Later he was a frequent visitor to the Ashram. This letter is about the occult illness of his son Rathin.

Draft Letters to and about Kumud Bandhu Bagchi. Born in 1901, Kumud Bandhu Bagchi was the head of the Bhawanipore centre from 1923, when Barin Ghose settled in Pondicherry, till it was closed in 1925. [1] 6 February 1926. A letter on Kumud's sadhana dictated by Sri Aurobindo. [2] 23 March 1926. A note on the psychic being, dictated by Sri Aurobindo and revised by him before being sent.

To People in America, 1926–1927. These letters were written to people in the United States of America who had read the *Arya* and written to Sri Aurobindo. Most of them are preserved only in the form of drafts found among his manuscripts.

To Mr. and Mrs. Sharman. Early 1926. Maude Ralston Sharman was an American woman of Detroit who was married to a Punjabi.

To the Advance Distributing Company. [1] 9 March 1926. Draft of a letter written in reply to one dated 18 January 1926 from the Advance Distributing Company, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (a small firm about which nothing is known) to the Arya Publishing House (the principal publisher of Sri Aurobindo's books in India). The manager of the Advance Distributing Company wished to purchase some issues of the *Arya* and also proposed bringing out a selection of Sri Aurobindo's works in the United States. [2] 2 July 1926. Reply to a letter from the same company dated 2 May 1926, in which the writer spoke of practical matters relating to the publication of Sri Aurobindo's books

in the United States, and the nature of spiritual seeking in that country. The book *Some I-L-O-F Letters* had been sent to Sri Aurobindo by Mr. C. E. Lefebvre of Glenfield, Pennsylvania, earlier in the year.

Draft of a Letter to C. E. Lefebvre. Undated draft, written in reply to a letter from C. E. Lefebvre dated 13 June 1926. In his letter Lefebvre identified himself as the “student” mentioned in the letter from the Advance Distributing Company dated 18 January 1926. Various internal and external references in the letters make it clear that Lefebvre also was the writer of both letters from the Advance Distributing Company. In his letter of 13 June 1926, Lefebvre spoke about the nature of spiritual seeking in the United States, concluding: “It would seem that America is only ready for elementary instruction.”

To and about Anna Bogenholm Sloane. According to a printed curriculum vitae enclosed in one of her letters to Sri Aurobindo, Anna Bogenholm Sloane, B.A., M.A., was a native of Sweden who settled in the United States sometime before 1907. She was active in various educational institutions, and wrote pedagogical stories for children. Interested in spirituality, she became a student of Ralph Moriarity deBit (an American guru later known as Vitvan, 1883–1964). DeBit, then head of the School of the Sacred Science in Los Angeles, introduced Sloane to Sri Aurobindo in a letter of 30 June 1926. Sloane arrived in Pondicherry early in 1927, a few months after Sri Aurobindo had retired. [1] 3 August 1926. Written in reply to a letter from Sloane dated 5 June 1926, in which she enumerated certain inner experiences, which she called “initiations”. [2–4] August–September 1927. Undated drafts, written in reply to a letter from Sloane in which she asked Sri Aurobindo if he was “the Krishna, the Supreme God of the Planet Earth”, and expressed doubts about the ability of the Mother to guide her. She asked to be guided by Sri Aurobindo instead. There is some evidence that Sri Aurobindo never sent a fair copy of these drafts to Sloane. [5] 13 October 1927. This is a report written by Sri Aurobindo after Sloane made certain allegations against him, the Mother and the Ashram to the British Consul in Pondicherry. The date appears on a copy of a French translation of the letter, which presumably was sent to the French authorities in Pondicherry.

Draft Letters, 1926–1928. These four draft letters were found in two

note pads used by Sri Aurobindo around 1926–28. Internal references make it clear that the last three were written to Marie Potel, who lived in the Ashram during this period. The intended recipient of the first letter is not known.

To an Unknown Person. Circa 1927–28.

To Marie Potel. Marie Léon Potel (1874–c. 1962) met the Mother in France in 1911 or 1912. She was perhaps the first person to regard the Mother as her master and spiritual Mother. Potel came to the Ashram in March 1926 and remained until March 1928. [1] Draft of a letter found among Sri Aurobindo’s manuscripts of 1926–27. [2] Probably April 1927. A reply to a letter written in French by Potel. The three paragraphs beginning “Again who is the Father here” and ending “supported by the Ishwara” were struck through in the manuscript. Sri Aurobindo took up these ideas in the sixth chapter of *The Mother*, which he wrote towards the end of 1927. [3] Circa 1928. The subject of this letter almost certainly was Marie Potel, who left the Ashram in March 1928.

Section Three

Other Letters of Historical Interest on Yoga and Practical Life 1921–1938

The letters in this section are of two types. Those in the first group are addressed to disciples who had undertaken to collect or provide funds for the Ashram. Those in the second are to public figures who had written to Sri Aurobindo for various reasons.

On Yoga and Fund-raising in the Ashram, 1921–1938. These letters were written to two people who helped raise funds for the Ashram in Bengal and Gujarat. Besides fund-raising, the letters deal with the sadhana of the two individuals, and with other subjects as well.

To and about Durgadas Shett. A member of a wealthy family of industrialists based in Chandernagore, Durgadas Shett (1895–1958) sent significant amounts of money to Sri Aurobindo through Motilal Roy before 1922. In 1934 his family property was distributed, and he gave most of his share to Sri Aurobindo. Afterwards he lived an austere life; at times he was dependent on Sri Aurobindo for cash for

ordinary expenses. These twenty-three letters from Sri Aurobindo to Durgadas are interesting in showing Sri Aurobindo's attitude towards money and the interest he took in the spiritual and material welfare of his disciples. Letters [2], [4] and [5] were written by Sri Aurobindo to his secretary Nolini Kanta Gupta, whom he asked to reply to Durgadas on his behalf.

To Punamchand M. Shah. Punamchand Mohanlal Shah (born 1898), of Patan, Gujarat, met Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry in 1919. Four years later he became a member of his household. Between 1927 and 1931, he spent much of his time in Gujarat trying to collect money for the newly founded Ashram. In August 1927 Sri Aurobindo wrote three letters to Punamchand on fearlessness, work and money, which were published in 1928 as chapters 3, 4 and 5 of *The Mother*. Here thirteen other letters to Punamchand on fund-raising and other subjects are reproduced.

To and about Public Figures, 1930–1937. These letters were written to or about people who held positions of responsibility or were otherwise in the public eye. They have been grouped together here for the convenience of students of modern Indian history.

Draft of a Letter to Maharani Chimnabai II. 1930. Gajrabai Ghatge (1871–1958), later Maharani Chimnabai II, was married to Maharaja Sayajirao III of Baroda in 1885. Sri Aurobindo met her while working under the Gaekwar between 1893 and 1906. More than two decades later, she wrote to him about her personal life. In replying, Sri Aurobindo used, out of courtesy, the form of address required by official protocol in writing to Indian royalty.

On a Proposed Visit by Mahatma Gandhi. 1934. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869–1948) visited Pondicherry on 17 February 1934. At that time he was temporarily retired from politics. As he related in his letter to Sri Aurobindo (part of which is reproduced above Sri Aurobindo's reply of 7 January 1934), he had been anxious to meet Sri Aurobindo since he returned to India from South Africa in 1915. In order to arrange a meeting, he wrote to Govindbhai Patel, a disciple of Sri Aurobindo's who previously had been connected with Gandhi's movement. (There is some evidence that Govindbhai had written earlier to Gandhi to suggest a meeting.) On 2 January 1934

Gandhi wrote directly to Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo's replies to Govindbhai and to Gandhi are reproduced in chronological order.

To Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. 2 October 1934. At the time this letter was written, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975), President of India between 1962 and 1967, was an academic in England. (In 1935 he was appointed Spaulding Professor of Eastern Religion and Ethics at Oxford.) In August 1934 he approached Sri Aurobindo through Dilip Kumar Roy, asking him to contribute an article for a proposed volume on contemporary Indian philosophy. In a letter of September 1934, published in *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, Sri Aurobindo asked Dilip to beg off for him. Radhakrishnan persisted, and Sri Aurobindo wrote this note to him directly. (Radhakrishnan's book, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, was published, without a contribution by Sri Aurobindo, by George Allen & Unwin in 1936.)

To and about Morarji Desai. Morarji Desai (1896–1995) was Prime Minister of India between 1977 and 1979. [1] 15 February 1935. In 1934, Desai proposed coming to the Ashram with his friend Chandulal Manibhai, who wrote to A. B. Purani asking for permission to attend darshan. Sri Aurobindo's reply was addressed to Purani. [2] 17 August 1935. Desai came to the Ashram in August 1935. During his stay he wrote a letter to Sri Aurobindo, asking him questions about spiritual matters. Desai published Sri Aurobindo's reply in *The Story of My Life* (New Delhi: S. Chand and Co., 1978), vol. I, pp. 126–27.

On a Proposed Visit by Jawaharlal Nehru. 5 October 1936. India's first Prime Minister (1947–64), Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964) was a leader of the Congress Party during the freedom movement, serving as its President four times. In 1936 Dilip Kumar Roy, a member of the Ashram who was acquainted with Nehru, proposed inviting Nehru to stay with him if and when Nehru came to Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo jotted down these remarks on Dilip's letter.

Birendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury. 21 February 1937. A member of the landed aristocracy of East Bengal, Birendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury was also an industrialist and a politician. He was elected to the Bengal Legislative Council in January 1937. Today, however, he is best remembered as a musician (he played the veena in the Hindustani style) and as a musical scholar.

PART THREE
PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS
ON INDIAN AND WORLD EVENTS, 1940–1950

Section One
Public Statements, Messages, Letters and Telegrams
on Indian and World Events, 1940–1950

After his withdrawal from the national movement in 1910, Sri Aurobindo ceased to write on contemporary political issues. His letters to the editors of *New India* and *Hindustan* in 1918 (see Part Two, Section One) were his last public statements on political topics for more than twenty years. He first broke his silence in 1940 in connection with the Second World War. Later he spoke in support of the Cripps Proposal and other British offers to the leaders of the Indian national movement. Still later he provided, on invitation, messages when India achieved independence and on other occasions.

On the Second World War, 1940–1943. After opposing European imperialism for the better part of his life, Sri Aurobindo came out in support of the British and their allies after the fall of France. Whatever errors the Allies might have made in regard to their colonies, he thought, they still were open to the influence of the forces of higher evolution, while Hitler's Germany was possessed by forces that were positively anti-divine.

Contributions to Allied War Funds. This letter, dated 19 September 1940, was signed jointly by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It accompanied a contribution of Rs. 500 to the Madras War Fund. The letter was published on the same date in the *Hindu* (Madras). Later the second paragraph was included in a leaflet entitled "Sri Aurobindo's views on the War" and headed "*For Sri Aurobindo's Sadhaks only*", which was distributed in the Ashram and among friends of the Ashram. Still later it was included in the booklet *On the War* (see below).

Notes on the War Fund Contribution. [1] This letter, undated but evidently written shortly after the above message, is reproduced from Sri Aurobindo's handwritten manuscript. It was not published during his lifetime. [2] Sri Aurobindo wrote this note on the back of a letter

written by Anilbaran Roy to one of his friends. Anilbaran's letter is dated 22 October 1940.

On the War: An Unreleased Statement. On 23 September 1940, Anilbaran Roy wrote an article defending Sri Aurobindo's position on the war as set forth in the letter of 19 September. He submitted his article to Sri Aurobindo, who thoroughly revised and enlarged it, leaving almost nothing of Anilbaran's original text. Sri Aurobindo had his secretary make a typed copy of the enlarged piece, which he further revised, but he does not seem to have shown the result to anyone, and it remained unpublished during his lifetime.

India and the War. [1] 6 April 1942. The Japanese armed forces captured Singapore on 15 February and Rangoon on 7 March 1942. Quickly moving north, they forced British and Indian forces to retreat into India. At this point many disciples of Sri Aurobindo living in Calcutta and elsewhere asked to be admitted to the Ashram for their own and their children's safety. This text does not seem to have been printed during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime, but it apparently was communicated privately to individuals. [2] Sri Aurobindo wrote this text around the same time as the above piece. It was not published during his lifetime.

On the War: Private Letters That Were Made Public. [1] 29 July 1942. This letter or extract from a letter was published in a leaflet and in two or more pamphlets that also contain the war fund letter of 1940. The leaflet and pamphlets were headed "*For Sri Aurobindo's Sadhakas Only*". This piece, piece [2] and the 19 September 1940 letter on the war fund contribution were subsequently brought out in a booklet entitled *On the War: Letters of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother* (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House, 1944). [2] 3 September 1943. This item is an abridged version of Sri Aurobindo's reply to a letter from Dilip Kumar Roy, in the course of which Dilip said: "I have received of late from correspondents and friends objections to our dubbing the allies as 'modern Pandavas'. Those were protagonists of virtue (dharma) and unselfishness which can hardly be said of the Allies and . . . are they not all exploiters of the weaker races and essentially imperialistic — more or less?" Sri Aurobindo's complete reply is published in *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*, volume 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO. The extracts making up the present item were published in the first issue of the quarterly

journal *The Advent* (February 1944), under the following note: “Sri Aurobindo has made known to the public his standpoint with regard to the present war. He is for unconditional and unreserved help — an all-out help to the Allies whose cause, according to him, is humanity’s and also India’s cause. The present extracts from a private letter written some time ago in answer to certain doubts and misgivings will further elucidate his position.” The extracts were also included in *On the War: Letters of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother* (see above).

On Indian Independence, 1942–1947. After his retirement from active politics in 1910, Sri Aurobindo turned down all offers to rejoin the national movement or to play any other role in politics. The seriousness of the situation during World War II caused him to speak out in favour of the Cripps Proposal of 1942. Later, on request, he issued messages on two other British initiatives: the Wavell Plan and the Cabinet Mission Proposals.

On the Cripps Proposal. In March 1942, Sir Stafford Cripps (1889–1952), a Labour member of the War Cabinet, came to India with a proposal from the British government. Indian leaders were invited to take part in the councils of war, and were promised a constitution-making assembly after the cessation of hostilities. Cripps announced the details of the proposal in a radio talk of 30 March 1942. Sri Aurobindo responded in several ways. [1] On 31 March, he sent a telegram to Cripps endorsing the proposal and offering his “public adhesion”. Cripps replied to Sri Aurobindo in a telegram of 1 April 1942. Sri Aurobindo’s telegram was published in many newspapers and reproduced in the pamphlet *Messages of Sri Aurobindo & the Mother* (1949) and subsequently. [2] On 1 April, Sri Aurobindo sent his disciple S. Duraiswami, a prominent advocate of Madras, to Delhi to speak to members of the Congress Working Committee: Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Azad, C. Rajagopalachari and others. He gave Duraiswami this letter authorising him to speak on his behalf. [3 and 4] On 2 April, Sri Aurobindo telegraphed Dr. B. S. Moonje, a former nationalist colleague, now head of the Hindu Mahasabha, and C. Rajagopalachari, the Congress leader of Madras. [5 and 6] On 9 April and again on a later date, Sri Aurobindo telegraphed his old revolutionary associate Amarendra Chatterjee, now a member of the Bengal Legislative

Assembly, who had written, asking him to play a more active role.

On the Wavell Plan. On 14 June 1945, the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, offered Indian leaders a new plan intended “to ease the present political situation and to advance India towards her goal of full self-government”. Sri Aurobindo expressed his approval in two ways. [1] On 15 June 1945, he dictated to his secretary a message that was subsequently released and printed in the *Hindu* and other Indian newspapers under the date 19 June. [2] Also on 15 June, he telegraphed Dr. Syed Mahmood, a member of the Congress Working Committee, who communicated Sri Aurobindo’s views to Gandhi and the rest of the committee.

On the Cabinet Mission Proposals. On 24 March 1946, three members of the British Cabinet came to India in order to find a solution to the constitutional deadlock brought about by the unwillingness of the Muslim League to work with the Congress and other Indian parties. After surveying the situation, the Cabinet Mission offered a new proposal on 16 May. Its most salient feature was the so-called group system, by which provinces in the Northwest, the Northeast, and the rest of the country would form semi-autonomous groups within the larger Indian union. (The idea was to grant the substance of the League’s demand for Pakistan without partitioning the country.) [1] In March 1946, before all the details of the proposal were known, Sri Aurobindo was asked his initial reaction by the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. He wrote this response on 24 March. Issued in the name of his secretary Nolini Kanta Gupta, it was published in the *Patrika* on 26 March and later reprinted in other newspapers. [2] Nine months later, after the details of the group system had come out, Sri Aurobindo was asked for his opinion by Surendra Mohan Ghosh, the President of the Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee, with whom he occasionally held talks about political developments. He dictated this reply to Surendra Mohan’s letter on 16 December 1946.

The Fifteenth of August 1947. India became independent on 15 August 1947. This was Sri Aurobindo’s seventy-fifth birthday. Before the event he was asked by All India Radio, Tiruchirapalli, to give a message for broadcast. Sri Aurobindo agreed and wrote two versions of a message, one of which was selected. On 9 August, AIR technicians made a recording of the Mother reading the message. This

was broadcast on 14 August. (The recording, apparently made on a perishable wax medium, was not preserved.) Sri Aurobindo's message exists in two versions, one long and the other short. [1] This version, which was found to be too long for broadcast in the allotted time-slot, was printed as a leaflet and reproduced in newspapers such as the *Sunday Times* of Madras. [2] This short version was broadcast by AIR and subsequently printed as a leaflet. Two years later it was reproduced in *Messages of Sri Aurobindo & the Mother* (1949). Since then it has been reprinted many times.

On the Integration of the French Settlements in India, 1947–1950. Pondicherry, where Sri Aurobindo lived between 1910 and 1950, was at that time one of five French *établissements* or settlements in India. As one who was regarded by the British as a danger to the Empire, he was grateful for the hospitality that successive French administrations extended to him. When it became clear that British India would become independent, pro- and anti-French parties in Pondicherry engaged in political debate and violent clashes in order to decide the colony's future. Sri Aurobindo wished Pondicherry to become part of the Indian union, but to retain some measure of autonomy, which would permit it to serve as a “window” between India and France. The situation remained unsettled until 1954, when all French possessions in India became *de facto* parts of the Indian Union. The *de jure* transfer took place in 1962.

The Future Union. Sri Aurobindo dictated this text in or before June 1947. It was published, anonymously, in a pamphlet marked “Issued by the French India Socialist Party/June 1947”. Sri Aurobindo supported this party's stance on the issue of Pondicherry's political future, though not necessarily its position on other issues.

On the Disturbances of 15 August 1947 in Pondicherry. 20 August 1947. In the evening of 15 August 1947, the day of India's independence, armed rioters attacked the Ashram, killing one member and injuring several others. Subsequently it was reported in the *Statesman* of Calcutta that “Satyagraha” (non-violent passive resistance) was offered by political workers in front of the Ashram. Sri Aurobindo dictated this reply to be sent to the editor of the *Statesman* on 20 August. It was issued over the signature of the Secretary, Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Letters to Surendra Mohan Ghosh. For details on the recipient of these letters, see below under Section Two. The letters in the present subsection were occasioned by a diplomatic conflict between the government of free India and the government of French India. [1] In April 1949, the Government of India put a customs cordon around French Pondicherry. This made it difficult for the Ashram to obtain food and other necessities. Sri Aurobindo dictated this letter to Surendra Mohan on 1 April 1949 when the crisis was beginning. [2] Sri Aurobindo dictated this letter on 6 May 1949, when the problems created by the customs cordon were at their worst.

Note on a *Projet de loi*. 12 February 1950. Sri Aurobindo made these comments on a French *projet de loi* (proposed article of legislation) that had been submitted to him for comment by Sanat Kumar Banerji, a disciple of his who was a member of the Indian Administrative Service and who had been named India's consul general in Pondicherry. In the event the *projet* was not discussed by the French and Indian governments.

Messages on Indian and World Events, 1948–1950. Sri Aurobindo dictated three of these messages on invitation. The other three were private letters (in one case, an extract from a private letter) that were released for publication after being sent.

On the Assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi was murdered on 30 January 1948. [1] On 4 February a certain Mr. Kumbi of Gadag, Karnataka, telegraphed to Sri Aurobindo: "Darkness sorrow spreads fast India Bapuji death children pray message." Sri Aurobindo telegraphed this message in reply. It was published in the *Hindu* on 7 February. [2] Asked on 5 February for a message on the subject by All India Radio, Tiruchirapalli, Sri Aurobindo wrote this paragraph, which presumably was broadcast by the station. On 8 February it was published in the *Hindu*, and at the end of February was reproduced in the *Advent*, a quarterly journal of Madras, and also as a separate leaflet. Both messages were also reproduced in the pamphlet *Messages of Sri Aurobindo & the Mother* (1949).

On the World Situation (July 1948). 18 July 1948. This letter from Sri Aurobindo to his disciple Dilip Kumar Roy was reproduced in the *Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual*, Calcutta, and also as a separate leaflet,

in August 1948. It was included in *Messages of Sri Aurobindo & the Mother* (1949).

On Linguistic Provinces (Message to Andhra University). December 1948. On 28 June 1948, Dr. C. R. Reddy, Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University, Waltair, wrote to Sri Aurobindo asking whether he would allow his name to be considered for the university's National Prize for eminent merit in the humanities. On 15 July Sri Aurobindo wrote to say that he would accept the prize if offered. On 30 October the Governor of Madras (who was ex-officio Chancellor of the university) wrote saying that the syndicate of the university had resolved to give the award to Sri Aurobindo. Subsequently Reddy wrote asking Sri Aurobindo for a message to be read out at the award ceremony. Sri Aurobindo replied by telegram that while he "usually does not give any message unless it comes by some inner inspiration", he felt sure "in this case inspiration and message will not fail to come". The message — which dealt at some length with the question of linguistic provinces, then a charged political issue, particularly in the Andhra country — was completed and sent on 5 December. On 11 December 1948 it was read out at a convocation at the university. The message was published in the *Hindu* on 12 December 1948, and subsequently in other newspapers, such as in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (22 December 1948). In 1949 it was reproduced in the pamphlet *Messages of Sri Aurobindo & the Mother*.

Letters Related to the Andhra University Award. [1] This letter, in which Sri Aurobindo authorised his name to be considered for the C. R. Reddy National Prize, was written on 15 July 1948. [2] This letter, addressed to the Governor of Madras, was sent on 6 November, a week after the university offered him the prize. [3] This letter, sent to Dr. Reddy along with the message, is dated 5 December 1948.

The Present Darkness (April 1950). 4 April 1950. This paragraph is an extract from a letter to Dilip Kumar Roy, which was released for publication shortly after it was written. It was printed in the *Hindusthan Standard* on 17 April 1950, and in other newspapers shortly thereafter. This paragraph also formed part of a larger extract from the letter that was published in the April 1950 issue of the *Advent* of Madras. Whenever the text was printed, all or part of the sentence mentioning Prime Minister Nehru was omitted. The

“Pakistan imbroglio” Sri Aurobindo referred to was the crisis created by attacks on Hindus in East Pakistan, retaliatory attacks in India, and the consequent movement of populations in both directions. For more on this crisis see the note to “On the Nehru-Liaquat Pact and After” in the next section.

On the Korean Conflict. 28 June 1950. In 1949 and 1950, Sri Aurobindo wrote a number of letters in answer to questions posed by his disciple K. D. Sethna, editor of *Mother India*, a newspaper of Bombay, in regard to various national and international problems (see Section Two, subsection two below). Sri Aurobindo wrote the present letter in reply to Sethna’s questions on the Korean Crisis. His letter subsequently was released to the Press Trust of India, and published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and other journals under the date 17 August.

Section Two

Private Letters to Public Figures and to the Editor of *Mother India* 1948–1950

Private Letters to Public Figures, 1948–1950. Sri Aurobindo dictated these four letters between 1948 and 1950 in reply to political leaders who approached him for guidance.

To Surendra Mohan Ghosh. 12 June 1948. As a youth, Surendra Mohan Ghosh (1893–1976) was a member of the Anushilan Samiti, a revolutionary organisation that had been founded by Sri Aurobindo and others in 1902. Later he joined the Indian National Congress. From 1938, he was president of the Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee. During the 1940s, he had a series of private meetings with Sri Aurobindo, during which the two spoke of political and yogic matters. In 1946 he became a member of the Constituent Assembly, which was charged with drafting India’s constitution. In 1948 and 1949 Sri Aurobindo wrote several letters to him about political matters. Two are published in the subsection containing material dealing with the integration of the French Settlements; another, on the Cabinet Mission Proposals, appears in the subsection containing material dealing with Indian independence. The letter in the present subsection was written on 6 June 1948, after Surendra Mohan informed Sri Aurobindo that he wished to resign from the position of president of the Bengal Pradesh

Congress Committee (B.P.C.C.).

To Kailas Nath Katju. 3 September 1949. Dr. Kailas Nath Katju (1887–1968) was a lawyer and, after 1937, a Congress leader. In 1948 he was appointed Governor of West Bengal. In this capacity he presided over a public celebration of Sri Aurobindo's seventy-seventh birthday in Calcutta in August 1949. On the twentieth of that month, he wrote to Sri Aurobindo, telling him about his past and present activities, and his hopes and apprehensions in regard to the country. Sri Aurobindo dictated this reply two weeks later.

To K. M. Munshi. Educated at Baroda College while Sri Aurobindo was a professor there, Kanaiyalal Maneklal Munshi (1887–1971) became a leading member of the Congress in Gujarat. In 1946 he was elected to the Constituent Assembly and after independence joined the union cabinet as agriculture minister. In 1949 and 1950 he asked Sri Aurobindo for advice on two occasions. [1] 3 September 1949. While serving on the Constituent Assembly, Munshi telephoned the Ashram in Pondicherry, asking for Sri Aurobindo's opinion on the question of the numerals to be used with Hindi, which was being promoted as the national language. Sri Aurobindo dictated his reply to A. B. Purani. The substance of his remarks was published in at least two newspapers on 15 September. [2] 3 August 1950. On 30 July 1950, Munshi wrote to Sri Aurobindo asking him for guidance in regard to his personal sadhana and his plans to work for the sake of Indian culture. Sri Aurobindo dictated his reply to A. B. Purani.

Notes and Letters to the Editor of *Mother India* on Indian and World Events, 1949–1950. In February 1949 a new fortnightly newspaper, *Mother India*, was launched in Bombay. Its editor was K. D. Sethna, who had been a resident member of the Ashram between 1928 and 1938, and remained in close contact with Sri Aurobindo. Along with articles on yoga, literary criticism, and poetry, *Mother India* published commentary on political affairs. Sethna wrote to Sri Aurobindo for guidance when writing such articles, and Sri Aurobindo often replied. Eleven of his letters are reproduced in this section. (A twelfth, on the Korean Conflict, is published in the subsection containing messages on Indian and world events [see above], since it was released as a message during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime.)

On Pakistan. This comment was written in reply to a letter from Sethna dated 12 March 1949.

On the Commonwealth and Secularism. This note was written in reply to two remarks in a letter from Sethna dated 5 April 1949. Sethna's first remark was: "Perhaps a concluding para should be added in which the suggestion could be made that the term 'secular' in our constitution should as soon as possible be qualified and the significance which does not contradict but rather confirms spirituality be openly introduced; or else the term 'spiritual' should be substituted, with an explanation that it goes nowise against but supports all the best that 'secularity' might connote." Sethna's second remark was: "What is Sri Aurobindo and Mother's view on the Commonwealth question?"

On the Unity Party. 25 April 1949. Written in reply to a letter from Sethna dated 21 April 1949, in which he asked Sri Aurobindo whether people in agreement with *Mother India's* position on the reunification of India ought to be referred to the Unity Party, a group then active in Bengal, whose Secretary, S. P. Sen, was an occasional contributor to *Mother India*. In a telegram written a few days after his letter, Sri Aurobindo wrote further: "Policy [of the Unity Party] not dictated by me — so how Aurobindonian? Policy guided mostly by A [Anilbaran]. Neither against nor for shall judge them by what they do."

On French India and on Pakistan. 27 June 1949. On 25 June 1949, the following text was published in *Mother India* under the title "Sri Aurobindo Supports Merger of French India":

Sri Aurobindo in his own supreme spiritual way strives for India's solidarity and greatness, Sjt. Nolini Kanta Gupta the Secretary of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram told the A.P.I. special representative on June 14.

Sri Aurobindo feels certain and has expressed it more than once, the Secretary said, that the different parts of India, whoever may be their present rulers, are bound to join the mother country and that India, free and united, will become a dynamic spiritual force bringing peace and harmony to the war-scarred world and suffering humanity in general.

Asked whether this meant that Sri Aurobindo desired Chandernagore, Pondicherry and other French Settlements in India to join India, the Secretary said: "Certainly so. He has

prophesied that these small foreign pockets in India would sooner or later become one with India and India would become the spiritual leader of the world. Sri Aurobindo's great Yoga-Shakti is directed to that end." . . .

As a spiritual home, the Ashram as such adopts a neutral attitude towards the burning question of the day in Pondicherry, namely, the referendum to decide the future of the French settlements in India, the Secretary said. He, however, strongly refuted the notion in certain quarters that the Ashram is pro-French, and referred to one of his public statements wherein he had stated: "Nobody here (Ashram) is for the continuation of French rule in India."

On 22 June, before publishing the statement, Sethna wrote to Nolini asking for Sri Aurobindo's views on Franco-Indian culture and on "the Contravention question". He concluded: "The statement on behalf of the Ashram by your honourable spokesman self will be featured on top of page 12 in the next issue." On receipt of this letter, Nolini drafted a letter to Sethna saying that the statement ought not to have been published as it "does not adequately represent Sri Aurobindo's views". Sri Aurobindo corrected and considerably enlarged Nolini's draft, making it his own letter. He also added a paragraph on the Pakistan problem. The revised text was typed and sent to Sethna in Bombay.

On Cardinal Wyszynski, Catholicism and Communism. 3 August 1949. Stefan Wyszynski (1901–1981) was made archbishop of Gniezno and Warsaw and primate of Poland in 1949, and a cardinal in 1953. He was an opponent of the Communist government's efforts to limit the influence of the Catholic Church.

On the Kashmir Problem. Circa September 1949. This letter was written around the same time as the letter to Kailas Nath Katju (see above, previous subsection). The article of Sethna's to which Sri Aurobindo referred is no longer available.

On "New Year Thoughts". 1 January 1950. Sethna sent a copy of an editorial entitled "New Year Thoughts on Pacifism" to Sri Aurobindo at the end of December 1949. Sri Aurobindo wrote this reply on the first day of the new year.

Rishis as Leaders. 3 January 1950. This letter was written in reply to a letter from Sethna dated 31 December 1949.

On Military Action. Written on 6 March 1950, in reply to a letter from Sethna that is not now available. For Indo-Pakistan relations in 1950, see the next note.

The Nehru–Liaquat Pact and After. 3 May 1950. Early in 1950, tension between India and Pakistan rose as a result of widespread communal rioting in East Pakistan, retaliatory attacks in India, and the consequent flight of Hindus from East Pakistan into West Bengal, Assam and Tripura, and Muslims from India into Pakistan. On 2 April 1950, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan of Pakistan came to India to discuss these problems with Prime Minister Nehru. Six days later the two men signed a pact addressing the refugee problem and guaranteeing the rights of religious minorities in both countries. The “letter to Dilip” that Sri Aurobindo referred to in the first sentence was the one written on 4 April 1950, a portion of which was published in the newspapers later in April. (See “The Present Darkness (April 1950)” in the preceding subsection.) On the 21st Sethna asked Sri Aurobindo if his position had changed since the letter of the 4th was written. Sri Aurobindo replied by wire: “Letter to Dilip written before Pact. Nothing changed in my direction.” The letter of 3 May 1950 published here was written two weeks after the telegram.

On the Communist Movement. On 13 September 1950, Swatantra Party leader Minoos Masani sent Sethna a draft of an anti-Communist tract entitled “Manifesto for the Defence of Democracy and Independence in Asia”. He asked Sethna: “Do you think Sri Aurobindo would consider signing the manifesto? Do try.” Later, at a private meeting, Masani told Sethna, “I would be very happy if Sri Aurobindo saw the manifesto and made his suggestions. They would indeed be valuable.” On 16 September, Sethna sent Masani’s letter and the draft manifesto to Sri Aurobindo, along with a letter of his own in which he noted: “The Manifesto is meant to rally the largest possible support to the anti-Communist front and it studiously avoids open or direct siding with the Western powers.” He added that even socialist leader Jai Prakash Narayan was thinking of signing it. On the other hand, Morarji Desai, with whom Masani had spoken, was opposed to getting the signatures of men like Narayan, as they were, he said, “not really

democratic”. Desai “was strongly in favour of declaring our adherence to the western democracies”. In closing his letter, Sethna asked Sri Aurobindo for his views. Sri Aurobindo’s answer, reproduced here, was drafted on 19 September 1950.

PART FOUR
PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND NOTICES CONCERNING
SRI AUROBINDO’S ASHRAM AND YOGA
1927–1949

Sri Aurobindo came to Pondicherry in 1910 and devoted himself to the practice of yoga. He lived at first with a few young men from Bengal. Afterwards they were joined by a handful of others from different parts of the country. By 1926 the household had some two dozen members. After a major yogic experience in November 1926, Sri Aurobindo stopped seeing or speaking with visitors and most members of the community that had grown around him. Around this time, this community became known as Sri Aurobindo’s Asram. Later the name was changed to Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

Section One
Public Statements and Notices concerning the Ashram
1927–1938

The statements in the first subsection below were written for the general public. Those in the second subsection were written for members of the Ashram.

Public Statements about the Ashram, 1927 and 1934. On two occasions after the founding of the Ashram in 1926, Sri Aurobindo wrote short statements about it for publication. These are published here for their historical interest. It should be noted that what he wrote in the contexts of 1927 and 1934 does not necessarily apply to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram of today, which is differently organised. It may be observed that Sri Aurobindo, while writing in English, spelled the Sanskrit word *āśrama* as “Asrama” or “Asram”. Ashram became the established spelling sometime during the late 1940s.

On the Ashram's Finances (1927). On 6 May 1927 an article by Jatindranath Sen Gupta entitled "Sri Aurobindo's Ashram: Daily Life of Inmates: A Visitor's Account" was published in the *Hindu* of Madras. Sen Gupta noted in his first paragraph: "Though everywhere in India and even outside India there is a keen desire to know what is really going on inside this Ashram at Pondicherry, not only very few get the opportunity of knowing what is going on here, but, on the other hand, all sorts of false and ugly rumours have been assiduously spread by interested persons." Sen Gupta's piece was the first article about the Ashram to be published anywhere. It seems also to have been the first published writing in which the name "Sri Aurobindo's Ashram" was used. Sri Aurobindo saw and approved of the article as a whole, and wrote one paragraph for it himself. This paragraph, concerning the financial arrangements of the Ashram as of May 1927, is reproduced here. This was the only time Sri Aurobindo made a public appeal for funds. Later he specifically disallowed this approach.

On the Ashram (1934). February 1934 (probably the 16th of the month). In February 1934, the Government of French India, apparently under pressure from the British Consul, began an inquiry into the functioning of the Ashram. At question was the legal status of the community. Press reports had spoken of it as an "institution" that had a "common fund", but no attempt had been made to register it with the government as a legal or financial entity. In fact the Ashram was not, at that time, a public institution. All the houses that composed it were registered in the name of Sri Aurobindo or the Mother. Individuals who wished to practise yoga under their guidance were allowed to use the facilities only so long as Sri Aurobindo and the Mother allowed. Sri Aurobindo nevertheless was obliged to take the government's inquiry seriously. To clarify the situation, he wrote this statement on the Ashram and the one known as "Sri Aurobindo's Teaching" (see the next subsection), apparently on 16 February 1934 (see below). The two texts were published together in the *Hindu* of Madras on 20 February 1934 under the title "Sri Aurobindo Ashram: Some Misconceptions Cleared". A short while later, both texts were published in Pondicherry and in Madras in brochures entitled "The Teaching and the Asram of Sri Aurobindo" (Pondicherry: Barathy Press; Madras: Kesari Printing Works). Also around this time a brochure containing a French

translation of both texts was printed in Pondicherry at the Imprimerie de Sandhanam. (In this French brochure the first text, “L’enseignement et l’ashram de Sri Aurobindo”, was dated 16 February 1934. This may be the date of writing of the original English text of one or both pieces.) Five months later, in August 1934, both texts were published in English, along with Bengali and Hindi translations, in a booklet entitled “The Teaching and the Asram of Sri Aurobindo” (Chander-nagore: Rameshwar & Co.). A second edition, with English texts only, was published in 1945 (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House). Both texts were included in the first and second editions of *Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1948 and 1951).

“Sri Aurobindo’s Teaching” has continued to appear, notably in *On Himself* (1972), but “Sri Aurobindo’s Asram” has not been printed since 1951. A letter written by K. D. Sethna to the Mother in 1937 helps explain why. Wondering whether he should send a copy of “The Teaching and the Asram of Sri Aurobindo” to someone, Sethna noted that the passage about there being “no public institution” etc. “was written in this downright way when that anti-Asram movement [of 1934] was in full career in Pondy”. The Mother agreed and said that Sethna need not send the pamphlet. What Sri Aurobindo said in “Sri Aurobindo’s Asram” does not necessarily apply to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram of today. The text is reproduced here for its historical interest.

Notices for Members of the Ashram, 1928 – 1937. This subsection consists of notices written by Sri Aurobindo himself (and not on his behalf by a secretary) that were posted or circulated in the Ashram between 1928 and 1937. Most of them were written in response to temporary situations. A few were incorporated into lists of rules of the Ashram.

Notices of May 1928. Sri Aurobindo wrote these three notes after the Mother suffered a serious illness. He insisted at this time on introducing changes in the schedule of Ashram activities in order to lessen the pressure of work on her.

Notices of 1929–1937. These are notices that were posted on the Ashram notice board between 1929 and 1937. Many of them were attempts to regulate the correspondence between the members of the Ashram and Sri Aurobindo, which took him as much as ten hours a day during the middle 1930s.

Section Two
Public Statements about Sri Aurobindo's Path of Yoga
1934 and 1949

Sri Aurobindo wrote these essays in 1934 and 1949 to explain his system of yoga to the general public.

Sri Aurobindo's Teaching. This essay was published in the *Hindu* on 20 February 1934 immediately below the article entitled "Sri Aurobindo's Ashram", which is described above in the note to "On the Ashram (1934)". It was published along with that article in leaflets and pamphlets of 1934 and 1945. Subsequently it was included in *Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram*, first published in 1948 and reprinted many times. It was also included in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (1953) and *On Himself* (1972 and subsequently).

A Message to America. 11 August 1949. This message was written for release at a public celebration of Sri Aurobindo's seventy-seventh birthday in New York City. Leaflets containing the text and a message by the Mother were printed in New York at that time. The message was reprinted in Indian newspapers, and has since appeared many times, notably in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* (1953) and *On Himself* (1972 and subsequently).

PUBLISHING HISTORY

Only a few of the items in this book appeared in print during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime. *Sri Aurobindo: A Life Sketch* was published anonymously as a booklet in 1937 and subsequently. The information provided to King's College appeared, in edited form, in the *Register of Admissions to King's College, Cambridge* in 1903 and 1929. One of the letters on the departure to Chandernagore was printed in 1945. "A General Note on Sri Aurobindo's Political Life" was published in "Sri Aurobindo and His Ashram" in 1948. All the "Open Letters and Messages Published in Newspapers" came out in the newspapers in question immediately after they were written. Most of the letter to Gogte was published in the *Standard Bearer* in 1921. Three of the statements on the Second World War, four of the statements on

Indian independence, one of the texts on French India, all the messages on India and world events and one of the messages to Munshi were published as leaflets and/or in newspapers shortly after they were written. In 1949, six of these messages — the telegram to Cripps, the message of 15 August 1947, the two messages on the death of Gandhi, “On the World Situation (July 1948)” and “On Linguistic Provinces (Message to Andhra University)” — were reproduced in *Messages of Sri Aurobindo & the Mother* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram). The note of 1934 on the Ashram and the essays of 1934 and 1949 on Sri Aurobindo’s yoga were issued in leaflets and pamphlets and later reprinted. See the notes on specific pieces for details.

In 1953, many of the pieces making up this book, and others now appearing in *The Mother with Letters on the Mother* and *Letters on Himself and the Ashram* (volumes 32 and 35 of THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO), were published in a collection entitled *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother*. Portions of the present book that appeared in that collection include most of the notes in Part One, Section Two, “Corrections of Statements Made in Biographies and Other Publications”, some of the letters to the Mother and Paul Richard, and the message of 15 August 1947.

In 1972 *Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother* was divided into two volumes. Notes and letters dealing with Sri Aurobindo or with Sri Aurobindo and the Mother jointly were published, along with much hitherto unpublished material, in volume 26 of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, *On Himself: Compiled from Notes and Letters*. Letters dealing with the Mother, some of which had been brought out separately in 1951 in a volume entitled *Letters of Sri Aurobindo on the Mother*, were included in volume 25, *The Mother with Letters on the Mother and Translations of Prayers and Meditations*. Both *On Himself* and *The Mother with Letters on the Mother* were reprinted several times after 1972.

Most of Sri Aurobindo’s letters to Motilal Roy, along with the letter to Anandrao, were first published in *Light to Superlight* by Prabartak Publishers, Calcutta, in 1972. These letters were included in the *Supplement* (volume 27) to the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library. The letters of Sri Aurobindo to his father, his sister and his brother, one of the letters to his father-in-law, the letter to the Maharani

of Baroda, one of the letters to the editor of the *Hindu*, and one of the letters to the editor of *New India* were included in the same volume. Some of the “Early Letters on Yoga and the Spiritual Life” and “Letters and Telegrams to Political and Professional Associates” came out in *Champaklal’s Treasures* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1976). The letters to Lord Kimberley were first printed in A. B. Purani’s *Life of Sri Aurobindo* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1957). The letter to Morarji Desai was published in Desai’s *The Story of My Life* in 1978. Most of the messages on the Second World War appeared in the *Bulletin of the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education* in 1978. Many other items included in this book first appeared in the journal *Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research* between 1977 and 1994.

In THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO, the material making up *On Himself*, together with related material first published after 1972, has been placed in two volumes: the present one and *Letters on Himself and the Ashram*. The latter volume is made up of letters written by Sri Aurobindo to his disciples between 1927 and 1950. Earlier letters, autobiographical writings and public messages appear in the present volume. Several items are being published here for the first time: the information supplied to the *King’s College Register*; a few of the corrections of statements made in biographies and other publications; most of the letters written while Sri Aurobindo was employed in Baroda; some of the letters to political and professional associates; some of the letters to Durgadas Shett and Punamchand Shah; most of the letters to public figures; many of the “Early Letters on Yoga and the Spiritual Life”; some of the messages on the integration of the French settlements in India; all the letters to the editor of *Mother India*; and some of the statements and notices concerning the Ashram.