

## THE MOTHER'S WORK \*

*Rishabhchand*

When Sri Aurobindo left his body more than four years ago, most of his disciples and devotees, living in the world outside, made anxious enquiries as to what would now be the fate of the Ashram and the great work of the supramental transformation which he had laboured for during the forty long years of his strenuous seclusion at Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo had asserted time and again that the descent of the Supermind and its establishment in the earth-consciousness as a principle and power of the infinite Knowledge-Will, superseding and completing the mind of man, was inevitable, and that a divine life on earth was the crowning glory of human destiny. How was that great work going to be accomplished? Who would now be the leader of the supramental evolution? Was it not merely a lofty dream of a spiritual visionary — one of those dreams and ideals that flash for a moment across our mental skies and fade away into the light of the common day, leaving but a memory of a splendour and a sublimity never to be achieved on this petty planet of our brief habitation?

What reply did the inmates of the Ashram of Sri Aurobindo give to these eager queries? What proof, what certitude did they advance against the turbid surge of facile doubts and misgivings? Stunned by the first shock of separation from One they had so profoundly loved and adored, so faithfully followed and served, they did not know what reply to give, how to convince the doubting, unbelieving minds. Their sole proof, their whole certitude, their absolute faith stood personified before them — the Mother, she who had been to them at once the path, the guide and the goal; and the solemn words of Sri Aurobindo rang in their hearts:

“A day may come when she must stand unhelped  
 On a dangerous brink of the world's doom and hers, Carrying the world's  
 future on her lonely breast, Carrying the human hope in a heart left sole  
 To conquer or fail on a last desperate verge.  
 Alone with death and close to extinction's edge,  
 Her single greatness in that last dire scene,  
 She must cross alone a perilous bridge in Time  
 And reach an apex of world-destiny  
 Where all is won or all is lost for man.  
 In that tremendous silence lone and lost  
 Of a deciding hour in the world's fate,  
 In her soul's climbing beyond mortal time

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\* Mother has taken the body because a work of a physical nature (i.e. including a change in the physical world) has to be done...” —Sri Aurobindo

When she stands sole with Death or sole with God  
 Apart upon a silent desperate brink,  
 Alone with her self and death and destiny  
 As on some verge between Time and Timelessness  
 When being must end or life rebuild its base,  
 Alone she-must conquer or alone must fall.  
 No human aid can reach her in that hour,  
 No armoured God stand shining at her side.  
 Cry not to heaven, for she alone can save.  
 For this the silent Force came missioned down;  
 In her the conscious Will took human shape:  
 She only can save herself and save the world.”<sup>1</sup>

With the flaming ardour of a renewed loyalty and the spontaneous self-abandon of an overflowing love, they clung to the Mother in that grim hour of their life. She was there, to whom they had already surrendered all of themselves and on whose guidance they had learned to depend exclusively in all the details of their lives. She was there, who had been leading their spiritual unfold- ment from stage to stage, across many a path and bye- path, over many a gulf and chasm, many a quagmire and precipice, towards the perfection that had attracted them to the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. Their contact with Sri Aurobindo had always been through her, and they had come to realise the truth of Sri Ramakrishna’s dictum that the key to the abode of Brahman is with the Mother, and that none can enter there unless She, in her Grace, opens the door. Wearied out by the inner struggle, they had reposed and revived on her lap; battered by the blasts of life, they had taken refuge at her feet; menaced by the forces of darkness, they had clung to her bosom of boundless love and compassion. Her love had been their mainstay, their never-failing friend and protector, their healer and comforter, and the solitary leader of their spiritual journey. Her love had been, indeed, the very sap and sustenance of their lives. If they stumbled on the rugged path of Yoga, she was there to lift them up; if they were confused and clouded in their vision, her light was always there to brighten up their consciousness and show them the right way. If the path appeared long and steep and laborious, and their heart’s fire seemed to sink, her beaming eyes pointed to the distant horizons, golden with the glory of the eternal Sun. With her, they knew they were invincible; without her, they could hardly conceive of existence except as a painful illusion. To be united with her, to be her pliant and docile instruments, to fulfil her work in the world, have been the only aspiration of their hearts. So, when Sri Aurobindo left his body, they naturally looked up to her, yearning to find him in her. She assured them that he had cast off his material vesture only for a definite purpose, and not compelled by any ineluctable law of Nature; and that he was here still, in the earth atmosphere, toiling, as ever, for the fulfilment of the great work of his life—the descent of the Truth-Consciousness and the supramental

transformation of man. She assured them that he was present in their midst, not in a figurative sense or as a universal, impersonal consciousness, but as the very divine being he had been in his physical body, as the very dynamic Master they had loved and adored. Sri Aurobindo had often told them that his consciousness and the Mother's were one; and now they realised that truth more and more, in a sense more living, quickening and intimate.

A meditative silence reigned in the Ashram for twelve days after the passing of the beloved Master. Then the normal activities began, but with a striking difference. One felt a pervading Presence in the Ashram atmosphere and the Mother's Force as more sovereignly in command of the life blossoming there. There was an imperative call, a kindling inspiration, almost an irresistible pull to transcend the normal levels of human consciousness and ascend to the radiant heights of the Spirit. Concentration came easier and the need for total self-consecration became more imperious than ever. Many felt an urge, never felt in the same way before, to ferret out all that was unholy and unlovely in them, all that opposed their self-transcendence, and fling them away for ever, so that the influence of the Mother alone could enter into them and mould them in the image of their innate divinity. Besides, each successive day brought a greater contact with the world outside, resulting in a rapid expansion of the Ashram and, which is remarkable, a greater and more enthusiastic acceptance by the world of the ideal for which the Ashram stood. The expansion appeared, indeed, to exceed all expectation. The departments of the Ashram work multiplied and the energies of the sadhakas found new channels of self-expression. It is a singular, though usual, feature of the Ashram activities that they develop of themselves, as if impelled by some invisible force, without any previous plan or blue-print. A person comes and starts a new line in which he appears to be an expert, or one of the sadhakas suddenly develops a capacity of which he never suspected any trace in himself before, and it becomes the occasion for a new department. Those who live in the Ashram and have observed how the departments come into being and thrive, know well enough that their single source of inspiration is the Mother, whose supramental Will manifests itself in its inscrutable way in the various life of her children. The working of that Will now made itself felt more powerfully than ever and sought manifold ways of self-fulfilment. Streams of visitors poured in, day after day, month after month, to pay their homage to the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo, catch a glimpse of the ideal of the Life Divine and imbibe something of the Light and Force emanating from the Mother. It seemed as if the flood-gates of a dynamic spirituality had been flung wide open to the whole world without any distinction of creed and colour. It seemed that the Mother's will and aspiration breathed by her Prayer of January 9, 1914, when she knew nothing of Sri Aurobindo and his teachings, had begun to be realised:

“O Lord, unseizable Reality, Thou who constantly escapest before our conquering advance even though it is effective, and who wilt always be

the Unknown in spite of all that we shall learn to know of Thee, in spite of all that we shall have ravished from Thy eternal mystery, we would, with a complete and constant effort, combin-ing the multiple paths which lead towards Thee, advance like a rising and indomitable flood, breaking all obstacles, crossing all barriers, lifting all veils, dispersing all clouds, piercing all darknesses, advance towards Thee, always towards Thee, with a movement so powerful, so irresist-ible, that a whole multitude will be swept on behind us, and the earth conscious of Thy new and eternal Presence will understand at last what are her true ends, and live in the harmony and peace of Thy sovereign realisation....”

It seemed that the mission of her life of which she had spoken in so many of her Prayers was going at last to be fulfilled:

“Grant that I may accomplish my mission, that I may help in Thy integral manifestation.”

“Grant, O Divine Teacher, that we may more and more, better and better, know and accomplish our mission upon the earth, that we may fully utilise all the energies that are in us, and that Thy sovereign Presence may become more and more perfectly manifested in the silent depths of our soul, in all our thoughts, all our feelings, all our actions....”<sup>2</sup> She, who had always kept herself in the background and shunned the lime-light, became now the cynosure of countless eyes and the hope and refuge of many wandering souls. Many who came to see the Ashram came again, and again, to see more, and more; for they felt that here there were more things below than on the surface; and some even came, decided to stay and enroll themselves as warriors in the great spiritual battle. Parents left their children, husbands left their wives, brothers left their sisters, whole families came and settled—all drawn by some irresistible, mysterious magne-tism. Even little children, once they came and felt a touch of the Mother’s love, refused to go back with their parents and were happy to live and grow under the Mother’s outspread wings. The Mother dislikes adver-tisement and propaga-da, particularly in the cause of spiritual institutions. She says that, if her work is the work of the Divine, workers will flock to her from all parts of the globe. And so, indeed, they have been flocking—from America and England and France, from Germany and Holland and Spain, from Sweden and Australia and China and Japan, and from almost every part of India. The stream expands as it pours in and rushes forward to bathe the Mother’s feet. Fired with the new spirit, the standard-bearers of the new Light gather round her to help fulfil her mission. Each day brings, as if by miracle, a more admiring appreciation of the Ashram and its expanding activities. Is it any wonder that men feel spontaneously drawn to one who can awaken their souls, unveil their innate harmony and happiness and lead them to the perfect fulfilment of their divine destiny?

In 1951 the Sri Aurobindo International University Centre came into existence. On the occasion of its convention the Mother said: "Sri Aurobindo is present in our midst, and with all the power of his creative genius he presides over the formation of the university centre which for years he considered as one of the best means of preparing the future humanity to receive the supramental light that will transform the elite of today into a new race manifesting upon earth the new light and force and life. In his name I open today this Con-vention meeting here with the purpose of realising one of his most cherished ideals." It is a centre where irrespective of race and clime, men can receive a harmo-nious education designed to develop and enlighten not only their mind but their whole being—soul, mind, life and body—and give them a definite lead towards a dy-namic spiritual life lived in God and devoted to the fulfilment of the divine Will in the world. It is a centre where men can learn how to achieve their perfection and fulfilment, not only on one but on all planes of their exis-tence, and express their inherent divinity which is now masked by their half-animal humanity. It is a centre where they can learn to rise beyond all artificial divisions of race and country, sex and age, caste and creed, and find themselves one with all, in peace and harmony with all—in God. It is a place where they can serve humanity best by learning to serve the Divine in humanity.

The University is growing, slowly but steadily, in the silent way things grow and flower under the benignant eye of God, when the bustling mind of man, in its arro-gant incompetence, ceases to interfere. The number of children has been increasing by leaps and bounds and, but for the extreme difficulty of accommodation, would have swollen to unmanageable proportions. It is in the flower-like faces of these children, more than anywhere else, that one can perceive the gleam of the heavenly Light the Mother has been striving to establish in the earth-consciousness, the Light about which she wrote decades ago in her Prayers and Meditations:

"A new Light shall break upon the earth, a new world shall be born: the things that were promised shall be fulfilled."

Addressing the children of the University, she said in 1951:

"There is an ascending evolution in nature which goes from the stone to the plant, from the plant to the animal, from the animal to man. Because man is, for the moment, the last rung at the summit of the ascending evolution, he considers himself as the final stage in this ascension and believes there can be nothing on earth superior to him. In that he is mistaken. In his physical nature he is yet almost wholly an animal, a thinking and speaking animal, but still an animal in his material habits and instincts. Undoubtedly, nature cannot be satisfied with such an imperfect result; she endeavours to bring out a being who will be to man what man is to the animal, a being who will

remain a man in its external form, and yet whose consciousness will rise far above the mental and its slavery to ignorance.

“Sri Aurobindo came upon earth to teach this truth to men. He told them that man is only a transitional being living in a mental consciousness, but with the possibility of acquiring a new consciousness, the Truth-Consciousness, and capable of living a life perfectly harmonious, good and beautiful, happy and fully conscious. During the whole of his life upon earth, Sri Aurobindo gave all his time to establish in himself this consciousness he called supramental, and to help those gathered around him to realise it.”

“You have the immense privilege of having come quite young to the Ashram, that is to say, still plastic and capable of being moulded according to this new ideal and thus becoming the representatives of the new race. Here, in the Ashram, you are in the most favourable conditions with regard to the environment, the influence, the teaching and the example, to awaken in you this supramental consciousness and to grow according to its law.”

“Now, all depends on your will and your sincerity. If you have the will no more to belong to ordinary hu-manity, no more to be merely evolved animals; if your will is to become men of the new race realising Sri Aurobindo’s supramental ideal living a new and higher life upon a new earth, you will find here all the necessary help to achieve your purpose; you will profit fully by your stay in the Ashram and eventually become living examples for the world.”

This, then, is the Mother’s work—to awaken in man the supramental Truth-Consciousness and help him grow according to its law. Evidently it is a signal departure from the aims and objects of traditional spirituality, which points to the Beyond as the only kingdom of per-fection and fulfilment. The Mother’s Force is directed to the radical transformation of the whole active nature of man, so that the gulf between his outer consciousness and the divine Consciousness may be bridged and that he may manifest the Divine in every movement of his individual and collective life on earth.

The Ashram of Sri Aurobindo is the Mother’s creation, and she has built it up, stone by stone, arch by arch, so that one day it may become a temple and a radiating centre of the new Light, a prism of the splendour of the Supermind. With her will united with the Will of the Divine, her unbarred vision contemplating the future more clearly than we can contemplate the immediate present, and her supramental Force creating the prin-ciples and conditions of the Truth-life upon earth, the Mother has been silently proceeding with her work, unmindful of the praise or blame of the world. What has been achieved is little by the side of what she has to achieve for God and humanity—a refounding of human life on the peace and bliss and creative harmony of the Spirit, a perfect revelation of God in Matter.<sup>3</sup>



## References

1. *Savitri*, Book VI, Canto II
2. Both these Prayers were written by the Mother in 1914, just a few days before her meeting with Sri Aurobindo. What is particularly remarkable in them is not only the word 'manifestation', but the expression 'integral manifestation', which has always been the keyword of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and philosophy. This insistence on the integrality of the realisation, unheard of before Sri Aurobindo, is the most conclusive evidence of the identity of their souls and their mission upon earth.
3. *Savitri*, Book III, Canto II

