

MOMENTS THAT DO NOT FADE

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I left Belgium on the 17th of January 1970—that was 33 years ago. And then I flew to Frankfurt. Seventeenth of January, the airport was white, under the snow. And then we flew through the night on a Boeing 707 over Lhotse, one of the high mountain tops in the Himalayas – I'll never forget it, and then we landed in Bombay at 5 o'clock in the morning, 30 degrees centigrade—hot sunshine! Another world. Then Madras, in a bus. At that time, 33 years ago, it was not like it is today. Then I arrived in Pondicherry, in a state of shock. I did not even know whether my luggage was on the top of the bus or not. But luckily it was there. Then I landed in a small hotel at the seaside that is not there anymore, just next to the Ashram press. And after I put my luggage in my room, I took my jacket on my shoulder and went out to see the Ashram.

In my head the Ashram was a white building with a palm tree next to it under a blue sky. Whether the Mother was there or not, I didn't know. So I went out. There was a church there and in front of that church was a European lady talking with somebody. A very fashionably dressed lady, in shorts, well done up. So I asked her, "Where is that Ashram here somewhere?" She answered in English with an accent. I said, "Oh, you are French!" "Oh, yes," she said. "See, you go on and you come to the Consulate with the French flag, and then you go to the left and you will be at the Ashram." So I did. It was Sunday afternoon, very quiet. You didn't see many people at that time. I entered the school courtyard, the gate was open. And there I saw all these timetables signed by the Mother, that very specific signature. I said, "Where am I!" All at once a voice behind me said, "Are you looking for something?" It was the voice of a young Frenchman, John Pierre, who afterwards became Guruprasad. He is still in Auroville—Goupi. "I'll take you to the Ashram," he said. But I understood '*La Chambre*' instead of '*L' Ashram*.' So I thought, "Oh, there must be a holy room here somewhere." And I went with him. He took me across the street, through a gate. You won't believe it. There on those chairs, known so well by all of you, sat four old, grey bearded people. It looked as if that was the entrance to heaven and they were St. Peter and the other saints. Then Goupi asked somebody, "When can he come and where?" Behind me, behind my back, somebody answered. And it was the same woman's voice I heard in front of the church. And I turned around and there was that same lady, no longer in shorts and fashionably dressed, but in a white long robe, holding a plate full of flowers. I thought, "What is going on here?!" I didn't realise that I stood in the Ashram because I had understood '*La Chambre*.' So then, "You can have an appointment with the person you are looking for," and this, that, and the other.

I had the appointment, and afterwards I found a room in Goyle's New Guest House. There I heard that the Mother was still alive and that one could meet Her. You had to put your letter to Her in the box that is still there. They

told me, "You go and put your letter to the Mother in that box." For three days I turned around the central Ashram building, asking everybody, "where is that Ashram?" Even though Prithvi Singh, who was sitting there in the balcony street, said, "It is here," I didn't believe him. The entrance gate for me was too small to be the Ashram of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. So when finally I was putting my letter in the box, a miracle happened. Behind me stood again that same Frenchman I had met before. I asked, "Where is the Ashram?" He said, "Come with me, it's here." I had seen a photo of the Samadhi and behind the Samadhi that kind of tiled roof under which is Nirodbaran's room. Therefore I had thought by myself, "If I see that, I am in the Ashram." And he took me to the Samadhi and I saw that and I knew that I was in the Ashram. And then I dropped my letter to the Mother, and She sent me in Her own handwriting an answer brought by Suresh Joshi who was Her messenger. And the answer was—I still have the letter—"You can come,"—it was in French—"You can come...*mais ce sera une entrevue silencieuse*—It will be a silent meeting." What did that mean? I had already had so much trouble in writing my letter! For what should I write—Madame? Mother? I had great inhibitions against writing Mother! I had had a mother! My mother was dead! I have kept that letter also, because the Mother had written Her answer at the bottom. She invited me to go and meet Her.

Then there was the ceremony in the guesthouse. I didn't know anything about flowers. And a whole lot of flowers were laid out before me; from those I had to choose to take some flowers to the Mother. And I was not a flower man. For me this meant nothing but sentimentality. All the guests in the guesthouse were standing behind my back to see which flowers I would choose. I failed the test miserably. I had chosen several flowers, which I had found very beautiful—but I had not chosen 'Humility', which looks more like a herb than a flower. Then Michou, whom some of you may remember, whom I met 30 years later in Montreal (a couple of years ago) and who still looks the same as in 1970, took me through the park to the Mother's room. After some time Champaklal-ji called my name and I went in. What was I to do? What do you do when you come in front of... I had a vague idea of who the Mother was... what do you do when you come in front of such a being? For in the meantime I had seen people meditating on the wall at the seaside, I had seen people on their belly at the Samadhi, I had seen people in all postures of religiosity and meditation and all that—I felt very much disoriented and insecure. So I went through that door of the Mother's room, known to all of you and what did I see? I saw that very thin arm of the Mother resting on the armrest of Her chair. And I went in front of Her... and the rest I cannot tell, because I don't know. And when I came to myself again, there was the Mother, smiling, giving me one packet of blessings and then another one.

Then after sometime when I had left the Mother's room, 'it' started working. In the body, in the spine, in the subtle body. And since I didn't want to be in the guesthouse with all those visitors at that time (I was a brand new visitor myself), I walked by the seaside for a couple of hours, with tears in my eyes. Then I lay

down, with the tears in my eyes. Something had happened. I am such a naive fellow that everything that has happened in my life, spiritually, I understood only long afterwards. And I am happy for this, because if you interpret things at the very moment you distort them. You give them a fixed shape in your thought. You know where I got the explanation of what happened between the Mother and me on the 29th of January, 1970? I got it in the Temple of Freemasons in Ghent, a town in Belgium. I had given a talk in that Temple and after the talk I had conversations with many of those Freemasons. There were judges, professors, lawyers, priests, doctors, and they were extremely interested. And when I told them about that experience, one of them said, "Oh! This is the initiation." Later I read that the Mother said in one of Her conversations, "What I call initiation is when a person meets me and recognises me." I suppose that in those very seconds of eternities I had recognised something, which I knew from long ago and which is always with me.

Everybody at the guest house was having a ring. Everybody had to buy a ring with the Mother's symbol! A ring with a red stone, a ring with a diamond, a ring like this, a ring like that... And I also had to have a ring. And the next time when I went to see the Mother on my birthday, end of March that same year, I took my ring with me. I didn't dare to talk because, remember, "*Ce sera une entrevue silensieuse,*" –our meeting would be silent meeting – or so I supposed. So I handed Her that ring. I presented it to Her and She looked at it. And I held my ring finger of the left hand like this, for Her to put the ring on it. This is one of the very few times that the Mother talked to me. She said, "*A ce doigt – là?* On THAT finger?" I nodded dumbly without knowing why I held up that finger. And She put that ring on that finger and the ring is still there. It is the only one I have ever worn in my life. Afterwards I asked Her son Andre, with whom I had a good contact, "Why did the Mother ask, "On THAT finger?" "I'll ask Her," he said. So he asked Her and then I got the answer. I know that you all are curious to know the answer, it meant – 'Mystic Marriage'.

I had a return ticket valid for one year. The time had come when I had to make a decision. In those days India was not what it is today. After all I was 35 years old. I had been a journalist, working in the school, the manager of a theatre. Compare all that with the job the Mother gave me – "Go to Nandanam with the New Group children." You have no idea how idiotic I felt the first time I was walking with two six year old boys holding my hands on either side, going to Nandanam. Afterwards I saw that it had been the ideal occupation for me. So the time had come for me to decide whether to stay or go back. Actually I had already made up my mind – I wanted to go back. To the Belgian beer and the cheese and the steak with chips. So I wrote to the Mother that the time has come and I feel I have to go back. She didn't say anything. To Andre She said, "Let him come." Again stupid as I am, I didn't realise the meaning of such a significant gesture of Hers who was so busy all the time. I went, sat in front of Her and then the smile came and the blessings. Later I went downstairs and said, "Okay! I am going! I am free!" So I went to the guest house where I had

been staying at that time. During the next one hour I went through a battle. I even dare to say I was attacked! And when Dining Room time came, I went to the Dining Room, (I often talked to Günther, whom some of you may know, he is still there) and I said to Günther, "I am staying." And I am still here!

In 1972 the first stone of the Matrimandir was laid. It still was the age of the bicycles—not yet the high season of the two wheelers, motorcycles, scooters, scooties etc. or of cars, buses. It was still cycling time. Auroville, Matrimandir is quite far from Pondicherry. 5 o'clock in the morning, puffing up the JIPMER hill, no, thank you very much! But I have seen that when I have to do something, somebody comes and tells me. That time who was it that came, sent by the Divine? Dick Hawk, the American tennis player, who in the meantime has left his body and who was a friend of mine. "Georges, hello, we are going to the first stone-laying ceremony of the Matrimandir." I say, "Okay." We rode up the hill, parked our bicycles. The order was being maintained by the captains of the Physical Education Department at that time. So, very obediently I went to stand where people like me were expected to stand. Then I didn't move anymore. Why? Because there was like a helmet of Force pressed on my head which meant that I just stood there and underwent that Force. The Mother was in Her room physically, but the Force She had put there was so strong. Since then I have never had any doubt about Auroville. People ask so often and say, "How is Auroville?" I say, 'Excellent, it can't be better.'" "Ah! But we hear all these things and all these stories and so many incredible scandals are happening. And you say it couldn't be better?" I say, "Yeah! I am sure it couldn't be better." Number one: people who are on a visit know a hundred times more than me, for they go around and I don't. Number two: it is my faith that the Mother has founded Auroville and takes care of it. If She hadn't done that for all these years, it wouldn't have been there anymore. The circumstances are so difficult that Auroville would not be there anymore. People do not realise what a miracle, what a wonder it is that it is still there and developing. Number three: since a couple of years I have had a kind of an experience which I can tell here, as we are among brothers and sisters, otherwise I wouldn't have even said all these personal things. A friend from a boarding school in Belgium, where I was studying forty years ago, had rediscovered me and I him. He came to India. He came to Pondicherry and wanted to see something of Auroville. I had to show him the Matrimandir, of course. But as I am a heart patient, I don't go inside. I am like Moses: I am halted on the border of the Promised Land! So I said to my friend, "You go up, please. I am sitting here, no problem." For me, if the Force is there, it is also here. The Ashram has become so busy that, usually, I remain sitting on my motorcycle under the Balcony and have my five minutes of concentration there. The very stones are drenched by the Force in the streets where Sri Aurobindo has been living and where the Mother has given so many Darshans. Therefore, no problem for me, inside or outside the walls. My friend went up and I sat down and closed my eyes. I saw red and golden light. Very active. I thought, "Oh, oh, the sun is shining in my eyes." It was the time of

the sunset. I opened my eyes. The sun was behind me. Since that day, when I go to the Matrimandir, I hesitate to close my eyes because it is as if I were asking, "Let me see that again." But every time I do close my eyes, I see that light, red and golden. If you have read the Mother's Conversations you would know what light that is. The same strong Force must have been there when the first stone of the Matrimandir was laid. Being humans, we are so small. And when you take up the Yoga, you go into yourself more and more, and more, and sometimes I am horrified by the littleness of the human being that I am, especially because we know the great perspective of what one has to become.

Then came the time of the last Darshan. I had six darshans with the Mother, personal encounters. When it was my birthday, end of March 1973, She had physical difficulties, if we may call it like that, and I could only see Her a few days later, which means it was in the very last days when She still saw people. So I was standing there. As I said in the beginning, somewhere I must have known that splendid Being that is the Divine Mother. Now She had become in Her physical body the Mother most of us have seen, and in me there was something that didn't accept that physical condition. Yes, something in me realised what She was going through, what She was working on, and from my terrace in the Rue Suffren I did *pranam* to the Mother in the Yoga; but when I saw Her in that battered body... there was something in me that revolted. I was standing there at the end of the line in Her room and there were people in front of Her trying to look into Her eyes, doing this, doing that. And in my small ignorant being there was something that revolted. But suddenly, something happened: the Mother sitting became upright, as it were, and looked towards me. At once I became peaceful and full of Her presence. And then when my turn came to stand in front of Her, She gave me flowers and my birthday card. And She said, "*Bonne Fête*". And with the birthday card and the flowers in my hands I bowed down with the intention to touch Her feet. But my hands were slowed down; in my movement my hands were slowed down so that they touched very lightly, which made me suppose that She must have suffered a lot just by rough, albeit very devotional touches of some hands. And when my hands touched Her feet, Her hand fell on my head, blessing me. There are so many people who read about the Buddha, about Christ, about Krishna and who think—if only I had been living at the time they were on earth, if only I could have met them, if only I could have been blessed by them. I have been blessed, like so many among you, by the Divine Mother. And that... remembering moments like that is by itself, I suppose, a whole Yoga.

Then one morning my French—Tamil neighbour on Rue Suffren came and knocked on the window of my room upstairs. "*La Mère est morte!*" he shouted. "*La Mère est morte!*" I got up... (I get up very late, I go to bed very late, I sleep very late—I have never taken up the Indian habit, that's why I am very late here!) I got up very quietly, just knelt down and said, "Let Thy will be done." And never anything has changed in my relation with the Mother, physically there or not there. Of course, practically speaking, Her physical presence meant a

great difference, especially for an institution like the Ashram. But as far as I am concerned, nothing has changed in the least.

That was then. Now the situation is different. Let us never forget that the Supermind has come down and has been there in the atmosphere of the earth since 1956. Hasn't the Mother said and repeated, "A New World is born"? She said, "*Un nouveau monde ist né est né, est né.*" She repeated this later in one of Her most lyrical talks, and She said to the children of that time, "Please, every morning when you wake up, remember that a new world is born." Brothers and sisters, do we believe that? Are we living according to that? There has been so much confusion after Sri Aurobindo left His body, after the Mother left Hers, and we see so much friction (let us call it like that) in the present day.

Do we still believe that? If what the Mother said was true and if the Supermind is what it is supposed to be, the birth of the New World must have been absolutely true. The world is going in the right direction. It cannot go any other way.

Number two: on the 1st of January 1969, the Mother had one of Her great experiences. She reflected very carefully on it for days and came to the conclusion that it was the consciousness of the Intermediary Being, what She called "*la conscience du surhomme.*" This is an aspect of the Supramental Being to help all those who are turned towards the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. It is there, now, for that. She said that it is a very compassionate, very strong consciousness. We can all invoke it, we can all be open to it, and if we are turned towards Sri Aurobindo and the Mother it must be there with us. All Consciousness is a Being, every Being is a Consciousness—whether big or small, very big or very, very small.

Number three: Sri Aurobindo exists in a supramental body. The Mother has said this time and again. She said: "He is here. He did that. He was there. He goes into the world and helps." The supramental body of Sri Aurobindo exists; it is essentially the transformation of His former physical, vital and mental. The Mother did the Yoga in the physical when He had left His body. She continued the *avataric* Yoga. This is the wonder, the miracle of the double Avatar. Sri Aurobindo said, "It is not my intention to repeat the old fiasco." If the Avatar of the Supermind had not been a double Avatar, the work would have failed again. Sri Aurobindo said, "One of us has to go." The Mother said, "I'll go." But no, He forbade Her to go because Her body was better for the Work than His, He said. And then He performed that miracle of letting Himself become ill, and fully conscious and with His immense power—Sri Aurobindo was so much farther than is normally supposed in the literature—he descended into death. Don't forget that Sri Aurobindo, in one of the sonnets written around 1940 described how 'Thy golden Light came down into my brain...into my heart... into my feet' (from *The Golden Light*). We all know that the feet are symbols of the material. He had gone very far in the *avataric* Yoga. And the Mother took it up and continued it.

Number four, therefore, is this that the Mother exists in a supramental body. She has described Her new body. Supermind does not die. Supermind is Divinity, is immortality.

So if we take these four points together: The Supermind is there and can't go away. The consciousness of the Intermediary Being who helps all those who are turned towards Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is there. Sri Aurobindo is there and the Mother is there for all of us to invoke. But we have to go through a difficult process of self-analysis, of self-mastery. And the more you go into yourself the more you see the depths of the human incapability, of the animal in us. There was—to give an example—this Presence; years after the Mother had left Her body, as I was sitting near the Samadhi, depressed by my own limitations. It was evening, the time that the Ashramites and the Group members come to the Samadhi to do *pranam*. Normally I sat against one of the posts around the Samadhi. And on the ground fluttered a moth which probably had burnt one of its wings on a lamp somewhere. And there were all those trampling feet around the moth, and I said to myself, "See, this is exactly a picture of what I am. I am that moth, in that condition, and any moment somebody may step on it and crush it." You won't believe it. No sooner had I thought that a young girl came, took up the moth and put it on the Samadhi. There are things like that all of us could tell. All of us live in that Presence. Many surely have nicer experiences to narrate than the ones I have had.

Suppose I meet an old friend from the West one of these days, a friend whom I have not met for 45 years, and he says, "So you have been living so many years in India. Was it worthwhile?" I would answer, "Yes, it was more than worthwhile. I have found what I was looking for." Which does not mean that I am or have become what I am looking for! It is the same when I am writing my essays, my books: I feel like a student who knows practically nothing and has so much, so much to learn. And there is so much that I have received. The vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother gives you the basis, the ground to start on. It gives you the perspective in which you can interpret the whole of Reality. This was exactly what the Mother said many times to the teachers, "Learn everything you can learn." But if you do so from the standpoint of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, you will have a true basis of understanding. In today's confused time, it is, I think, the only way to confront the world. That is a huge gift.

The second point: feeling so clearly that one is continuing in this life something that had started in another life is such a grace.

The third point: having met the Mother personally gives you the assurance that you can go on through everything that confronts you. As a heart patient, I am always walking with a shadow beside me. So you live turned toward Eternity, ready at every moment. But as there is that absolute protection, that Presence, everything is possible. This should remain written on the blackboard in our schools and remain there: 'Everything is possible.' Because Sri Aurobindo

and the Mother have done Their incredible Yoga. And it is only by studying other things that one gets more and more to appreciate the greatness of what They have done. And They, having done that, are there, here, and everywhere. Please don't take it amiss that I have been so personal, I suppose that it is what was required of me. Thank you for your willing attention, dear brothers and sisters.

THE GOLDEN LIGHT

Thy golden Light came down into my brain
 And the grey rooms of mind sun-touched became
 A bright reply to Wisdom's occult plane,
 A calm illumination and a flame.

Thy golden Light came down into my throat,
 And all my speech is now a tune divine,
 A paeon-song of thee my single note;
 My words are drunk with the Immortal's wine.

Thy golden Light came down into my heart
 Smiting my life with Thy eternity;
 Now has it grown a temple where Thou art
 And all its passions point towards only Thee.

Thy golden Light came down into my feet:
 My earth is now thy playfield and thy seat.

Sri Aurobindo, (SABCL, Vol.5, p.134)