

SRI AUROBINDO'S

HUMOUR

Nirodbadan

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Published by
Kashiben Manibhai Patel Charity Trust
Pondicherry

First published in 1972 under the title
Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo — Part II

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ISBN 81-900160-4-0

Published by
Kashiben Manibhai Patel Charity Trust
PONDICHERRY

Printed at
All India Press, Kennedy Nagar, Pondicherry 605001
PRINTED IN INDIA

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

1994

This book represents a new and, to the general public, quite an unfamiliar aspect of Sri Aurobindo — his humour.

It was first published to mark the Birth Centenary of Sri Aurobindo in 1972 by Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Pondicherry under the title *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo Part I*. It is now reprinted by Sri Mira Trust, Pondicherry under its new title.

Preface

There is a common belief that yogis and saints are grave and reserved by nature. They have no sense of humour. Sri Ramakrishna was probably the first among them who is known to have shattered this false notion. Sri Aurobindo was revered and accepted as a great yogi, philosopher and poet, but was considered to be dry and dreary. His sublime philosophical writings dating from the *Arya*-period were perhaps responsible for this popular misconception. During his political life too he was branded as 'the man who never smiles'. Even to us, his disciples who saw him only four times a year, he appeared grave and austere, yet with a quiet compassion which made him so lovable as a Guru. When I wrote to him complaining that his "Himalayan austerity and grandeur take my breath away, making my heart palpitate!" he replied: "O rubbish! I am austere and grand, grim and stern! every blasted thing I never was! I groan in an un-Aurobindian despair when I hear such things. What has happened to the common sense of all of you people? In order to reach the Overmind it is not at all necessary to take leave of this simple but useful quality. Common sense by the way is not logic (which is the least common sense-like thing in the world), it is simply looking at things as they are without inflation or deflation—not imagining wild imaginations—or for that matter, despairing 'I know not why' despairs."

This single letter will prove how deceptive appearance is and how baseless popular belief. Sri Aurobindo's letters to some of us made people rub their eyes and say, "Well, what a delightful surprise!" But unfortunately the letters have not gained a wide circulation and Sri Aurobindo as a Yogi, de-void of his glorious humour, still lingers in the mind of the intelligentsia.

The present bunch of letters, brimming with humour, culled from my correspondence, will, I hope, dispel the mist of ignorance and reveal Sri Aurobindo as a Yogi who found *rasa* in every circumstance of life, for he himself was *raso vai sah*, "Verily he is the Delight." His many-sided playfulness bursting out on any trivial or serious occasion will make a delectable feast for all lovers of laughter. And these letters are just a fraction of his divine levity.

NIRODBARAN

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GENERAL HUMOUR

1933

MYSELF: My birthday comes on the 17th of this month, shall I not come to you?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. I don't know how it failed to be put on the record.

MYSELF: I try to leave myself in your hands entirely. Am I wrong in my attitude or am I to cry constantly into your ears?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not constantly, but from time to time.

1934

MYSELF: Can you spare me a canvas cot, if any? If you can, please sanction some mosquito frame arrangement too.

SRI AUROBINDO: Ask for the canvas cot and a mosquito frame to be used with. Impossible to hang a mosquito frame on the independent principle here.

MYSELF: Mother, from your look in the Pranam it seemed to me you didn't or don't like our taking food exclusive of Ashram food.

SRI AUROBINDO: How did you read food into the Mother's look? It was not there at all.

Why don't you go on what the Mother says instead of taking all this intuitive or inferential trouble? MYSELF: Guru, so permission

for Darshan given to S. Majumdar and staying with Dilipda too? I also know him, he is really a very fine man.

Dilipda promises me a kingdom for a wire. If I can get your answer today, well, the kingdom will be one day earlier, as the wire will go today.

SRI AUROBINDO: Can wire and become a king at once. MYSELF:

May I be permitted to see you on the 15th inst. the centenary of my arrival here?

(Sri Aurobindo underlined the word 'centenary', put an interrogation mark above it).

SRI AUROBINDO: I say, you have not been here 100 years, surely!

1935

MYSELF: Everybody seems to be happy to find me shifted from the 'timber-throne' to the Dispensary, and says 'Now is the right man in the right place!'

SRI AUROBINDO: Men are rational idiots, The timber godown made you make a great progress and you made the timber godown make a great progress too. I only hope it will be maintained by your successor.

MYSELF: You refuse to be a Guru and decline to be a Father, though ladies specially think of you and call you by the latter. If they know this, I think I shall have to run from one lady to another with smelling salt!

SRI AUROBINDO: Father is too domestic and semitic—Abba Father! I feel as if I had suddenly become a twin brother of the Lord Jehovah. Besides there are suggestions of a paternal smile and a hand uplifted to smite which do not suit me. Let the ladies "father" me if smelling salts are the only alternative, but let it not be generalised.

MYSELF: I have given you my time-table so that you may concentrate on me at the exact time. I hope the mathematical figures won't give you a shock!

SRI AUROBINDO: No fear! Mathematics are more likely to send me to sleep than give a shock.

MYSELF: My friend Jatin Bal whose photo I sent you the other day expresses a desire for Darshan. Is permission possible?

SRI AUROBINDO: No recollection of it at all! But the Mother remembers and she has given me a glimmering and gleaming reflection of a recollection. Yes, it was the photograph in which you qualified for Abyssinia. Right.

It is the only thing possible for a beginning.

MYSELF: As far as I can make out, we have to take everything on trust, since we lack the experience and so long as the experiences don't come what can we do but go on teasing you with our questions? And you well know,

We are not worshippers of you
But your immortal letter!
We do not worship the dumb blue
But his resplendent star
Which shines and all the night shines
In the dark caves of our mines.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord! I hope you don't imagine that is a rhyme?

MYSELF: (I had told the Furniture Dept. that if a table was lying about I would like to have it. I had mentioned this in my note-book to Sri Aurobindo).

What about my table? Forgotten? ellipsis?

Out of the silence
What is the word that be
About my cane-table, Sir?
Either can I take with surrender.

SRI AUROBINDO: Forgot both the cane and the table. You can have, if it is lying about.

Good Lord! another! If you rhyme sir and surrender, you don't deserve a table but only a cane and plenty of it,

MYSELF: I realise every moment that I am not made for the path of the Spirit neither for any big endeavour in life. I know I shall be unhappy. But are all men born to be happy?

SRI AUROBINDO: Man of sorrows! man of sorrows!! knock him off man, knock him off!

MYSELF: Something great, something big you have done, Sir. Will you kindly whisper what it is?

SRI AUROBINDO: I am always doing something big, but never big enough—as yet.

MYSELF: Really, Sir, do tell us, if no objection.

SRI AUROBINDO: *Eh, what ?*

MYSELF: R and self are invited for tea to the occultist's place—there's some function. I suppose it'll be rude not to go. Again social consciousness?—you may say. But say it again then, Sir!

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course, social consciousness—according to S.C., it is certainly rude not to go. What it may be from another S.C. (spiritual consciousness), is another matter.

MYSELF: Can you stretch your hand, Sir and help me out of this mud of the subconscious, Inconscient, universal nature or God knows what?

SRI AUROBINDO: I am quite willing to stretch out any number of hands for the purpose. Hold on and you will get out.

1936

MYSELF: My nights are again becoming heavy. I don't know how to deal with them.

SRI AUROBINDO: So are mine with a too damnably heavy burden of letters to write.

MYSELF: I come out of bed with the morose thought that another night has passed away and I have done nothing.

SRI AUROBINDO: You mean the morbid thought!

MYSELF: Thoughts of past pleasures and enjoyments are hopping in and out!

SRI AUROBINDO: Man alive, send them hopping off for good, What a masochism in all that!

MYSELF: You compare your nights with mine! God above! yours, Sir, is a labour of love.

SRI AUROBINDO: Love under protest then or at least labour under protest!

MYSELF: And mine—labour of yoga?

SRI AUROBINDO: A labour of Bhoga?

MYSELF: 'Exceptional circumstances'! whatever they might have been, have disappeared.

SRI AUROBINDO: Make them reappear.

MYSELF: Expected many things or at least something from Darshan but don't see anywhere any sign of it!

SRI AUROBINDO: Many Americans, at least, what was not expected. It is always the unexpected that happens, you see.

MYSELF: Arjuna was stupefied, horrified, flabbergasted by seeing the Vishwarup of Krishna whom he thought of as friend, guru, play-mate. Could I for a moment play all these pranks on you if I saw your Vishwarup? No, Sir, I am satisfied with you as Sri Aurobindo pure and

simple.

SRI AUROBINDO: But that was because the Vishwarup was enjoying a rather catastrophic dinner, with all the friends and relations of Arjuna stuck between his *danstrdni karalant*. My Vishwarup has no tusks, sir, none at all. It is a pacifist Vishwarup.

No objection, I only suggested that *I* don't know who this Sri Aurobindo pure and simple is. If you do, I congratulate you.

MYSELF: The result of Darshan in some other quarter leaves me staggered and staggered! I can't imagine such an incident taking place in the Ashram—I mean, of course, N's gripping M's throat. It makes me rather aghast. Coupled with that incident of R's rushing to shoe-beat P. Good Lord! but I suppose they are all in the game!

SRI AUROBINDO: You seem to be the most candid and ignorant baby going. We shall have to publish an "Ashram News and Titbits" for your benefit. Have you never heard of N's going for K's head with a powerfully-brandished hammer? Or of his howling challenges to C to come out and face him, till Mother herself had to interfere and stop him? Or of his yelling and hammering in a rage at C's door till D came and dragged him away? These things happened within a short distance of your poetic ears and yet you know nothing??? N is subject to these fits and has always been so. The Darshan is not responsible. And he is not the only howler. What about M herself? and half a dozen others? Hunger strikes? Threats of suicide? ^[1]...to leave the Ashram etc., etc. All from the same source, sir, and apparently part of the game.

MYSELF: Whatever it may have been due to, the result of the Darshan has been very disturbing in some quarters. Difficulties of individual nature rushing up?

SRI AUROBINDO: Individual and general. The subconscious, sir, the subconscious. Brilliant irruptions of the subconscious Brahman into the dullness of ordinary life. ব্রহ্মণে নমো নমঃ (salutation to the subconscious Brahman)

MYSELF: As soon as I enter the Dispensary, it seems some black forces ride on my shoulders, I want to escape and spend a few af-

ternoon hours away in the loneliness of Nature's company till this melancholia lasts. Can a cycle be had for the purpose?

SRI AUROBINDO: Again X! Can't supply a cycle for every melancholiac. Would have to buy 20 new ones immediately and then the whole Ashram would turn melancholiac in order to have cycles.

MYSELF: From the tone of my letter you may imagine that I am making you responsible for my pathological condition. Not at all; it is my blessed nature or Man of Sorrows as you title it, though I don't understand why you say that I have borrowed them from X. Diffidence, self-distrust has always been my element from the very start.

SRI AUROBINDO: Your "not at all" is a delusion. You doubt like him in the same terms, write like him with the same symptoms similarly expressed, want to cycle into Nature like him etc., etc.—and still you say, "No X!"

MYSELF: You call me lazy, but I am not lazy. When the inner condition is all right, I can work at a poem for hours.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then why the hell don't you keep it right?

MYSELF: I gather the painting here is only in its infancy, but this piece of poetry by A.K. is as mature a work as any great poet's.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but all the same very remarkable at times, e.g. for a boy of Y's years with no systematic training some of the work he has done is quite unexpected. Only what has been done is not yet great and finished art. But if R is to be acclaimed as a mighty artist for his paintings, I don't see why our artists should be underrated any longer. Let us proclaim them also as epoch-making geniuses.

MYSELF: If Mother has no objection and Z is willing to look after the Dispensary, I would like to fly to the Lake or Villenur on cycle!

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother says if nothing is needed to be done and nothing happens while you are away and Z has only to sit and

guard the Dispensary, then it is all right. On condition of course he doesn't kick down the Dispensary by an ill-considered movement of his legs in your absence! This last is my addition.

MYSELF: With all those 'buts' and 'ifs', I drew back today. So if Mother doesn't really approve I won't go. I didn't quite catch if Mother said that in the Pranam.

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother had forgotten all about Villenur and the Z-guarded Dispensary. So that had nothing to do with her look at Pranam.

MYSELF: It is really a pity that J is going away—with so many parts also!

SRI AUROBINDO: He is going with tears and full of blessings. Perhaps it is the "parts" you speak of that call him—his horoscope was found to be brilliant and almost Leninesque. Perhaps one day you will gaze at the figure of পাগলা যশবন্ত (mad Jaswant) (I think that is Mridu's description) presiding over the destinies of a Communist India!! why not? Hitler in his "handsome Adolf" days was not less পাগল (mad) or prettier, so there is a chance.

MYSELF: Really, how things happen here so suddenly! He had been laughing, joking and one day I find he has turned quite a different man—morose, muttering etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is because he is listening to "voices" and feeling "influences" A's and others, *e.g.* N's. Imagine N engaged in dark and sinister occult operations to take possession of somebody.

MYSELF: Herewith C's letter. He wants to change his residence. But if he goes to a Mohamedan mess, it would be from frying pan into the fire. However he wants your opinion. Have you any to offer?

SRI AUROBINDO: Have no opinion to offer. Don't very well understand the proposed culinary operation. He is going to earn Rs. 10 and spend 14—and on the top of that bring his mother—to live with him in a Mohamedan mess? It sounds very modern—but too much of a mess. Irish stew—what!

MYSELF: What, Sir, "Expect" has become "except"? Supramental slip? Hurrah!

SRI AUROBINDO: Do you mean to say this is the first you have met? I used to make ten per page formerly in the haste of my writing. Evidently I am arriving towards a Supramental accuracy—spontaneous and careless in spite of the lightning speed of my epistolary movement.

MYSELF: So, J is going tonight. If any intelligent fellow with some interest in work can take his place or guard the Dispensary at least, please give us one.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord! What high expectations! Where are they, these intelligent interested fellows who are ready to stand guard over the Dispensary? Spot them, please.

MYSELF: Very strange, Sir, that you don't have a single intelligent chap in the species of your Supramental race to be! On what do you build your hopes, please?

SRI AUROBINDO: Excuse me, you said intelligent and interested... You might find one of these separately, but how do you hope to get them combined together? Anyhow, we can't hunt for the kind of animal you want, you yourself should take up the chase.

MYSELF: My big photo requires Sanjiban's treatment. Granted permission?

SRI AUROBINDO: What? which? where? how? what disease? what medicine wanted?

MYSELF: I send you your big photo, it is your photo that would be drawn by Sanjiban.

SRI AUROBINDO: You are always plunging me into new mysteries. If it is a photo, how can it be drawn by anybody? And what is the tense, connotation and psychological and metaphysical annotation of "would be" here?

MYSELF: When a person with few or no friends comes to see you, how to turn your face away? If any disturbance results from seeing, I

will bear if it's helpful. But if it becomes too frequent?

SRI AUROBINDO: Let us hope it will not be too frequent. Don't want you to fall again either into the flummocks and flumps or into the dumps. Don't look for these words, at least the first two in the dictionary, they are not there—my own Joycean neologisms.

MYSELF: I'm obliged to sleep out for a few days because of repairs, the whole building is smelling of lime and lime and lime!

SRI AUROBINDO: If you want to be a real yogi go on sniffing and sniffing at the lime till the smell creates an ecstasy in the nose and you realise that all smells and stinks are sweet and beautiful in the sweetness and beauty of the Brahman.

MYSELF: Friend Chand again with his woeful tale!

SRI AUROBINDO: What a fellow! He blunders through life stumbling over every possible or impossible stone of offence with a conscientious thoroughness that is unimagi- nable and inimitable.

MYSELF: With a rupee sent by him,
What shall I buy

To suit the Divine taste?

But aren't all same to him—paste

Or pudding, butter, cheese or mutton-pie?

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord! I hope you are not plotting to send any such things here! Of butter and cheese I have more than I want and pudding and mutton-pie are banished from my menu.

MYSELF: By the way, I think fountain pen ink would be the thing for you, only nothing for Mother.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, Mother says we have f.p. ink in plenty—I won't say gallons and seas but still. Besides, the same ink is to be used always for the pen, otherwise it gets spoiled.

MYSELF: I send you a letter of our dear Chand. If you are still interested in the chap, you can take the trouble to decipher it.

SRI AUROBINDO: I have had several letters from him.

MYSELF: He wants to know many things. Descent of Supra. M. Tail—on the slight happy news of which he will give a gorilla jump to Ponds to set right his nerves! Is the tail in view?

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course. Coming down as fast as you fellows will allow.

MYSELF: He wants your remarks on him which will prove 'precious'!

SRI AUROBINDO: Tell him I have grown chary of remarks. Remarks frighten the Sm. T.

MYSELF: Can any letters and poems be sent, though I know he will hardly read them?

SRI AUROBINDO: What letters? The poems are your own and co's, so you are the best judge of that.

MYSELF: Lastly will Mother give him a flower tomorrow through Nolini?

SRI AUROBINDO: You can make a petition to Nolini to get the flower.

MYSELF: The fellow is still dreaming of the Sup. M. Tail! He doesn't realise yet that many of us will see it after our souls have departed into the subtle planes and will have taken birth again in proper circumstances and conditions— one after the other dropping, dropping after many years of stay—viz. M-lal, next X-lal, Y-lal, then Nirodlal!

SRI AUROBINDO: Excuse me. M-lal and Company are not running away from the Sm. Tail—they are only running after the paternal tail—as soon as they have stroked it sufficiently, they will return. All the Lals have gone like Japhet in search of their fathers and will return in June, except M who comes back, I believe, after 15 days. Two others asked for filial leave—one is perhaps still thinking of running after P.T. But we are beginning to kick. One "leave" has been refused!

MYSELF: Jaswant writes: Deepest love to Sri Aurobindo. Do convey it if Papa writes blessings, if Jaswant comes up in memory.

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't understand. What is to be conveyed? And how do the two 'ifs' relate together or with the 'convey'?

MYSELF: Tomorrow, by the way, I am going to burst a little. *Attention!*

SRI AUROBINDO: Eh, what! Burst? which way? If you explode, fizz only—don't blow up the Ashram.

MYSELF: Wretched, absolutely done for.

Feel like jumping into the sea,
Or hanging- myself from a tree!

SRI AUROBINDO: Why? Disburden yourself!

MYSELF: Disburden? You mean throw off the burden or place the burden at your door?

SRI AUROBINDO: Both!

MYSELF: Please give me some Force for writing. But I wonder if you have time for circulating it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Not as much as is necessary.

MYSELF: The atmosphere seems too thick with doubt etc. A lull over the Ashram. Storm brewing?

SRI AUROBINDO: Panic seems to be the order of the day as well as doubt. The storm seems to have brewed. I am fighting it at present, having been obliged to give up my Abyssinian campaign and stop the march to Adis Abbaba. How-ever!

MYSELF: Had a dream of a death also...

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, if you go on dreaming like that!

MYSELF: Please, Guru, try to percolate a little occultism through the thick sieve of your correspondence. I lost all hope, you know and was depressed, dejected and downcast. It is so very interesting—this occultism!

SRI AUROBINDO: All right. I can flood you when I have time and season.

MYSELF: I am preparing my confession! Perhaps tomorrow!

SRI AUROBINDO: Very good. Shall await the revelation.

MYSELF: Guru, this is the month when your thrice blessed disciple came into the physical world. But thinking again— what will the poor Guru do if the big disciple doesn't fulfil the conditions? Is that so?

SRI AUROBINDO: The one hope is then that he may last on to fulfil the conditions without his knowing that he is doing it! What do you think of that device?

MYSELF: Any impression of Mother's on my birthday? I am afraid I wasn't calm but the whole day I felt peaceful.

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother's verdict is "Not at all bad—I found him rather receptive". So, sir, cherish your receptivity and don't humbug about with doubt and despondency and then you will be peaceful for ever!

MYSELF; Chand has asked your advice and protection about going to Chittagong in January.

SRI AUROBINDO: *Protection is possible, advice not.*

MYSELF: Guru, I don't know why Mother looked at me like that during Pranam. Was I anywhere in the wrong?

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother knows nothing about, it.

MYSELF: I went over the whole incident and didn't find anywhere that I have misrepresented facts.

SRI AUROBINDO: No.

MYSELF: ...or was it because I was bothering myself and you over a trifle?

SRI AUROBINDO: No.

MYSELF: It was not an illusion. Some meaning was there.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes? But then it must have been a meaning in your mind, not the Mother's. So only you, its mother, can find it out.

MYSELF: I have no peace now; the whole day passes in lamentation.

No use dilating on it, as it has been before and will be after.

SRI AUROBINDO: We weep before and after, Our sweetest hours are those we fill with saddest thought.

MYSELF: Now, will you send me some force to pull me out?

SRI AUROBINDO: All right, sir. If you feel ready for force, I will send you. As for the results, well, let us see.

MYSELF: Now absolute blank, a perpetual vegetative unrest, a Nirvana!

SRI AUROBINDO: Gracious heavens, you have reached Nirvana so easily? But how can unrest be Nirvana? Some misconception. Perhaps it is Prakriti laya you are aiming at! Perhaps you are moving towards a repetition of Jada Bharat and when you are sufficiently Jada and able to enjoy it, the Nirvana and all the knowledge will come to you.

MYSELF: You spoke of the supramental coming as fast as we will allow. If we fellows have to allow, you had better close down the shop and enjoy your supramental beatitude.

SRI AUROBINDO: You have mistaken the sense altogether. It simply means if with the bother of your revolts, depressions, illnesses, shouts and all the rest of it, I can get time to go on rapidly. Nothing more, sir.

I am quite ready. I propose that you call a meeting and put it to the vote "That hereby we resolve to release Sri Aurobindo into beatitude and all go off quietly to Abyssinia."

MYSELF: Why are we made of so many contradictory elements?

SRI AUROBINDO: It takes many ingredients to make a nice pudding.

MYSELF: Is it that the path to the Divine can't be made easy lest all leave the ordinary world?

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps it is to prevent the world from coming

to a sudden end by a universal rush into beatitude.

Well, but haven't I told you that the Supramental can't be understood by the intellect? So necessarily or at least logically if I become Supramental and speak supramentally, I must be unintelligible to everybody. Q.E.D. It is not a threat, only, the statement of a natural evolution.

MYSELF: It is a pity that D went off-centre with so much brilliance!

SRI AUROBINDO: But look here, his brilliance came after his madness. Before that he was earnest, industrious, eager for knowledge, ambitious, but nothing more. I don't contend that his madness made him a genius, though it would agree with the immortal theory of Lombroso that genius is madness or at least always tied to abnormality and mental and physical unsoundness. It may have been the result of our constant pouring of Force into him to keep his mind bright and coherent and clear.

MYSELF: It is said that Buddha died from eating pork.

SRI AUROBINDO: Modern scholars have cleared Buddha of that carnivorous calumny. They say it was a vegetable root called *śūkarakhaṇḍa* which ignorant commentators have mistranslated "piece of a pig".

MYSELF: What does your newspaper say about Abyssinia? Another "black country" swallowed by the "whites," "prayers to God of no avail!"

SRI AUROBINDO: Why all this sentimental fury? This and worse has been happening ever since mankind replaced and improved on the ape and tiger. So long as men are what they are these things will happen. What do you expect God to do about it? The Abyssinians have conquered others. Italy conquers the Abyssinians, other people have conquered the Italians and they will probably be sat upon again here-after. It is the Law, sir, and the Great Wheel and everything else. Keep your head cool in the heat. If you want to change things, you have to change humanity first and I can assure you, you will find it a job—yes, even to change 150 people in an Ashram and get them to surmount their instincts.

MYSELF: You will perhaps say that justice, retribution will come in time.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord, why should I say such things? Was I ever a moralist or a preacher? Justice was never the determining factor in a war.

MYSELF: Is it really an illusion that the force will one day galvanise the consciousness?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, it is an exercise in faith! As for the results, some day, one day, many days, no day—why bother?

MYSELF: No, I don't know anything about the roses being opened by the rhythm of Nature or the Bride. Hence the question to know what you know.

SRI AUROBINDO: What I know is ineffable.

MYSELF: But you seemed to have been in the worst of moods, due to heavy correspondence?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, the best.

MYSELF: And you gave me a good beating.

SRI AUROBINDO: It was all done for your good with the most philanthropical motive.

MYSELF: What is meant by feminine women or masculine women ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Feminine is not used in opposition to masculine here, but means only a wholly unrelieved feminine woman—capricious, fantastic, unreasonable, affectionate—quarrelsome, sensual—emotional, idealistic—vitalistic, incalculable, attractive—intolerable, never-knows-what-she-is or what-she-isn't and everything else kind of creature. It is not really feminine, but as the woman as man has made her. By the way, if you like to add some hundred other epithets and double epithets after searching the Oxford dictionary you can freely do so. They can all be filled in somehow.

MYSELF: It looks C has disposed off his mother's ornaments trustingly deposited with him, to pull out a friend from difficulty. His

mother has detected the 'robbery' by his own admission.

SRI AUROBINDO: Obviously it must, be that—unless he robbed her more than once which is always possible.

MYSELF: S, the head mason, has been having headache and vomiting for last 2 years, seems to be due to dietetic indiscretion, but queer that it persists so long.

SRI AUROBINDO: Probably persistence due to want of dieting. Most impossible to diet a Tamilian—too many spices and things.

Sir, couldn't finish what I began with your other book, so kept it. Will see-tonight if Time and the Gods are favourable. Pray to them meanwhile.

1937

MYSELF: Jatin asks me to send you these questions. 'The answer is immanent but it wants clarification and 'there is Sri Aurobindo who will do it in a minute', he says. So will you do it, Guru, in a minute?

SRI AUROBINDO: No. You must not ask impossible miracles from me.

MYSELF: What does this telegram from C mean? All I know is that this loan company is a company at Chittagong where he has kept deposits. Is it the position of his complex self or the self of the company that is risky? Which?

SRI AUROBINDO: Both perhaps.

MYSELF: But one thing is clear that he requires your protection. Well?

SRI AUROBINDO: Difficult to protect such an erratic genius. However!

MYSELF: Have you read the letter and the poems of D? Anything to communicate regarding the letter?

SRI AUROBINDO: Nothing special.

MYSELF: Poems seem extremely fine, don't they?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, I said so.

MYSELF: You can't call them sentimental, Sir, this time, because they are addressed to the Divine!

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, one can be sentimental with the Divine, if one particularly wants to!

MYSELF: D is having plenty of garlands, meetings, feasting etc. Good enough for a change, what?

SRI AUROBINDO: Change, certainly.

Myself; Are you writing a Mahabharat in reply, I wonder!

SRI AUROBINDO: I was.

MYSELF: Guru, I hope you won't 'ash' ^[2] me for spoiling your afternoon 'spree', by this letter, will you?

SRI AUROBINDO: Where is the spree in the afternoon? Neither afternoon, evening, night, nor morning. Spree indeed!

MYSELF: Laugh with the sonnets and cry with the letter, if you can. Very touching!

SRI AUROBINDO: You recommend me a fit of hysteria? No, sir. The sonnets are as usual, quite admirable. By the way; his uncle has developed a carbuncle! And D expects me to cure it! A case for you, sir. After Parkhi.

MYSELF: What does he mean by 'manliness' here? i.e. his 'swadharma' is to cry like a woman, let him do it a bit—not for all, but for the One!

SRI AUROBINDO: Like what woman? That is the point. Tears, caprices, outcries, *abhimān*, hunger-strike? that is one kind of *स्त्रीधर्म* (nature of woman). If it is that *स्वधर्म*—(swadharma) you suggest,—no thanks. The One declines.

MYSELF: Guru, C wants to know what will be the true spirit of surrender for him and how he ought to receive Mother's flower 'surrender' which he has been getting often.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why for him? Surrender is the same for everybody.

MYSELF: Any illumination?

SRI AUROBINDO: None.

MYSELF: There is some law point here and reference to A.P. House also. God knows who is this Benoy Krishna who requires your permission to go into all this business. Well?

SRI AUROBINDO: Permission be hanged!

MYSELF: I am sure next August will be a great victorious occasion with swarms of élites of Calcutta at your feet. Happy at the prospect?

SRI AUROBINDO: Horrifying idea! Luckily the élites are not in the habit of swarming.

MYSELF: All these orations, successes etc. raise another question—whether the Divine also wanted that His name should be spread now.

SRI AUROBINDO: The Divine is quite indifferent about it. Or rather more privacy would be better for the work.

MYSELF: Anyway, please give him all the Force and protection possible and available so that the name of the Guru and disciple may resound from one end of India to another and all flock in crowds—trains, aeroplanes to the door of the Invisible Guru!

SRI AUROBINDO: Good God!

MYSELF: Alas, where shall we be then?

SRI AUROBINDO: And where shall we be?

MYSELF: Another letter from C—family matters and something about his Bank trouble! What a fine thing to be an Avatar, what?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why? You think an Avatar has to take in the Bank troubles of his C's? No fear!

MYSELF: Guru, there is a whole mass of letters from dear C.

SRI AUROBINDO: His Bengali handwriting is too much for me.

MYSELF: There is a tangled problem which is absolutely beyond me.

SRI AUROBINDO: I have read his letter, but can't make head or tail out of his problem, He will have to solve it himself.

MYSELF: There is a clash between ethics and spirituality and worldliness; so he seeks your advice.

SRI AUROBINDO: Anyhow he seems to me to be the most loose and unpractical and disorderly fellow that ever was, leaving his papers and debts lightly fluttering about all over the world. It will be no wonder if he loses all he has.

MYSELF: Heard the great news? X singing in theatres! Gracious,

fancy that! In theatre and perhaps singing spiritual songs! Oh Lord!

SRI AUROBINDO: Bringing the highest to the lowest—quite spiritual!

MYSELF: Just now heard that he has made great friendship with Y.

SRI AUROBINDO: All are one, sir, one Brahman. Besides, the *Āṅgī* (Shreshtha), leading Man should get people to do all their work by himself doing all actions, *sarva karmāni*, the Gita says so.

MYSELF: I am pained when I hear people saying—after all Pondicherry has brought him to this.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why can't they say he has acquired a Godlike *samatā*? Don't you remember the *śloka*—. A Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog and an outcaste are all the same to the sage. So X can embrace even actors—hope, he will stop short of the actresses, though.

MYSELF: I don't understand in C's letter—*psh*. Is it Paresh? Got it at the last moment, by intuition, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: I see! It needed intuition to find that out!

MYSELF: I heard X was touchy regarding his wife. Is that it? and wife touchy about him! my God! where shall we go? Grazes the skin almost, Sir!

SRI AUROBINDO: Touchy means what? and how does touchiness graze the skin?

MYSELF: Very glad to hear, Sir, that you are too busy; only we have been hearing that so often and so long since, that by now the Supramental or any Light should have tumbled down!

SRI AUROBINDO: It isn't so easy to make it tumble.

MYSELF: But jokes apart, I hear from a reliable authority that the Descent—Supramental Descent is very near. Is it true, Sir?

SRI AUROBINDO: I am very glad to hear it on reliable authority.

It is a *great* relief.

MYSELF: No luck about Intuition?

SRI AUROBINDO: None! Too thorny a subject to tackle without leisure and space.

MYSELF: Really, Sir, you have caught a magnificent fellow for Supramentalisation, what?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, sir, in the Supramental world all kinds will be needed, I suppose. Then why not a supramental ass?

1938

Chand sent a wire: Why silent? great struggle, protection.

MYSELF: Guru, I don't know why he says 'silent', I have sent the darshan blessings on 23rd or 24th which he must have received.

SRI AUROBINDO: But you have not given him protection.

CHAND'S WIRE: Inspector's contact uncongenial trying avoid.

SRI AUROBINDO: What the hell! He seems to have plenty of money to waste on unnecessary telegrams! Why wire about the Inspector's contact?

CHAND'S WIRE: Progressing again, debt case tomorrow.

MYSELF: Voila, another, Sir! and not the last, if you please! I wrote to him once not to waste money unnecessarily on registered letters and telegrams but Chand is Chand!

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, well, let us accept the inevitable. প্রকৃতিং যান্তি ভূতানি—(prakṛtim yānti bhūtāni) which means all animals follow their nature.

CHAND'S WIRE: Great inertia again, letter follows.

MYSELF: Guru, another bombardment! What an impulsive fellow! almost unparalleled. I think he is another fellow who will find life extremely difficult here.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, there's no inertia in his wrong activities at any rate. He is full of energy there.

MYSELF: Chand writes there is no letter from me. So, one word, Guru!

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, well! (That's one word twice repeated).

MYSELF: Chand writes: "You have" said "Well, well!" The meaning is quite clear to me."

SRI AUROBINDO: Queer! He seems cleverer than myself.

MYSELF: Mother, in these two Pranams you seemed to have indicated to me that I have done something wrong somewhere.

SRI AUROBINDO: Nonsense!

MYSELF: Coming on just before Darshan it is rather hanging like a load. May I know what it is, if anything?

SRI AUROBINDO: Nothing at all—quite imaginary.

MYSELF: Guru, C writes to me to ask your opinion on the 'tampering with figures'. Can there be any opinion? Really, I don't know what to do with the fellow. But I suppose in worldly life such things are necessary?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not in the worldly life, but perhaps in the Corporation life. All this promises a bad look out when India gets Purna Swaraj. Mahatma Gandhi is having bad qualms about Congress corruption already. What will it be when Purna Satyagraha reigns all over India?

DILIP'S TELEGRAM: Nirod Ashram, arriving tomorrow evening train. Heldil.

MYSELF: Guru, this is from Dilip—Heldil is not he, of course. But what is it then? Can your Supramental Intuition solve? But mine has: it is H of Hashi, e of Esha, l of Lila—Dil of course you know. What do you think, Sir, of my Intuition? He perhaps thought he'd beat us.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't see how he could with the Dil there to illumine the Hel.

CORRESPONDENCE - HUMOUR

1935

MYSELF: By the way, people get poems, pictures in meditation and I seem to get only letters and points for letters! Since letters and discussions are interdicted I have been obliged to draw inspiration from sleep. And I find that sleep- ing has a decided advantage in this Yoga!

SRI AUROBINDO: You get letters in meditation! that would be fine—it would save me the trouble of writing then, simply project into your meditation instead of sending through Nolini! No objection to sleep—the land of Nod has also its treasures.

MYSELF: But do you really mean that till 7 a.m. your pen goes on in aeroplanic speed? Then it must be due more to outside correspondence. I don't see many books or envelopes now on the staircase. Is the supramental freedom from these not in view?

SRI AUROBINDO: Your not seeing unfortunately does not dematerialise them. Books are mainly for the Mother and there is sometimes a mountain, but letters galore. On some days only there is a lull and then I can do something.

MYSELF: I've heard your poem on "Tautology" to Dilipda, and I felt rather bad for your sake. So if you like, I can write only 3 days a week.

SRI AUROBINDO: The poem was not aimed at you—you need have no qualms of conscience.

MYSELF: Another thing—if you mind the way I have written the last few letters—the humorous vein—I shall stop it. But I may say that it was by some gracious move- ment of yours that I dared to do this and I have really wondered how I dared!

SRI AUROBINDO: Not necessary to stop, unless you are afraid of word punctures in the skull. My indignations and objurgations are jocular and not meant to burn or bite.

MYSELF: They were saying that 'a sweet relation' has been estab-

lished between you and me. I only hope and pray that it'll be sweeter and sweetest.

SRI AUROBINDO: The sweet relation is all right, but let it be nameless.

I have brought down a verse from heaven on the correspondence like Bahauallah—which proves that if I am not an Avatar, at least I am prophet. It is, I fear, full of *chhandapatan* and *bhashapatan*, but it expresses my feelings:

সাধকগণের হৃদিতলে correspondence করব বলে'
যদি জাগতনা পিপাসা,
থাকতাম আমি হাসিমুখে মগ Supramental সুখে
হায়রে হায়, কোথায় সে আশা ?

(Translation: If the sadhaks had not in their hearts a craving for correspondence, I would live with a smiling face, merged in supramental bliss. Alas, alas, where is such a hope?)

For heaven's sake, don't show this undivine outbreak to any- body! They will think I am trying to rival Dara—in his lighter poetic moods.

MYSELF: I am simply dying to show your divine verse to Dilipda. 'Heaven's sake' I can't take seriously, you don't mean it either; besides, I am no believer in Heaven. So you will excuse me. No one in our group will think Dara's influence is acting on you!

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, under careful limitation and in all confidentiality you may risk the indiscretion.

MYSELF: Dilipda finds it faultless in rhythm. Oh, how he laughed! Because of your lines I am feeling a little guilty about my correspondence.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't mind your correspondence. It is a relief. But when people write four letters a day in small hand—running to some ten pages without a gap anywhere and one gets twenty letters in the afternoon and forty at night (of course not all like that, but still!) it becomes a little too, too...

Correspondence suspended till after 21st and resumable only on notice. But under cover of your medical cloak, you can carry on. Only mum about it. Otherwise people might get ideas and give you a headache.

MYSELF: I am surprised and sad to hear that you can still be affected by these physical ailments!

SRI AUROBINDO: What I am surprised at is that I have any energy left at all after the last two or three years of half-day and all night work. The difficulty for resting is that the sadhaks have begun pouring paper again without waiting for the withdrawal of the notice—not all of course, but many. And there is a stock of * [3] correspondence still unanswered. I am persuading my eye, but it is still red and sulky and reproachful. Revolted, what? Thinks too much is imposed on it and no attention paid to its needs, desires, preferences etc. Will have to reason with it for a day or two longer.

MYSELF: Now I wish, as a medical man, I mean, I could enforce absolute rest to the eyes and issue a bulletin.

[Sri Aurobindo underlined 'absolute rest' and replied]:

It does not exist in this world—not even in the Himalayas— except of course for the inner being which can always be in absolute rest.

1936

MYSELF: As there is no *correspondence* now, please send one or two poems from your old or new ones, if possible. Will you, Sir?

Asking for the file would be too much I suppose!

[Sri Aurobindo underlined 'no correspondence' and wrote in the margin]:

What a rash statement!

MYSELF: I am waiting for the original and the remarks to send Jatin a reply. You may be waiting for a Sunday, perhaps?

SRI AUROBINDO: I am waiting for a day when I will have time to finish everything before 7 a.m. in the morning.

MYSELF: People are already saying that I take too much correspondence liberty with you. I forgot that J was put in contact with you through his photo. So was P, but there was apparently no action in his case.

SRI AUROBINDO: And I return the compliment—I mean reply without restraint, decorum or the right grave rhythm. That is one reason why I indulge so freely in brackets...

Plenty of people have sent their photographs—some mad, some sane, some good, some bad, some indifferent. You . don't expect all to get the contact, do you? That would be too too even for a Vishwarup.

MYSELF: I hear from all quarters that you are buried in letters. In the near future there will be millions of letters heaped upon your Supramental segregation, if you don't relinquish it and come out boldly.

SRI AUROBINDO: Come out and have millions and millions of admirers heaped upon my promiscuity? Thank you for nothing! The letters can be thrown into the W.P.B. more easily than the admirers can be thrown out of the window.

MYSELF: What about the poem sent you the other day?

SRI AUROBINDO: Shall send it back....Fact is, I am trying to get some damned thing done—have a chance of success if I keep at it—so can't afford to turn aside to anything else. Just check off in a hurry daily things, but as for arrears!

MYSELF: Now that your correspondence is reduced, you can work on Savitri.

SRI AUROBINDO: Where is the reduction of correspondence? I have to be occupied with correspondence from 9 p.m. to 12 p.m. (minus one hour), again after bath and meal from 2.30 a.m. to 7 a.m. All that apart from afternoon work. And still much is left undone. And you think I can write Savitri? You believe in miracles!

MYSELF: You will find something in my famous bag, which may startle you! Well, the pen is a present from A. The size and everything will suit you best, though the nib may not, and I send it to you that your writing may flow in rivers from the pen, in my book, not in a few stingy lines.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord! what a Falstaff of a fountain pen!

But it is not the pen that is responsible for the stinginess; the criminal is Time and with a fat pen he can be as niggardly as with a lean one.

MYSELF: Please do write something tonight. I request you, I beseech you, I entreat you, I pray to you. Do find out the letter from that heap—I can see it from here and just a few marks and remarks will do. That's like the Divine! Give that time you would have spent on reading the long letter I was hoping to write, but I hold it for getting this chance!

SRI AUROBINDO: Sorry, but your luck is not brilliant. Had a whole night—*i.e.* after 3, no work—was ready to write. Light went off in my rooms only, mark—tried candle power, no go. The Age of Candles is evidently over. So "requests, beseeches, entreats" were all in vain. Not my fault. Blame Fate. However, I had a delightful time, 3 hours of undisturbed concentration on my real work—a luxury denied to me for ages. Don't tear your hair. Will be done another day with luck.

MYSELF: By the way, I thought you have a kerosene lamp with a pumping business and burner—God knows the name.

SRI AUROBINDO: Who gives these wonderful news?

Of course I have a lamp but it is not available at 2.30. Do you think I am going to wake up the whole house at that hour?

MYSELF: I intended long ago to procure one for your emergency use. Shall I try?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, sir, no pumping business for me!

MYSELF: But concentration on real work? Good Lord, you do that from 9 or 10 am.—3 p.m. God alone knows what you do then.

SRI AUROBINDO: What is this transcendental rubbish?

MYSELF: Perhaps you send Force to Germany etc...?

SRI AUROBINDO: That is not my real work. Who except the devil is going to give force to Germans? Do you think I am in liaison with Hitler and his howling tribe of Nazis?

MYSELF: We speculate and speculate. Next, you concentrate from 6 p.m. to midnight. Still not enough?

SRI AUROBINDO: Who gave you this wonderful programme? Invented it all by your ingenious self? From 4 p.m.—6.30 p.m. afternoon correspondence, newspapers.

Evening correspondence 7 to 7.30—9 p.m. From 9—10 concentration, 10—12 correspondence. 12—2.30 bath, meal, rest. 2.30—5 or 6 our correspondence unless I am lucky. Where is the sufficient time for concentration?

MYSELF: Please don't fall flat again. So much depends on your curvilinear position, especially when you are bringing down the supramental tail.

SRI AUROBINDO: Now look here, do you think I fell flat on purpose? No, sir. Sudden rush of correspondence, interruption of campaign—consequent breakdown of road to Addis Abbaba, retreat necessary, consolidation of back position, road repair—feat, but I suppose, necessary.

MYSELF: I suppose all "lacks" will be removed by the descent of Force?

You promised to write about Intuition but like all your promises... .God knows what you are busy with now, with the correspondence also reduced.

SRI AUROBINDO: Obviously, obviously!

I promised to do so in some future age when I had time. That promise stands—if a promise stands. What more can you ask of it?

Who says it was reduced? For a few days it was—now it has increased to half again its former size and every morning I have to race to get it done in time—and don't get it done in time. Thousand things are accumulating; inner work delayed.

MYSELF: You write—'for me all are only outward means, and what really works are unseen forces!' Can you amplify this a little further?

SRI AUROBINDO: Sir, do you think I have time for your interesting questions? I have had three nights work to do in a single night—and with my table lamp gone. In other perhaps fre-a-er off times.

1937

MYSELF: What about my book? Haven't decided where you will begin and where you will end? or keeping it for Sunday?

SRI AUROBINDO: My dear sir, if you write a Mahabharat, you can't expect the answer however scrappy to be finished in one or two nights among a mass of other work? *nous progressâmes*—that's the state of things.

MYSELF: You perhaps had a hope that at least some respite you would have with no longer Dilipda's voluminous correspondence. Much mistaken, Sir! much mistaken.

SRI AUROBINDO: So long as I have not to write voluminous answers.

POETIC HUMOUR

1934

MYSELF: I send you a poem. I didn't send it yesterday because it was the day of our vengeance and who knows my little verse might have been the last straw....But since all people profit at your expense, it wouldn't be wiser for me to stand aloof. So the poem and your kind opinion on it.

SRI AUROBINDO: My opinion is "good, but not good enough"—more stuff is needed.

It is good you did not throw your straw on the waters yesterday—the flood might have carried it away into the beginning of next week.

MYSELF: I can't resist the temptation of disturbing your Sabbath, Sir; here is a poem. The forceps were indispensable, but I hope it will be an 'Angel'!

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not bad at all—can be accorded the "order of merit". Traces of the forceps are visible. But if you go on, probably the forceps will not be indispensable.

1935

MYSELF: N.K. says that before writing or painting he bows down once before Mother and you. If that is the magic, why, I will bow a hundred times, Sir!

SRI AUROBINDO: It depends on how you bow.

MYSELF: Today I surprised myself by completing a poem of 18 lines in about two hours and 8 lines of another poem in one hour!

SRI AUROBINDO: Glory to God!

MYSELF: My disgust is becoming more and more acute as regards poetry. I suppose the slightly lit-up channel has closed again. Things are pushing me towards medicine—an absolutely opposite pole! Where is your alchemist, Sir?

SRI AUROBINDO: Has taken opium probably and is seeing visions somewhere. Perhaps they will come out some day from your suddenly galvanised pen.

MYSELF: Everyone is doing something. I am only Tennysonning. Don't you feel pity for me, Sir?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not so much. If you were Browning, I might. On second thought I keep the poem one day more.

MYSELF: About the Bengali poem—I wrote the lines marked and then the Muse failed. Nishikanta saw them, picked up the poem and completed it. Naturally he has expressed his own sentiments. They are not mine, neither did I know what they would be when I started. I intend some day to write one myself with these lines as they seem quite good. What's your opinion?

SRI AUROBINDO: Your lines are very good. N's poem is very fine, but his style is too strong to agree with yours. It is as if a trumpet were to take up the notes of a flute.

MYSELF: Two English poems from N enclosed; one old and the other new. But no use asking what is the metre. N has only begun learning it.

SRI AUROBINDO: All right, I think. Re-reading it, I find it *très joli*. Congratulations to myself and Nishikanta with Nirod Talukdar in the middle.

MYSELF: Why bother about the metre, precise Englishness etc.? They will come some day and in the meantime let him go on writing and learning by corrections, lessons, so on.

SRI AUROBINDO: That's all right—but I rub in a bit of metre and stresses so that his ear may learn—and yours also. Finding by the last poem there is a distinct progress but where is the credit? Corrected by Amal? Or only by your sole poetic self?

MYSELF: By the way, you didn't like my poem or you hesitate to call it mine because of so many corrections by N? Others say it is very fine.

SRI AUROBINDO: It was very good; mixed parentage does not matter, so long as the offspring is beautiful.

MYSELF: I have made quite a vigorous programme to start from the New Year. One, Eng. metre with Arjava—he is willing and another, French with S, provided Mother has no. objection. So?

SRI AUROBINDO: No objection at all. Enthusiastic approval!

MYSELF: May I ask that promised poem as a New Year present?

SRI AUROBINDO: You may ask, but who has time for it? Not yours truly.

1936

MYSELF: Here is my attempt at the use of anapaests in the iambic metre:

The dismal clouds haunting my days and nights
Dissolve into a calm transparent wide
Horizon, when ascends on the black heights
Thy moon increasing in its luminous tide.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is stressed *transpárent*, not tránsparent. What a howler! It makes me "drop into poetry"—thus

Sir, you seem ápparémently ignorant
That párent is the trick and not parént.
And yet the stress transpires transparently
And is appárent to both ear and eye.
So you compáre and do not cómpare things;
Your soul prepáres, not préparens heavenly wings.

Your use of anapaests is still clumsy.

MYSELF: I have composed a sort of a poem:

Once swayed unmeasured insolent hopes in my breast:
Melting like snows heaped upon Himalaya-crest
Songs of my glory would o'erflow land and sea
In tempestuous floods bursting the limits of Eternity.

(Sri Aurobindo's version):

Once swayed an insolent hope unmeasured in my breast:
That like bright snows heaps upon Himalay's crest
Songs of my glory overflowing land and sea
Would break in deathless floods through the long Eternity.

MYSELF: Too grandiloquent?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. But, man alive, what is the metre? It seems to be neither pentametre fish, not lyrical red herring. I have turned it into alexandrine.

MYSELF: You forgot to have a look at Nishikanta's poetry yesterday? It has come back just as I sent it—want of time and absence of mind, J mean overmind?

SRI AUROBINDO: How is that? But it is not surprising if I overlook something, considering the crash through which I have to go at a gallop.

MYSELF: It seems I am not very rich in the faculty of imagination. And without that hardly any creation worth the name is possible.

SRI AUROBINDO: What is this superstition? At that rate Sophocles, Chaucer, Milton, Wordsworth are not good poets because their poetry is not full of images? Is Kalidasa a greater poet than Vyas or Valmiki because he is fuller of images?

MYSELF:

What thinkest Thou of this anapaest poem, Sir,
Written by my humble self? Pray, does it stir
Any soft feelings in Thy deep. within
Or touches not even thy Supramental skin?

SRI AUROBINDO:

So soft, so soft, I almost coughed, then went aloft
To supramental regions where rainbow-breasted pigeons
Coo in their sacred legions—

N.B. This inspired doggerel is perfectly private. It is an effort at abstract or surrealist poetry, but as I had no models to imitate, I may have blundered.

MYSELF: I had to show that doggerel to Amal as I couldn't decipher. Amal suggests if your "perfectly private" is a joke, after all.

SRI AUROBINDO: No, sir. Quite serious. Can't afford to play jokes like that in public.

MYSELF: Is that "Coo in their sacred legions"?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, the cooing is the supramental zenith of the softness and the surrealist transformation of the cough.

MYSELF: How is it, Sir, that my letter with the poem came away as they went? Because I was late or some Supramental forgetfulness?

SRI AUROBINDO: Never had a glimpse of either of them Must have been hiding scared in your bag.

MYSELF: For this have I kept awake at night and done sadhana. I've endured mosquito-bites all over my body, and it has come back without receiving your gracious look. Now I'm bursting into tears of despair. Pil send it again at your door, you'll kill me, O Guru, if you forget it this time!

SRI AUROBINDO:

O must I groan and moan and scarify my poor inspired
bones
To get my poem back as it were a bill from Smith or Jones?

N.B. Abstract poetry, very abstract.

MYSELF: You gave no remark on the poem. You see, all our values depend on how you appraise them. If Mother smiles at somebody we think him good; if she doesn't, well...!

SRI AUROBINDO: What a coupling of disparates! What a blunder! Don't you know that the Divine smiles equally on the wicked and the good together?

MYSELF: You referred to "circumstances being exceptional" as regards my early success in English versification. But how are they exceptional?

Let me know
How 'tis so
A dullard like me
Bursting like the sea
With the heart of the Muse
Makes his rhythm fuse?

SRI AUROBINDO:

You are opening, opening opening

Into a wider, wider scopening
That fills me with a sudden hopening
That I may carry you in spite of gropening
Your soul into the supramental ropening.

N.B. Surrealist poetry.

MYSELF: I asked you what were the exceptional circumstances. In reply you have delighted my soul with surrealist poetry; but not my intellect, "widening, widening" is not the cause, but the effect.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, but that's just it. Widen, widen, scopen, scopen and the poetry may come in a torrent roaring and cascading through an enlarged fissure in yours and the world's subtle cranium.

MYSELF: Now I don't find poetry anywhere on the horizon. SRI AUROBINDO: How do you know? It may be hiding behind a cloud.

MYSELF: At times I think why the devil do I bother my head with poetry? Poetry, poetry, poetry! Have I come here for blessed poetry?

SRI AUROBINDO: You haven't. But the poetry has come for you. So why shout?

MYSELF: I know that success in English poetry is as far away as the stars in heaven in spite of your remark to the contrary, though I must confess to having some contentment in writing.

SRI AUROBINDO: Rubbish! the stars in heaven don't stroll in and pay a visit—nor do they stroll out again.

MYSELF: I will tell you how an Englishman looks at our versifications in his tongue which has thrown cold water on it.

SRI AUROBINDO: I am not interested in the looks of your Englishman.

T's 'tongue' has thrown cold water on it—or what? This sentence is almost as unintelligible as T's own English.

MYSELF: You say T doesn't deserve a public castigation. I wish he did because he is again bombarding Dara on Indian English—apart from other things!

SRI AUROBINDO: Not only so, but I refuse to figure as discussing with him on an equal platform. You will ask me next to enter into a debate with Chellu ^[4] on Vedanta. There are limits.

MYSELF: In my case I have found that mostly I have to make a

great effort and then when the thing comes down, people call it the result of the Force, I am quite justified in refusing to allow the Force most credit.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite. It was your efforts that turned non-poets into poets! Hail, you wonder workers!

MYSELF: If you say that the Force has different ways of working— at times making me sweat and struggle for the sake of fun and at other times coming and sweeping one like spring-breeze, nothing to argue.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the experience of the Yogis—but that is of no value.

MYSELF: If you don't exclaim 'Again X?'

SRI AUROBINDO: I do!

MYSELF: I will write what he very aptly and eloquently expresses—I did everything with my effort, and you say that the Force has made me do it! If it's the Force that's doing it, then why, alas, this bone-breaking!

SRI AUROBINDO: All I can say is that if it was X's Force (of effort) that turned in a moment a hobbling ass into a winged eagle for that was what happened to his poetry, it has done something no one ever did before. But no doubt you are both of you right. I am rather coming to the conclusion that this world should be left to his own "efforts" to arrive where it can and the Mother and myself should take tickets for some other.

MYSELF: "Over the lone heights in the still air roamed," but roamed what, Sir?

SRI AUROBINDO: How the deuce am I to know? I wrote what came as a metrical example and the roamer did not come in view.

MYSELF: I hope you didn't intend to make me an April-fool. Otherwise Virgil and Nirod to be mentioned in the same pen-stroke!

Sri Aurobindo wrote in pencil:

What a modest poet! Most think themselves the superior of Homer, Milton and Shakespeare all added together.

MyseELF; (I couldn't read it) Absolutely unreadable, Sir, not even by Nolini!

SRI AUROBINDO: I repeat then from memory. What a modest poet! Most think in their heart of hearts that they are superior to

Homer, Virgil, Milton and Shakespeare all piled upon and fused into each other.

MYSELF: Getting depressed, discouraged, thinking of giving up the blessed business of writing poetry. Binapani has no compassion towards me.

SRI AUROBINDO: Nonsense! She has plenty—at times.

MYSELF: Will try again, if no result, will absolutely fall flat. Can't blame me, I think you have no time to send any Force.

SRI AUROBINDO: Had no force to send, at least some that I considered worth something. Fell flat myself for the last two or three days—as flat as I could manage to at this stage. Am recovering curvilinear proportions and shall try to send something along.

MYSELF: By the way, what do you think of my taking lessons in English metre now? But at times I feel that when there is some improvement in Bengali poetry, then I shall think of it; otherwise as they say, I'll be Jack of all trades.

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no harm in studying English metre. It won't prevent you becoming a John of some trades hereafter.

MYSELF: What poem, you ask? Good Lord! Didn't I request you to compose a poem illustrating some points of prosody? Already forgotten? If the Guru is so forgetful, the *śiṣya* can be worse.

SRI AUROBINDO: And didn't I tell you that it was an extra-vagant and unwarrantable idea to demand a poem for such a grammatical purpose and I kept the *carte blanche* that I might use it for other purposes? What's this *śiṣya* who does not read his Guru's objurgations, however illegible?

MYSELF: Last night I tried to compose a poem. It was a failure, I fell asleep over its first two lines.

SRI AUROBINDO: You call it a failure when you have discovered a new soporific?

1937

MYSELF: I let go the typescript, but the poem? How can I allow you to break your promise?

SRI AUROBINDO: Break a promise? who's going to do that? No time was fixed—so the promises can be fulfilled, say in 1997. If you say you are not likely to be alive then, nor I either—well, our heirs can complete the transaction.

1938

MYSELF: Here is a stanza from a poem of mine.

I gather from some fathomless depth of Mind
Transparent thoughts that float through crystal wind
And weave the dance of the Spirit's mystery
Around the star-fires of infinity.

SRI AUROBINDO: I read your variation first as "stumps". What a magnificent and original image! the starry stumps (or star-stumps) of infinity! But I fear, alas, that it would be condemned as surrealistic. I can't make out the variation for crystal. Wearied? Tired of carrying tons of transparent thoughts? Surely not!

MYSELF: In yesterday's poem I am much tempted to take the "stump", even if it is surrealistic. Who cares what it is when you find it magnificent? It was not "weary wind" but trancéd wind.

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't do it, sir, or you will get stumped. The "star-stumps" are "magnificent" from the humorous- reckless-epic point of view, but they can't be taken seriously. Besides, you would have to change all into the same key *e.g.*

"I slog on the boundless cricket field of Mind
Transparent thoughts that cross like crystal wind
God's wicket-keepers dance of mystery
Around the starry stumps of infinity."

MEDICAL HUMOUR

Medical Humour: Boil

1935

MYSELF: My cold has given me the quick realisation that everything in this world—including the Divine, is Maya. What Shankara and Buddha realised by sadhana, I realise by a simple cold!

SRI AUROBINDO: No need of sadhana for that—anybody with a fit of the blues can manage that. It is to get out of the Maya that sadhana is needed.

1936

MYSELF: My brain is now less hampered by the body's indisposition.

My boil has burst and as you see
From the depression I am free.
Thanks Guru, thanks to thee!

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, I got irritated last night by your persistent boiling and put a gigantic Force which, I am glad to see, burst the little boil.

Thank God for that!
Free from boil,
At poems toil
Laugh and grow fat.

MYSELF: You actually propose "Laugh and grow fat" though laughing never makes fat!

SRI AUROBINDO: You oppose one of the most ancient traditions of humanity by this severe statement. But your statement is mistaken even according to Science. We are now told that it is the activity of certain glands that makes you thin or fat. If glands, then why not gladness?

MYSELF: Really I am now wondering at my own revelry and hilarity. No particular concern about yoga, yet I am happy. What kind of psychic attitude is this?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not a psychic attitude, but is better than depression.

MYSELF: Again a blessed boil inside the left nostril— painful, feverish. A dose of Force please!

SRI AUROBINDO: As the modernist poet says—

O blessed blessed boil within the nostril,
How with pure pleasure dost thou make thy boss thrill!
He sings of thee with sobbing trill and cross trill,
O blessed boil within the nostril.

I hope this *stotra* will propitiate the boil and make it disappear, satisfied.

MYSELF: I couldn't make out one word. Is it *bows* thrill ?

SRI AUROBINDO: I thought you'd boggle over it. "Boss", man, "boss"=yourself as owner, proprietor, patron, capitalist of the boil.

MYSELF: One more blessed boil! Dr. B says it is a good sign, for it means purification! !

SRI AUROBINDO: All that's a discovery. The boil is then truly a blessed. one!

MYSELF: Boil burst!!

SRI AUROBINDO: Hurrah!

MYSELF: Bad frontal headache, feverish, hope no compli- cation of left frontal sinus suppuration! —

SRI AUROBINDO: What's all this? Is this time to start suppurating sinuses? Drop it, please.

MYSELF: Guru,

My head, my head
And the damned fever—
I am half dead!

SRI AUROBINDO: Cheer up! Things might have' been so much worse. Just think if you had been a Spaniard in Madrid or a German Communist in a concentration camp! Imagine that and then you will be quite cheerful with only a cold and headache. So

Throw off the cold,
Damn the fever,
Be sprightly and bold
And live for ever.

MYSELF: I am better today. But what about the lack of interest in everything? Imagination of Madrid or concentration camp will have a reverse effect.

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't understand. You want to get rid of the interest in everything or to get rid of the lack of interest? What reverse effect? Increase of cold and headache?

MYSELF: By the Guru! Please don't forget to give a supramental kick to my main impediments at Darshan; only no after-effect please, what?

SRI AUROBINDO: "By the Guru"! What kind of oath is this? But the object of the imagination was not to liberate your nose or forehead but to liberate your soul.

Kicking is easy. As to the effects or after-effects, that has to be seen.

MYSELF: Boil again inside the right nostril! But perhaps you will ask me to imagine being a Spaniard, German, Jew, Japanese—German pact, Russian inflammation at it etc., etc. All right, Sir, I will imagine all these if you will imagine giving me a dose of Force, what?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is for you to do that. I can only send Force.

MYSELF: Boil paining, what to do? Suffer with a smile?

SRI AUROBINDO: Smile a while.

MYSELF: Again a boil on the left cheek, Good Heavens! No improvement.

SRI AUROBINDO: As René's doctor says, "Tut tut tut tut tut tut!"

MYSELF: Punishment for too much talking or eating or subconscious welling out?

SRI AUROBINDO: Probably.

MYSELF:

Boil a little ripe, but still—
Hard and big as hazel-nut,
In spite of your tut, tut, tut!
Give one more dose at the least
Or I howl on like a beast!

SRI AUROBINDO: Tut nut tut, not nut tut tut!

Hope this will have the effect of a Tantric *mantra* which it resembles. So if you like Om ling *bling* bring kring!

Just try repeating either of these 15,000 times concentrating on your boil (bling) at the time.

MYSELF: Did you really want me to chant that *mantra*? I took it as a big piece of joke.

SRI AUROBINDO: You couldn't realise that Tut Tut Tut was a serious *mantra* with immense possibilities? Why, it is the modern form of तत् and everybody knows that ॐ तत् सत् is a *mantra* of great power. Only you should as a penance for not having accepted at once, do it not 15,000 but 150,000 times a day—at a gallop, e.g. Om Tut or Tut Tut a Tut, Tut a Tut and so on at an increasing pace and pitch till you reach either Berhampur ^[5] or Nirvana.

MYSELF: I am not only ignorant about all things spiritual, Atma, Yog-biyog etc., they are as nauseating to me as quinine which I had to gulp. And see the trick of Fate, it is such things now that I am called upon to do.

SRI AUROBINDO: You are justly punished—but what is Yog-biyog? I thought that had to do with mathematics, not spiritual philosophy.

MYSELF: Is it for nothing that I see the Red Light as the outcome of my misadventure?

SRI AUROBINDO: Take courage. Say Tut tut tut to the misadventure and go ahead.

MYSELF: By the way I am trying your *mantra* though by fits and starts.

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord! What *mantra*? Om Tut a tut tuwhit tuwhoo? Man! But it is to be recited only when you are taking tea in the company of four Brahmins pure of all sex ideas and 5 ft. 7 inches tall with a stomach in proportion. Otherwise it can't be effective.

MYSELF: Hard, throbbing, painful boil. Slight fever, headache in the morning. Hot fomentation etc. Went to the miracle doctor, 4 powders! added to these the Force! Does it budge? The game must be over tomorrow, Sir. Otherwise I have to lie flat!

SRI AUROBINDO: All this for a poor little boil? What would it be if you were put to roast?

MYSELF: Boil has burst today! Swelling less, pain none but still it is oozing and oozing. By tomorrow it will be over, I hope.

SRI AUROBINDO: R has written to me insisting that you should continue the treatment for a fortnight even after the oozing is past history so as to erect a barrier against further boilings.

1937

MYSELF: I am feeling feverish, cold in the head, bad head-ache. Due to sea-bath and diving? What a pity!

SRI AUROBINDO: Pains of pleasure, I suppose.

MYSELF: I am having blessed fever-like business since morning, aching all over, a damn business it is, Sir! Could not do any work at all. Read a detective story as treatment. Taking one Pulv. Glys. Co.

SRI AUROBINDO: Detective story as treatment and Pulv. Glys. and company as amusement? Right!

MYSELF: My boil seems to have subsided but the blessed legs, especially left one aching terribly—can't walk due to my athletic enthusiasm at this age, Sir. System won't bear it, seems. Give some embrocation, please.

SRI AUROBINDO: You have been doing Olympic sports? What an idea!

MYSELF: This boil paying all the time. Please do something, otherwise I can't do anything.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why so boiled by a boil?

MYSELF: I am simply fomenting it 3 or 4 times a day. Anything else? SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose there is nothing else to do.

MYSELF: A swelling—size of a cherry has appeared inside the nose. The tip is damn painful. Knifing is not advisable. I hope it won't leave me with a nose like that of Cyrano de—quoi?

SRI AUROBINDO: Let us hope not. That kind of nose wouldn't suit either your face or your poetry.

MYSELF: Nose boil boiling down; terrible headache, fever too. Feeling fed up, Sir!

SRI AUROBINDO: Cellular bolshevism probably.

MYSELF: What's cellular bolshevism?

SRI AUROBINDO: Bolshevism of the cells surging up against the Tsar (yourself). Also the Bolsheviks carry on their propaganda by creating Communistic "cells" every-where, in the army, industries etc. You don't seem to be very up in contemporary history.

MYSELF: Pus still coming out. Nose also angry!

SRI AUROBINDO: What a bad-tempered "pussy" cat of a nose!

MYSELF: A new trouble! Taint of acidity, burning in throat. The Force is experimenting on me my patients' maladies to take them more seriously?

SRI AUROBINDO: Who knows?

MYSELF: Pus is not getting less, better inject gomenol and then vaccine, if not cured. So?

SRI AUROBINDO: You know best—or at least can try.

Medical Humour: General

1935

MYSELF: X has profuse 'whites'.

SRI AUROBINDO: What on earth is this word? Winter? Wintes? It may be profuse, but it is not legible. For God's sake don't imitate me.

MYSELF: The word you tumbled upon is 'whites' meaning leucorrhoea. But I thought it should be our ideal to imitate you!

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord, what an h! I could not do worse myself.

MYSELF: She took one pill which she says gave her a lot of burning in her eyes. I washed her eyes, but it caused much uneasiness in the head. But the pill was quite harmless.

SRI AUROBINDO: All that is of course X's imagination. She decides in herself that the medicine is the cause of the burning and the uneasiness. Perhaps she decides it before- hand or another something in her decides it. If her imagination was equally effective for cure, it would be a great thing.

She writes to me that her eyes are a little better, but she is in dental anguish and as usual, all that is done by the doctor (dentist) makes her worse!

MYSELF: You have suggested that M's trouble may be a "policeman's disease" which comes from a _ prolonged standing. It is then quite possible for her to get it, for she is almost always on her heels.

Why not apply some force and cure it?

SRI AUROBINDO: She has got too much force herself, though the heel may be, as with Achilles, her most vulnerable point; the force may not be able to get into it.

MYSELF: The ophthalmologist said that N's eye-condition has improved. He has advised to give salicylates for past rheumatism.

SRI AUROBINDO: All right—salicylate him as much as the Ost. likes. Queer! One has to be dosed not only for present and future but past ailments. Medicine like the Brahman transcends Time.

1936

MYSELF: A says he can't work more than he would like to.

SRI AUROBINDO: What's that? Why should he want to work more than he would like to? Do you mean "as much as" by any chance?

MYSELF: Today's microscopic exam. shows that N has a soft sore which is contracted in only one way. And it is very contagious.

SRI AUROBINDO: If it is contracted only one way, why should I tell him it may be due to an indirect contact? If it is very contagious, how is it contagious? Only by one way? If so, nobody here is going to do the deed willingly, I suppose. Please clear this point and don't write Delphic oracles. Leave that to me as my monopoly.

MYSELF: You used an expression—*kindly prescribe medically*, which was not clear to me, for I thought we have done so. Don't you think that expression is a little more figurative, at least for my brain?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not at all, if you had only used your brains or your intuition or any blessed thing available and not being satisfied with a meaningless and hieratic 'usuals' instead of my matter-of-fact 'urinals'.

MYSELF: R asks me to send you these reports.

SRI AUROBINDO: Reports no use unless the medical hieroglyphs are interpreted.

MYSELF: Today P came for her eyes. All on a sudden she burst out into sobs—God knows why!

SRI AUROBINDO: God doesn't. P is a sort of weeping machine—touch a spring even unintentionally and it starts off.

MYSELF: No medical cases today.

SRI AUROBINDO: Hello! Golden Age come or what? No —for R's pain is kicking cheerfully again. It is telling her "your Nirod's potions and things indeed! I just went because I took the fancy. I go when I like, I come when I like. Doctors—pooh!"

MYSELF: What, Sir, mistake? where is my medical report book? Wrong book has been sent?

SRI AUROBINDO: Kept the wrong book (Reminds me of the Sultan

of Johara who when the Englishmen on board his ship were inveighing in fury against the murder of Sir Curzon Wylie by an Indian, wanted to sympathise, and moaned with "Very bad! very bad! shot the wrong man!"

MYSELF: D's temperature was 101.4 in the morning; evening, 100.4. Had two half-boiled eggs in the morning as he was hungry because we starved him at night!

SRI AUROBINDO: A robust patient!

MYSELF: He says he has eaten two eggs out of greed, asks to be excused.

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite safe!

MYSELF: The pain of the patient gone and she had a beautiful long sleep. What do you think of it?

SRI AUROBINDO: Refuse to think—lost the habit.

Good Heavens! After a life of sadhana you expect me still to think and what is worse think what is right or wrong. I don't think even; I see or I don't see. The difference between intuition and thought is very much like between seeing a thing and badgering one's brains to find out what the thing can possibly be like. Intuition is truth-sight. The thing seen may not be the truth? Well, in that case it will at least be one of its hundred tails or at least a hair from one of the tails. The very first step in the supramental change is to transform all operations of consciousness from the ordinary mental to the intuitive, only then is there any hope of proceeding farther, not to, but towards the supramental. I must surely have done this long ago otherwise how could I be catching the tail of the supramental whale?

MYSELF: Mother is giving us doctors very good compliments, I hear, that we confine people to bed till they are really confined!

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. Mother did pass on that epigram. Doctors were born to hear such remarks.

MYSELF: Surely Yogis ought to be able to try to bear a little suffering and you ought to encourage or allow, Sir!

SRI AUROBINDO: She is not that kind of Yogi. She would only scream and get as wild as Durvasa and stop going to the dispensary—apart from copious weeping etc.

MYSELF: A is passing excessive phosphate, shall we make a Microscopic exam?

SRI AUROBINDO: Do you want to microscope him out of existence? The loss of phosphate, I suppose, explains his weakness.

MYSELF: Shall we then turn a deaf ear to his complaints?

SRI AUROBINDO: What complaints? Micturition and phosphates? Tell him to learn to economise his phosphates

instead of squandering them and he will become strong and healthy as a tiger.

MYSELF: X has phimosis.

SRI AUROBINDO: What kind of medical animal is this?

MYSELF: That is a trouble causing difficulty in passing urine due to the narrowing of the orifice.

SRI AUROBINDO: My dear sir, if you clap a word like that on an illness, do you think it is easy for the patient to recover?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, I don't know why, but you have the reputation of being a fierce and firebrand doctor who considers it a sin for patients to have an illness; you may be right, but tradition demands that a doctor should be soft like butter, soothing like treacle, sweet like sugar and jolly like jam.

MYSELF: A doctor says that one has to be firm, stern and hard with women. They may not like it superficially, but they enjoy it and stick to the doctor who gives them hard knocks. Cave-man spirit?

Dr. X seems no less a firebrand than myself, but women seem to like him.

SRI AUROBINDO: He must have been he-man. She-women enjoy it from he-men. But all women are not she-women and all men are not he-men. Moreover, there is an art as well as a nature in that kind of thing which you lack.

He is a he-man. Even so the women have ended by saying 'No more of X'.

MYSELF: If the tradition demands, we shall try to be softer than butter but we may be too tempting and evoke a response from the patient's palate for making delicious toast. Who will save us then?

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course, if you are too, too sweet. You must draw the line somewhere.

MYSELF: U now vacillates or hesitates thinking of pain, suffering,

etc. and says—after all how much can it grow in 1 or 2 years? So I leave him with his tumour (on the neck).

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother was looking at his mango. It looked to her as if it was rather deep and would need more than a local anaesthetic. If he is afraid of the operation, no use operating.

MYSELF: Now all this question of operation is useless, because he says he is afraid. After all he has no discomfort and neither is it very big, he says, so let it be. Only I was thinking that if it grows bigger, as undoubtedly it will, unless your Force prevents it, what will be done then?

SRI AUROBINDO: No use doing it if he is afraid. Let us wait on the Gods and hope they won't increase the lipoma till it deserves a diploma for its size. An American skyscraper on the neck would be obviously inconvenient.

SRI AUROBINDO: R is sending me charts of the fever temperature of his cousin B (an Ashram nomenclature) who has been suffering from typhoid, enteric (so the Colonel Doctor of Hyderabad says), with affection of chest which was suspected to be pneumonia. Now in his first chart the progresses were 104°, 103°, 102°, 101° and an uninstructed layman could understand—but what are these damned medical hieroglyphs 30-112, 26-118, E 24-110, 24-110.

MYSELF: Now about the 'damned hieroglyphs' you don't understand, though I don't understand why you don't. If you only read Sherlock Holmes' science of deduction and analysis which I have done lately, you would have at once realised my remark.

SRI AUROBINDO: Sherlock Holmes arranges his facts beforehand and then detects them unlike the doctors.

MYSELF: Well, keep the chart vertically then it should at once be clear to you that the red line is the normal temperature line—98.6 and the fever would be about 101.8. Then the figures below, what would they be? Well, your long association with doctors should have taught you (1) that in a fever chart pulse rate is recorded with temperature. (2) If that be so, between those pairs of damned figures one must be of pulse and which is it? Surely not 30, 26 because with that rate no charts would have been sent to you. (3) What are these 30, 26, 24 and 24 then? Just a little bit of cool thinking would again point out, Sir, that they are respiration rates—normal being 20, 22 or so. Now are they simple and easy or are they not? Can you but say the same thing about your yogic hieroglyphs? By Jove, no!

And I give you only one instance in the other book. Let the Sherlockian vein be pardoned. One independent criticism: I don't know how they suspect pneumonia with a respiration rate of only 30, 26. It should bound up to at least 40. Instead, with a temperature of 102°, it is only 24!

SRI AUROBINDO: (1) Never gave me one, so far as I remember; I mean not of this problematical kind.

(2) Naturally, I knew it must be the pulse, but what are the unspeakable 30s and 24s attached to them? And I didn't want the pulse, I wanted the temperature. However your red line which I had not noticed sheds a new light on the matter, so that is clear now. I was holding it horizontal because of its inordinate length.

(3) No, sir, it is not. What's the normal respiration rate anyhow? 32 below zero or 106° above? (N.B. zero not Fahrenheit but Breathenheight)

There are no hieroglyphs in yoga except the dreams and visions—symbols and nobody is expected to understand these things.

But what about E? Extravagant? Eccentric? Epatant?

Well, both the doctors did that and one is a mighty man there, the Doctor of Doctors. But perhaps it's the fashion in Hyderabad to breathe like that when one has pneumonia. Anyhow pn. seems to have dropped out of the picture, and the 'D of Ds' tells only of typhoid and impossible re-activity of inactive germs of tuberculosis.

MYSELF: I chuckled, Sir, to learn that you held the paper horizontally, because of its length! And E is neither of those high-sounding "extravagant" words. If you had just looked about you for a moment lifting your eyes from the correspondence, you would have discovered that E stands for nothing but a simple evening, clear?

SRI AUROBINDO: No. What has evening to do with it? Evening star? "Twinkle, twinkle, evening star! How I wonder what your temperatures are?" But I suppose Sir James Jeans knows and doesn't wonder. But anyhow E for Evening sounds both irrelevant and poetic.

MYSELF: No, Sir, it is not at all irrelevant, though poetic. I swear it is Evening. You know they take these pulse and respiration rates Morning and Evening of which M & E are short hands and one of which I suppose you will make mad and the other, one of the three you have divined! But what is this Jones—knows and doesn't wonder?

SRI AUROBINDO: Jeans, Jeans, Jeans—not Jones!

Sir James Jeans, sir, who knows all about the temperatures, weights and other family details of the stars, including E.

By the way, what do you mean by deceiving me about E in the Hyderabad fever chart? R wrote that E is the entry in the "Motions" column; it evidently means enema. Poetry indeed! Sunset colours indeed! Enema, sir! Motions, sir! Compared with that, ling bling is epically poetic.

MYSELF: I beg your pardon, Sir! Enema didn't strike me at all. But I hope it didn't make any difference in the working of your Force unless you enematised the patient too much.

It is a pleasure to learn that one can deceive the Divine, however!

SRI AUROBINDO: If the Divine chooses to be deceived, anyone can deceive him—just as he can run away from the battle; পলায়ননপি^[6] You are evidently not up to the tricks of the Lila.

MYSELF: Amrita says no water should drain into the street except rain water. But we have to wash frequently the Dispensary courtyard as it's too hot. What's the solution of the impasse?

SRI AUROBINDO: If it is for coolness, sprinkling ought to be sufficient. Why Noah's flood in a dispensary courtyard merely for antidoting heat?

MYSELF: V suffering from a simple pharyngitis—if that also must run its course of about 4 to 5 days, then the Force is playing the same part as the medicines—if at all, Sir, I am thinking. Feels wretched. Begg for Mother's Grace and Force. Is it coming?

SRI AUROBINDO: V's illness is that? However simple, not surprising he should be wretched....Is he receiving it?

Think on! Think hard! Think, brothers, think!

MYSELF: Why Sir, seems you don't read the reports, well? I told you his was a congested throat—that means tonsils, pharynx—everything, and you ask—pharyngitis?

SRI AUROBINDO: Then why do you say a simple pharyngitis when it is "everything" under 'the sun'?

MYSELF: Will R take up B.P. (Trachoma case)? SRI AUROBINDO: I would rather wait for the moment. R has A on his hands, two heavy luggages still in the town and other lighter items.

MYSELF: Please ask Mother to give some blessings to this hopeless self.

SRI AUROBINDO:

R/

Vin. Ashirv	m. VII
Recept. Chior.	gr. XXV
Aqua jollity	ad. lib.
Tinc. Faith	m. XV
Syr. Opt.	Zxx
12 doses every hour	(Signature)

MYSELF: What's this second item in your prescription, Sir? Too Latinic for my poor knowledge.

SRI AUROBINDO: Chlorate of Receptivity.

MYSELF: And I would put Aqua at the end to make it an absolutely pucca academical prescription.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but I thought of the two last ingredients afterwards.

MYSELF: And 12 doses every hour—these tinctures and vinums ?

SRI AUROBINDO: 12 doses—every hour (one each hour. Plagiarised from your language, sir.)

MYSELF: And where is the cost to be supplied from?

SRI AUROBINDO: Gratis—for the poor.

MYSELF: Do you know what my weight is? Only 51 kg— 102 lbs—7st. 4 lbs. I was staggered to find it so low, wondered how I was walking about!

SRI AUROBINDO: Quite a considerable weight. I used in the roth Century to walk about with less than 100—found no difficulty.

MYSELF: Most of the trouble is with the abduction of the hip-joint.

SRI AUROBINDO: Abduction of a joint, sir? What's this flagrant immorality? What happens to the joint when it is abducted? and what about the two colliding bones? Part of the abduction? Right! abduct him to Philaire. (Hospital Doctor)

MYSELF: Could not touch her without making her shed tears. They are thinking how heartless brutes these doctors are!

SRI AUROBINDO: Much safer than if they think 'What dears these doctors are, darlings, angels!'

MYSELF: "What do you say?" What else can I say but thoroughly agree with you, second you and third you? Will Dr. R. take the whole responsibility or divide it?

SRI AUROBINDO: Very good. Send him to R.

No division is possible with R. His treatment is an indivisible Brahman, however many the aspects. In his latest cases there was a mass of simultaneous illnesses in each body and he took them all in his sweep.

MYSELF: Isn't it possible by the Mother's knowledge to ascertain the nature of a disease? We would expect some sudden opening as it did in your case of painting.

SRI AUROBINDO: My dear sir, in that case I should have to do all the doctoring. So I take care not to let the medico open. Simple measure of prudence.

MYSELF: You said that if right medicine is not given, the Force has to counteract it also.

SRI AUROBINDO: I only meant that it was so much obstacle to the Force which it has to overcome.

MYSELF: What I asked you was that by the very fact of the obstacle, the Force or the giver of the Force knows that some mistake is being made. Suppose you give a certain Force but it fails to produce the desired result, then you say, "Oh that fellow has given wrong medicines—swine."

SRI AUROBINDO: Not at all. The Force (I am out of the picture here) feels a greater obstacle but need not know that it is due to a wrong medicine. Force and knowledge are two different things and in the consciousness below Supermind, may go together or may not. Swine is not appropriate—it should be some other animal.

MYSELF: A carpenter beaten by a rat.

SRI AUROBINDO: Say, say! I never heard of a rat beating a man before! He ought to go to the criminal court, instead of the hospital,

MYSELF: X says Mother has sent him but when I go to apply

medicine he says, ask Mother!

SRI AUROBINDO: Nonsense! It is implied. Mother doesn't send him to the Dispensary for a promenade or to dine.

MYSELF: The patient has some signs in the lung, better to make an X-ray etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: Better not X-ray etc., unless it is absolutely necessary. Feed him,—him, ^[7] coddle with cod liver oil and see how it works out before plunging into these soul- shaking measures.

MYSELF: Dr. B. prescribes butter for my amaigrissement and cod liver oil by myself.

SRI AUROBINDO: ? ?

MYSELF: Why 2 interrogations against my using butter? Since the Force doesn't help, I have to seek freshness from butter and cod liver oil. Of course, Dr. B added also cheerfulness to the prescription.

SRI AUROBINDO: Butter and cod liver oil—which is two.

Mother pours scorn on your idea that you are a jutting skeleton. She says that you are less shockingly plump than when you came, but that is all. But if you take butter and oil together, to say nothing of cheerfulness, what will you be- come? Remember Falstaff.

MYSELF: Less shockingly plump! Good gracious, was I ever plump? Mother has only to see my bare body and ex- claim, 'Oh, doctor like that!...etc...'

SRI AUROBINDO: It's your clothes that made you plump?

MYSELF: A says he feels heavy and sleepy and not refreshed. Is it the Force that does it?

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord, no! It is forcelessness that does it.

MYSELF: A has malaise, not refreshed.

SRI AUROBINDO: I have been without light, so black, black. Keeping everything in hope of better luck today (this has nothing to do with A's malaise, by the way. Trying to take advantage of bottom of paper). ^[8]

MYSELF: The hostile forces have made my life unbearable, sucking away every drop of blood. Can't sit outside even one minute under the breezy starry sky. Their breeding place is in the thick bushes M has planted. Can't you direct him to strike them off and save my precious

life? What will happen if the Ashram doctor is to die of malaria.

SRI AUROBINDO: My dear sir, M will have a fit and you will have to treat him and probably he will kill you into the bargain. You prefer a violent death to malaria? Where there is life, there is hope, even if there are also mosquitoes. Why not negotiate with M himself? If you plead with him in a sweet, low, pathetic voice, he may have mercy.

SRI AUROBINDO: By the way, S has consented to take the cod liver oil after all,—so I have agreed to ask you for a whole bottle for her personal absorption. So send her a bottle of this divine but fishy nectar.

MYSELF: X feels "tous les bien!"

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord! What's that? French?

MYSELF: At times I think I am really useless as a doctor, I haven't the gift for it. I have done some studies, surely, but even quacks seem to be more successful. What are the elements then wanting in me? I haven't much faith in our drugs but with these very drugs doctors become successful.

SRI AUROBINDO: Book knowledge is necessary but not much use by itself.

Lack of experience, lack of decision, vacillating intuition, want of vision.

They go ahead, don't mind how many people they kill, but they go—human motorcars.

MYSELF: It seems I don't know yet the right way to call down the Force or is it because the "canalisation" hasn't been done yet?

I am getting more and more disappointed; still more, in yoga since I heard that you are now trying more for transformation of nature than for experience.

SRI AUROBINDO: Right, that's it.

Because without transformation of nature, the blessed experience is something like gold crown on a pig's head— won't do. Picturesque perhaps, but—

MYSELF: Please give me precise practical suggestions on the art of healing, how to bring down Force etc. One must have the gift, I said. Have I?

SRI AUROBINDO: My god, man! I am not a doctor.

How? is there a how?

You call, you open, it comes (after a time). Or, you don't call, you open, it comes. Or, you call, you don't open, it comes. Or, you call, you don't open, it doesn't come. Three possibilities. But how—? Well, God, he knows or perhaps he doesn't!

Can't say! Had you the poetic gift some years ago?

MYSELF: Regarding A you said he is refractory to big doses.

You can be less mysterious in these explanations, *si vous voulez*.

SRI AUROBINDO: Even to small doses. Sometimes I get a little surreptitiously and, as it were, against his will. He is much more 'granite' than you.

Not mysterious at all. Succinct and epigrammatic.

MYSELF: Why didn't your Force prove decisive in this patient's case? Failure of the Supermind over hostile forces? I give you the chance to bombard me or else I will.

SRI AUROBINDO: What has the Supermind to do here?

Who told you that I was using the supramental Force? I have said all along that it was not the supramental Force that was acting. If you want the supramental Force, you had better go to X of Chittagong. I hear from Chittagong that the Supramental Force is descending in him.

(In the medical report I wrote Achanchar instead of *Achanchal*.) Sri Aurobindo commented:

Is this *r* or *l*? If *r*, please transform into *l*.

MYSELF: If it is *l* and not *r*, why do they pronounce Achanchar? Is it like our saying আম (mango) instead of আম? Oh, the very word আম takes you, Sir, to the land of—!

SRI AUROBINDO: God knows! I have not heard their pronunciation, But it is *l* all right. *R* and *L* are however supposed to be philologically interchangeable since the beginning of human speech.

(While writing a report, I wrote the name of the patient as *Ambala*, instead of *Ambalal*.)

SRI AUROBINDO: I say! this is the name of a town, not of a person.

MYSELF: N has given me a copy (sent by Mother) of effects of betel-nut (*pān supāri*). So far as I know in India people believe that

betel leaf (*pān*) helps digestion and lime (calcium) is good for health.

SRI AUROBINDO: Even if it stimulated momentarily, that would not prevent from wearing it out in the end. But the idea is probably a superstition.

MYSELF: Some believe that betel-nut (*supāri*) taking is a good exercise for teeth, especially since here we don't take any meat etc.!

SRI AUROBINDO: Lord! I have known people who lost all their teeth at an early age by the habit.

Meat is good for the teeth? Always heard the contrary— besides, millions who don't take meat have as good teeth as anybody in the world and don't need *pān supāri* either.

MYSELF: An eye-specialist (European) of Calcutta said that many eye-diseases are due to *pān-supāri* and he was a dead enemy of it.

SRI AUROBINDO: Very probably; teeth and eyes are closely connected.

MYSELF: But what should I do with this typed copy given by N? To enforce on patients? or others also? A was repeatedly told but—

SRI AUROBINDO: That! like one of my uncles who preferred taking his *pān* betel to keeping his teeth.

MYSELF: But Guru, you must admit that betel (*pān*) has a sweet taste or perhaps you are an utter stranger to it?

SRI AUROBINDO: Have taken it—can't say I found it very attractive or enticing. ভিনু রুচিহি লোকঃ—Tastes differ.

MYSELF: Shall I try some protein injections on S? or let him go on with slight pain and swelling till the Supramental descends?

SRI AUROBINDO: You can try. He is solid and stolid.

No, sir. Supramental does not want to have to deal with swelled things, either heads, legs or stomachs.

MYSELF: By the way, please make a rule henceforth not to accept sadhaks before passing medical exam. Don't you realise, Sir, what potential troubles are ahead with so many invalids?

SRI AUROBINDO: You are quite right with a million times of million rightness.

MYSELF: Regarding M.G., urine examined, contains pus, detailed report tomorrow. Now giving urotropine etc. Perhaps they are Greek

to you!

SRI AUROBINDO: Those are the hieroglyphics on the Vallé paper? They are not Greek to me, but Amharic.

MYSELF: The gentleman had also syphilis. I consulted Vallé, he advised serum injection.

SRI AUROBINDO: Christ! And yet, you attribute the sufferings of these people to the supramental Force!

MYSELF: By the way, what is happening? Supramental descending? P is going phut. All thought that he was doing serious sadhana; as a result Purushottam descended into him and he was calling Sri Aurobindo to come and bow to him; what next? Makes me shake to the bones!

SRI AUROBINDO: It appears that P has recognised 'that his Purushottama head was indeed all phut! He says he felt some evil forces making him do and say these things but he was so helpless that he was forced to obey them! That is a fall from Purushottama heights, but a return to sanity, if only temporary. (But let us hope it will increase.) But that is evidently what happened.

Serious? You mean not to sleep and all that sort of thing? Well, it is just that kind of seriousness which brings these attacks—earnestness of this sort does call down that kind of Purushottama or rather call him—for it is a horizontal, not a vertical descent.

Next? Perhaps he will want you also to come and bow to him and pummel you if you don't.

Only the bones?

MYSELF: Already I am feeling awfully pulled down, on top of that Madangopal sits; and the Purushottam crowns them all, I ask myself—whither, whither are you going, my friend and what awaits you?

SRI AUROBINDO: Perhaps the Paratpara Purusha beyond even the Purushottama.

But why this pulled downness? You are not pulling down Purushottama or any other gentleman from the upper storey, are you? It is strain and want of rest, I suppose. Sleep, sleep! Read Mark Twain or write humorous stories. Then you will be chirpy and even Madangopal won't feel heavy to you.

MYSELF: Goodness knows what inspired you to pick up such a

blessed place for your Ashram. A heaven indeed for a Supramental colony!

SRI AUROBINDO: Had no medical standards in view when I came to Pondicherry—nor any views about establishing an Ashram. A Supramental colony obviously ought to have a first class hospital, but no such colony was then intended.

MYSELF: M said, "mixture very bitter, can I take *pān* after it?' I said 'do'. Now I hear her saying that I've advised her to take *pān*.

SRI AUROBINDO: Wonderful ladies they are! My dear sir, such ladies are quite wonderful outside the Ashram also. M didn't need to come here to be marvellous in that way.

Were they all respectable and consistent in their former life?

Well, T and S used both to get cured without need of medicines once upon a time. The later development has evidently come for your advantage, so that you may have elementary exercises in *samatā*. I have had a lot of schooling in that way and graduated M.A. Your turn now.

If you had treated them in the pre-Ashram period, do you think their comments, if not at once cured, would have been more filled with a holy awe and submission to the doctors?

MYSELF: These ladies come to the doctor disappointed with the action of the Force, and go back to the Divine, disappointed with the doctors! Splendid! They are so touchy. Perhaps you will say 'Judge not lest ye be judged.'

SRI AUROBINDO: Exactly—for these are poor little uneducated people. But are the big brains at bottom less unreasonable and inconsistent? All alike, sir, in one way or another. Man is a reasoning animal, no doubt, but not a reasonable one.

MYSELF: S asked for meals at home. Because of the rainy weather, he says, he feels unwell. How can I refuse when a healthy fellow like myself—>? !

SRI AUROBINDO: What delicate people all are becoming! A feather will hunch them down. Can't bear this, can't stand that. Evidently they are approaching the heights of supramental Yoga.

MYSELF: J's finger was incised suspecting pus, but there was hardly any.

SRI AUROBINDO: Premature incision not safe, I believe, in this

kind of thing.

MYSELF: Your belief is right, Guru! I didn't feel happy yesterday after the incision. However, nothing untoward has happened; no pain almost but the swelling persists, asked to foment.

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother suggests hot water 1 part peroxide, 3 parts water and dipping the finger for 15 minutes. Some of these things are cured by that—it ought really to be done immediately but even now it may be effective.

MYSELF: Why, that is almost exactly what we have advised him to do from the very start, only peroxide was not given.

SRI AUROBINDO: You are taking daily almost exactly the same thing as Anglo-Indians take in their clubs *i.e.* a peg. Only brandy and soda are not there—but the water is.

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MYSELF: One thing I find among patients here, especially ladies, that they want to be served quick—5 minutes at most ! They can't wait, they must go, they have work, etc., etc.

SRI AUROBINDO: Important people, you see—necessary for the world action,- —can't be kept waiting.

MYSELF: P is much better, says bandage is now bondage!

SRI AUROBINDO: Seems much struck by Mother's force as per carbuncle—no gratitude to the doctor. Such is life!

MYSELF: So, Dr. B. has departed! But now perhaps the avalanche will roll down on me. Will you save and help?

SRI AUROBINDO: Help, I can. But save? Well, an avalanche is an avalanche.

MYSELF: L has some burning sensation in the mouth and throat.

SRI AUROBINDO: What cause? She says for months her throat is carpeted with pepper and covered with thin pomegranate grains and she suspects an eruption there. Also you have medicated her throat but under the tongue there is fire. Surrealist Poetry is not your monopoly—even your patients write it. S informed me the other day that her spine had already begun breaking itself into two.

MYSELF: You may congratulate yourself, Sir, on this invasion of Surrealism. However she is better. But what have you done with the spine? I saw her still going strong; result of your operation?

SRI AUROBINDO: The spine was surrealistic—her going it strong is realistic.

I wrote in my medical report: D better; pain.

SRI AUROBINDO: Is it that he has a better pain? or that the fact that he has a pain shows that he is better or that he is better, but still has pain? An aphoristic style lends itself to many joyfully various interpretations.

MYSELF: Have you asked Dr. R his opinion?

SRI AUROBINDO: Haven't asked him. Afraid of a resonant explanation which would leave me gobbrified and flabbergasted but no

wiser than before.

MYSELF: We examine chemically first a sample of urine, *i.e.* by chemical re-agents, which is called qualitative test. You ought to know that from your English Public School chemistry, Sir!

SRI AUROBINDO: Never learned a word of Chemistry or any damned science in my school. My school, sir, was too aristocratic for such plebian things.

MYSELF: It is very strange your school had no chemistry; but for I.C.S. you had no science? Perhaps these new-fangled things didn't come out then?

SRI AUROBINDO: It (chemistry) may have had a corner, but I had nothing to do with such stuff.

Certainly not. In I.C.S. you can choose your own subjects.

They were new-fangled and not yet respectable.

MYSELF: Why the devil does A write all these things to you? Are you prescribing or are we? and what the devil is the use of his knowing the medicines' and doses, pray? He could have asked me.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, what about the free Englishman's right to grumble? This is not London and there is no "Times" to write to. So he writes a letter to me, instead of to the "Times",

MYSELF: Surely, there is a twist somewhere.

SRI AUROBINDO: There always is a twist, sir, always.

MYSELF: Anyway, I won't fume nor tear my hair.

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't. Losing one's hair is always a useless operation. Keep your hair on.

MYSELF: Only just tell him, please, that he ought to let us know instead of sending a boy with an empty bottle, if he doesn't want to present his honourship himself, or I will tell him myself?

SRI AUROBINDO: Dear sir, tell him yourself, tell him yourself. I will pat you on the back in silence from a safe distance.

MYSELF: People say I am getting absolutely bald, Sir. Two things I feared—one a big tummy and another a damned baldness. Couldn't be saved from one. If you can't grow new hair, please help to preserve the few I have, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: What one fears most, is usually what happens.

Even if there were no disposition, the fear calls it in. Who knows if you had not feared, you might have had the waist of a race-runner and the hair of Samson.

MYSELF: I read in *Conversation* that skin, hair and teeth are very near to Matter and so, spiritual Force takes a long time in acting on them. Is it true?

SRI AUROBINDO: Painfully true.

MYSELF: Then I have no chance till Supermind descends?

SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose not. And who knows what fancies the supramental may have?

MYSELF: A has finished 3 Takadiastase bottles. He finds good effect from it. We require another bottle now. Should we buy it?

SRI AUROBINDO: Buy the take-a-distaste (Takadiastase) and keep his liver quiet for God's sake. He shows signs of starting his lamentations again. The bottle to Keep the baby quiet.

MYSELF: I have been thinking of studying medical books daily one hour but can hardly manage it; at the same time I am inflicted with doubts as to the utility of studies; for, lacking practical experience, book-study, how much can they help? Please give some Force in that direction also. Must run the horses, what?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not?

MYSELF: Difficulty is still the lack of living interest in it—what you call *enthousiasmos*!

SRI AUROBINDO: Enthousiasmos does not mean living interest or enthusiasm—it means the inrush of the creative force or godhead, আবেশ —you don't need that for chewing medical books.

MYSELF: Why, Sir, you didn't know that small-pox fellows are not required to be vaccinated? A book says one attack generally protects for life but second attacks are not very uncommon and the protection tends to wear off in time. -My theory smashed? Well, exception proves the rule, what?

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, there are people who say that small-pox attack immunises for only a few years. But if it is as you say, then there are others, I suppose. There is A among the servants, for instance, who nearly died of small-pox. I myself had a slight attack in Baroda after I came from England—so, you needn't try to come up and vaccinate me.

MYSELF: X attributes her trouble to R's insufficient or even negligent treatment. Strange! I saw that R took much care and he cured her of that terrible attack. Such is life, Sir! What?

SRI AUROBINDO: X is a liar and says anything she wants to—she is also semi-hysterical and believes anything she wants to. Such is life and such are humans.

MYSELF: X has some intense itching. Whole body swollen and red.

SRI AUROBINDO: But what nature of eruption? She has sent a howl—can't sleep, etc.

MYSELF: B complains of more pain!

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, he has also sent an epistolary howl.

MYSELF: I justify B's epistle, Sir. His-thundering scowl burst your ear!

SRI AUROBINDO: It wasn't a scowl, even a thundering one—it was a tympanum-piercing howl—so one had to do something.

MYSELF: I would have tried anti-serum, astringents, opium etc. and I think most of the doctors would have done that.

SRI AUROBINDO: Try everything one after the other and together and see if any hits—that seems to be the method.

MYSELF: The other day as regards that baby you wrote that the Mother has no intuition for infants.

SRI AUROBINDO: No intuition for stuffing infants with heterogeneous medicines.

MYSELF: If the "medico" can be revealed from within, why could it not be revealed from without and tell me to give anti-dys. serum to that baby, which I hear, has been administered and found to be effective.

SRI AUROBINDO: Damn it, man! Intuition and revelation are inner things—they don't belong to the outer mind.

MYSELF: Shall I adopt the surrealist method? *i.e.* keep quiet for a moment and whatever strikes first, go ahead with it; only be careful in case of poisons! You remember once I told you of this and you cried—Good Lord!

SRI AUROBINDO: I did and I repeat it. I don't want this Ashram

transferred to the next world by your powerful agency.

MYSELF: I wonder why you flared up at my 'go at it'. By 'go at it' I didn't obviously mean sending your Ashram to the next world. No, not at all. I meant only this: say a case comes with pain in the stomach etc. I simply keep silent, and suddenly comes to me the suggestion: gastritis.

SRI AUROBINDO: I didn't flare up. I was cold with horror.

Doctors don't mean it, when they do that kind of thing, It is not deliberate murder with them but involuntary or shall we say, experimental homicide.

MYSELF: S and Co. refuse vaccination point blank! Till now none has succeeded in doing them, they say! Well?

SRI AUROBINDO: Nothing to be said, unless you tell them to go and be d-d in their own way!

MYSELF: ...to go and *be dead*? S and Co. be dead?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, sir, not dead, but damned! damned! damned!

MYSELF: S has hard red swelling about left elbow joint; no cause.

SRI AUROBINDO: Sir, in this world there is nothing without a cause—unless you hold the ultra-modern view that causation does not exist.

MYSELF: No luck about Intuition?

SRI AUROBINDO: None! Too thorny a subject to tackle without leisure and space.

By the way, S must be added to the list of vaccination impossibles. R asks me to warn you and A that if you vaccinate, you will get back your old friends, the boils and A, his old companion the sty. I pass on the warning to you without further piling up the agony. A very nasty affair, this vaccination, in any case.

MYSELF: Quite agree with you, Sir, about the beastly nastiness of vaccination...though in which way, we may disagree.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is beastly and nasty in all ways, so there is no room for disagreement.

MYSELF: S has been put out of the ring before and so also A.

SRI AUROBINDO: Then add I and M to the Vaccination Untouch-

ables.

MYSELF: Can you not or rather isn't it high time that you should open up the medical channel in me, Sir? I feel ashamed that I am a doctor and can't cure cases! You gave me a godship in Timber Godown work and compliments for my ability etc. In my own field I shall be a failure?

SRI AUROBINDO: Medical channel? Rather rocky perhaps and sanded—but if poetry could open, why not medicine?

MYSELF: Medical channel rather vicky? vichy? and— what? It means anyhow the thing is not easy, but why not?

SRI AUROBINDO: Rocky, sir, rocky—sanded—silted up with sand from both sides. No place for the current. Have to blast rocks, dig out channel, embank.

MYSELF: By the way, you have absolutely forgotten to send me that *Presse médicale* with your notes. Brooding over it?

SRI AUROBINDO: No. Went to limbo.

MYSELF: Will you wake up from limbo and scratch on the paper something ?

SRI AUROBINDO: How can I when the whole thing has gone to limbo?

MYSELF: I wrote to you that K fell down unconscious with froth at the corner of the mouth. Throughout the morning he was in a dazed condition though he answered all my questions correctly. He says he concentrated in bed in the morning quite consciously for 20 minutes or so. I don't find anything wrong with his system. We must-eliminate the possibility of Force. I heard about A who fell down once while meditating in standing posture.

About epilepsy I'm not sure for it usually doesn't occur at his age. Mother's suggestion about worms is very good.

SRI AUROBINDO: Bunkum about Force. Obviously if a man goes into trance while standing or walking, he may fall down—Ramakrishna had often to be held up when he went off suddenly while standing. But it doesn't produce results like that. I don't believe he is such a mighty sadhak as to go off into *nirvikalpa* samadhi for several hours. However it does not give froth at the lips.

Quite so. If sure that nothing happened like this before, it can't be epilepsy.

MYSELF: Where is pneumonia or T.B.? In one night everything over! Perhaps it was due to simple over-exhaustion; —or Force did it?

SRI AUROBINDO: Shobhan Allah! With your diagnosis one would have expected him to be already in Paradise. Of course, I put a Force.

MYSELF: No, sir, not in Paradise but in hell of agony, suffering, fever, brown hepatitis, grey hepatitis etc., etc. (nothing to do with liver though). But is this a miracle of Force or miracle of diagnosis?

SRI AUROBINDO: What on earth is this hepatitis? where? lungs? pneumonia? what else? Kindly be less cryptic.

MYSELF: Well, red and grey hepatitis are parts of morbid anatomy. When there is pneumonia, lungs undergo pathological changes from red to grey and get the solid appearance of liver. So the stages are called red or grey hepatitis. Nothing alarming, you see.

SRI AUROBINDO: But hang it all! Has he pneumonia or not? Is there fever now? Alarming or not, what is his present condition?

MYSELF: But I told you long ago that he is hale and hearty and that was the miracle; no fever, nothing at all. You said according to our diagnosis you expected him to be in Paradise. I said, no, not so early but in hell of suffering etc., etc...that's all—that grey hepatitis troubled you, eh?

SRI AUROBINDO: Naturally, if you say that a fellow who is supposed to be hale and hearty, is brown and grey with a mysterious hepatitis and suffering a hell of agony and not yet in Paradise.

MYSELF: No, Sir, no! You didn't read between the lines. You wanted to send him to Paradise; I objected and said— no, he would have suffered i.e. in hell of suffering.

MYSELF: Procured another tube. Any amount can be had now.

But you seem to be much behind time, Sir! You don't favour these new discoveries?

SRI AUROBINDO: How is that? About the blood injection juggle? I told you it was fashionable and you could fash along with it if you liked or rather if J liked—provided André did it.

MYSELF: You said it was fashionable but hinted that you don't like the fashion. 'If you liked or if J liked'—don't they mean that?

SRI AUROBINDO: Nonsense, sir. Where on earth did I hint any-

thing? Where did I write that? I said it must be done by André, if at all—which had to do with the person who is to do it, not with anything else. For the rest, I said if J consents, you can try it. Where the hell in that simple phrase is there anything about either my disliking or your liking or anything else that you have put into it? Really now!

MYSELF: S comes today with a sad and determined face. Says "I have borne enough, can't bear any more. Pain all the time; now no sleep, to add"

You kept silent twice over his treatment. Silent again?

SRI AUROBINDO: How can I prescribe? It is your business.

SRI AUROBINDO: There is a blood-curdling letter from S. If it is to be taken as accurate, the whole affair must be nervous, Mother says. She asks if you have tried charcoal tablets with him.

MYSELF: No, this time we haven't tried charcoal, but yesterday we began and continue it now. Yes, the letter is blood-curdling and his symptoms too, if they are true.

God knows how to cure.

SRI AUROBINDO: If he does, send him a telephone!

MYSELF: I can't increase evening meal yet. My idea is to build up gradually the diet so that the system may be accustomed and strengthened at the same time. No use upsetting the stomach, liver etc.—what?

SRI AUROBINDO: I suppose so. Don't understand the ways of a fallen stomach—sounds too much like a fallen angel— but S is not that (no angel—that is to say), whatever his stomach may be.

MYSELF: Same trouble continued or worse. Why are you silent on liver extract?

SRI AUROBINDO: Extract liver—no objection.

MYSELF: Pain, burning "normal" *i.e.* you understand I hope, this normal pain.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, of course. It is the patient who is abnormal.

MYSELF: Again bad, pain started right after lunch and other troubles also.

SRI AUROBINDO: Does he remain quiet after the meal for a sufficient length of time or prances about?

MYSELF: We have exhausted our means. One thing remains—liver extract which I have withheld till now.

SRI AUROBINDO: You can try that—since it is his liver. Let's see if it extracts him out of his agonies.

MYSELF: I couldn't very well take in L's history, for it is quite unnatural to get a wound in that position by falling, unless one had fallen head down. In the evening a different story came out, which is quite the opposite, you see.

I suppose, better to trust than distrust, what?

SRI AUROBINDO: Amen!

MYSELF: Servant has boil on the face. Not very happy about it.

SRI AUROBINDO: He is not? Hard to satisfy these people!

MYSELF: I am sorry! I meant I am not happy.

SRI AUROBINDO: I supposed so.

MYSELF: André says anti-anaphylactic is very good for eczema and asthma.

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't know what anti-anaphylactic means (my proficiency in —* ^[9] Greek is not very great) but it sounds swell. No objection.

MYSELF: R came and asked for apomorphine. This drug is only used in urgent cases of poisoning where evacuation is immediately called for. We don't know anything about the case. We are asked to give certain drugs, we give; for what case etc. we don't enquire because he may not like it. What should be done in such cases in future?

SRI AUROBINDO: God knows! Perhaps, if it is anything really dangerous, play the Artful Dodger and, otherwise, pray fervently to God that nobody may be poisoned. But for whom does he ask this, I wonder? A? He has no other patients except L perhaps, at the moment.

SRI AUROBINDO: I send you the letter of a diabetic sadhak asking me if he can take rice once a day. I can only pass on the question to you. What shall I reply to his piteous and pathetic request? For enlightenment, please.

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MYSELF: Adenoids and tonsils, you know, to a great extent dull the intellect.

SRI AUROBINDO: Aided by self-imprisonment, I believe.

MYSELF: So whatever you sanction, please write against each one; otherwise he will bother me about your sanction and permission first.

SRI AUROBINDO: What to sanction when the doctors can't say what's what?

MYSELF: Why do you say doctors can't say?

SRI AUROBINDO: Because you say "It *may be* either" and "if" and "if". According to ordinary logic, that means "we" does not know but either guesses or infers.

MYSELF: I don't find any localising sign but I suspect K is going for pleurisy.

SRI AUROBINDO: !!!

MYSELF: Iodine is very often given, especially collosol iodine injection is very good. But I heard from Dr. Banerjee that you don't favour internal iodine medication, is it true?

SRI AUROBINDO: What's this word? Cousin of colossal?

Mother does not favour in certain cases; as in those cases it has a bad effect. Can't say for N. But his subconscious is contradictory like S's and inclined to say No to any medicine.

MYSELF: And if it is due to extreme self-annihilation, why not tell him so?

SRI AUROBINDO: Where did you get this self-annihilation? I wrote self-centredness. N's self is not annihilated; it is there active and kicking and governing everything.

What's the use of telling him? It won't go by the mere telling.

MYSELF: He comes and bothers and bothers saying that medicine has no effect, I am not looking carefully....Is his sight really so bad that he can't take up any work? I don't know that eyes have to be much used in his electric super-vision work.

SRI AUROBINDO: So he believes.

You don't allow for the potency of auto-suggestion.

MYSELF: S is really extremely difficult to deal with.

SRI AUROBINDO: He always has been.

MYSELF: Is it his disease that has made him so or his nature?

SRI AUROBINDO: His nature made the disease.

MYSELF: Please read T's report tonight. I am absolutely staggered at her sudden voracious appetite. Finished one cabbage in the evening! Have you pumped some Supramental Force into her stomach or what?

SRI AUROBINDO: I have of course put pressure for no fever and a good appetite, but did not expect any supramental effects in the latter direction.

MYSELF: I hear that X is now shedding tears of joy at the sight of apples, oranges, prunes etc., etc. She has forgotten all her troubles. Tears of sorrow, tears of joy, oh dear!

SRI AUROBINDO: 'Fruity' tears of joy. They move me to poetry.

"O apples, apples, oranges and prunes,
You are God's bliss incarnate in a fruit!
Meeting you after many desolate moons
I sob and sniff and make a joyous bruit."

Admit that you yourself could not have done better as a poetic and mantric (romantic?) comment on this touching situation.

APPENDIX

SRI AUROBINDO—THE MODERN AVATAR A TALK

Friends, you will excuse me for the flashy title I have given to my talk, but I hope to justify it.

I begin with some unpublished portions of my correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, sometime in 1936, when an unaccountably good relation was established between the Supramental Godhead and the mental doghead that was still the former's own human portion.

At the time of the following exchange, I was in charge of the dispensary:

QUESTION: My big photo requires Sanjiban's treatment. Granted permission?

SRI AUROBINDO: What? which? where? how? what disease? what medicine wanted?

The next day I had to give Sri Aurobindo a little more light'on my cryptic language:

QUESTION: I send you your big photo, it is your photo that would be drawn by Sanjiban.

SRI AUROBINDO: You are always plunging me into new mysteries, If it is a photo, how can it be drawn by anybody? And what is the tense connotation and psychological and metaphysical connotation of "would be' here?"

You will mark two things: the looseness of my expression and the tone of Sri Aurobindo's reply, which are signs testifying to our good relation. As time passed this good relation increased little by little until one day it became familiar—all good relations take this turn—and I heard a thundering from him: "Why the devil do you want to know of my life?" Well, instead of being intimidated, my heart leaped for joy and almost popped out of its chamber! Because the thunder had no edge, it was full of sweetness. Then followed a series of such members of the nether family of terms as "damn", "hell", "deuce", etc., along with their higher counterparts "Eternal", "Jehovah", "Shobhan Allah", "Good Heavens", "Good Lord", and so on. So you can ascertain from these ejaculations the depth, the intensity, and the extent of the good relation between us. Not only doghead, but many other epithets he hurled on this head—wooden-head, blockhead, ass, idiot. I took them all with a good face, waiting for the day when I could pay him back with quip and jibe at his Supermind. The day did arrive. But the verbal looseness did not end there, certainly—I had committed quite a bit of it, and he had to pull me up again and again.

These few snatches of correspondence should convince you of the appropriateness of my title, for Sri Aurobindo is a modern Avatar. He may be viewed from various angles; but my own point of view is this: only because Sri Aurobindo is a modern Avatar am I here. A materialist such as myself could have no place in a spiritual institution unless it was a modern Ashram and the Guru was modern too, in the form of Sri Aurobindo. And I am happy to say that there are many others who share this opinion. So from this proof, I am sure everybody will acclaim with one voice that there can be no other Ashram more modern than this one. Place it side by side with Raman Maharshi's Ashram or Sri Ramakrishna Mission—our modernity will be too patent a fact. Take the Mother playing tennis, for example. And yet, when Annie Besant's Messiah, Krishnamurti, started playing tennis, we laughed at him. Or take Sri Aurobindo's correspondence—the voluminous correspondence that he carried on from year to year, day by day, explaining the same subject at length to various people—trying to persuade them, to argue with them point by point, to bring them to his point of view. Some people, such as myself, were attacking his Yoga and denying his Avatarhood, and yet with infinite patience he tried to understand the modern mind and the modern spirit, and explained things to us until we were convinced. Or if not able to convince us, he tolerated us until one day he wrote in one of his letters about the sadhaks in his Ashram: "Tt is as it were a favour is

being granted to us by their remaining here!" At another time, in a fit of self-revealing jocularly or whatever it was, he wrote: "The very fact that I am carrying on a correspondence with the sadhaks for eight or nine hours every night should be enough to prove that I am an Avatar."

Then there was the case of a sadhak who, in the early days of the Ashram, was given charge of gate-keeping. Instead of keeping the gate, he was always busy reading and, when he wasn't reading, he slept. He didn't bother about who came and went. The fact was reported to the Mother, who sent someone to inquire: "It seems you are reading instead of doing your duty?" The gate-keeper replied, "Well, I can't help it, it is my weakness." There the matter ended. And I have even seen one or two instances of sadhaks abusing the Mother to her face—which staggered us all, but she kept quiet, digesting all the insults hurled at her.

Well, I don't want to go into a deep philosophy of Avatarhood to show that Sri Aurobindo is an Avatar, or to fix his place on the list of Avatars; or demonstrate the modern character of his Yoga. All this is not my domain. I am a humble man and I deal with humble things. What I have invited you for is to share and enjoy with me a feast of Supramental Levity in our correspondence, which ranges over various topics—spiritual, medical, poetic, etc. The portions I have chosen are short, sharp like jets of water, and sparkling, scintillating with humour. We shall be reminded of one mighty pen in this context—that of Shakespeare. Sri Aurobindo once wrote to me: "It is not every spear that shakes!" I would venture to say that Sri Aurobindo's spear shook even more than Shakespeare's! I would go even further and say that Sri Aurobindo surpassed his own self, for it is my firm belief that Sri Aurobindo was Shakespeare. It has also been said of Shakespeare that he never blotted a line. The same may be said of Sri Aurobindo with more justice and accuracy, and greater credit to him, because the entire volume of his correspondence was written with a lightning spontaneity, sometimes coming in a flood like the Ganges or the Brahmaputra. There is one modern trait, which our friend Purani has noted. During the early years of the Ashram, Sri Aurobindo's foot once touched Amrita's inadvertently. Sri Aurobindo sat up in the chair and said, "I beg your pardon." Well, the Guru telling a shishya "I beg your pardon" —if that's not modern, I don't know what is!

To further demonstrate the looseness of my expression, I offer the following: "The word 'focus' was unintelligible? But you understand

all right. I adopt the device and 'your attention' to save your time and mine as well, as is obvious."

Sri Aurobindo wrote in reply: "Good Lord! Is this Hebrew or Aramaic or Swahili? I can't understand a word. Which device? which attention? Some reference to something I wrote? If so, it has clean gone out of my head. That, by the way, is a manner of speaking, for I never have anything in my head."

The next day I wrote him an apology: "I am sorry for the last elision. I wanted to write—'I adopted the device' and dropped "your attention" to save time. I find I have chopped the word 'dropped' altogether, so it has become Hebrew, Aramaic or—? I can't read this last word."

His reply: "Swahili. African language, sir, somewhere in West Africa."

So much for my slips. One day I found a slip in his writing. I wrote to him: "What, Sir! 'Expect' has become 'except'? Is it a supramental slip? Hurrah!"

Sri Aurobindo answered: "Do you mean to say this is the first you have met? I used to make ten per page formerly in the haste of my writing. Evidently I am arriving towards a supramental accuracy—spontaneous and careless in spite of the lightning speed of my epistolary movement."

One day I sent him a pen and wrote: "You will find something in my famous bag, Sir, which may startle you. The size will suit you best though the nib may not; I am sending the pen to you so that your writing in my notebook may flow in rivers from it, not in a few stingy lines."

SRI AUROBINDO: "Good Lord! What a Falstaff of a fountain pen! But it is not the pen that is responsible for the stinginess; the criminal is Time and with a fat pen he can be as niggardly as with a lean one."

Now we come to the subject of Pranam. I am sure many of you are familiar with the numerous letters that Sri Aurobindo has written on the abuse and misuse of Pranam committed by the sadhaks and sadhikas. In a recent issue of Mother India there is a letter on this very subject. Instead of Pranam being a spiritual function we made it, to

our shame, a dramatic function. Far from absorbing what the Mother was giving us, we tried to watch her movements vis-a-vis each sadhak and sadhika—whether she was smiling at a sadhak or was not smiling at all; how much she smiled; if she touched a sadhak with one finger or two, or with only the tip of a finger; if she didn't touch him at all; if she looked at me; why she didn't look at me, what crime had I done? etc. And the whole function and the entire day were spoilt. I was no exception, and here is a letter that proves it:

QUESTION: Guru, I don't know why Mother looked at me like that. Was I anywhere in the wrong?

SRI AUROBINDO: Mother knows nothing about it.

QUESTION: I went over the whole incident and didn't find anywhere that I have misrepresented facts in the Dispensary.

SRI AUROBINDO: No.

QUESTION: ...Or was it because I was bothering myself and you over a trifle?

SRI AUROBINDO: No.

QUESTION: It was not an illusion. Some meaning was there.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes? But then it must have been a meaning in your mind and not the Mother's. So only you, its mother, can find it out.

Another excerpt follows on the same subject:

QUESTION: Today Mother looked at me in such a way at Pranam as though she 'said' something.

SRI AUROBINDO: She didn't; she only looked at you a little longer than usual.

QUESTION: Ah! there you are then! Mother did look longer—that's a point gained!

SRI AUROBINDO: Just Jehovah, man! What of that? Can't Mother look longer without being furious?

QUESTION: 'There must have been something. I can take any amount of thrashing with grace, even with good grace, as you know, but to take it without knowing the why or the how of it, that goes a little too deep, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: No thrashing at all—not even the natural yearn-

ing to thrash you.

QUESTION: For an earthly reason, I found that I had accepted an invitation for lunch. Is that the reason then why Mother focussed her fury on my dreadful soul?

SRI AUROBINDO: Know nothing about it. Never dreamed even of the lunch—was thinking of B,! not of any delinquency of yours.

QUESTION: As I was positively conscious that there was something, you can't say there was nothing.

SRI AUROBINDO: I can and do.

QUESTION: I was positively conscious that there was something and I only want to know it so that I can rectify the error.

SRI AUROBINDO: Only fancy, sir, dear delightless fancy. Nothing more deceiving than these pseudo-intuitions of Mother's displeasure and search for their non-existent reasons. Very often it comes from a guilty conscience or a feeling that one deserves a thrashing, so obviously a thrashing must be intended. Anything like that here?

QUESTION: It may be the thing about which I wrote to you long ago and got a smack!

SRI AUROBINDO: Consider yourself smacked this time also.

QUESTION: Thrashing, fury, I accept all if that was what it was for.

SRI AUROBINDO: It was not. As there was no thrashing and no fury, it could not be for that.

You cannot fail to notice throughout this passage the disci! One of my patients—{Nirodbaran).

ple's dog-headedness and the Guru's inexhaustible patience. Any other Guru, ancient or even modern, would have cut me short!

Now for something about Darshan. Sri Aurobindo once wrote to me about "exceptional circumstances"; so quoting his phrase, I opened our discussion:

QUESTION: "Exceptional circumstances"! Whatever they may have been have now disappeared.

SRI AUROBINDO: Make them re-appear.

QUESTION: Expected many things, or at least something from the Darshan, but don't see anywhere any sign of it!

SRI AUROBINDO: Many Americans at least, what was not expected. It is always the unexpected that happens, you see.

(By the way, at one Darshan, an American had a vision of the whole of America lying at the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's feet. I heard of it and, as was my wont, I wrote asking Sri Aurobindo for confirmation. He replied, "Yes, Mother expects much from America." This was in 1936. Those friends who come from America will be glad to learn this.) The next day, I wrote:

QUESTION: The result of Darshan in some other quarters leaves me staggered and staggered! I can't imagine such an incident taking place in the Ashram as N's gripping M's throat. It makes me 'rather aghast. Coupled with that incident of R rushing to shoe-beat P. Good Lord! but I suppose they are all in the game!

SRI AUROBINDO: You seem to be the most candid and ignorant baby going. We shall have to publish an "Ashram News and Titbits" for your benefit. Have you never heard of N's going for K's head with a powerfully brandished hammer? Or of his howling challenges to C to come out and face him, till Mother herself had to interfere and stop him? Or of his yelling and hammering in a rage at C's door till D came and dragged him away? These things happened within a short distance of your poetic ears and yet you know nothing??? N is subject to these fits and always has been so. The Darshan is not responsible. And he is not the only how-ler. What about M_ herself? and half a dozen others? Hunger-strikes? Threats of suicide?...to leave the Ashram, etc., etc. All from the same source, sir, and, apparently, part of the game.

Then there is Depression, which used to come over me very often. To quote a line from *Savitri*:

'I sat with grief as with an ancient friend.'

In such a mood I once wrote: "I realise every moment that I am not made for the path of the Spirit, not for any big endeavour in life."

Sri Aurobindo wrote back; "Man of sorrows! man of sorrows! knock him off, man, knock him off!"

At another time I wrote:

QUESTION: Wretched, absolutely done for.

SRI AUROBINDO: Why? Disburden yourself!

QUESTION: Disburden? You mean throw off the burden or place the burden at your door?

SRI AUROBINDO: Both!

On another occasion:

QUESTION: I am thrown out of joint, Sir. Madam Doubt still peeps from behind. Anyhow no chance for me! Kismet, Sir! What to do?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why out of joint? It ought to strengthen your joints for the journey of Yoga. Not at all, sir. Mind, sir, mind. Madam Doubt, sir, Madam Doubt! Miss Material Intellectualism, sir! Aunt Despondency, sir! Uncle Selfdistrust, sir! Cousin Self-depreciation, sir! The whole confounded family, sir!

QUESTION: Please ask Mother to give some blessings to this hopeless self.

SRI AUROBINDO:

R/ Vin. Ashirv. m. VII Recept. Chlor. gr. XXV Aqua Jollity ad lib. Tinc. Faith m. XV Syr. Opt. zss

Twelve doses every hour. (Signature)

QUESTION: What's this second item in your prescription, Sir? Too Latinic for my poor knowledge.

SRI AUROBINDO: Chlorate of Receptivity.

QUESTION: And I would put Aqua at the end to make it an absolutely pucca academic prescription.

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, but I thought of the two last ingredients afterwards.

QUESTION: And 12 doses every hour—these tinctures and vinums ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Twelve doses—every hour (one each hour. Plagiarised from your language, sir).

QUESTION: And where is the cost to be supplied from?

SRI AUROBINDO: Gratis—for the poor.

You can't beat him!

Then there was our correspondence about writing and poetry:

QUESTION: But do you really mean that till 7 am. your pen goes on at an aeroplanic speed? Then it must be due more to outside correspondence. I don't see many books or envelopes now on the staircase. Is the Supramental freedom from these not in view?

SRI AUROBINDO: Your not seeing unfortunately does not dematerialise them! Books are mainly for the Mother and there is sometimes a mountain, but letters galore. On some days only there is a lull and then I can do something.

I wrote to him, "My nights are again becoming heavy; I don't know how to deal with them." He replied, "So are mine, with a too damnably heavy burden of letters to write."

Then once I warned him: "Tomorrow, by the way, I am going to burst. ATTENTION!" "Eh, what! Burst?" He replied, "Which way? If you explode, fizz only—don't blow up the Ashram."

The next day I wrote; "I am sending my explosion—the result of Darshan!" He responded: "Man alive (or of Sorrows or whatever may be the fact), how is it you fell on such a fell day for your burst? There has been an explosion, as X merrily calls it, beginning in the...* [10] but reaching now its epistolary climax and have been writing sober letters to Y for the last few hours. Solicit therefore your indulgence for a guru besieged by other people's disturbances (and letters) until tonight. Send back the blessed burst and I will try to deal with it."

That reminds me of something else he once wrote to me, when one day in a fury I attacked his Yoga—"Karmayoga is all bosh," etc. He wrote: "You will excuse the vein of irony or satire in all this—but really, when I am told that my own case disproves my own spiritual philosophy and accumulated knowledge and experience, a little liveliness in answer is permissible."

I often corresponded with him on the subject of poetry. Here is one occasion.

QUESTION: By the way, you didn't like my Bengali poem, or you hesitate to call it mine because of so many corrections by Nishikanto?

SRI AUROBINDO: It was very good; mixed parentage does not matter, so long as the offspring is beautiful.

Here is another:

QUESTION: It seems I am not very rich in the faculty of image-making. And without that hardly any creation worth the name is possible.

SRI AUROBINDO: What is this superstition? At that rate Sophocles, Chaucer, Milton, Wordsworth are not good poets because their poetry is not full of images? Is Kalidasa a greater poet than Vyas or Valmiki because he is full of images?

Then on April 1st he wrote something about Virgil and myself, so I asked him:

QUESTION: I hope you didn't intend to make me an April fool. Otherwise Virgil and Nirod to be mentioned in the same pen-stroke!

But I couldn't read his answer to this, so I wrote: QUESTION: Absolutely illegible, Sir. Even Nolinida could not read the words.

SRI AUROBINDO: I repeat then from memory: What a modest poet! Most think in their heart of hearts that they are superior to Homer, Virgil, Milton and Shakespeare all piled upon and fused into each other.

QUESTION: You referred to "circumstances being exceptional"? as regards my early success in English versification. But how are they exceptional?

Then I wrote a doggerel:

Let me know
How 'tis so
A dullard like me
Bursting like the sea,
With the heart of the Muse
Makes his rhythm fuse?

SRI AUROBINDO:

You are opening, opening, opening
Into a wider, wider scopening
That fills me with a sudden hopening

That I may carry you in spite of gropening,
Your soul into the Supramental ropening.

N.B. —Surrealist poetry.

QUESTION: You have delighted my soul with surrealist poetry but not my intellect—"widening, widening" is not the cause, but the effect.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, but that's just it—Widen, widen, scopen, scopen, and the poetry may come in a torrent roaring and cascading through an enlarged fissure in your and the world's subtle cranium,

QUESTION: Now I don't see poetry anywhere on the horizon.

SRI AUROBINDO: How do you know? It may be hiding behind a cloud.

QUESTION: The. tragedy is that I know nothing of Inspiration's reasons for arrival and departure.

SRI AUROBINDO: Only unreason or super-reason. Keep your end up and it will arrive again and some day perhaps, after Jack-in-the-boxing like that sufficiently, will sit down and say, "Here I am for good. Send for the priest and let's be married." With these things that is the law and the rule and the reason and the rhyme of it and everything.

QUESTION: At times I wonder why the devil I bother my head with poetry? Have I come here for blessed poetry?

SRI AUROBINDO: You haven't. But the poetry has come for you. So why shout?

Here are some excerpts from our medical correspondence:

QUESTION: X has phimosis, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: What kind of medical animal is this? My dear sir, if you clap a word like that on an illness do you think it is easy for the patient to recover?

On another occasion:

QUESTION: A doctor says that one has to be firm, stern and hard with women. They may not like it superficially but they enjoy it and stick to the doctor who gives them hard knocks. Is it the cave-man spirit? Dr. Y seems no less a firebrand than myself, but women seem to like him.

SRI AUROBINDO: He must have been a he-man. She-women enjoy it from he-men. But all women are not she-women and all men are not he-men. Moreover, there is an art as well as a nature in that kind of thing which you lack. He is a he-man. Even so the women have ended by saying, "No more of Y."

Once Sri Aurobindo sent me the following letter in which he gently hinted at my reputation as a doctor:

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, I don't know why but you have the reputation of being a fierce and firebrand doctor who considers it a sin for patients to have an illness! You may be right, but tradition demands that a doctor should be soft like butter, soothing like treacle, sweet like sugar and jolly like jam.

QUESTION: If tradition demands it, we shall try to be softer than butter, but we may be too tempting and evoke a response from the patient's palate for making delicious toasts. Who will save us then?

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course, if you are too, too sweet. You must draw the line somewhere.

QUESTION: I wanted to be as soft as possible, but couldn't touch Z without making her shed tears. What heartless brutes, patients must be thinking now!

SRI AUROBINDO: Much safer than if they think, "What dears these doctors are, darlings, angels!"

We corresponded on the subject of medical tests:

QUESTION: We examine chemically first a sample of urine, i.e., by chemical reagents—which is called a qualitative test. You ought to know that from your English Public School chemistry, Sir.

SRI AUROBINDO: Never learned a word of chemistry or any damned science in my school. My school, sir, was too aristocratic for such plebeian things.

QUESTION: It is very strange, Sir, your school had no chemistry; but for I.C.S., you had no science? Perhaps these new-fangled things hadn't come down then?

SRI AUROBINDO: It (chemistry) may have been in a corner, but I had nothing to do with such stuff.... Certainly not. In I.C.S. you can choose your own subjects. They were new-fangled and not yet respectable.

Once I asked him about a patient of mine—an Englishman:

QUESTION: Why the devil does that patient write all these things to you? Are you prescribing medicines, or are we? And what is the use of his knowing the medicines and doses, pray? He could have asked me.

SRI AUROBINDO: Well, what about the free Englishman's right to grumble?

This is not London and there is no "Times" to write to. So he writes a letter to me instead of to the "Times".

QUESTION: Surely there is a twist somewhere.

SRI AUROBINDO: There always is a twist, sir, always.

QUESTION: Well, I won't fume any more or tear my hair.

SRI AUROBINDO: Don't. Losing one's hair is always a useless operation, Keep your hair on.

QUESTION: Only tell him, please, that he ought to let us know himself instead of sending a boy with an empty bottle.

SRI AUROBINDO: Dear sir, tell him yourself, tell him yourself. I will pat you on the back in silence from a safe distance.

I used to suffer from chronic boils, so I acquainted Sri Aurobindo with the fact:

QUESTION: Nose boil boiling down, terrible headache, fever, feeling fed up, Sir!

SRI AUROBINDO: Cellular bolshevism, probably.

QUESTION: What's this "cellular bolshevism"?

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1. Words could not be deciphered.
 2. to turn to ashes
 3. One word could not be deciphered
 4. Chellu was an Ashram servant
 5. A plan: famous for its mental hospital
 6. Running away.
 7. The two words after 'Feed him' are not decipherable.
 8. This report about A came at the bottom of the page.

9. word not decipherable