

Classic Poetry Series

Sri Aurobindo
- poems -

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Sri Aurobindo(15 August 1872 – 5 December 1950)

Sri Aurobindo was an Indian nationalist and freedom fighter, major Indian English poet, philosopher, and yogi. He joined the movement for India's freedom from British rule and for a duration (1905–1910) became one of its most important leaders, before turning to developing his own vision and philosophy of human progress and spiritual evolution. He was also one of the famous Radical leaders of India during the Indian National Movement.

The central theme of Sri Aurobindo's vision is the evolution of life into a "life divine". In his own words: "Man is a transitional being. He is not final. The step from man to superman is the next approaching achievement in the earth evolution. It is inevitable because it is at once the intention of the inner spirit and the logic of Nature's process".

The principal writings of Sri Aurobindo include, in prose, *The Life Divine*, considered his single great work of metaphysics, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, *Secrets of the Vedas*, *Essays on the Gita*, *The Human Cycle*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *Renaissance in India* and other essays, *Supramental Manifestation upon Earth*, *The Future Poetry*, *Thoughts and Aphorisms* and several volumes of letters. In poetry, his principal work is "Savitri - a Legend and a Symbol" in blank verse.

Sri Aurobindo, not only expressed his spiritual thought and vision in intricate metaphysical reasoning and in phenomenological terms, but also in poetry. He started writing poetry as a young student, and continued until late in his life. The theme of his poetry changed with the projects that he undertook. It ranged from revolutionary homages to mystic philosophy. Sri Aurobindo wrote in classical style.

Aurobindo's writings synthesized Eastern and Western philosophy, religion, literature, and psychology. Aurobindo was the first Indian to create a major literary corpus in English. His works include philosophy; poetry; translations of and commentaries on the Vedas, Upanishads, and the Gita; plays; literary, social, political, and historical criticism; devotional works; spiritual journals and three volumes of letters. His principal philosophical writings are *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga*, while his principal poetic work is *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol*.

Early Life

Aurobindo Ghosh was born in Calcutta, India. His father, Dr. Krishna Dhan

Ghose, was District Surgeon of Rangapur, Bengal. His mother, Swarnalata Devi, was the daughter of Brahmo religious and social reformer, Rajnarayan Basu. Aravinda means "lotus" in Sanskrit. Aurobindo spelled his name Aravinda while in England, as Aravind or Arvind while in Baroda, and as Aurobindo when he moved to Bengal. The surname Ghose is pronounced, and usually written in English, as "Ghosh", and Aurobindo's name often appears as "Arabindo Ghosh" in English academic sources. Dr. Ghose chose the middle name Akroyd to honour his friend Annette Akroyd.

Aurobindo spent his first five years at Rangapur, where his father had been posted since October 1871. Dr. Ghose, who had previously lived in Britain and studied medicine at King's College, Aberdeen, was determined that his children should have an English education and upbringing free of any Indian influences. In 1877, he therefore sent the young Aurobindo and two elder siblings - Manmohan Ghose and Benoybhusan Ghose - to the Loreto Convent school in Darjeeling.

 England

Aurobindo spent two years at Loreto convent. In 1879, Aurobindo and his two elder brothers were taken to Manchester, England for a European education. The brothers were placed in the care of a Rev. and Mrs. Drewett. Rev. Drewett was an Anglican clergyman whom Dr. Ghose knew through his British friends at Rangapur. The Drewetts tutored the Ghose brothers privately. The Drewetts had been asked to keep the tuitions completely secular and to make no mention of India or its culture.

In 1884, Aurobindo joined St Paul's School. Here he learned Greek and Latin, spending the last three years reading literature, especially English poetry. Dr. K.D. Ghose had aspired that his sons should pass the prestigious Indian Civil Service, but in 1889 it appeared that of the three brothers, only young Aurobindo had the chance of fulfilling his father's aspirations, his brothers having already decided their future careers. To become an ICS official, students were required to pass the difficult competitive examination, as well as study at an English university for two years under probation. With his limited financial resources, the only option Aurobindo had was to secure a scholarship at an English university, which he did by passing the scholarship examinations of King's College, Cambridge University. He stood first at the examination. He also passed the written examination of ICS after a few months, where he was ranked 11th out of 250 competitors. He spent the next two years at the King's College.

By the end of two years of probation, Aurobindo became convinced that he did not want to serve the British, he therefore failed to present himself at the horse

riding examination for ICS, and was disqualified for the Service. At this time, the Maharaja of Baroda, Sayajirao Gaekwad III was travelling England. James Cotton, brother of Sir Henry Cotton, for some time Lt. Governor of Bengal and Secretary of the South Kensington Liberal Club, who knew Aurobindo and his father secured for him a service in Baroda State Service and arranged a meeting between him and the prince. He left England for India, arriving there in February, 1893. In India Aurobindo's father who was waiting to receive his son was misinformed by his agents from Bombay (now Mumbai) that the ship on which Aurobindo had been travelling had sunk off the coast of Portugal. Dr. Ghose who was by this time frail due to ill-health could not bear this shock and died.

 Baroda

In Baroda, Aurobindo joined the state service, working first in the Survey and Settlements department, later moving to the Department of Revenue and then to the Secretariat, writing speeches for the Gaekwad. At Baroda, Aurobindo engaged in a deep study of Indian culture, teaching himself Sanskrit, Hindi and Bengali, all things that his education in England had withheld from him. Because of the lack of punctuality at work resulting from his preoccupation with these other pursuits, Aurobindo was transferred to the Baroda College as a teacher of French, where he became popular because of his unconventional teaching style. He was later promoted to the post of Vice-Principal. He published the first of his collections of poetry, *The Rishi* from Baroda. He also started taking active interest in the politics of India's freedom struggle against British rule, working behind the scenes as his position at the Baroda State barred him from overt political activity. He linked up with resistance groups in Bengal and Madhya Pradesh, while travelling to these states. He established contact with Lokmanya Tilak and Sister Nivedita. He also arranged for the military training of Jatindra Nath Banerjee (Niralamba Swami) in the Baroda army and then dispatched him to organise the resistance groups in Bengal. He was invited by K.G. Deshpande who was in charge of the weekly *Induprakash* and a friend from his days in Cambridge to write about the political situation. Aurobindo started writing a series of impassioned articles under the title *New Lamps for the Old* pouring vitriol on the Congress for its moderate policy. He wrote:

"Our actual enemy is not any force exterior to ourselves, but our own crying weaknesses, our cowardice, our selfishness, our hypocrisy, our purblind sentimentalism"

further adding:

"I say, of the Congress, then, this, - that its aims are mistaken, that the spirit

in which it proceeds towards their accomplishment is not a spirit of sincerity and whole-heartedness, and that the methods it has chosen are not the right methods, and the leaders in whom it trusts, not the right sort of men to be leaders; - in brief, that we are at present the blind led, if not by the blind, at any rate by the one-eyed."

The Congress which practised more mild and moderate criticism itself, reacted in a way which frightened the editors of the paper who asked Aurobindo to write about cultural themes instead of Politics. Aurobindo lost interest in these writings and the series was discontinued. Aurobindo's activities in Baroda also included a regimen of yogic exercises and meditation, but these were minor in comparison to the work he would take up in his later life. By 1904 he was doing yogic practices for five-six hours everyday. He stated that after performing pranayama, he was able to memorize and reproduce 200 lines of poetry in half an hour, while earlier he was not even able to memorize a dozen lines. After the practice of pranayama, he was able to compose 200 lines worth of poetry in half an hour, while earlier he was only able to compose 200 lines in a month.

 Calcutta

Aurobindo used to take many excursions to Bengal, at first in a bid to re-establish links with his parents' families and his other Bengali relatives, including his cousin Sarojini and brother Barin, and later increasingly in a bid to establish resistance groups across Bengal. But he formally shifted to Calcutta (now Kolkata) only in 1906 after the announcement of Partition of Bengal. During his visit to Calcutta in 1901 he married Mrinalini, daughter of Bhupal Chandra Bose, a senior official in Government service. Aurobindo Ghose was then 28; the bride Mrinalini, 14. Marrying off daughters at a very young age was very common in 19th century Bengali families.

In Bengal with Barin's help he established contacts with revolutionaries, inspiring radicals like Bagha Jatin, Jatin Banerjee, Surendranath Tagore. He helped establish a series of youth clubs with the aim of imparting a martial and spiritual training to the youth of Bengal. He helped found the Anushilan Samiti of Calcutta in 1902. When the Partition of Bengal was announced, there was a public outpouring against the British rule in India. Aurobindo attended the Benares session of Congress in December 1905 as an observer, and witnessing the intensity of people's feelings decided to throw himself into the thick of politics. He joined the National Council of Education and met Subodh Chandra Mullick who quickly became a supporter of Aurobindo's views. Mullick donated a large sum to found a National College and stipulated that Aurobindo should become its first principal. Aurobindo also started writing for *Bande Mataram*, as a consequence of

which, his popularity as a leading voice of the hardline group soared. His arrest and acquittal for printing seditious material in *Bande Mataram* consolidated his position as the leader of aggressive nationalists. His call for complete political independence was considered extremely radical at the time and frequently caused friction in Congress. In 1907 at Surat session of Congress where moderates and hardliners had a major showdown, he led the hardliners along with Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The Congress split after this session. In 1907–1908 Aurobindo travelled extensively to Pune, Bombay and Baroda to firm up support for the nationalist cause, giving speeches and meeting various groups. He was arrested again in May 1908 in connection with the Alipore Bomb Case. He was acquitted in the ensuing trial and released after a year of isolated incarceration. Once out of the prison he started two new publications, *Karmayogin* in English and *Dharma* in Bengali. He also delivered the *Uttarpara Speech* s:Uttarpara Speech hinting at the transformation of his focus to spiritual matters . The British persecution continued because of his writings in his new journals and in April 1910 Aurobindo, signalling his retirement from politics, moved to Pondicherry, where Britain's secret police monitored his apolitical activities.

 Conversion from Politics to Spirituality

Aurobindo's conversion from political action to spirituality occurred gradually. Aurobindo had been influenced by Bankim's *Anandamath*. In this novel, the story follows a monk who fights the soldiers of the British East India Company. When in Baroda, Aurobindo and Barin had considered the plan of a national uprising of nationalist sannyasis against the empire. Later when Aurobindo got involved with Congress and *Bande Mataram*, Barin had continued to meet patriotic youngsters for recruitment for such a plan. In 1907, Barin introduced Aurobindo to Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, a Maharashtrian yogi.

Aurobindo had been engaged in yogic discipline for years, but disturbances to his progress following the recent events surrounding the Congress had put him in the need of consulting a yogi. After attending the Surat session of the Congress in 1907, Aurobindo met Lele in Baroda. This meeting led him to retire for three days in seclusion where, following Lele's instruction, Aurobindo had his first major experience, called nirvana - a state of complete mental silence free of any thought or mental activity. Later, while awaiting trial as a prisoner in Alipore Central Jail in Calcutta Aurobindo had a number of mystical experiences. In his letters, Sri Aurobindo mentions that while in jail as under-trial, spirit of Swami Vivekananda visited him for two weeks and spoke about the higher planes of consciousness leading to supermind. Sri Aurobindo later said that while imprisoned he saw the convicts, jailers, policemen, the prison bars, the trees, the judge, the lawyers as different forms of one godhead, Krishna.

The trial ("Alipore Bomb Case, 1908") lasted for one full year, but eventually Sri Aurobindo was acquitted. His Defence Counsel was Chiitaranjan Das. On acquittal, Sri Aurobindo was invited to deliver a speech at Uttarpara where he first spoke of some of his experiences in jail. Afterwards Aurobindo started two new weekly papers: the Karmayogin in English and the Dharma in Bengali. However, it appeared that the British government would not tolerate his nationalist program as then Viceroy and Governor-General of India Lord Minto wrote about him: "I can only repeat that he is the most dangerous man we have to reckon with." The British considered the possibilities of a retrial or deportation, but objections from Lord Minto, or the Bengal government at different instances prevented immediate execution of such plans.

When informed that he was sought again by the police, he was guided by an inner voice to the then French territory Chandernagore where he halted for a few days and later On April 4, 1910, to Pondicherry.

 Pondicherry

In Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo completely dedicated himself to his spiritual and philosophical pursuits. In 1914, after four years of concentrated yoga, Sri Aurobindo was proposed to express his vision in intellectual terms. This resulted in the launch of Arya, a 64 page monthly review. For the next six and a half years this became the vehicle for most of his most important writings, which appeared in serialised form. These included The Life Divine, The Synthesis of Yoga, Essays on The Gita, The Secret of The Veda, Hymns to the Mystic Fire, The Upanishads, The Renaissance in India, War and Self-determination, The Human Cycle, The Ideal of Human Unity, and The Future Poetry. Many years later, Sri Aurobindo revised some of these works before they were published in book form. It was about his prose writing of this period that Times Literary Supplement, London wrote on 8 July 1944, "Sri Aurobindo is the most significant and perhaps the most interesting.... He is a new type of thinker, one who combines in his vision the alacrity of the West with the illumination of the East. He is a yogi who writes as though he were standing among the stars, with the constellations for his companions. Pondicherry is prayerpalace of Aurobindo Ghosh.

For some time afterwards, Sri Aurobindo's main literary output was his voluminous correspondence with his disciples. His letters, most of which were written in the 1930s, numbered in the several thousands. Many were brief comments made in the margins of his disciple's notebooks in answer to their questions and reports of their spiritual practice—others extended to several pages of carefully composed explanations of practical aspects of his teachings.

These were later collected and published in book form in three volumes of Letters on Yoga. In the late 1930s, Sri Aurobindo resumed work on a poem he had started earlier—he continued to expand and revise this poem for the rest of his life. It became perhaps his greatest literary achievement, *Savitri*, an epic spiritual poem in blank verse of approximately 24,000 lines. During World War II, he supported the allies, even donating money to the British Government, describing Hitler as a dark and oppressive force.

On August 15, 1947, on his 75th birthday, when India achieved political independence, a message was asked from Sri Aurobindo. In his message, which was read out on the All India Radio, Sri Aurobindo dwelt briefly on the five dreams he has cherished all his life and which, he noted, were on the way to being fulfilled. Sri Aurobindo died on December 5, 1950, after a short illness.

 Poetry

Sri Aurobindo not only expressed his spiritual thought and vision in intricate metaphysical reasoning and in phenomenological terms, but also in poetry. He started writing poetry as a young student, and continued until late in his life. The theme of his poetry changed with the projects that he undertook. It ranged from revolutionary homages to mystic philosophy. Sri Aurobindo wrote in classical style.

 Savitri

Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol is Sri Aurobindo's epic poem in 12 books, 24,000 lines about an individual who overcomes the ignorance, suffering, and death in the world through Her spiritual quest, setting the stage for the emergence of a new, Divine life on earth. It is loosely based on the ancient Indian tale of 'Savitri and Satyavan' from the Mahabharata.

 The Future Poetry

In Sri Aurobindo's theory of poetry, written under the title *The Future Poetry*, he writes about the significance that art and culture have for the spiritual evolution of mankind. He believed that a new, deep, and intuitive poetry could be a powerful aid to the change of consciousness and the life required to achieve the spiritual destiny of mankind which he envisioned. Unlike philosophy or psychology, poetry could make the reality of the Spirit living to the imagination and reveal its beauty and delight and captivate the deeper soul of humanity to its acceptance. It is perhaps in Sri Aurobindo's own poetry, particularly in his epic poem *Savitri*, that we find the fullest and most powerful statement of his spiritual

thought and vision.

A God's Labour

I have gathered my dreams in a silver air
Between the gold and the blue
And wrapped them softly and left them there,
My jewelled dreams of you.

I had hoped to build a rainbow bridge
Marrying the soil to the sky
And sow in this dancing planet midge
The moods of infinity.

But too bright were our heavens, too far away,
Too frail their ethereal stuff;
Too splendid and sudden our light could not stay;
The roots were not deep enough.

He who would bring the heavens here
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
And tread the dolorous way.

Coercing my godhead I have come down
Here on the sordid earth,
Ignorant, labouring, human grown
Twixt the gates of death and birth.

I have been digging deep and long
Mid a horror of filth and mire
A bed for the golden river's song,
A home for the deathless fire.

I have laboured and suffered in Matter's night
To bring the fire to man;
But the hate of hell and human spite
Are my meed since the world began.

For man's mind is the dupe of his animal self;
Hoping its lusts to win,
He harbours within him a grisly Elf
Enamoured of sorrow and sin.

The grey Elf shudders from heaven's flame
And from all things glad and pure;
Only by pleasure and passion and pain
His drama can endure.

All around is darkness and strife;
For the lamps that men call suns
Are but halfway gleams on this stumbling life
Cast by the Undying Ones.

Man lights his little torches of hope
That lead to a failing edge;
A fragment of Truth is his widest scope,
An inn his pilgrimage.

The Truth of truths men fear and deny,
The Light of lights they refuse;
To ignorant gods they lift their cry
Or a demon altar choose.

All that was found must again be sought,
Each enemy slain revives,
Each battle for ever is fought and refought
Through vistas of fruitless lives.

My gaping wounds are a thousand and one
And the Titan kings assail,
But I cannot rest till my task is done
And wrought the eternal will.

How they mock and sneer, both devils and men!
'Thy hope is Chimera's head
Painting the sky with its fiery stain;
Thou shalt fall and thy work lie dead.

'Who art thou that babblest of heavenly ease
And joy and golden room
To us who are waifs on inconscient seas
And bound to life's iron doom?

'This earth is ours, a field of Night

For our petty flickering fires.
How shall it brook the scared Light
Or suffer a god's desires?

'Come, let us slay him and end his course!
Then shall our hearts have release
From the burden and call of his glory and force
And the curb of his wide white peace.'

But the god is there in my mortal breast
Who wrestles with error and fate
And tramples a road through mire and waste
For the nameless Immaculate.

A voice cried, 'Go where none have gone!
Dig deeper, deeper yet
Till thou reach the grim foundation stone
And knock at the keyless gate.'

I saw that a falsehood was planted deep
At the very root of things
Where the grey Sphinx guards God's riddle sleep
On the Dragon's outspread wings.

I left the surface gods of mind
And life's unsatisfied seas
And plunged through the body's alleys blind
To the nether mysteries.

I have delved through the dumb Earth's dreadful heart
And heard her black mass' bell.
I have seen the source whence her agonies part
And the inner reason of hell.

Above me the dragon murmurs moan
And the goblin voices flit;
I have pierced the Void where Thought was born,
I have walked in the bottomless pit.

On a desperate stair my feet have trod
Armoured with boundless peace,
Bringing the fires of the splendour of God

Into the human abyss.

He who I am was with me still;
All veils are breaking now.
I have heard His voice and borne His will
on my vast untroubled brow.

The gulf twixt the depths and the heights is bridged
And the golden waters pour
Down the sapphire mountain rainbow-ridged
And glimmer from shore to shore.

Heaven's fire is lit in the breast of the earth
And the undying suns here burn;
Through a wonder cleft in the bounds of birth
The incarnate spirits yearn

Like flames to the kingdoms of Truth and Bliss:
Down a gold-red stair-way wend
The radiant children of Paradise
Clarioning darkness's end.

A little more and the new life's doors
Shall be carved in silver light
With its aureate roof and mosaic floors
In a great world bare and bright.

I shall leave my dreams in their argent air,
For in a raiment of gold and blue
There shall move on the earth embodied and fair
The living truth of you.

Sri Aurobindo

Bande Mataram

Mother, I bow to thee!
Rich with thy hurrying streams,
Bright with thy orchard gleams,
Cool with thy winds of delight,
Dark fields waving, Mother of might,
Mother free.

Glory of moonlight dreams
Over thy branches and lordly streams,
Clad in thy blossoming trees,
Mother, giver of ease,
Laughing low and sweet!
Mother, I kiss thy feet,
Speaker sweet and low!
Mother, to thee I bow.

Who hath said thou art weak in thy lands,
When the swords flash out in twice seventy million hands
And seventy millions voices roar
Thy dreadful name from shore to shore?
With many strengths who art mighty and stored,
To thee I call, Mother and Lord!
Thou who savest, arise and save!
To her I cry who ever her foemen drave
Back from plain and sea
And shook herself free.

Thou art wisdom, thou art law,
Thou our heart, our soul, our breath,
Thou the love divine, the awe
In our hearts that conquers death.
Thine the strength that nerves the arm,
Thine the beauty, thine the charm.
Every image made divine
In our temples is but thine.

Thou art Durga, Lady and Queen,
With her hands that strike and her swords of sheen,
Thou art Lakshmi lotus-throned,

Pure and perfect without peer,
Mother, lend thine ear.
Rich with thy hurrying streams,
Bright with thy orchard gleams,
Dark of hue, O candid-fair

In thy soul, with jewelled hair
And thy glorious smile divine,
Loveliest of all earthly lands,
Showering wealth from well-stored hands!
Mother, mother mine!
Mother sweet, I bow to thee,
Mother great and free.

Sri Aurobindo

Because Thou Art

Because Thou art All-beauty and All-bliss,
My soul blind and enamoured yearns for Thee ;
It bears Thy mystic touch in all that is
And thrills with the burden of that ecstasy.

Behind all eyes I meet Thy secret gaze
And in each voice I hear Thy magic tune :
Thy sweetness haunts my heart through Nature's ways;
Nowhere it beats now from Thy snare immune.

It loves Thy body in all living things;
Thy joy is there in every leaf and stone:
The moments bring Thee on their fiery wings ;
Sight's endless artistry is Thou alone

Time voyages with Thee upon its prow
And all the future's passionate hope is Thou.

Sri Aurobindo

Bliss Of Identity

All Nature is taught in radiant ways to move,
All beings are in myself embraced.
O fiery boundless Heart of joy and love,
How art thou beating in a mortal's breast !

It is Thy rapture flaming through my nerves
And all my cells and atoms thrill with Thee ;
My body thy vessel is and only serves
As a living wine-cup of Thy ecstasy.

I am a centre of Thy golden light
And I its vast and vague circumference,
Thou art my soul great, luminous and white
And Thine my mind and will and glowing sense.

Thy spirit's infinite breath I feel in me;
My life is a throb of Thy eternity.

Sri Aurobindo

Bride Of The Fire

Bride of the Fire, clasp me now close, -
Bride of the Fire!
I have shed the bloom of the earthly rose,
I have slain desire.

Beauty of the Light, surround my life, -
Beauty of the Light!
I have sacrificed longing and parted from grief,
I can bear thy delight.

Image of Ecstasy, thrill and enlase, -
Image of Bliss!
I would see only thy marvellous face,
Feel only thy kiss.

Voice of Infinity, sound in my heart, -
Call of the One!
Stamp there thy radiance, never to part,
O living sun.

Sri Aurobindo

Cosmic Consciousness

I have wrapped the wide world in my wider self
And Time and Space my spirit's seeing are.
I am the god and demon, ghost and elf,
I am the wind's speed and the blazing star.

All Nature is the nursling of my care,
I am its struggle and the eternal rest;
The world's joy thrilling runs through me, I bear
The sorrow of millions in my lonely breast.

I have learned a close identity with all,
Yet am by nothing bound that I become;
Carrying in me the universe's call
I mount to my imperishable home.

I pass beyond Time and life on measureless wings,
Yet still am one with born and unborn things.

Sri Aurobindo

Evolution (Revised)

I passed into a lucent still abode
And saw as in a mirror crystalline
An ancient Force ascending serpentine
The unhasting spirals of the aeonic road.

Earth was a cradle for the arriving god
And man but a half-dark half-luminous sign
Of the transition of the veiled Divine
From Matter's sleep and the tormented load

Of ignorant life and death to the Spirit's light.
Mind liberated swam Light's ocean vast,
And life escaped from its grey tortured line;

I saw Matter illumining its parent Night.
The soul could feel into infinity cast
Timeless God-bliss the heart incarnadine.

Sri Aurobindo

Fate (Savitri, Part Two, Book Seven)

Fate followed her foreseen immutable road.
Man's hopes and longings build the journeying wheels
That bear the body of his destiny
And lead his blind will towards an unknown goal.
His fate within him shapes his acts and rules;
Its face and form already are born in him,
Its parentage is in his secret soul:
Here Matter seems to mould the body's life
And the soul follows where its nature drives.
Nature and Fate compel his free-will's choice.
But greater spirits this balance can reverse
And make the soul the artist of its fate.
This is the mystic truth our ignorance hides:

Sri Aurobindo

God

Thou who pervadest all the worlds below,
Yet sitst above,
Master of all who work and rule and know,
Servant of Love!

Thou who disdainest not the worm to be
Nor even the clod,
Therefore we know by that humility
That thou art God.

Sri Aurobindo

I Have A Hundred Lives

I have a hundred lives before me yet
To grasp thee in, O Spirit ethereal,
Be sure I will with heart insatiate
Pursue thee like a hunter through them all.

Thou yet shalt turn back on the eternal way
And with awakened vision watch me come
Smiling a little at errors past and lay
Thy eager hand in mine, its proper home.

Meanwhile made happy by thy happiness
I shall approach thee in things and people dear,
And in thy spirit's motions half-possess,
Loving what thou hast loved, shall feel thee near,

Until I lay my hands on thee indeed
Somewhere among the stars, as 'twas decreed.

Sri Aurobindo

Invitation

With wind and the weather beating round me
Up to the hill and the moorland I go.
Who will come with me? Who will climb with me?
Wade through the brook and tramp through the snow?

Not in the petty circle of cities
Cramped by your doors and your walls I dwell;
Over me God is blue in the welkin,
Against me the wind and the storm rebel.

I sport with solitude here in my regions,
Of misadventure have made me a friend.
Who would live largely? Who would live freely?
Here to the wind-swept uplands ascend.

I am the Lord of tempest and mountain,
I am the Spirit of freedom and pride.
Stark must he be and a kinsman to danger
Who shares my kingdom and walks at my side.

Sri Aurobindo

Kamadeva

When in the heart of the valleys and hid by the roses
The sweet Love lies,
Has he wings to rise to his heavens or in the closes
Lives and dies?

On the peaks of the radiant mountains if we should meet him
Proud and free,
Will he not frown on the valleys? Would it befit him
Chained to be?

Will you then speak of the one as a slave and a wanton,
The other too bare?
But God is the only slave and the only monarch
We declare.

It is God who is Love and a boy and a slave for our passion
He was made to serve;
It is God who is free and proud and the limitless tyrant
Our souls deserve.

Sri Aurobindo

Krishna

At last I find a meaning of soul's birth
Into this universe terrible and sweet,
I who have felt the hungry heart of earth
Aspiring beyond heaven to Krishna's feet.

I have seen the beauty of immortal eyes,
And heard the passion of the Lover's flute,
And known a deathless ecstasy's surprise
And sorrow in my heart for ever mute.

Nearer and nearer now the music draws,
Life shudders with a strange felicity;
All Nature is a wide enamoured pause
Hoping her lord to touch, to clasp, to be.

For this one moment lived the ages past;
The world now throbs fulfilled in me at last.

Sri Aurobindo

Liberation

I have thrown from me the whirling dance of mind
And stand now in the spirit's silence free,
Timeless and deathless beyond creature-kind,
The centre of my own eternity.

I have escaped and the small self is dead;
I am immortal, alone, ineffable;
I have gone out from the universe I made,
And have grown nameless and immeasurable.

My mind is hushed in a wide and endless light,
My heart a solitude of delight and peace,
My sense unsnared by touch and sound and sight,
My body a point in white infinities.

I am the one Being's sole immobile Bliss:
No one I am, I who am all that is.

Sri Aurobindo

Life

Mystic Miracle, daughter of Delight,
Life, thou ecstasy,
Let the radius of thy flight
Be eternity.

On thy wings thou bearest high
Glory and disdain,
Godhead and mortality,
Ecstasy and pain.

Take me in thy wild embrace
Without weak reserve
Body dire and unveiled face;
Faint not, Life, nor swerve.

All thy bliss I would explore,
All thy tyranny.
Cruel like the lion's roar,
Sweet like springtide be.

Like a Titan I would take,
Like a God enjoy,
Like a man contend and make,
Revel like a boy.

More I will not ask of thee,
Nor my fate would choose;
King or conquered let me be,
Live or lose.

Even in rags I am a god;
Fallen, I am divine;
High I triumph when down-trod,
Long I live when slain.

Sri Aurobindo

Life And Death

Life, death, - death, life; the words have led for ages
Our thought and consciousness and firmly seemed
Two opposites; but now long-hidden pages
Are opened, liberating truths undreamed.
Life only is, or death is life disguised, -
Life a short death until by Life we are surprised.

Sri Aurobindo

Mother Of Dreams

Goddess supreme, Mother of Dream, by thy ivory doors when thou standest,
Who are they then that come down unto men in thy visions that troop, group
upon group, down the path of the shadows slanting?
Dream after dream, they flash and they gleam with the flame of the stars still
around them;
Shadows at thy side in a darkness ride where the wild fires dance, stars glow and
glance and the random meteor glistens;
There are voices that cry to their kin who reply; voices sweet, at the heart they
beat and ravish the soul as it listens.

What then are these lands and these golden sands and these seas more radiant
than earth can imagine?
Who are those that pace by the purple waves that race to the cliff-bound floor of
thy jasper shore under skies in which mystery muses,
Lapped in moonlight not of our night or plunged in sunshine that is not diurnal?
Who are they coming thy Oceans roaming with sails whose strands are not made
by hands, an unearthly wind advances?
Why do they join in a mystic line with those on the sands linking hands in
strange and stately dances?

Thou in the air, with a flame in thy hair, the whirl of thy wonders watching,
Holdest the night in thy ancient right, Mother divine, hyacinthine, with a girdle of
beauty defended.
Sworded with fire, attracting desire, thy tenebrous kingdom thou keepest,
Starry-sweet, with the moon at thy feet, now hidden now seen the clouds
between in the gloom and the drift of thy tresses.
Only to those whom thy fancy chose, O thou heart-free, is it given to see thy
witchcraft and feel thy caresses.

Open the gate where thy children wait in their world of a beauty undarkened.
High-throned on a cloud, victorious, proud I have espied Maghavan ride when the
armies of wind are behind him;
Food has been given for my tasting from heaven and fruit of immortal
sweetness;
I have drunk wine of the kingdoms divine and have healed the change of music
strange from a lyre which our hands cannot master,
Doors have swung wide in the chambers of pride where the Gods reside and the
Apsaras dance in their circles faster and faster.

For thou art she whom we first can see when we pass the bounds of the mortal;
There at the gates of the heavenly states thou hast planted thy wand enchanted
over the head of the Yogin waving.

From thee are the dream and the shadows that seem and the fugitive lights that
delude us;

Thine is the shade in which visions are made; sped by thy hands from celestial
lands come the souls that rejoice for ever.

Into thy dream-worlds we pass or look in thy magic glass, then beyond thee we
climb out of Space and Time to the peak of divine endeavour.

Sri Aurobindo

Nirvana

All is abolished but the mute Alone.
The mind from thought released, the heart from grief,
Grow inexistent now beyond belief;
There is no I, no Nature, known-unknown.
The city, a shadow picture without tone,
Floats, quivers unreal; forms without relief
Flow, a cinema's vacant shapes; like a reef
Foundering in shoreless gulfs the world is done.

Only the illimitable Permanent
Is here. A Peace stupendous, featureless, still.
Replaces all, - what once was I, in It
A silent unnamed emptiness content
Either to fade in the Unknowable
Or thrill with the luminous seas of the Infinite.

Sri Aurobindo

O Coil, Coil

O coil, honied envoy of the spring,
Cease thy too happy voice, grief's record, cease:
For I recall that day of vernal trees,
The soft asoca's bloom, the laden winds
And green felicity of leaves, the hush,
The sense of Nature living in the woods.
Only the river rippled, only hummed
The languid murmuring bee, far-borne and slow,
Emparadised in odours, only used
The ringdove his divine heart-moving speech;
But sweetest to my pleased and singing heart
Thy voice, O coil, in the peepel tree.

O me! for pleasure turned to bitterest tears!
O me! for the swift joy, too great to live,
That only bloomed one hour! O wondrous day,
That crowned the bliss of those delicious years.
The vernal radiance of my lover's lips
Was shut like a red rose upon my mouth,
His voice was richer than the murmuring leaves,
His love around me than the summer air.
Five hours entangled in the coil's cry
Lay my beloved twixt my happy breasts.
O voice of tears! O sweetness uttering death!
O lost ere yet that happy cry was still!

O tireless voice of spring! Again I lie
In odorous gloom of trees; unseen and hear
The windlark gurgles in the golden leaves,
The woodworm spins in shrillness on the bough:
Thou by the waters wailing to thy love,
O chocrobacque! have comfort, since to thee
The dawn brings sweetest recompense of tears
And she thou lovest hears thy pain. But I
Am desolate in the heart of fruitful months,
Am widowed in the sight of happy things,
Uttering my moan to the unhoused winds,
O coil, coil, to the winds and thee.

1890-1892

Sri Aurobindo

Ocean Oneness

Silence is round me, wideness ineffable;
White birds on the ocean diving and wandering;
A soundless sea on a voiceless heaven,
Azure on azure, is mutely gazing.

Identified with silence and boundlessness
My spirit widens clasping the universe
Till all that seemed becomes the Real,
One in a mighty and single vastness.

Someone broods there nameless and bodiless,
Conscious and lonely, deathless and infinite,
And, sole in a still eternal rapture,
Gathers all things to his heart for ever.

Sri Aurobindo

Soul In The Ignorance

Soul in the Ignorance, wake from its stupor.
Flake of the world-fire, spark of Divinity,
Lift up thy mind and thy heart into glory.
Sun in the darkness, recover thy lustre.

One, universal, ensphering creation,
Wheeling no more with inconscient Nature,
Feel thyself God-born, know thyself deathless.
Timeless return to thy immortal existence.

Sri Aurobindo

The Bigger Fields

There is a brighter ether than this blue
Pretence of an enveloping heavenly vault,
Royaler investiture than this massed assault
Of emerald rapture pearled with tears of dew.
Immortal spaces of cerulean hue
Are in our reach and fields without this fault
Of drab brown earth and streams that never halt
In their deep murmur which white flowers strew

Floating like stars upon a strip of sky.
This world behind is made of truer stuff
Than the manufactured tissue of earth's grace.
There we can walk and see the gods go by
And sip from Hebe's cup nectar enough
To make for us heavenly limbs and deathless face.

Sri Aurobindo

The Call Of The Impossible

Our godhead calls us in unrealised things.
Asleep in the wide fields of destiny,
A world guarded by Silence' rustling wings
Sheltered their fine impossibility.

But part, but quiver the cerulean gates,
Close splendours look into our dreaming eyes;
We bear proud deities and magnificent fates;
Faces and hands come near from Paradise.

What shone thus far above is here in us;
Bliss unattained our future's birthright is;
Beauty of our dim soul is amorous,
We are the heirs of infinite widenesses.

The impossible is the hint of what shall be,
Mortal the door to immortality.

Sri Aurobindo

The Dreamboat

Who was it that came to me in a boat made of dream-fire,
With his flame brow and his sun-gold body?
Melted was the silence into a sweet secret murmur,
'Do you come now? Is the heart's fire ready?'

Hidden in the recesses of the heart something shuddered,
It recalled all that the life's joy cherished,
Imaged the felicity it must leave lost forever,
And the boat passed and the gold god vanished.

Now within the hollowness of the world's breast inhabits -
For the love died and the old joy ended -
Void of a felicity that has fled, gone for ever,
And the gold god and the dream boat come not.

Sri Aurobindo

The Fear Of Life And Death

Death wanders through our lives at will, sweet Death
Is busy with each intake of our breath.
Why do you fear her? Lo, her laughing face
All rosy with the light of jocund grace !
A kind and lovely maiden culling flowers
In a sweet garden fresh with vernal showers,
This is the thing you fear, young portress bright
Who opens to our souls the worlds of light.
Is it because the twisted stem must feel
Pain when the tenderest hands its glory steal?
Is it because the flowerless stalk droops dull
And ghastly now that was so beautiful ?
Or is it the opening portal's horrid jar
That shakes you, feeble souls of courage bare?
Death is but changing of our robes to wait
In wedding garments at the Eternal's gate.

Sri Aurobindo

The Godhead

I sat behind the dance of Danger's hooves
In the shouting street that seemed a futurist's whim,
And suddenly felt, exceeding Nature's grooves,
In me, enveloping me the body of Him.

Above my head a mighty head was seen,
A face with the calm of immortality
And an omnipotent gaze that held the scene
In the vast circle of its sovereignty.

His hair was mingled with the sun and breeze ;
The world was in His heart and He was I:
I housed in me the Everlasting's peace,
The strength of One whose substance cannot die.

The moment passed and all was as before;
Only that deathless memory I bore.

Sri Aurobindo

The Golden Light

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

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

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

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

Sri Aurobindo

The Guest - Sonnet

I have discovered my deep deathless being:
Masked by my front of mind, immense, serene
It meets the world with an Immortal's seeing,
A god-spectator of the human scene.

No pain and sorrow of the heart and flesh
Can tread that pure and voiceless sanctuary.
Danger and fear, Fate's hounds, slipping their leash
Rend body and nerve, - the timeless Spirit is free.

Awake, God's ray and witness in my breast,
In the undying substance of my soul
Flamelike, inscrutable the almighty Guest.
Death nearer comes and Destiny takes her toll;

He hears the blows that shatter Nature's house:
Calm sits He, formidable, luminous.

Sri Aurobindo

The Inner Fields

There is a brighter ether than this blue
Pretence of an enveloping heavenly vault,
Royaler investiture than this massed assault
Of emerald rapture pearled with tears of dew.
Immortal spaces of cerulean hue
Are in our reach and fields without this fault
Of drab brown earth and streams that never halt
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Floating like stars upon a strip of sky.
This world behind is made of truer stuff
Than the manufactured tissue of earth's grace.
There we can walk and see the gods go by
And sip from Hebe's cup nectar enough
To make for us heavenly limbs and deathless face.

Sri Aurobindo

The Miracle Of Birth

I saw my soul a traveller through Time;
From life to life the cosmic ways it trod,
Obscure in the depths and on the heights sublime,
Evolving from the word into the god.

A spark of the eternal Fire, it came
To build a house in Matter for the Unborn.
The unconscious sunless Night received the flame;
In the brute seed of things dumb and forlorn.

Life stirred and Thought outlined a gleaming shape
Till on the stark inanimate earth could move,
Born to somnambulist Nature in her sleep
A thinking creature who can hope and love.

Still by slow steps the miracle goes on,
The Immortal's gradual birth mid mire and stone.

27, 29-9-1939

Sri Aurobindo

The Universal Incarnation

There is a Wisdom like a brooding Sun,
A Bliss in the heart's crypt grown fiery white,
The heart of a world in which all hearts are one,
A Silence on the mountains of delight.

A Calm that cradles Fate upon its knees;
A wide Compassion leans to embrace earth's pain;
A Witness dwells within our secrecies,
The incarnate Godhead in the body of man.

Our mind is a glimmering curtain of that Ray,
Our strength a parody of the Immortal's power,
Our joy a dreamer on the Eternal's way
Hunting the fugitive beauty of an hour.

Only on the heart's veiled door the word of flame
Is written, the secret and tremendous Name.

Sri Aurobindo

The Unseen Infinite

Arisen to voiceless unattainable peaks
I meet no end, for all is boundless He,
An absolute Joy the wide-winged spirit seeks,
A Might, a Presence, an Eternity.

In the inconscient dreadful dumb Abyss
Are heard the heart-beats of the Infinite.
The insensible midnight veils His trance of bliss,
A fathomless sealed astonishment of Light.

In His ray that dazzles our vision everywhere,
Our half-closed eyes seek fragments of the One:
Only the eyes of Immortality dare
To look unblinded on that living Sun.

Yet are our souls the Immortal's selves within,
Comrades and powers and children of the Unseen.

Sri Aurobindo

The Witness Spirit

I dwell in the spirit's calm nothing can move
And watch the actions of Thy vast world-force,
Its mighty wings that through infinity move
And the Time-galloppings of the deathless Horse.

This mute stupendous Energy that whirls
The stars and nebulae in its long train,
Like a huge Serpent through my being curls
With its diamond hood of joy and fangs of pain.

It rises from the dim inconscient deep
Upcoiling through the minds and hearts of men,
Then touches on some height of luminous sleep
The bliss and splendour of the eternal plane.

All this I bear in me, untouched and still
Assenting to Thy all-wise inscrutable will.

Sri Aurobindo

The Word Of The Silence

A bare impersonal hush is now my mind,
A world of sight clear and inimitable,
A volume of silence by a Godhead signed,
A greatness pure, virgin of will.

Once on its pages Ignorance could write
In a scribble of intellect the blind guess of Time
And cast gleam-messages of ephemeral light,
A food for souls that wander on Nature's rim.

But now I listen to a greater Word
Born from the mute unseen omniscient Ray:
The Voice that only Silence' ear has heard
Leaps missioned from an eternal glory of Day.

All turns from a wideness and unbroken peace
To a tumult of joy in a sea of wide release.

Sri Aurobindo

To Weep Because

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

Sri Aurobindo

Trance

A naked and silver-pointed star
Floating near the halo of the moon;
A storm-rack, the pale sky's fringe and bar,
Over waters stilling into swoon.

My mind is awake in stirless trance,
Hushed my heart, a burden of delight;
Dispelled is the senses' flicker-dance,
Mute the body aureate with light.

O star of creation pure and free,
Halo-moon of ecstasy unknown,
Storm-breath of the soul-change yet to be,
Ocean self enraptured and alone!

Sri Aurobindo

Transformation: Sonnet

My breath runs in a subtle rhythmic stream;
It fills my members with a might divine:
I have drunk the Infinite like a giant's wine.
Time is my drama or my pageant dream.
Now are my illumined cells joy's flaming scheme
And changed my thrilled and branching nerves to fine
Channels of rapture opal and hyaline
For the influx of the Unknown and the Supreme.

I am no more a vassal of flesh,
A slave to Nature and her leaden rule;
I am caught no more in the senses' narrow mesh.
My soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight,
My body is God's happy living tool,
My spirit a vast sun of deathless light.

Sri Aurobindo

Who

In the blue of the sky, in the green of the forest,
Whose is the hand that has painted the glow?
When the winds were asleep in the womb of the ether,
Who was it roused them and bade them to blow?

He is lost in the heart, in the cavern of Nature,
He is found in the brain where He builds up the thought:
In the pattern and bloom of the flowers He is woven,
In the luminous net of the stars He is caught.

In the strength of a man, in the beauty of woman,
In the laugh of a boy, in the blush of a girl;
The hand that sent Jupiter spinning through heaven,
Spends all its cunning to fashion a curl.

There are His works and His veils and His shadows;
But where is He then? by what name is He known?
Is He Brahma or Vishnu? a man or a woman?
Bodies or bodiless? twin or alone?

We have love for a boy who is dark and resplendent,
A woman is lord of us, naked and fierce.
We have seen Him a-muse on the snow of the mountains,
We have watched Him at work in the heart of the spheres.

We will tell the whole world of His ways and His cunning;
He has rapture of torture and passion and pain;
He delights in our sorrow and drives us to weeping,
Then lures with His joy and His beauty again.

All music is only the sound of His laughter,
All beauty the smile of His passionate bliss;
Our lives are His heart-beats, our rapture the bridal
Of Radha and Krishna, our love is their kiss.

He is strength that is loud in the blare of the trumpets,
And He rides in the car and He strikes in the spears;
He slays without stint and is full of compassion;
He wars for the world and its ultimate years.

In the sweep of the worlds, in the surge of the ages,
Ineffable, mighty, majestic and pure,
Beyond the last pinnacle seized by the thinker
He is throned in His seats that for ever endure.

The Master of man and his infinite Lover,
He is close to our hearts, had we vision to see;
We are blind with our pride and the pomp of our passions,
We are bound in our thoughts where we hold ourselves free.

It is He in the sun who is ageless and deathless,
And into the midnight His shadow is thrown;
When darkness was blind and engulfed within darkness,
He was seated within it immense and alone.

Sri Aurobindo