SATPREM

THE REVOLT OF THE EARTH

ESSAY

Translated from the French by Luc Venet

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On a very narrow ridge
between the Marvel and the
disaster.

S.

To Sri Aurobindo
to Mother
who have given me all
to
my mother
and the sea gulls of la Cote
Sauvage

1. The Scientific Middle Ages

Through a wonder cleft
in the bounds of birth...

Sri Aurobindo

When a species fails to find its own sense, it dies or it self-destructs.

We think of ourselves as French, Chinese or Russian, yellow, white or black; that is our first barbarism. We think of ourselves as Christian, Hedonist, Moslem, or what have you; that is our second barbarism. We think of ourselves as scientists, star explorers – and consumers of every possible species – that is our third barbarism. We devour everything, but who devours what? We know everything but who knows what?

The religious Middle Ages have been followed by the scientific Middle Ages. And one isn't sure which is the worst.

Yet it's simple – and very difficult.

The evolution of a species does not lie in what it thinks of itself, although the ability to think may indeed help us to speed up the process and find the sense. For four hundred million years, it has been clear that the evolution of a species lies in the body. In order to develop from shark to little seal on the icecap, it scarcely mattered whether one was a yellow, white or black fish, or even a scientific fish, because, in any case, that science was a science of fish, and hence outdated.

"Wait a minute," the scientists will say. "We live under the stars, erect on two feet, and we have telescopes and microscopes with which we count everything, including *your* atoms. We can even state with a straight face that there are one billion atoms in a grain of salt."

But this is wrong. We do not live under the stars or in such an atomic accounting. We live in death. Our science is a science of death, as is our theology. The first and foremost fact of evolution, the fundamental fact of life is death; and we see everything, know everything, and feel everything through that wall of death, much as the fish does through its barrier of water. The greatest fraud ever committed by "thinking" men has been to call that life. It's the most stupendously wrong description in all of history. One cannot even speak of a symbiosis of life and death, for that "life" *is* death – a necro-biosis.

Having lacked the courage to face this simple, primordial fact of the evolution of species, we have embarked upon all the wrong directions and all the wrong means of action.

And it is in the process of blowing up in our faces.

The man of Lascaux dates back fourteen thousand years, and we still haven't found our human secret.

What wrong turn have we taken, then?

The imperative is to find a crack in the Wall, the place *in the body* where lies the possibility of the next step for our species, or the next species. But first, in which *direction* should we look? Clearly not in an improvement of our cerebral cortex or of our various ingenuities, just as the shark could not become an amphibian by improving the number and capacity of its fins.

Amphi-bian means one who “lives on both sides” (or dies on both sides, if one prefers). We are not in the least amphibian. We “live” on one side only, that of death, and all we know of the Earth, the planets, and the stars – not to mention ourselves – is “the side of death.” How do we find what lies on the other side of the wall – without leaving a corpse behind?

“Well, let's see... on the other side of the wall lies ‘pure spirit,’ or else a box in the graveyard. But then again, where is this ‘wall’ of yours? We've never seen it under our microscopes! We've seen tuberculosis, heart failures, truck accidents, as well as vertebrae in a box. But where on earth is this wall? One should be able to see it!”

But we do not see anything, no more than the fish does inside its oceanic fishbowl. We have defined all the conditions of “life” without realizing they were the conditions of death. We have said: beyond so many degrees Fahrenheit, it's death; beyond so much atmospheric pressure, it's death; beyond so much oxygen, it's death; beyond... To enumerate all the beyonds of life would be endless, for they are all the beyonds of death; they are the walls of our prison, within which we claim to live the good life (not so good of late).

But it's a Falsehood.

That simple, primordial fact of evolution might also give us the key to the next step of evolution or, as Sri Aurobindo called it, the "New Evolution," which is a radical departure from Lamarck and Darwin in that it is truly the dawn of the first Life upon earth – the necro-biosis decapitated of its false name.

The great Crack in the wall of evolution.

A species' weakness is its best means of passage to something else.

The next species is not an "improvement" of the previous one. It isn't something added, like fins, legs, or wings, or some new convolutions of the cerebrum; it is something *falling away*, and that "something" falling away is essentially what causes the death of all species. That primordial cocoon covering and ruining everything.

There is no "superman." There is *another* man, or perhaps a first man, because up until now there have been mostly mortal animals, equipped with a more or less skillful intelligence for escaping their sorry condition, either from the top or the bottom.

Neither the spiritual top nor the material bottom can help us, but the depths of our body can – such profound depths that they may go back to an age prior to the trilobites and the lithosphere. We can expect nothing from extra-terrestrials, but we can definitely expect something from a tremendously powerful secret within some still-unknown intra-terrestrial.

Hence, we already have a direction – to indulge in a bit of aquatic, and soon-to-be amphibian, philosophy – that nothing in this universe can be if it is not for joy. A creation or "way of being" based on death, hell, and suffering makes no sense whatsoever, unless we say, like those poor Roman gladiators in the circus, *Ave Caesar, morituri te salutant*, "Hail Caesar! We who are about to die salute you!"

It seems obvious, too, that this animal body, produced by evolution and built through countless deaths, has no

intelligible sense other than to find the secret of non-death and the laughter of joy in the very body issuing from death.

This is the great evolutionary challenge, and the next step of our species.

The religious and scientific proponents have misled us.

Both science and religion have crippled us – rendered us stupid – robbing us of our own powers and evolutionary secret, one by urging us to heaven, the other to a utilitarian machinery. We are not knowledgeable; we are crippled. Ultimately, are we even "human"? We are equipped with telephones, telegraphs, planes, and so on – a scientific, controlled, and indisputable way; every justification not to search for the key. And to top it all off, a medical science that offers every opportunity to die from its cures.

But where is Life in all this?

2. The Revolt of the Earth

Has no one, then, ever found the key?

There was Socrates: "Know thyself."

They murdered Socrates.

There was Prometheus, who wanted to bring the Divine Fire to men.

A myth?

Symbolically, one could say that in 399 B.C., on the day of the hemlock, the West took a fatal turn. That day we were irremediably moving away from the key. From that oasis of grace and beauty whose motto was *To Kalon to epieikes* – "what is beautiful is true" – we were to be progressively overrun by the Roman barbarism whose cry still resounds today throughout our five continents: *panem et circenses*, "bread and circus"; then, slowly but more insidiously, by an octopus-like Church, which pretended to compensate for the Roman brutality, but nevertheless produced more than a few gruesome executions at the stake while confining us in a ready-made and God-sanctioned knowledge from which the sole possible exit was the materialist revolt, followed by the plunge into a rather abysmal human filth.

The very filth from which, today, we are unable to extricate ourselves, despite our deafening triumphs.

We may have more "bread," but certainly a lot of "circus," televised and otherwise, which seems to breed violence and murder as if they exuded from everywhere – from our very flesh, from this unknown animal body whose every law and atom we think we have catalogued and locked forever in the books of our new scientific Church as in a tomb. But this new Church is a prison and its miracles are cruel. It is a Bastille more stifling than that of the Capetians or the Inquisition. Our murders and violence, our drugs and viruses are the cry of the Earth, an ultimate revolt against ourselves, for want of having found our own sense of being, just as the materialist revolt was against an ecclesiastical prison, only more radical and deeper in our cells.

Will the religious and scientific Middle Ages be followed only by the Age of the Brute? Let us not delude ourselves; we are not at the end of a "civilization," the way we were at the end of the Roman Empire. We are at the end of the Human Empire.

But has the human ever been? Or is it yet to be? Man lacks the key to his evolutionary, *physical* secret that would deliver him forever from both his devils and his gods – as well as from his mortal prison. Evolution cannot stop until it has found all of its secret. That secret lies in the very seed, in our cells, which may be made of something other than merely the grimacing deoxyribonucleic acid on which our scientific sorcerers so pride themselves. And perhaps the very convulsions of our age are there to *prod* us toward the Secret.

Sometimes, there occur strange conjunctions in history, as in planets, through which one can seize upon great vistas of the human march, and its impasses.

Near the time Socrates was born, Buddha entered into Nirvana, and Aeschylus was writing his *Prometheus*. Three great human seeds of whom the last one remains mysterious and unknown.

One could say that, with Buddha's Nirvana, Asia took a turn – not exactly "fatal," like that of the West, because it was sweet and kind and compassionate, and because, even then, it urged the "senseless," as Buddha called them, to find their own sense and reality. But that "reality" would thrust Asia into a dead-end course, at least as far as the earth was concerned, since one was urged toward a Nothingness from which one should never have emerged in the first place, short of an aberration whose responsibility was uncertain among God, the Devil, and ourselves.

But our materialist science would soon level all that, in both East and West, with the same murky, utilitarian tide that now covers every continent.

Of course, one can still enjoy indoor meditations and individual "liberations," which are even quite refreshing in the midst of our chaotic world. But meanwhile the Earth remains in chains, like Prometheus upon his Caucasus, and in due time the murky osmosis will not lease a single consciousness intact. Indeed, we must also face the fact that the oasis of beauty never survives the surrounding barbarism, in Tibet no more than in Athens.

And the tide is gaining ground, as we know. We are today already more than five billion.

It is rather frightening.

There remains Prometheus.

But that seed is still in a state of myth or poetry. It is but a suggestive clue on a trail extremely muddled and completely intellectualized, while we *need* a concrete path, a tangible secret, an evolutionary *lever* enabling us to take a decisive step, outside a new ice age or an Apocalypse that would only cause everything to begin again and again until we reach the secret in our cells. There is nothing more implacable than a cell; it is obstinacy incarnate, and billions of years make no difference to it.

So why not now, since we have already knocked on every conceivable wrong door?

The Fire...

Prometheus wanted to bring the Divine Fire to men. But where to search for it since all of India's secrets urge us toward Transcendence?

No, not all.

Long before the Greeks, very long before Buddha and the Upanishads, and perhaps even before the first Egyptian dynasty, some three to five thousand years before our young Christ, the Himalayan range was the dwelling place of strange songsters, called *rishis*, who have left their hymns and their secrets as intact as those of Thebes' hypogea and frescoes, for they were repeated orally from father to son and from master to disciple with the greatest accuracy in each intonation, as is essential for all sacred formulas. Of those hymns, called *Veda*, one *Rig-Veda*, devoted to the Divine Fire, has remained and Sri Aurobindo has deciphered it, as Champollion deciphered with the help of a "Rosetta stone," or by using some higher knowledge, but deciphered and *rediscovered* by the very experience of Sri Aurobindo's body and cells – "Oh, so that's it! That's what it means!" The cells re-cognize. We may think what we like, but the body has its own way of recognizing its mother.

> *O Fire, thou art the son of heaven*
> *by the body of the earth...*
> *O Fire, thou art the child of the waters,*
> *the child of the forests,*
> *even in the stone thou art there for man*[1].

There lies a secret.

And this:

> *Our fathers by their words broke the strong*
> *and stubborn places;*
> *they shattered the mountain rock with their*
> *cry; they made in us a path...*
> *and discovered the Day and the sun-world.* [2]

That "rock," those "strong and stubborn places" may well

be our “wall of death” and the invisible Bastille against which the Earth is in revolt

The next step of our species.

3. The Sphinx

Sometimes one should be simple and renounce the literary plural to speak in the first person like the man in the street. “What time is it and where are you going? And what impels you, o man?”

Thus spoke Socrates: “Stop awhile, my friend, so we can talk. Not about some truth I am supposed to possess, nor about the unseen essence of the world, but about what you were about to do when I met you. You must have deemed it just, beautiful, or good, since you were about to do it; tell me what you understand by justice, beauty, and goodness.”

Justice-beauty-goodness... Good Lord, where on earth have those creatures vanished?

I walk on. I have walked a lot. I have gone across several continents at a gallop. What was it that upheld that course of mine? What current drove my keel? And why did I choose a particular direction, and then another – so many directions – as if I were half-mad yet perfectly clearheaded at the same time? Never has a single “thought” or abstraction impelled me. I am Breton and a sailor, and I like the open seas, the sea bulls, though I was born in Paris, on rue Giordana Bruno (a heretic stubborn enough to be burned at the stake). Things were off to a good start. But on the roads of Afghanistan I kept recalling Malraux: “Let others mistake a surrender to chance for that relentless premeditation of the unknown.” The unknown is something close to the Breton heart (one of my relatives was a ship's boy on one of the first Cape Horners), and I yearned for the unknown, the adventure, all the more so since the “known” turned my stomach.

But why was it so? What started me on that course? The sailors say they “cast off from the buoy.”The end of a quest holds what was there from the beginning, and that may be

everyone's question. The silent question of the child looking out at the rolling wave and the flurry etching the ocean. "What is this all about? *Who* is there?" 3

And then my question swept upon me like an earthquake. It was May 5, 1945. I was barely twenty-one as I emerged from a hanger infested with lice, sick with typhus, contracted in the last days in a concentration camp. I don't know why I was saved.

It was enough to be heretical about *everything*.

I was a gaping void.

Eighteen months in *human* Horror.

No, not the "Nazis," not the "Germans," not the "others." The devastation of Man. Suddenly, I was thrown into a savage world, like that of the red monkeys howling in the night of Guiana. Perhaps they howl in search of their own sense? I would readily have howled for mine.

There are, however, extraordinary instances of Grace. Perhaps certain cries cause that grace to come down?

Exactly seven months after emerging from that no man's land and finding the sea again – which did not particularly inspire me, except that it loved me and I loved it; there was something to love – I found myself aboard an old military transport plane (since there was still no regular transportation during this postwar chaos) en route for Cairo. My final destination was India, where a Breton cousin of mine had just been appointed governor.

And there I was at Giza, before the Sphinx.

I was petrified.

I was alone, the hordes of tourists having yet to descend on the world like Genghis Khan.

I was twenty-two. I felt like the walking dead. Like an amnesiac child bearing his hole of pain, I was just two eyes staring at the sands and the Sphinx as at the infinity of the sea. There was nothing left, just that hole, that pain; it was the only "thing" left. And "That," staring at me as if from the depths of eternity – as if the sea had two eyes.

I felt so small. What was I?

I was not even a “man”; my humanity had been brutally torn from me. Can one ponder about something that is NOTHING? Something that is just a hole, a cry, and nothing else? A fire, yes. A fiercely burning hole. To be is to be a burning fire. It dates back to before man, to before these ages. The first cry upon the mountains of the earth was a fire. It was my being of fire before that Sphinx.

And then, something like a revolt, or a betrayed love, but it was “man” who had betrayed me.

Was there an answer? An answer to what?

I was not seeking a system of thought or a philosophy! I was seeking... a heartbeat.

I went toward Upper Egypt – alone, completely alone! I had all of Upper Egypt for myself! Abydos, Thebes, Luxor, the Valley of the Kings, and Nag-Hamadi, where I stayed by the Nile for six weeks.

I was stunned. During those six weeks, I lived in a state of deep, incomprehensible emotion, drinking in that overflowing world. It was empty – a few ruins strewn among the sands – and yet it was so filled, like those columns of Luxor, massive, sun-drenched, ever standing and present as if they were still carrying the god Re on their shoulders. It was alive! It was *there*.

Suddenly, the West seemed like a hollow, well-dressed shell; even the Greek columns seemed effeminate compared to these giants. All of the Western world with its churches and cathedrals, its academies and Sorbonnes, seemed like some intellectual artifice – neat and tidy, good-looking, but so fragile that it seemed to rest on nothing. One strolled through it as one strolls on a mall, in the middle of what?

While here, one was engulfed, dwarfed, overwhelmed by a world that was not just a question with answers, but was the question itself – felt, imbibed, alive, spread out beneath the sun and soon shattered among the sands, only to begin again and again, as if by being repeated thousands upon thousands of times the question itself acquired a power of its own and a presence of fire that was the Answer.

To be “intelligent” was to be able to drink “that.” Everything else was just deft little anecdotes to occupy the cerebral cortex. I was suddenly face to face with a “nothing” that was a formidable something – without words. And that something always kindled a fire in my heart, as if that fire was the all-there-is.

Then Thebes, the hypogea. Everything *spoke* to me as no book in the West had ever spoken to me. How odd that there was nothing to comprehend, yet it was filled with comprehension! Had I lived in the clouds prior to this? Most definitely not! There had been the Gestapo, which had plunged me into an abyss of total incomprehension. That Horror was with me, in the background, everywhere I went, as if all the West led *to this*. The West's entire culture, its intelligence, its machines were like wind swallowed up in a black hole. All one had to do was blow on it and it would crumble.

But the columns of Luxor would remain standing. And I kept gazing at those frescoes in the semidarkness, at those hieroglyphs replete with a meaning without meaning, and at the great Serpent of Thebes with its little men lined up one after another, each bearing a coil of the great Serpent over his head, journeying on and on through centuries and lives and buried dynasties – all drawn by a unique Destiny toward what?

For that entire month and a half I remained in a state of stupor. I was being born a second time – to what I didn't know, since I was no longer the same person who had once seen the light of day on rue Giordano Bruno. Though I was without a doubt the person who had died in a certain Gestapo cave.

I packed my bag and took the night train for Cairo. Was it fortuitous that it was on a February 21, 1946, the birthday of someone I had yet to meet and who would irreversibly change my life – “Mother,” far away in India?

In the train, I was brooding without words, while the sugarcane fields flowed by and the moon glistened over the

Nile. I was like a dark, burning gaze striving to pierce the Enigma; one either solved it or blew up. That much was clear. One couldn't live with that horror in the pit of one's stomach. It was my whole humanity that was dead. And now those desert revenants were trying to inhabit my intimate hypogeum.

Still, one evening, near Abydos, I had seen the marvelous statues of my revenants with their faces smashed – savagely smashed – by some fanatical Moslems (God help me!) of times past. But are times ever past? One merely goes on beneath the great Serpent of Thebes, soon to be devoured by formidable jaws. What was it that so revolted me in this human condition? I stared and stared, sharpening my dark gaze. Still, there had been Spartacus and his band of rebellious slaves, who believed they had successfully revolted against the Romans, but then came Glaber, and the vile Crassus, who had *six thousand* of Spartacus' slaves crucified on the road between Capua and Rome.

Crassus was before Jesus Christ.

Hitler was after Jesus Christ. Where is the difference? *Who* will be the next Hitler? Where?

Forty years later we know that Hitler has disseminated everywhere, and that he has won the war.

No, it was not the crumbling of the West I was contemplating in my Cairo-bound train, but something far more profound and recondite in which a Secret of life, or death, had to be captured if one did not want to fall, like Spartacus, in a thousandth futile revolt.

Again, I went back to see the Sphinx. I was on my way to Port Said to catch a British ship bound for Bombay. To tell the truth. I did not give a damn about much of anything; I was like a suicide in reprieve.

And there was that amazing Sphinx, as if some Titan had gathered up the Question of the Earth and shoved it into the pit of your stomach without a word. And the sands, all around.

O man, what time is it?

And where are you going?

When Socrates was born, the Sphinx was already two thousand years old.

4. The Revolutionary

What is it that impels you, o man, or impels us in unseen depths, seemingly making us wander here and there, suddenly to reveal the miracle yawning by the roadside? As if that miracle had been “premeditated,” to recall Malraux's word. And what course had we traveled before, in the past, to come across this trail where everything seems to be known, to be in accord, to meet again? This is it at last; we're on our way after countless vain footsteps and false starts.

I will never stop wondering at the lightning-like trajectory that, as I was barely out of my “human” collapse, brought me, first, to the Sphinx's feet, before that sand-clasped Enigma, then to that infinite miracle: Sri Aurobindo. Ten months after the agony of being a typhous patient who did not know whether he wanted to live and for what, I was before Destiny itself – before life or death.

It was the 24th of April 1946. I was twenty-two and a half years old.

I knew nothing about Sri Aurobindo when I arrived at the “Pondicherry Government.” I knew only that he was a “revolutionary,” that he had been jailed by the British, and that he had almost been sent to the gallows.

That made me like him immediately!

People said he was also a “sage.”

But I was a complete layman in regard to the “Wisdom of the East.” I had greater understanding of Vasco da Gama, Christopher Columbus, and the Breton pirates boarding the Spanish galleons. And, to be perfectly frank, I preferred Spartacus to the Buddha.

But on that particular 24th of April, everything was overturned toward a new, unknown sea.

It was half past two in the afternoon. And the heat was

suffocating. Pavitra, a French graduate from *Ecole Polytechnique* (God!), was waiting for me on the first floor of the "Ashram." He was such a fraternal and straightforward man, with a smiling gleam in his eyes. I followed him up a narrow staircase thronged with disciples, then onto a landing, and then into this... absolutely silent – one could almost say solidly silent – room draped in white linen. Two people were sitting inside.

Somewhat mechanically. I stepped forward and folded my hands in the Indian fashion, as I had been told to do. There He was – a mass of immobile power. His face was suffused in blue light (I thought it was neon lights). He looked at me. That look felt so vast, oh, vaster than all the sands of Egypt, softer than all the seas! And everything seemed to be engulfed in... something unknown. It lasted three seconds.

Then Mother, seated on his right, tilted her neck and chin toward me and gave me a broad, radiant smile as if to say, "Aah!" I was completely dumbfounded. Three seconds.

I returned to my room at the "Governor's Palace," sat on my huge bed, which probably dated back to the *Compagnie des Indes*, and stayed there, stunned, much as I had been stunned by the Valley of the Kings and Thebes. Something kept on vibrating, vibrating in the depths, far, far away, beyond all known horizons, and I no longer knew anything. I only knew I had encountered "something for always." Three seconds for always. A unique being unlike anyone I would ever meet. A *being*.

Then I felt as if a thumb were being driven into my skull through the top of my head. It was very strange – a *physical* sensation. It felt very still, powerful, yet without sense. Nothing made any sense!

And yet, I never felt as *alive* as I did on that day.

We are so very poor at expressing what is in our hearts.

We are always obliged to use some convoluted process that goes in roundabout ways. When will we speak in music?

I was so shaken, so inexplicably shaken, that, despite my

bad English, I threw myself on everything I could find by Sri Aurobindo: pamphlets, letters, articles, and a few transcribed conversations. Then, almost at once, I stumbled upon the following sentence, five words:

“MAN IS A TRANSITIONAL BEING.”

It created a kind of revolution in my head, my heart, my life. Indeed, I could have ignored altogether that the earth was round and revolved around the sun, not to mention Newton's apple and the entire scientific, “enlightened” lot, and *nothing* would have been essentially different in my life; I would only have sailed more beautiful sailboats, on seas that were not more safe. But that man was a “transitional” being was astounding news.

One can sail with portolanos and an astrolabe, or even by the stars, but can one sail with death in one's heart? Man's heart is filled with death. And he sows it everywhere.

Of course, I had read Lamarck (or at least what is said about him in philosophy class), and it had fascinated me, but I would never have imagined that this triumphant species of ours was nothing more than a link, a kind of “higher” baboon, and that we were on our way to something else.

My heart was crying to find that “something else” – not in heaven, not in a Bible of one kind or another, but in my body! This wounded, cheated body, burdened with false knowledge, with religious and scientific injunctions and all the rest of it – all that to end in a *human* Horror.

Suddenly, everything was as clear as daylight! My astrolabe pointed straight to that star.

Suddenly, all these human carnivores – pardon me – seemed, well, just a phase, a painful fecund interlude. Fantastically fecund, since it finally led somewhere! That

being I had *seen*, Sri Aurobindo – so dense, so poignant, as if bursting with power, like the columns of Luxor, with a boundless gaze – *that* being could not speak philosophical twaddle; he knew. He knew the way. There *was* a way.

It was a fantastic piece of news, as if the first news of my entire life.

I read on, and it was in the first pages of the *Evening Talks*, recorded by an old, warm and dynamic man, another revolutionary, A. B. Purani, whom I had met on the street. It was still an age when an Indian Socrates would hail you on the street: "O man, where are you going?"

Indeed, where are we going?

There first pages contained another piece of news, or rather a declaration, not of the "human rights" but of the human task; for we are workers, as it were, essentially charged with a task. What task? We are discoverers, but out to discover what? We keep staging revolutions and dying, collectively or individually, sometimes savagely, until we discover the task to be performed and the sense of our species.

Sri Aurobindo said to that old revolutionary Purani, who must have been quite young, then, perhaps about my age:

> *It is not a revolt against the British government, which anyone can easily do.*
> *It is, in fact, a revolt against the whole universal Nature*.

Just imagine! This really was becoming quite an interesting challenge. How would Spartacus have reacted? Or Lenin? We can accumulate revolutions endlessly, but they won't revolutionize anything, only stir the same elements in the pot from which nothing, finally, will come out except what we had put in. And what does seem to come out, in actuality, are voracious little men and ever more monstrous inventions intended to satiate that insatiable voracity. All our revolutions crumble or end in corruption because we have not waged *that* Revolution.

Finally, as if to drive the point home:

> *If a total transformation of the being is our aim, a transformation of the body must be an indispensable part of it.* [4]
> I was truly face to face with the Revolutionary. And a revolutionary with a real course of action.
> My work was laid out before me.
> I had much to discover.
> My astrolabe pointed straight toward the unknown!

5. She

Yet, I still was not ready.

The blast of the siren has rent the night, but one keeps wandering through the port.

I have wandered so much, but it was part of a growing Fire. Perhaps one has to reach the point when the moorings break – moorings of every kind. I did not have many left, except those one does not see, in one's very own flesh. I suppose that Breton, too, had to be uprooted; the “best” in us is our greatest obstacle. These were my last moorings in this senseless world: the ocean, the sea gulls, the small sunny cove where the surf purls on through infinity and breaks over a rock adorned with tiny orange lichens. That rock...

Then, abruptly, came the day in December 1950 when my brother brought me the *Combat* newspaper to my room in Paris: Sri Aurobindo has gone.

He has gone.

Oh, that sense of collapse! That cry in my heart!

He has gone.

That *being*.

It was the whole earth crying out in my heart. It was the whole earth that was suddenly impoverished, in tatters, bereft of its Sense.

Sri Aurobindo...

So I packed my bags and left for French Guiana – the

jungle, anywhere, as long as I would be able to cry out my distress and my lack of human sense to my heart's content. If I could no longer leap into the future, let me at least immerse myself in a verdant prehistory, alive only with monkeys and the shrieks of macaws.

But one is always face to face with oneself, the burning enigma that dies and is reborn. A man is really a question put by the entire earth. It is his post-simian Destiny, his all-consuming Fire that will not let up until he reaches the "keyless gate" – the very end, the ultimate wall where he either finds the answer or dies. The individual is the whole species; it is one and the same substance. Had I gone down so deeply into this human Horror simply to say, "Hang it all, I quit"? I had to perforate the Hole, go to the bottom of it, to the other side of the bottom – yes, wield the Thracian sword, but not to slay any particular oppressor, for the oppressors are everywhere! Perhaps *everything* would need to be slain! Yet, there was no hatred in my heart, just the comprehension of and compassion for all things that only suffering and destitution can bring: yes, to find the way out of this human concentration camp. The *roots* of the misery. The end of this radical oppression that drives us against one another and drives us to prey on every species and on the earth as if it were no more than a wanton woman to be raped, possessed, and exploited in every possible way for our own fleeting gains.

For two whole years I thundered, wandered, wore down my pain, with some moments of great joy, too, in the wild.

Then I packed my bag of revolt.

There was still Mother, over there, whom I did not understand at all.

I overcame my natural aversion for "communities," "ashrams," and similar cloistered places that are custodians of "the Truth," and I returned to India.

I was thirty.

She was there.

That mystery.

I never cared for ashrams and all their business.

But She. That danger – for me.

I approached Her as one approaches the reefs of *Taillefer*, all fringed and bubbling with foam, and so beautiful – an irresistible peril. I was going to sink there, split my keel!

I wanted it, and feared it.

But I have always loved the sea.

And I loved Mother, as a drowning man loves air.

Yes, I struggled. I said no and then yes. But how I wanted to know! And she made all my old comprehensions melt into a... flabbergasting unknown. I would put up a fight, but then my heart would melt into Her, bleeding, wounded. And She took my revolt into her arms and transformed it into a sword to pierce the Horror.

"We are going to do something together."

To do, yes! I was so fed up with meditations and speculations! But to do, to knead, yes, to cut through, machete in hand, as in the forest. First, one must cut through oneself; it is hard and painful to find the Enemy in one's own flesh. Nor would I cease finding the Enemy, increasingly denser, increasingly cruel and inexorable. For to escape above is well and fine, even lovely, but to go *down* into this... Past a few inches, it isn't just one's own atavistic make-up that one encounters, but the whole earth's! There are not thousands of men; there is only one. There are not thousands of enemies; there is only one. And there is only one Victory: over death. For every other little devil stems from *there*.

She took my hand. She made me her confidant, for nearly twenty years.

Of course, victory over death does not mean to become "immortal" in this skin of a higher ape, God knows! But victory over the something-that-causes-death, which covers the whole earth, or "nourishes" it – that abominable primordial compost. Unless it is a "rock," as the Vedic rishis called it, those mysterious sages of the beginning of

humanity who already seemed to have known the end, the Goal:

> *O Seers...*
> *weave an inviolate work,*
> *BECOME THE HUMAN BEING*
> *create the divine race...*
> *sharpen the shining spears*
> *with which you cut the way*
> *to that which is immortal.* [5]

Become the human being.

This was five to seven thousand years ago! There was a long way to go to become what we have yet to be. The tomorrow of the Earth. Following a few fecund convulsions.

Mother took me by the hand. She made me the witness to her incredible advance toward the tomorrow of the Earth, toward the Man yet to be.

I saw her toil, heard her moan, listened to her cries, sometimes her despair, her experiences a bit... dizzying, and saw her smile, always, as long as She could. She tried to the very end. Her breath was increasingly short as she gasped for air in the middle of that ashramite jungle which only understood its own little humanity. She cut through it, through those men and women who were not distinct but one and the same "quagmire," as She called it, with a few gilded trimmings and some spiritual flights, because, despite everything, we are completely ambiguous. She hewed a path through those "refractory fortresses." She laid siege to the new species *through the very resistance of the old*, as the fish on the sand lays siege to the sun through its own asphyxiation and convulsions, which are the asphyxiation and convulsions of the old species as a whole. It is in the body one has to hew! It is against one's own self one has to become! It is against the whole world one has to dare unearth that which is not yet of this world.

A new being is a peril for all. It disturbs everything, challenges everything, goes against every existing law. But

of course, the New Law must be wrested from the very negation of our own body – and all bodies, as there is only one body!

She hewed and hewed. She hewed as much as She could, from inside her golden dungeon, surrounded by cruel guardians and a variety of serpents. Finally, She had no more words; She had only that large gaze which goes through time and walls, that inexpressible smile of compassion for the open wound that we all were. She would take my hands, close her eyes, secretly drawing me toward what I had yet to understand, what I had yet to be. And, as I know now, She planted into my heart and my body a few particles of that new Seed – that hope for the earth.

"I want to walk some more," She said the day before that 17th of November 1973.

She, the intrepid.

She who has given me everything, who has done everything for me – for all of us. And unknown to all.

She, more ancient than Thebes, who has wrested the Sphinx's secret – our secret.

Oh, her hands so fresh and strong holding mine – so strong, as if She were pulling me and trying to pull the entire Earth.

"What time is it?" She asked me a last time. Those were the last words I heard from Her.

The time. What time is it for the Earth?

She has gone....

I was fifty years old.

6. The Challenge

I have difficult things to say.

What language to use?

At dawn, in my prison cell at Fresnes, [6] my heart was filled with a great burning silence as I listened to the boots in the corridor.

After Mother's departure, there was not the sense of collapse I had experienced when Sri Aurobindo had gone.

There was that same burning silence.

I was no longer facing my own little person wondering about itself and its destiny. I was listening to other boots marching in the corridors of the world. I was, simply, facing Man's destiny and the Earth's question. Was there no hope, then? Were we going to begin again with fathers and sons and the Tables of the Law and Euclid and a thousand and one insurrections for nothing, not to mention all those horrors in accelerated motion? And babies by the millions to continue with new fathers and grandfathers? It was as if I were reliving the uselessness of all those lives and the deaths of all those men, as well as their last question. Were we going to begin again in a cradle only to leave once more with the same question? I had the "chance" to die on the way and go on living with that question.

No, not "death," but countless deaths and the very Sense of our species.

I knew that Sense, not in philosophical but in physiological terms. A man about to die is hardly concerned with philosophy; he is in the throes of very physiological convulsions. As is the Earth at present.

I knew that secret, but it had to be lived. It had to be transmitted.

It was an awesome responsibility.

But first, that fabulous document of Mother's own progression – The Agenda – had to be preserved. Those gropings and stammerings of a new species, those cries of triumph and heartbreaks should in no way fall in the clutches of a new Church. A difficult battle ensued, one that need not be told here. Giordano Bruno was stubborn, and so am I. Today, happily, there is no more burning at the stake, but there are still assassins in canyons. And I think there are assassins everywhere, as my brother Rimbaud had seen: *Voici venir le temps des assassins*, "The age of assassins is upon us."

It took me eight years to materialize that fabulous message of six thousand pages and to try – oh, what a task! – to map

out a “service path,” as they say in the jungle, through this green deluge, no longer related to prehistory but to a history yet to be born and still incomprehensible to anyone.

And what did I understand myself?

To understand is fine, but one only understands in one's own flesh, as one understands the sea by diving into it and scratching oneself on the rocks. And then what? More books? Yes, but one does not become a little seal basking in the sun by reading a manual! *To become* was indeed the pressing point. Those “readers” would no doubt read, perhaps even open their eyes to that extraordinary Sense, but when the empire is crumbling – our human empire – when our earth is plundered as no Attila has ever done before, when the human consciousness is becoming increasingly clouded and overrun by a sly barbarism, and the twilight is stealing upon us, isn't there something more to do? Well, precisely, *to do*.

It was a terrible challenge.

I did not dare. Yet it kept haunting me.

Have I had the privilege, the grace, to listen to Mother, to know Sri Aurobindo, to touch that Secret of the Vedic rishis, merely to write books about it? If no one had followed the Vikings or Christopher Columbus, America would have never existed. If no one had asphyxiated in a dried-up swamp and “invented” pulmonary breathing earthlings would never have existed. Someone had to *follow*!

Yet, I was ashamed to try. Why ashamed? It seemed so beyond the measure of a tiny individual! But if no tiny individual follows, however feeble he may be, however mixed like all his human brothers in the general quagmire, then what hope it there? There is no need to be “superior” or superintelligent to take a step toward the next species, nor is it necessary to possess special virtues, because our superiorities, “intelligence,” and virtues are precisely the syndromes of the old species. Indeed, it is not a matter of becoming a “superman” but something else, something else entirely. It is a matter of having courage.

And such great thirst!

So I said to myself, “Why not?” The way someone named Charcot set out for the Arctic Sea. He perished at sea.

But others followed.

My job as a scribe was over; who knows if in Thebes, at Mother's feet, I had not already listened to the tale of another humanity? But time advances stealthily while the Sun god awaits. “They discovered the Day and the sun-world,” said the Veda. It was such a long time ago!

Could it be that the time, the hour, the day has come at last? The darkness is never so great as before dawn. Sri Aurobindo had said it.

I have difficult things to say that have long been hidden behind myths, legends, lost trails – and so much blood.

I was very troubled at the idea of picking up the trail where She left off.

But I took the plunge. It has been seven years – over seven years – day after day and hour after hour, since I have undertaken that labor. The Vedic rishis called it “digging.” It is like riding a storm that uproots everything; everything is laid bare. But once in the middle of the storm, you cannot pause for a rest; you ride it out or you sink.

I have been in this storm for seven years, isolated, cut off from the word; yet, I have never seen so much of the world! Oh, what horrors! The Earth is *possessed* as it has never been in any Middle Ages. Based on the experience of Mother and Sri Aurobindo, I knew I had to be absolutely alone and secluded to undertake such a work. One may be physically secluded, but all the tunnels of the Earth lead to oneself, as well as much maleficence, as if one were up against *everything*.

I have made so many discoveries since that day in 1982, discoveries that Sri Aurobindo had made, that Mother had made, that perhaps John of Patmos had made on his island of exile, as well as the rishis. And I realize that I had not understood anything, or so little, though I had been a witness and even written books – a trilogy – to try to

explain Mother's journey. One understands nothing until “it” descends into your own body like an earthquake. Then one says, “Ah!” and one is thunderstruck as before the Secret of the Earth and the centuries.

But a final interrogation mark, a last step remains, and nothing will truly be known until we reach the end.

I had said I no longer wanted to write, because words seemed so utterly frivolous, but sometimes it is necessary to cast a bottle to the open sea. Yet, during these seven years – and who knows how many more? – I have kept a journal of that perilous Odyssey, as I felt the necessity to leave some traces. I call it my “Notebooks”; *Notebooks of an Apocalypse*. The Greeks knew, as did John of Patmos, that this famed “Apocalypse,” which has elicited so many monsters (although there might be, after all, a few tremors and some “beasts”... already visible), simply meant “to lay bare,” *apo-kalupsis*. It is the time of laying bare the horrible thing that we see crawling everywhere.

I do not know whether these “Notebooks” will ever see the light of day. Perhaps they will be overtaken, outdated by the “Day” of the Vedas, made obsolete by the facts. But I have felt inwardly compelled, virtually forced, to write these pages, as day after day I can see that this task of the new species is exhausting, and...one never knows.

I wanted to leave a few hints, or at least a few “pointers” – I will give only two – about what I have observed, “laid bare” in my own body, day after day.

And in God's hands!

7. Life and Death

In what direction to search?

Until now, the “direction” was all decided for us as well as for all the species before us: Nature would plunge us into the appropriate conditions and there was nothing to search for. The body would do the “searching,” struggling as it could in the middle of an earthquake, a flood, a drought, a breakdown in our feeding or breathing habits, or some

asteroid slamming into the earth and burying us under an ice age. But in every case it is the body that searched.

Today, it is also the body that searches, but in a different way. For it is completely buried, not under an ice age, but under a technical and scientific and medical age that chokes it to death and deprives it of its own resources – of its own self-knowledge, one could say. Though it could well be that this age of witchcraft or, rather, fakery – for this is a time of fakers and deceivers – is part of Nature's design of suffocating us in such a ghastly way as to compel us, or to compel a few more especially asphyxiated individuals(!), to find the evolutionary key. The real key. The one that began this whole affair. Finding the next step of a species has never required a lot of "bodies." All that is required is a crack in the old customary armor; a few slip through, and it's another world.

A crack, yes; a *fault*, precisely. As long as things roll on and work or fly or swim in the same usual, comfortable environment, one is merely "improving" the environment and its living conditions, but one is already a stationary or declining species, or is set on a self-destruction course, as our anti-human virus portends.

And, God knows, this so-called human age of ours is full of faults, which our sciences and religions try to patch as best they can. But our ship is sinking, and the more we try to improve our conditions, the heavier we become; the more we attempt to rectify our mistakes, the more we reinforce the prison; the more "wonderful" it is, the more suffocating.

It makes no sense whatsoever to improve such an "environment."

So where to search? How to search in something that does no yet exist?

If the fish had had the "idea" of searching, it might have poked its head outside its water, soon to realize or understand in its gills that this was death. For every species, evolving to "something else" is like a stepping into death; that something else *does not exist*, and yet it *has* to exist!

Thus, death may be one of the conditions to explore. That is where we have to poke our heads and, if possible, our whole bodies.

But what, exactly, do we know about death? Nothing, precisely, except what we are told by the scientists, sorcerers, and priests of the old environment, who are merely the ministers of the old Prison or, rather, its keepers, and who will assert with the greatest authority that beyond these scientific and medical bars lies "death" – which is simply the death of *their* science. Those are simply the conditions of *their* life inside the prison. The pope of fish wouldn't have said it any differently.

We are totally mistaken when we regard death as a corpse that has been unfortunate enough to deviate from the medical chart or to be crushed beneath the wheels of a truck.

And then, on the other side of the bars, we will supposedly find heaven, or hell, depending on our proportion of sins and virtues in the old environment. Or else "nothing" – still, by their death those "nothings" appear to have produced quite a number of species in the course of time!

But what if there is something else on the other side of the bars? What if there is another Sun, like that of the little amphibians lolling on the sand?

But then, how to pass to the other life and remain alive? Yet, in every evolutionary transition, a representative on the verge of death, as it were, *has managed to remain alive*. A first mutant has begun to wriggle, crawl, or trot.

Every transition has to pass through death, or a form of death.

Every death emerges into a new form of life.

The Vedic rishis spoke of the "great passage," *mahas patah*.

This may well be the first direction to search in. But not "search" with artificial means – microscopes, test-tubes, theories – rather, search in one's own body.

Search for death? In one's own body?

But *where* is it, outside our medical catalogs? In what *location* of the body does it hide? If we want to fight an enemy, we have to catch hold of it somewhere, by its tail, wing, or coat of mail.

In fact, there is no need to "search for death"; it's right here. It is the most present, and the most invisible, of all things.

The greatest discoveries are utterly simple, and completely incomprehensible because they contradict something that is so fundamentally obvious, or "natural," that it means *nothing* to our consciousness.

If a peasant of the Middle Ages had been told that "the Earth is round," he would have scratched his head and said, "Well, maybe, but my field is still flat; and, at any rate, whether round or square, I can walk on it, and that's all that matters to me."

I spend some twenty years beside Mother and, like the peasants of the Middle Ages, there was something fundamental I had failed to grasp. One day, as I was making some comments to Mother, She exclaimed, "But it is my *constant* experience that life and death are the same thing!"

I had understood her to mean that the state called "life" and the state called "death" (on the other side of a tomb or of a round earth) were the same thing, i.e., there is life after death, and that life is as living as ours – which is really quite clear, and one would have to be quite primitive not to know it, but that's another story. This is not, however, what Mother meant! She meant that our life *is* death itself, i.e., there is no "other side"; we're already in death! Or, to put it differently, we are on the wrong side *and life has yet to be*.

For the person I was fifteen or twenty years ago, this was incomprehensible. My field was still flat. And for the highly intellectualized people we are, it seems merely like a play on words, a mental game: you can call white black, or you call the black of life white, but what does it change?

It changes absolutely everything!

One *cannot* understand that fundamental discovery (and to

understand it means nothing if it does not lead to a *practical* means of action) unless one has parted with the intellect and found oneself in the state of a *body* pure and simple, or in the state of the essential animal that we are beneath our manifold garbs – a physical state we never experience, yet which holds our secret. If any animal, say, a fish, could feel its condition as mortal, the way Mother felt her condition as mortal, that would mean *it already knew of another state*, which it would properly feel as life. And compared to that new, other state, it could then say, "I am or was living in death. My aquatic life is a state of death compared to that other Sun."

But what Mother further meant – I understood it only later, when I myself engaged in the work and began to experience raw matter, as it were, the body stripped of its artifices and atavisms; for, very clearly, even a baby is born *fully dressed up* – what Mother meant was far more fundamental and radical than that! It is not just the life of a given species that is death compared to the next life of another species, as the death of the fish is the life of the little lizard scurrying in the sun. Not at all!

It is *all of life*, all that we call "life," beginning with the first blue algae of Greenland or the first annelids – what we call the first life on Earth – that *is* in a state of death. Life has never been born! It has yet to be. Ever since the dawn of earthly existence, death has seized us, and it keeps devouring us insatiably from one species to the next. It is death that lives.

"Well, all right, but my field is still flat," will say the intellectual peasant that we are.

Let us leave the scientific peasants to their ignorance; but for those who search, who asphyxiate, and who walk on a round earth, this is a fantastic key.

Within a body of our animal species, there is something *physical* – Mother was perfectly physical, with ninety-five years of human experience – that is at the dawn of the first Life on Earth, something Mother knew and that I have

discovered after her. Something completely unknown to us, unknown to every species, which is going to revolutionize and change the face of the earth. As Sri Aurobindo said: “A revolt against the whole universal Nature.”

We are in a certain invisible earthly concentration camp, and within that concentration camp (very much alive for us), we witness a phenomenon we call “death,” which we blame on typhus, the heart, the liver, cancer, old age, exhaustion, the viciousness of a mean neighbor, a car accident, or what have you. But that isn't so! It isn't illness, age, or any physiological data that *causes* death. It is the WALLS of the concentration camp that causes the death of everything within those walls.

That changes everything! It changes our entire course of action. For we need not invent thirty-six thousand types of penicillin, thirty-six thousand supersonic wings, or countless gimmicks to mitigate our drastic infirmity; we need to find a cure for the WALLS. Then *everything* will be cured. We need to get out of the Camp, and there will be Life – in freedom.

Salvation is *physical*, said Mother.

We are in a universal black dungeon, invisible to us, and we go about in that dungeon as a matter of course, thinking it is our daylight and our life, making all kinds of “wonderful” discoveries, even peering at the whole universe through the dungeon walls, using the ingredients of the dungeon to accomplish atomic, electronic, and medical “miracles,” even flying through the air of the dungeon and tinkering with genetics in an attempt to improve our nocturnal species – whereupon the dungeon disintegrates.

And something else emerges. Something else entirely.

We had never been born, never been “men” – we were merely hemeralopes, like the axolotis in the underground lakes of Mexico. We had never seen the daylight, never seen life. We were living dead.

Then our walls crumble.

And it's another Earth.

It is “another heaven,” as John of Patmos had seen.

It is the Day, as the Vedic rishis saw some five or seven thousand years ago.

> *They shattered the mountain rock with*
> *their cry;*
> *They made in us a path...*
> *They discovered the Day and the sun-*
> *world...*
> *the pregnant hill [our own matter, our dun-*
> *geon]... parted asunder,*
> *heaven was perfected.* [7]

8. The “I Know” of the Body

There is a second momentous key.

Actually, it is the first one to emerge.

For so many years I had listened and thought I understood, but when it breaks out in the body, the “field” is no longer flat at all. It even lies gaping before an incredible, and perilous, unknown. Of course, it is perilous to become the unknown! It is not; yet, somehow, it becomes. It becomes with each step. Each step is unknown; yet, somehow, one puts a foot down on something. It's truly like being born anew from one minute to the next, except one does not come out of the womb of one's mother and into a ready-made world. A baby cries; one cries, too. Often. One comes out of the womb of a formidable Mother, perhaps She who breathed all these stars into existence.

And kindled all these little fires.

Oh, we think we are so profound and learned. What a joke! We are profoundly and learnedly asleep on a strange fire that smolders *there*, and which is about to upset all our profundity and learnedness. What children we are!

Right there in the body.

That mystery.

What is needed is for us to descend into it with all our hearts, with all our cries – not with electronic eyeglasses or any of those artificial utensils that reveal only a grimace, a caricature of the reality. They make fakes that look so genuine! To the ancients, say, the rishis, only that which a man can know and achieve *by himself* is properly human. If they had known of our electronic, telephonic, astronautical, and mechanical artifices, they would have regarded them as profoundly dishonest, like servants eavesdropping on or parroting their master. They would have said, "This is a dishonest civilization." The master is consciousness. The power is consciousness. *Everything* can be done through consciousness. But no sooner had we deprived ourselves of that master than we embarked on all the wrong powers and all the wrong knowledge – a caricature of knowledge – thus subjecting ourselves to the yoke of a cruel despot that would eventually drive us faster and faster into a disastrous non-humanity.

Thus, the true-false or the false-true has now overrun all of human consciousness, to the point that we are swimming in a sea of falsehood and in such an hallucinating and mesmerizing false reality of matter that all genuine approaches are clouded.

Truly, an animal howling at the dawn of life on earth is already a kind of longing and searching for something. We would do better to start that way.

That burning gaze on the walls of my prison cell at Fresnes was already a step – at the dawn of no life, since this one was on the brink of death. A gaze on NOTHING. And that "nothing" becomes so intense and burning that it is already something. There is no preconception about matter or the universe in such moments. There is something that goes right through. There is, precisely, a first human step on no continent and no "field," since that field has collapsed.

And from one collapse to another, one digs down.

And it becomes more and more "nothing" – the dark, a wall – which becomes more and more fire as one goes

down.

It is an horrendous pit.

It is a desperate condition, more desperate than that of a man about to die, for at least that death is an issue. Yet that very desperation is fire. It would seem that fire is the only thing that *is* in this whole horrendous affair.

One digs and digs, as the Vedic rishis said, through countless layers and quagmires that bring to light all the grandfathers in the world along with all their stories, just like our own, as if there were only *one* man on this whole planet; and all the horrors of the past, just like the present ones, as if there were only *one* ill, only one pain in these millions of lives. And so many wild beasts. And the night grows increasingly suffocating as one keeps searching, digging with one's scalpel of fire to find the root of that pain – and wring its neck once and for all.

No, the "horrors" are not what we think. It is that Pain in the depths – like a choked cry. Perhaps a cry of love that became covered over with night and falsehood. Something that has created death in order to lose itself, only to find itself again, and to keep finding itself until we free the Secret in the depths of this unfathomable body.

I have been digging long.

We miss the trail because we try to clothe in words, explanations, "stories," and psychological terms something that is just a hole reaching farther and farther into primary human matter, together with a growing Fire.

That fire *is* the Trail, like a river leading to its source: if we go upstream, we reach the goal; if we go downstream, we are tossed into the estuary along with the debris, our endless debris and dust. And then the pain of beginning all over again.

But it is a Source of Fire.

A prodigious un-covering.

We can never say enough that "to discover" is first and foremost to un-cover.

I can only speak of my own experience, as I could speak

of my experience in the jungle of French Guiana, or on the difficult seas among the *Belle-Ile* reefs. Seven years of experience in this unknown Matter condensed in a few pages, though to tell the facts of Nature does not require a lot of words.

Thus, I have dug in this body of mine as fiercely as one struggles to uproot a horror, and it was becoming scorchingly hot, perhaps as in the depths of a bottomless mine shaft. Then, one day, a kind of revolution occurred in the depths of this body, as if thousands and millions – an innumerable quantity – of microscopic volcanoes had been kindled, un-covered. Volcanoes that might be even smaller than a cell, but so innumerable and unrestrained – indeed, un-restrained – that I watched and experienced all this with a sense of bewilderment and exultation, much as one might behold a phenomenon of nature, a thunderstorm, or an earthquake. Stupendous, innumerable fires in the depths of this bodily matter. Then that entire mass was seized with an irrepressible urge and began to rise and rise, shaking off all restraints and coverings, gathering itself in an uncontrollable upward thrust, as if overhead, somewhere above the body or outside these walls, a giant magnet (I don't know what else to call it), a colossal force of attraction was drawing out these innumerable freed fires. I absolutely felt as if I were dying – that's it, the Enemy immediately shows its face! Death is certainly... fascinating. From then on, I would confront it regularly, day in and day out, see – experience – how things really are. My horror, precisely. That which no one knows until the very last moment. The secret of our bodies.

But first, when those countless microscopic volcanoes broke out of my walls, out of their prison, by being sucked upward, and my old normal body felt it was dying, this very same being and body was nevertheless overwhelmed with an inexpressible sense of exultation – joy, oh, of a kind I had never, ever known in all my life, not even in a full-blown storm at sea off *la Cote Sauvage*! A physical delight,

as if those countless particles of fire were recognizing their source, their Mother, what they had been searching for life after life, through one body after another, through an endless desert of agitated existences. Now that Thirst was fulfilled at last, satisfied to the full with that nectar.

As if the body had reached the Goal of the Ages.

There are no words to express that.

One might say it was all of the body's love meeting its timeless Love. One "loves" thousands of things – the ocean, the sea gulls, different people – but *That* was the very source, the place where one can immerse oneself without restraint, without "others," without sense of you or me, without walls at last.

It was outside our dungeon.

Then the junction took place between those innumerable bodily micro-volcanoes and their great fire "outside," their fount of nectar, and that same Fire "above" (I don't know how to say it) began to descend into my old dungeon.

And that's when the whole difficulty and peril, and the whole discovery, arose.

That's when we begin to realize the reality of our bodies and of our substance as intellectual animals – the *earthly* reality, for there are not endless kinds of bodies nor endless kinds of substances. We may think of ourself as a sage, a sailor, a doctor in one kind of science or another, or as a democratic head of state of the West or the East, but we are really an old dungeon and the entire Earth is in a dungeon.

When that formidable material Reality began to descend into my own matter, a sense of panic and agony swept over me – a long agony. Panic can be overcome.

We think we know the reality of Matter and all the stars, but we are merely like echinoderms or periwinkles wrapped in an original shell that keeps us separated from reality. Through our walls, we can send out all the periscopes and telescopes we like, but our instruments will only let us perceive and understand what our internal structure or constitution allows us to perceive and understand. They are

only instruments of echinoderms, and this is only a knowledge of echinoderms. How does an eagle see the galaxies? He sees galaxies of eagles, and we see galaxies of humans, that's all.

But reality, that formidable material reality, is something else altogether.

In truth, we need to tear down our whole millennial structure in order to have access to that Reality. This is the agony mentioned earlier. It is the demolition of the dungeon.

And that dungeon is death itself. It is the something that causes the death of our species and of all species since the dawn of a life that has never been life.

But here, suddenly, the body has felt Life, discovered Life, drunk in that nectar. These myriad cells have inexpressibly touched their Source outside the shell; these myriads of little fires have imbibed the Great Fire whence they issue as from a primary Mother. They KNOW. The cells KNOW. Henceforth, they can bear the trial.

They know, as if for all time and from the beginning of time; they re-cognize this as an infant recognizes his mother. And nothing and no one, no death or any specter of death, will ever be able to remove this from their internal vibration. It is like a new physiological memory. And this is what will help us along that passage through death, that demolition of the dungeon – that "rock," as the Vedic rishis called it, which separates us from Life at last.

For that invasion of Life into our old organic structure is like an invasion of death! It means the death of our old way of being. Everything is reversed! Then one becomes aware of what death really is; that is, one becomes aware of what we call "life." Under that invasion, every distress signal in the body starts ringing. That Sun is there, and our entire night begins to screech and be torn apart – I'm dying, burning, bursting, collapsing. There is a crushing pressure. This is perhaps what the fish on the sand feels as it gasps for air and *has* to invent a new way of breathing, or die.

A new way is needed to breathe that Life. It cannot be

found in one day: it is a long agony. Mother used to say, “If I did not know how the process works, it would be a constant agony.” And I made the same discovery when, some five years ago, I remarked to my friend Luc, who had come to interview me. “In this business, you spend your time dying without dying.” Five years later, it continues. To take a step toward another species is a lengthy task. It requires a long adaptation to a new, and crushing, Sun.

But there is this mighty “I KNOW” of the body.

Strangely, there are as if two bodies, one in the other. One that knows irrevocably and for all time, against the whole world; it KNOWS the Life it has touched. And the other, the old mortal body, slightly above, as if covering the first one – the product of untold ancestors who have repeatedly instilled death into it, death for the least thing that questions the old ancestral rhythm. And that one does not know in the least! It only knows the old law. However, these are not two different bodies, but one and the same, as if under the control of, or grappling with, two conflicting laws and realities.

Sailors speak of a boat as having two parts: the “quick works” below the waterline and the “dead works” above. But it is still the same boat! And so deep within, below the surface, is that body, borne by that prodigious new current, that prodigious new breath, which cries, “I KNOW – I KNOW – I KNOW and even if I die, I still KNOW!” while the other, above or outside, whimpers, “I'm dying – I'm dying – I'm dying!”

But it is actually death that is dying.

Yet, every sign of the approaching or crushing death concurs and hits us in the face, in the heart, in the brain, or in these old stiff vertebrae, crushed under the weight of that crushing Life. It may be similar to the lunar man who must slowly, carefully remove his space suit to accustom himself to another gravitation.

Thus, we have a key, a tremendous key, namely, this “I know” of the body. Then we discover the enormous

concentration camp in which we live, individually as well as collectively, on earth. We discover that this body, our body, is entirely manufactured by death, that it *is* living death, while thousands and millions of guardians keep tearing it, confining it, threatening it, and shouting at every moment. "Farther than this, it's death; beyond this point, it's death; your heart will collapse, your strength is faltering, you'll be crippled, you'll lose your mind." And all of it is complete nonsense. Millions of guardians of death, armed with medical and ancestral machine-guns and with the most convincing – painfully convincing – physiological signs.

But we learn, we *have* to learn that every physiological sign is *a lie contrived by death to keep us in its snare*. We have to learn or die. Like the fish on the sand. And if we flinch, we really die. Indeed, it's exactly like a concentration camp! There is something that KNOWS in such a poignant, such an irresistible way: "The open air lies on the other side!" And: "I want – I want – I want to get out of this!" Things are totally impossible; one can't go on anymore, one is at the end of one's rope, ready to drop, this is the end; yet, somehow, that CRY of LIFE bursts forth – the something that makes us go through the obstacle.

Along this new course, this ordeal of the new species (there is no other way of putting it), time and time again the impossible *must* become possible. After each such "operation," there seems to be a divine Smile saying, "See, it's totally impossible; and yet, it's totally possible!" Each day one steps into a new possibility, which *becomes* possible by stepping into it, step after step, second after second. Until the body has wholly uprooted the death that dwells in it – *unmasked* death, that frightful falsehood concealing a marvelous Love and trying to pass for life itself.

Every one of our sensations is fabricated by death.

And that Life uproots death.

It feels like being uprooted through and through.

That Life is what is in the process of uprooting the entire

Earth, every nation, every human being.

It is the demolition of the dungeon.

The slow invasion of the new Life.

And, at the other end, a new species that will change the face of the earth.

The twilight of man is the beginning of the free Man and the divine life on earth.

"May Earth and Heaven be equal and one," said the Veda.

"A new Heaven and a new Earth," said Saint John of the Apocalypse.

The resurrection from the dead is our resurrection.

It is the last revolt of the Earth.

It is Sri Aurobindo's revolution.

And Mother's love.

Friday, July 7, 1989

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[1] Rig-Veda, III.25.1. and I.70.2.
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[2] Rig-Veda, I.7.1
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[3] As quoted by *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, 15.9.1
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[4] *The Supramental Manifestation*, p. 24.
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[5] *Rig-Veda*, X.53 ff.
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[6] Where the police held French *Resistance* fighters in World War II before sending them to the firing squad.
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[7] *Rig-Veda*, I.71, V.45.
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