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Affection in Time, Reverence Beyond

I had the privilege of meeting Prof. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar as a teenager, though I am neither a student of his nor of English Literature. He had been a member of our family ever since. He was such a legendary figure that even non-literature students felt proud that they were students of Andhra University, where such a scholar headed the department. Labels of ‘regionalism’, ‘son-of-the-soil’, ‘languagism’ faded away in front of his scholarship and he was accepted as a world citizen everywhere in the country and even by staunch jingoists. He brought name and fame to the university he served. He was the pioneer of Indian writing in English.

Like many who were associated with Prof. Iyengar, I am also a beneficiary of our meetings. To my knowledge no one came out dissatisfied after meeting him. Even if they did not get what they expected (may be due to their own ignorance), the serenity he spread around made one and all feel the peace within themselves. Teaching was an innate art for him. He taught you something valuable in a few words. Statements like ‘Acceptance followed by transformation is the wiser course and holds the key to the future.’, ‘One should not judge a person by external signs, but by his inner qualities.’, are memorable and ring in my ears. The nuggets of wisdom he passed on every time we met helped me become wiser, gave me a better perspective on life.

Some may find fault with the Professor for not placing his students, but his students themselves never felt that way and continue to have the same reverence for him. Even after decades of association his charisma never faded and used to draw them towards him. A detour just to visit him was an acceptable part of travel for many; some even made a pilgrimage to see the *acharya*. He was kind to the intelligent and not-so-intelligent, to the educated and not-so educated, to the wise and not-so-wise. He was an *ajatashatru*—he had no enemies.

The first time I met Prof. Iyengar, I barely understood a word of what he said. In our last meeting, I was all ears to imbibe every word uttered by him. With our thirty-five years of association with him, he is a permanent resident of our hearts.

Usha K. Srinivas

Ashram Activities

High Altitude Trek to Chandra Tal (June 1999)

A report appears elsewhere in this issue.

Matri Kala Mandir Presentation

On 10 July 1999 the Kathak students of Anjali Saini presented their art while on 31 July Hindustani and Karnataka vocal and tabla students were on the stage.

Workshop on Body Awareness and Creative Dance at Matri Kala Mandir

Matri Kala Mandir organised the workshop from 22 July 1999 to 10 August 1999. It was conducted by Aryamani from Auroville. Aryamani graduated as dance teacher from the School of Performing Arts, University of Bahai, Brazil. She has worked with the famous dancer Rolf Gelewski and has travelled widely, giving dance classes and workshops.

The workshop was conducted in two batches, with both theory and practice. Starting with simple movements based on rhythm and breathing, it moved on to improvisation and expression with music, poetry, pictures, stories—drawing from the inner source of creativity and spontaneity.

BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF SRI AUROBINDO

Amid the desert of the unrelenting heat and humidity from June to August, Sri Aurobindo's Birthday and the attendant festivities were like an oasis.

96th Birthday of Chachaji

The 96th birthday of Surendra Nath Jauhar 'Faquir' was celebrated on 13 August. Apart from the morning 'Invocation', audio recording of Chachaji's interview with the Mother was played in the evening *Satsang*, followed by devotional singing.

Lecture Series

Three lectures were delivered on 14, 15 and 16 August by Prof. Chandrasekhar Rath, the Sahitya Akademy Award winner writer from Orissa and an eminent exponent of Sri Aurobindo's yoga and philosophy. The themes for the three lectures were 'Sri Aurobindo and the Living Past of India', 'Sri Aurobindo and the Current Century', and 'Sri Aurobindo and the Future'. On the first day the learned speaker gave glimpses after glimpses of how the Master rediscovered and correctly interpreted the great spiritual visions and realizations and teachings of the Vedas, Upanishads and Gita and how brilliantly he brought out the glories of the ancient but living Indian culture. The second lecture dwelt on the momentous role of Sri Aurobindo in the resurgence of India...his revolutionary nationalism that kindled a fiery love for Mother India in the people and

gave a historic turn to the freedom fight. Prof. Rath also explained how the Master used his spiritual power to ensure the defeat of Hitler and how his great dreams for the world are getting realized. The concluding talk was a brilliant exposition of the great Future dreamed and created for earth and the humanity by the *rishi* and *avatar* of the Supramental Transformation. The talks, which were interesting and illuminating, were well-attended and were keenly heard.

The Sacred Day—Fifteenth August

The day commemorating the divine advent 127 years ago was heralded by a devout atmosphere in the Ashram. The campus wore a festive look with beautiful *alpana* in the sacred area. The *Shrine* had an exquisite floral decoration of marigold garlands. The day began with an ‘Invocation’ by Karuna-di, followed a little later by music offerings—Hawaian guitar recital by Chakrapani Singh and *bhajans* by Richa, Nidhi, Neha, Nalini, Piyush, Meghna, Bhavana, Ranjana, Gopal, Sharda, Sudeep, Uma.

In the *Satsang* from 10 a.m., devotional singing by Karuna-di was followed by a talk by Prof. Chandrasekhar Rath on ‘Sri Aurobindo and the Current Century’.

‘Dawn to Greater Dawn’, a video film on Sri Aurobindo was shown from 1 p.m. There were two sessions of guided meditation with recording of Tara-di’s voice and soothing background music on the synthesizer by Shantanu and one more session of music offerings in the afternoon—flute recital by Sanjay Patel, devotional music by Sarathi Chatterjee, Swati Kaneri, A. Thaplyal, rudra veena recital by Rangamma and *bhajans* by Nilotpal, Sayak and Raghunandan.

From 6 p.m. there was an impressive march past by the *ashramites* and trainees and a spirited rendering of ‘*Bande Mataram*’. Soon devout hearts started offering incense and ‘Lights of Aspiration’ at the *Shrine*, while, in the meditation hall, there was a talk by Prashant Khanna on the significance of the Day and the role of the *Guru* in *sadhana* and devotional singing and group chanting by Karuna-di, Mousumi, Srila, Bithika and Devjani.

At the end of the *Satsang*, a message for the Day and *prasad* were distributed.

As the evening mellowed and night approached we could see the beautiful and elevating spectacle of tiny lights twinkling all over the *Shrine* lawn, in a mystic atmosphere. A joyous mood was created by the ardent gathering and the illumination—a synthesis of the solemn and the festive.

A large number of devotees had *prasad* in the Ashram dining room.

Theatre Training

Radhika, an MA in Mass Communications from MCRC, Jamia, conducted the following activities, under the aegis of the Sri Aurobindo Institute of Mass Communication, during August-September 1999:

Saturday Theatre Club...to provide living experience of drama and to develop, among other things:

Control of body and voice

Communication through actions, words, movements, sound rhythm

Two-month Diploma Course in Dramatics : The contents included core workshops on:

Expressive use of the body through rhythmic and imitative movement, pantomime

Expressive use of voice (sound and dialogue) through choral speaking, creating original dialogue

Dramatizing of stories using improvisation

Characterization, puppetry, playwriting, situation role-playing

Yoga classes

The yoga classes have been restructured. Two *yogasana* courses—‘Basic (4 weeks) and ‘Intermediate’(8 weeks) have been started from September 1999, with classes thrice a week in the evenings. These are conducted by Deepak Jhamb, a yoga therapist and natural health educator. Early morning classes are being taken on Weekdays by Sanjay Patel, who had his training at the Bihar School of Yoga.

Mother’s Health Centre

Physiotherapy, Reiki and Pranic Healing have been started on a modest scale.

Garden

Of late, the lawns have greened up a lot. Extensive planting was done during 1999 rains. (Although what came down from the stingy rain gods was rather an apology for a rainy season—our part of the metropolis having been the most deprived!) Apart from ornamental, shade and fruit trees, planting of hedges, shrubs and creepers has been done all over the campus.

Satsang and Discourses

We had evening *satsang* on weekdays with devotional music, reading from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and, occasionally, talks on spiritual subjects.

On Sundays we had morning *satsang*, with devotional music and a discourse. Prashant Khanna continued his series on ‘Sonnets of Sri Aurobindo’. Dr Makarand Paranjape has started a new series on *Savitri*. Bimal Mohanty delivered lectures on ‘Spiritual Approach to Life’ and Dr Ramesh Bijlani gave talks on *Essays on the Gita*.

On 8 May 1999, Udai Debanshi offered *Rabindra Sangeet*.

Study Circle

An effort is made to awaken the inherent spirituality in the young trainees who are in the Ashram, through lectures by knowledgeable persons. To cater to the needs of the different language groups there are regular classes from 7 to 7.30 p.m.—Bengali (Monday), Tamil/Kannara (Tuesday), Oriya (Wednesday), Hindi (Friday) and Manipuri (Saturday).

A Trek to Chandra Tal

A trek to Chandra Tal in Himachal Pradesh (4,570m) was organised by the Sri Aurobindo Education Society in June 1999. We 18 young hopefuls started our journey from Delhi on 18 June.

While on our way to Dharmasala after completing our train journey, we passed through dense green forests, skirted raging rivers, inched our way up treacherous mountain roads. As soon as we arrived at Dharmasala we went to McLeod Ganj, an important seat of Buddhist learning in India. The monastery located here is revered by Buddhists around the world. The remarkable Buddhist temple amidst evergreen mountain forests is a beautiful example of Tibetan architecture. It was time for prayers when we reached the temple and a number of devotees were chanting their *mantras*. Although we couldn't follow the words, still it had a mystic effect on us : we could feel the vibrations of peace palpably.

After a stopover at picturesque Manali, we reached Jagatsukh from where our trek started—a small village 7 km from Manali, on a river bank, under the shadow of mountain forests.

Hill villages, like most Indian villages, are in a state of transition. While visiting the nearby villages, we discovered how hard they work. The hill women do most of the work, from farming to household chores, besides tending the children. The garden of every house was full of fruit-laden trees and colourful flowers. I recollected a beautiful poem of Keats :

*Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruits the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss's cottage tree,
And fill the fruit with ripeness to core...*

The next morning brought a clear blue sky and a tender rising sun. The yonder snow peaks were being kissed awake by the soft sunlight. They were looking resplendent like virgin princesses in their spotless beauty. The Himalaya made me realize that it is the heaven on the Planet Earth.

With our luggage on horses, we trekked to Khanul (2,020 m), 4 km from Jagatsukh. After pitching the tents we rested for a while to energize our body before collecting dry wood for cooking. The rhythmic river music made me plunge deep within my heart. I had my first and last bath of the trek here! In the evening, we had our last delicious dinner in front of a bonfire.

The morning of 23 June, we got up early, packed our luggage and set out on a trek of over 8 km to Chhaki, our second camp. The breathless climb was compensated by beautiful views of green hills and murmur of the river. A two-room set with a half-built

Lord Shiva temple was our shelter at Chhaki. Some of us cooked lunch while others went for rock-climbing and rappelling. Fortunately we had two experts to teach us the basics, so the activity was enjoyable and fun.

June 24 saw a clear and bright morning. The cooing and chirping of the birds and *kul-kul* sound of the river were composing a very sweet music to wake us up for our next leg of the ascent. Lord Surya was rising with his splendour and a couple of snow peaks were trying to come out from behind a cloud to get a touch of the sunlight. When they succeeded, they looked as if the sun had put golden crowns on their heads! It was an unforgettable moment for me and my heart started dancing with rapture! My eyes and heart would not let me go further but we had to leave. We set out trekking to Seri, 10 km from Chhaki. Dancing green forest, cascading river, glaciers, dark and naked but beautiful mountains delighted us during the steep climb. The peaks were playing hide-and-peek with us—sometimes they shone with bright sun and sometimes hid behind a veil of clouds. Countless varieties of pretty little flowers were spread over along the way and were dancing with the breeze!

After a long and exhausting trek we reached Seri (3,390m). It was wet and very cold up there, with near freezing temperature. Without delay, we had our lunch and dinner simultaneously because it was already 3 p.m.! Just 100 m above our camp was a cave. Some of us went to spend a night without sleeping bags. It was the first time in my life that I got an opportunity to sleep in a cave. From inside the cave I could enjoy the beauty of Chandra Tal. It was surrounded by mountains, the peaks of which were shimmering in the golden sunlight like glittering jewels! Before the sun set behind the mountains, it put a rainbow necklace on the peaks which made them look like young brides! This wonderful sight was a special gift to us from Mother Nature.

On 25 June, we got up early and prepared ourselves for our final leg of the ascent. The sky was bright blue with golden light of the rising sun streaming through the clouds. We set off on our 5 km trek to Chandra Tal. The last two kilometres of the climb at an angle of almost 80° were arduous but with tremendous determination and the right approach, everything became comfortable and easy. We crossed two small rivers, which were shimmering in the sunlight. They were not too deep. So we took off our shoes but as we put our feet in the chilly water we felt our feet going numb. The crossing was a painful experience.

At last, we reached our final goal at a height of 4,570m. after an exhausting ascent. It is a place where time stands still and silence sings! A world of unparalleled beauty and serenity was before us ! The surrounding snow peaks, bathed in sunlight, were reflected in the crystal clear water of the lake and made a perfect picture! The sight filled us with wonder and a mystical calm. We were thrilled and vibrated with ecstasy. At the centre of my heart an unknown and completely new consciousness was arising slowly and capturing my whole being with bliss. The rapture started to open petal by petal. A new philosophy of life shattered the past rigid barriers. An old vision of life was replaced by a luminous new vision. I was reluctant to leave this place. My emotional being and mind

were aspiring to be in this place for the rest of my life. At that moment my memory brought back to me a beautiful poem by A.E Houseman :

*Loveliest of trees; the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide...*

*And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see cherry hung with snow.*

The poet desired to be in the woodland for the rest of his life and I felt the same at Chandra Tal. But I have to come back. For like Lord Byron I love mankind :

*There is a pleasure in the pathless wood,
There is rapture in the lovely shore,
Their society where none intrudes
By the deep sea, and music in the roar,
I love not men the less, but nature more...*

Our life can be beautiful if we enjoy this world sans possessions. Isha Upanishad says :
“All this is for habitation by the Lord, whatsoever is individual universe of movement in the universal motion. By that renounced thou shouldst enjoy; lust not after any man’s possession”.

Back at the base camp Chhaki, we were in a joyous mood. We had not noticed how days had flown by. The trek had been an infrangible chain of experience and we felt we gathered enough memories to last a lifetime.

Ananta Kumar

**The Charitanivedaka of
Sri Aurobindo & The Mother
by Dr Prema Nandakumar**

(Continued from issue number 3/1999)

After re-writing the biography of the Mother, there were many tempting offers to write the biographies of some great men of India. But father felt that he could never take up a lesser subject after having written about the Mother. This is how he began writing the life of Sita inspired by Valmiki's *Ramayana*.

Sitayana was followed by *Sati Saptakam*. The two epic poems in English are sublime retellings of some of the greatest heroines from India's ancient past.

Father's last work was *Krishna Geetam*. It is basically the life of the Krishna of the tenth Book of the *Bhagavatam* but father has also written at length on the inspiration of Krishna's personality on future generations after the Dwapara Yuga. Sri Aurobindo has described how in our *yuga* people have envisioned several divine personalities for meditation and inspiration. Of all these, the highest according to Sri Aurobindo, is "the supreme figure of the intensest Indian religion of love, Sri Krishna, the All-blissful and All-beautiful."

Krishna Geetam brings in the personality of the Mother and the inspirations she herself gained from the figure of Krishna. The section, 'Mother Mirra' recapitulates the life of the Mother, her yoga of self-perfection and her coming to Pondicherry in 1914 :

"Increasingly inward-oriented,
she met Sri Aurobindo
and knew he was verily the KRISHNA
she had oft seen in her dreams.

'twas as though Radha had met at long last
her Krishna, and found her voice:
"At first sight of You, I knew You the Lord
of my being, and my God.

*My thoughts, emotions, actions, my heart-beats
and cellular vibrations,
all, all are Thine without any reserve:
and my future too is Thine:*

*Be it life or death apportioned to me,
happiness or suffering,
whatever may come from You is welcome,
and will bring felicity."*

After the frustrating pulls and chilling
shortcomings of the body,
vital and mind, this call of the Spirit
was clearly definitive.

Thus commenced the grand collaboration
between the *Mahayogi*
and Mirra on the supreme Agenda
for building the Life Divine.”

Krishna Geetam was published in 1994. It was a year which was *amrutham visha samsrushtam* for us. A nectarean year because this beautiful book was published; but poisonous, because father lost his vision completely in this year. However, he continued to evince keen interest in literature and spirituality, listened to others read out for long hours, helped those of us who approached him for suggestions and help and dictated an occasional article. Mother was constantly with him. But he slowly turned inward too and his silences became longer, punctuated with reciting the Sanskrit hymns of Vedanta Desika or the Matri-mantra: *Om Anandamayi, Chaitanyamayi, Satyamayi, Parame*. His memory and wit remained with him till the end and he gently reached the Mother’s presence on 15 April 1999, two days prior to his 91st birthday.

When father lost his eyesight, in my ignorance, I had often felt totally frustrated, since I had seen him at work for long hours and knew of his intense love for reading and writing. Anything but this terrible handicap that made him a stranger to the world of books! He once said in auguish: “I know all these books are around me in these shelves, but I cannot read any one of them myself.” But then, it was also a lesson in heroism to find him regroup his defences and settle down to a life with acceptance, never losing his faith in the Mother and the Master for even a moment. After all, even Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had suffered, he would remind us; so he could not be complaining vociferously. He would recite long passages from Milton and Shakespeare and Sri Aurobindo’s masterly statement :

*Pain is the hammer of the gods to break
A dead resistance in the mortal’s heart,
His slow inertia as of living stone.
If the heart were not forced to want and weep,
His soul would have lain down content, at ease,
And never thought to exceed the human start
And never learned to climb towards the Sun.*

I could see visibly how the words of Sri Aurobindo in *Savitri* were being enacted dramatically in father’s last days:

*O mortal, bear this great world’s law of pain,
In thy hard passage through a suffering world
Lean for thy soul’s support on Heaven’s strength,
Turn towards high Truth, aspire to love and peace.*

*A little bliss is lent thee from above,
A touch divine upon thy human days:
Make of thy daily way a pilgrimage...
For through small joys and griefs thou mov'st towards God.*

I came to realise that what is written in *Savitri* is being enacted by the Mother's children all the time. With humility all that I can say is, may our days also be a daily pilgrimage.

(Concluded)

No Time—No Mind

Our concept of time is linear—the present, which was future, would become the past. The present is only an instant. As you approach the present, notice that the mind cannot exist without the past and future. The mind drags the past into the present and anticipates the future. It interferes with the present reality as it is. The past and future exist only as movements of the mind. Meditation is an attempt to experience the present reality without distortion of the mind.

You are the teacher and your mind is your student. Who else can control and discipline your mind but you? When the mind is allowed to run loose, it continually creates mischief. For mind is the creator. Thoughts are real forces. As you think, so you will become. The purer your thinking, the nicer your future. You might as well get started now.

Your mind doesn't know the way; but someone within you does. If the mind can be silenced, the wisdom within will light up your path through life.

The mind can fall silent. When the mind becomes silent the past and future disappear and only the eternal now exists.

Michael Virat

My Experiences in the Experiment for the Education for Tomorrow
by Prashant Khanna

The poet Wordsworth hailed the French Revolution as the beginning of a new age for mankind in the following words :

*“Bliss it was in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very Heaven.”*

My own feelings are very similar to the above lines and I am filled with deep nostalgia when I think back about my childhood and youth spent in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry. I had the benefit of receiving my education in the Centre of Education started by the Mother under her own close supervision and care.

Had my experience of academic life been confined only to the days spent in Pondicherry, I might not have been in a position to make any worthwhile observations on the PONDY system of education for :

*“What do they know of England
Who only England know.”*

My teaching at the Mother’s International School gave me enough opportunity to observe education in a cosmopolitan set-up too.

Despite limited interaction with other public schools, I can say that the Mother’s School can be singled out for its effort to impart value-based education for overall growth and development of the child’s personality, compared to an intense regime of a career-oriented school.

Education is the art of living and therefore all life is education—this is the basic premise at the Centre in Pondicherry. It is distinctively child-oriented and the growth of the child is its pivot.

Understanding the personality of the individual is the basis of education at Pondicherry. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother held that every individual has lodged within him a spark of divinity which is his true individual Self, the ‘Psychic Being’. Alongside this are the other selves like the body, emotions and thoughts—the physical, vital and mental parts. Education must aim to help the child grow in such a manner as would enable him to realise his full potential in a harmonious blending of these various elements which constitute his personality. The Pondicherry system of education ensured that each child grew at his own pace and in a manner best suited to his individual needs and capacities.

Since its inception, this system had a unique feature, namely that it was not necessary for a student to be in the same class for all subjects! It was quite common for a child to be say in class V for certain subjects, in class VI for others and even in class VII for still

some others. Such a provision imparted a very great degree of flexibility. If his personality needed more time to absorb and understand the basic concepts of a certain subject he could, without misgiving, afford to repeat his class in that subject and move forward with regard to the other subjects.

Later on, with the introduction of the 'Free Progress' system, as implied by its very name, the degree of flexibility became even greater as it removed even the minimal burden on the child of keeping pace with the syllabus and with his peer group. The child had the option of taking as much time as he needed on a particular lesson and moving on to the next lesson only when he inwardly felt convinced and satisfied that he had understood and exhausted the contents of that lesson.

The result of such a high degree of flexibility and so much latitude was that students were able to study what really interested them and go slow on or keep for a later date what did not interest them then. In other words, education was largely something to look forward to rather than an imposition or a 'necessary evil'. It would be obvious that when a child studied what really interested him, his concentration and involvement became much greater, thereby greatly enhancing a qualitative retention of what he studied.

For example, though I was a student of humanities, I continued to not only remember, for the next twenty years or so, the Pythagorean Theorem but also all the various steps covered by way of its proof.

The other unique contribution of the 'Free Progress' system was the love of learning that it fostered. The encounter with education as a student having been such a pleasant one, the eagerness to widen one's horizons and explore new vistas in the realm of the intellect survived long after completion of formal education. There was an ambience that encouraged free discussion and even near hostile and aggressive questioning. This enabled the mental faculties to develop to an extent that one learnt the art of learning and could take flight into regions beyond formal student life.

Looking back over the decades, I feel that the Mother had largely succeeded in creating a modern day *gurukul*-like environment where the teacher was often like a friend and guru to the students. Life outside school tended to be a seamless extension of time spent in the school and one had ample opportunity to meet, play and discuss with the teachers issues and subjects often unrelated to pure academics. There was also always present before the students the example of the teacher himself and it is a well-known fact that the most effective teaching is by example—practice rather than precept.

That a healthy mind resides in a healthy body is now a recognised tenet of education in good educational institutions, but in Pondicherry this was implemented as far back as 40 years ago with a rigour beyond the farthest stretches of imagination of people elsewhere. It might come as a surprise that the time spent in sports, exercise, athletics was as much as in studies. It extended to almost 3 full hours, starting from 4.30 p.m. and going upto 7.30 p.m. and sometimes beyond.

Alongside studies and games, a lot of importance was attached to cultural activities, and I have till date not seen cultural programmes being organised in other schools on such a scale and frequency.

The spiritual needs of the children and the youth were met by the Mother herself, who kindled in the children the psychic spark and oversaw with great care, love and sympathy the progress made by each child. There were regular classes in which she closely interacted with the children and nurtured them along the path to divinity. She went to the length of reading out children's stories accompanied with dramatic gestures and intonation and modulation of voice and then eliciting from them a fuller and deeper understanding of the issues involved.

From all of the above, it must be amply clear that in such an environment there could not be even so much as a whiff of an element of compulsion or coercion in the scheme of things. Children studied in an environment wholly free of the suggestion of doing well, meaning scoring high marks. The Mother once said that what she really looked for in the students was not so much academic brilliance and proficiency in a subject as that they should be living souls. Even the perspective in which things like 'progress' and 'advance' were measured was so different. The Mother viewed a person's growth and evolution in terms of several lives rather than one single life span, and often, when she came across a child who was too playful and disinterested in studies, she would take the stand that maybe in this particular life his soul needed to undergo such experiences and that serious studies could wait for a later date, if not another life! Parents were, so to say, asked to 'offer' their children to her for experimenting with their souls' growth and not for being shaped into 'successful' humans from a material point of view. Even so, it is worth noting that most of the students who, after studies, chose to opt out of the Ashram life, were eminently successful in their worldly careers as well.

In order to fully appreciate such major differences in outlook, one would do well to bear in mind that the underlying presumption was that the children after completing their formal studies would continue to live in the Ashram and actively pursue spiritual goals for which they had been reared and prepared since childhood. Of course, if they chose to join the outside world, such a decision was ascribed to a need for their souls to undergo a particular set of experiences. For, the spiritual path does not move in a straight line but mostly in cycles and 'the cycles are many'.

As to which elements of the above system are relevant to the present day conditions in India and how far can they be incorporated into our educational system, I find it extremely difficult to make any categorical statement either way—the whole perspective is so different.

**An Ode to the ‘Father of Man’
by Rajiv Malhotra**

I wake up on a cold December morning, and immediately start revelling in blissful procrastination. Who wants to spoil a perfect morning with the thought of eight hours in that concrete cage they call my office? So, here I am, sipping the customary cup of bed-tea, while Shilpa, my fourteen-month-old daughter, plays beside me, surrounded by her Teddy Bear, her Donald Duck and other “friends”. Amidst her play, she occasionally looks up to see if I am observing, wonders whether I approve, and then gets busy again after flashing one of those glorious smiles. My interest in watching her lies in seeing that she stays out of any harm, and of course, Vandana’s instructions must be followed to the letter. “Rajiv, see that she doesn’t get out of the quilt. It’s too cold today.” The smile is a bonus I gratefully accept. Nothing better than that innocent, undiluted expression of glee on a baby’s face to start your day !

Hey, what’s gotten into the child suddenly? She’s struggling to get out of the quilt. Here, I’ve put down my tea-cup. I must distract you, my child, so come to my lap. Oh, so you haven’t let go of the doll! Never mind, I’ll tell you what to do with it. Come, put it inside the quilt so its feet don’t get cold. She’s your baby, child, look after it. Like the new game, don’t you? Thank God, because my tea is getting cold. Here, I pick up my teacup again.

Oops ! You are cleverer than I thought, though little do you realise that your springing up and diving towards the floor could have resulted in a major disaster. Silly child, if nothing else, my tea could have spilled all over you. So, you haven’t given up? Never mind, we’re adversaries again. Ah! there’s the Glowbug now. You love him, don’t you? So, play with him, he’s feeling lonely. And for heaven’s sake let me finish my tea in peace. Ah, peace, and I manage to finish my tea.

Oh, no, you’re at it again ! Thanks for letting me finish my tea, but my patience is running out. Listen, now, my child, good children do not get out of bed this early. Bad children do, but then the cold gets them. Understand? I know you want to go down on the floor but the reason you’re giving me is hardly intelligible, because I don’t understand the language you’re speaking. Besides, rules are rules and I can’t allow you to go down, in your own best interest. I see you can understand me despite communication barriers, because you are back to playing with the Glowbug.

Oh, not again, not again ! All right, if it’s a show of strength that you want, you’ll have it. Your tiny hands and feet are no match for my monstrous paws. Okay, keep trying, this is turning out to be a well-contested wresting match. You’ll have to give in finally. You still won’t? Fine, you win. Sometime the compliance of a nurturing father has to take over, and you have your way. Go ahead !

What a smug and satisfied look you have as you perform the ‘victory lap’, crawling all the way over the edge of the bed to the floor. But, what is so alluring on the floor, I can’t understand; there must be some purpose to your struggle, what is it? Ah, I can see

you've reached it. You're trying to pick up something. I can see you trying once, twice, now thrice, without success. What is up?

So that was it ! How naïve of you to think you could catch it in your hand. That golden spot on the floor cannot be caught, try as you may. It were just the first morning rays of sunshine filtering through the hole in the curtains, that your painfully proper mother has managed to overlook for over a month now. And excuse me, my daughter, because I find your repeated attempts to catch it rather comical...

...but you've set me thinking, child, and in the small incident we've shared this morning, is condensed the story of my life, and that of many other 'adults'. How many of us have been lucky enough to escape the barriers set by parents and authority figures, because they thought they were in "our own best interest"? How many of us have strived to catch the sunshine—the sunshine of the person we all wanted to be when we grew up? How many of us have dared to pursue our childhood dreams, in the face of distractions by well-meaning adults, or rules prescribed by them? If very few adults can claim that they have, then you've just given me a message which has more meaning than most of us realise in a lifetime.

And so, child, in conceding to your wishes today, I have won a major war—the war within me. The war that rages between the normative part of me and the rational part of me. Thanks for the same, child, and I can only hope that, in your life, you are always able to catch the sunshine that you set out to!