

Daiva Tamošaitytė

Among the Rishis



Daiva Tamošaitytė and Nirodbaran at his place, 1995

It is not an easy task to write about great people, though personal contacts seemingly grant us a right to do so. The present essay on Nirodbaran, the most outstanding personality I've ever met, might be considered as a humble attempt to add few more features to his living image.

At the Sri Aurobindo Ashram I've met many extraordinary people: K. D. Sethna, Arabinda Basu, Manoj Das, H. Maheshwari and his daughters, Sunil, Pranab, Jayantilal, Shobha-di, Suresh Dey, R. Y. Deshpande and others, who in way one or another helped me or simply shared their precious time for conversation. Among them Nirodbaran, in a most unexpected way emerged like a mystic father and friend, and I don't know to what heavenly powers I must thank for such a rare relationship.

The very first contact with him was, as usually happens in my life, through a book. While reading *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo* I felt I was accepted into his *kula*. Events in the book seemed to me so vivid and near that I almost felt myself

participating in them! The fluent, absorbing and adventurous style of writing, spurting out with serene humour – that gave me an incomparable pleasure of reading. Even more, behind the lines I found the kindred soul talking to me in a very intimate way. The next book was *Memorable Contacts with the Mother*, which I bought in L. A., California, and devoured in 24 hours on my way back to the East Coast. Afterwards I wrote to a friend about my impression: “I love Nirodbaran’s personality though I haven’t seen him, but from the book you can feel his serious and honest nature. Not without reason Nicolas Boileau has said, “Style is the man”.

We’ve heard a lot about Nirodbaran’s rigorous and austere looks and stern character; we’ve read, too, that patients were afraid to go to this doctor! No wonder, that my husband Kazimieras Seibutis (Kazys in short), who was staying at the Ashram for some “spiritual project” with Dr. Maheshwari for one year, didn’t dare to visit him for several months! I came for the first time to the Ashram in 1995. After some time, encouraged by a warm welcome and still soaring in the high-toned atmosphere of my recent birthday, I’ve bought all the books of Nirodbaran which I could get at the SABDA bookshop and made a firm resolution to visit the sage, in the hope of his signature on them. At that time I carried my video camera with me in order to preserve the memory of every step in India, where everything looked so new and overwhelming to the eye of a young and curious Western traveller, not to mention the precious events and people at Pondicherry. I knew, of course, that it is forbidden to film certain places at the Ashram. But still, expecting God knows what, I took the camera with me and, holding it in a front like a ready arm during a battle, started filming.

It was March 19th. As things turned out, Nirodbaran, living with open doors in front of Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s Samadhi, amiably received us. I saw the tall, hale old man, gracefully sitting in a reclining chair. His appearance was a bit stern, so I didn’t dare to look into his eyes at the beginning. But his figure was beaming with such a soft and calm radiance, that it seemed to me his whole being was smiling. When Nirodbaran saw us entering, he was amazed at a strange pair of slow and flustered guests, I suppose. When we sat down, he pointed to Kazys and said: “He looks like a saint!” We all laughed. Yes, at that time Kazys had long hair, a beard and moustaches. And his ascetic thinness, white *punjabi* and absent-minded attitude towards life easily gave him the look of a biblical apostle (at home, however, to many he reminded of a Russian revolutionary like Felix Dzerzynski!). About me, Nirodbaran later said: “I’ll

never forget, how you've appeared with that funny hat on!" Thus he simply signed the books and then the conversation began.

We asked him many questions about the Ashram, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and Nirodbaran shared his knowledge with us. The conversation was caught on tape, because he gave permission, contrary to the experience of some others. I think that Nirodbaran, keeping his equality to exterior happenings, didn't care about such a small detail. But to us it was an event: now we have the invaluable material. So the precious relationship was established, and Nirodbaran invited us to tea at his place whenever we'd find it convenient.

Thus we now and then went to drink a cup of tea with Nirodbaran at four o'clock in the afternoon. His niece Dolly used to make wonderful tea. To my hesitation on some subjects he answered, "Everything is possible", and this aphorism I remember every time I meet difficulties. Another is: "If Sri Aurobindo has accepted you, he will never leave you".

Nirodbaran was interested in what we were doing at the Ashram. When I gave a piano concert and a short lecture about the famous Lithuanian composer and painter Mikalojus Konstantinas Ciurlionis¹, Nirodbaran attended for a while, sitting at the back of the audience.

He took personal care of us. It seems Nirodbaran wanted to share with us what was dear to him. He arranged an appointment with Sunil, who received us and talked to us for about half an hour. It was remarkable enough, as I understood later, because Sunil usually avoided contacts with people. We had a wonderful afternoon with Amal Kiran as well. Next time when we came to Nirodbaran, he suddenly took us to the Sportsground in his car and we had an opportunity to see how he did his exercises on the grass. And the most extraordinary experience we had, was when Nirodbaran introduced us to Esha, "an extraordinary girl". I felt astounded by her inner and outer beauty. I believe it is a rare occasion to meet such a pure gleaming spiritual beauty even at the Ashram. Nirodbaran took us to Esha's place, and we spent about an hour sitting quietly, forming a kind of *mandala*: Esha, Nirodbaran, Kazys and me. We listened to

¹ I played a few piano works of Ciurlionis and made an exhibition of reproductions of his paintings at the Ashram School. I was eager to present our biggest composer, artist and cultural figure of XX century to the Ashramites, so to speak, to bring his presence of genius of exceptional and future directed spiritual nature into Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's atmosphere. I handed some of Ciurlionis's *Preludes* to Richard Harz, who liked them very much, and a few tape-recordings with Ciurlionis's music, and a big album with his paintings to the Library. I hope my humble and imperfect, but symbolic attempt was not in vain.

the singing of Dilip Kumar Roy. No word was spoken, and we plunged into a meaningful silence... I remember only Nirod's mute gesture as if he wanted to say, "There are no words to express what is taking place here". It was a gesture of pure love, sweet and sad at the same time. Divine Grace in a most intimate and secret way opened my heart's doors and here it will remain forever. How much strength we must have in order to meet uncovered leaning of God towards us! To one Ashramite, who was surprised seeing us walking the streets together he uttered: "These are true children of the Mother".

One day we were to go to Calcutta. The purpose of our trip was to visit the Alipore jail, where Sri Aurobindo underwent his great inner change. Nirodbaran sent for us. We saw Esha having a dialogue with him. They were both anxious to know if we had made any arrangement in Calcutta. We said we had a friend who was studying at the Ramakrishna Mission; he was supposed to meet us. Nirodbaran told us that we must go to Sri Aurobindo Bhavan and he gave us a letter of introduction to Manik Mitra. At Calcutta we were received as guests and stayed in a room at the first floor above the library. Through the window we could see the courtyard with Sri Aurobindo's relics enshrined. Here we participated in the evening meditations. I liked the calm, beautiful and green place, like a citadel amidst the noisy and crowded city. Early in the morning, a servant, who used to bring our breakfast, served us nicely: two cups of tea and sandwiches. When I had free time I used to observe funny little green frogs, paddling in the pond: the one real occupation they had was to push leaves of white lotuses from below, so they moved on a dark surface seemingly all by themselves! But we had not much time for contemplation of the play of Nature. We came for a few days and were eager to know if we would get permission to go inside the Alipore jail. One morning we asked Manik Mitra, if it would be possible, and he said he'd make inquiries about it. The answer came the same day. It was positive! An appointment was made for 6 p. m. A man from Bhavan took us in a taxi to the jail. I was a bit afraid since I had never been in a working jail before. We had to leave our camera and other things behind. When we entered the inner area, prisoners were looking at us with curiosity. We reached the cell, where Sri Aurobindo had suffered long days of the unknown. It was all covered with flowers. I asked who was taking care of the solitary cell, and the answer was "the prisoners" – they offer *puja* to the reverent Master every day! The cell became a tiny shrine in a sorrowful house! It is kept in this way to the present day. We were told that we had only 10 minutes for meditation. But I could not leave and wasn't

interrupted though I stayed for a half an hour! It was so small and dark; it must have been the severest ascetic ordeal to stay in such a horrible “cave”! But more surprised was I by the hospitality and attention the superiors of the jail showed to us and by the warm atmosphere we were bathed in, during the visit. I didn’t feel any pressure or evil vibrations! But a most miraculous accident followed. After we had left the cell we were politely invited to sit near the table. Surprised, we watched supervisors rushing about: one of them had brought some medicine and gauze. The chief smiled and pointed to Kazys’ forehead. My God, it was bleeding! Then we remembered that the same day while walking on the Shakespeare Sarani, Kazys didn’t notice the huge branch of the tree hanging so low that it scratched his forehead. Now, in a prison, believe it or not, the wound was meticulously cleaned and dressed! Thus we left the blessed house as if in a dream. Blessed, because – that’s how I felt it – Sri Aurobindo’s presence manifests here as sunshine in the darkness. Rishis of the Sri Aurobindo Bhavan, the whole atmosphere of that sacred place and experiences I had had over there and in the Alipore jail are engraved in my memory for good. And all this happened thanks to Nirodbaran.

My stay at the Ashram came to an end. Dolly presented me with two small vases from Nirodbaran’s room, Nirodbaran... a coconut. True, once he indicated the small wooden statue of a deity on the table and with a carefree laughter uttered: “Do you want this?” Of course, I did! But couldn’t say a word! I didn’t take it. God doesn’t offer the same thing twice: if you missed the chance – it is your fault! Later Kazys brought to Vilnius a bundle of long incense sticks from him, and from Dolly, a napkin. The last words were not “Good-bye”, “Have a good trip”, or anything of that kind. Everybody was asking me: “When you will be back?”

But I could not come back as soon as I wished. So I wrote a letter to Nirodbaran. He wrote me back, and correspondence began. Here is his first letter, dated 26th August 1995:

Dear Daiva,

I received your wonderful letter today and your present some days ago. I was wondering why you have been silent, what may have happened to you etc. etc. I saw Kazy (?) passing by in the street. I was surprised. I thought: “Oh, is he here? How is it he hadn’t come to see me? etc. etc. And then comes your present of a chocolate box! Then the letter. What wonderful experience you’re having, child! Very precious indeed! And your return from America with a complete change in your outer appearance! The experience before the Rishis at the Bhavan, it is magnificent! Something has suddenly

opened in you! I liked you very much – your sweet child like face, your talks thrilled me and I was counting on your letter... How can I be impatient to read them? Raman Maharshi, Krishnamurti, etc. etc. are nothing beside Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and I'm sure they have found in you a very extraordinary person. Do keep to them, be loyal to them, love them. They will guide and protect you always.

You have asked my permission to translate my books. What a good fortune it will be for the books! Do translate and let your people know about the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. That's all I want. I'm so glad to hear that your soul touches my soul. About your suffering. First of all better not share your experiences with others. People are jealous. It may harm you. Don't be depressed by anything. Take everything impartially. Remain calm thinking and seeing the truth –that human nature is made of good and bad things. Remain undisturbed in all conditions. You can trust me entirely and confide in me without fear.

I don't know much about your husband, but you are a jewel and [I] am waiting to meet you again. Don't need satsang when you've their Presence in you. Will you send me a photo of yours? Your experience of the Force “harder than diamond and yet more fluid than gas” – is superb. I consulted P.'s book.

Well, no more space. I close the letter waiting to hear from you soon. You know I'm getting old. How long will the Guru keep me, I don't know. With love, love, love meanwhile.

Nirod-da.

I was usually receiving aerogrammes with blessing packets and Darshan cards or dry flowers. The post was slow – the letters took to a month from one end to other. I used to write not so much about my experiences, but more about the difficulties I had to face. I didn't want to make of myself a pure “saint”: God knows my imperfections, and I am responsible to Him alone. Still Nirodbaran has written: *“Your child like pure nature is something rare now-a-days. There is something of Daiva (godly) in you, something [of] Indian or Christian saintliness”* (8 December 1995). I remember he once told me, that my nature is Love. But in a worldly life whenever you show your love or compassion, based on your spiritual background, it can easily be misunderstood for egoistic reasons, unless you point to the ‘orange robe’. That was a nuisance I had to face. On the one occasion Nirodbaran has written: *“What is human love? You have yourself defined it saying that it brings suffering and joy. It is egoistic, a bastard etc. therefore mixed... Do love people but without attachment. Love and compassion one*

must have, for which equality of the soul is a must. If we can establish equality other things will follow. Yours is a sweet, beautiful psychic being which must have love and give love but in the divine way like our Mother.” (18 January 1996) Once I asked about Sri Aurobindo. To this Nirodbaran replied: *“I’m afraid I can’t answer your question about my feeling regarding the Lord. And what I have written in my Twelve years holds true. His majestic figure and Presence when alone and suave and near – human almost on this earth when together. When dictating Savitri a Rishi! I hope this will hasten your realisation!”* (9 January 1997) Keeping his request, saying *“Do write us all your news and inner life”*, I tried to mark the main steps of my swadharma. He’s written back: *“There are quite a bit of good news in your letter particularly about your earnest activities in spreading Sri Aurobindo’s message to the world. I’m sure it will have its effect in the long run. Already we perceive its subtle effects in various fields. In India particularly we see the political field clearing up and making room for a better situation. The inner condition too is improving. The grip of the Subconscious is weakening. Best assured that the battle is continuing with greater effect behind the surface and any sincere contribution by individuals will add to the effect. So, go on fighting. Your Art authority is far behind the growing influence of the unseen.”* (25 July 1996) In another letter Nirodbaran asked how my piano concerts were going on. He reminded me that *“the Mother used to practice 7-8 hours a day.”* Yes, after a long break I had to regain the form; it takes a long time, too. But playing the piano is, perhaps, the most extraordinary and gratifying labour, real *sadhana!* Thus Nirodbaran was interested in all my activities.

My letters where long. I wrote openly and sincerely, because I needed to share my thoughts with somebody who would understand me in a proper way. Nirodbaran was a loving Friend to me, and I was happy just because I could write to him. For years I felt safe for I knew, at every minute that far away lives *Jivanmukta*, who cares for me and with whom I am in touch, and to have personal ties was a great gift! I was much surprised, however, when I received from Nirodbaran this high appreciation: *“I’m one with you in the experience you had on reading Essays Divine and Human and your expression of it is superb. I wish I could express in the same way. I wonder how being a Lithuanian you managed [indecipherable, D. T.] such English, which I could in spite of my laborious study of it. This book is to me a rare gem and surpasses others in its own way, but the language is its special feature for me.”* (28 January 1997) I wonder what dear Nirod-da would say if he would hear Kazys’ speeches on Sri Aurobindo and

the Mother. He is a man of rare erudition, brilliant mind and originality, and surpasses me like mountain a mouse! To my surprise, Nirodbaran put two of my letters in *Mother India*.

My next visit to the Ashram took place in January 1998. This time I was on my own: travelling alone to Pondicherry via Delhi (I wanted to see the city). I didn't know that before the Darshan it is hard to find a place in the Guest Houses. Last time, dear Manoj Das, the writer took care about my accommodation. Together with Dr. Maheshwari he did so much for us, that it requires a separate article to describe his patience, generosity, nobleness, intelligence and another thousand and one virtues, which confer upon him, a tremendous authority.² This time no rooms at the Cottage Guest House were available; so I, thinking, that in India is warm enough to live under the tree, went straight to Nirodbaran. He told Dolly: "This lady changes a lot"! He rebuked me as to why I didn't write to him about my visit. He would have booked a room! He then ordered his nephew to accept me, because he had a house! But I refused to be such a heavy burden and with Dolly's help have found a place at the International Guest House. She was so nice, and gave me as a gift a new cassette with Sunil's New Year music and said: "In the photo you've sent us you look like a princess. Nirod-da has kept it in his album." Well, this time Nirodbaran was stricter with me. With a stern voice he asked if I have got a letter where he wrote about *Mother India*. I said: "Of course!" I didn't catch what letter exactly he was talking about. Imagine this, today only I understood his resentment. While preparing to write this article I've found the letter in question among the others, dated 25. 1. 1997. *It was sealed!* Astonished, I opened it and read over. Among the other lines I've found these: "*Now, I have sent your letter to Mother India for publication. I hope you've no objection and a copy of M. I. will be sent to you afterwards. The editor would like to publish your article, which will be published by the Institute of Philosophy. You can send your other articles too for M. I., if possible typed.*" And I thought that Nirodbaran published my letter without asking me! I remained stoned for a while. My brain was working feverishly in order to uncover the events and to understand what had happened, that such a terrible mistake

² I can't but mention here, that on my way to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother many people from USA, India and even Russia had helped me, managing the financial support or just sharing love and sympathy. I, feeling not at all worthy of this, am forced to think that it is a clear sign of the Grace They showed. Nothing that concerned worldly matters succeeded afterwards. So I was concentrated exclusively on the inner life.

was made. But I couldn't remember. May I blame my child, who was small and naughty at the time; maybe he had put it among the other letters? He used to hide things, which, in his opinion, fixed my attention not on him alone. Or mischievous beings played tricks upon me? At that time they used to stop my watch and do many other things. I had to throw away my new watch, because it became unpredictable! But how could I *miss* the letter? A letter from Nirodbaran was such a great joy for me that I usually put it in a safe place and prepared myself for reading the precious lines. It was impossible to forget it if I took it from the box myself. Can't say! For five years it lay sealed! I remember now how in our condominium, in which we used to live a long time ago during Soviet regime, we found a huge pile of letters from abroad (mainly USA) addressed to my mother. They were opened and thrown behind the doors in a corner of the staircase; nobody usually used the doors, and somebody used to take letters out of the boxes and do this nasty job for years, and we thought people didn't write to us! Maybe at this time some *bhutas* were jealous about this particular letter! Who knows?

Back to the theme. The next day after my arrival, 18th of January, I was having lunch at the Dining Room. All of a sudden appeared Arabinda Basu and asked for permission to sit near me. He wanted to know for how long I would stay, if I was alone, with what purpose I came, did I put up at some place and so on. I said that this time I came alone, and had an interest in Indian music and aesthetics, that I came somehow "spontaneously" and didn't book an apartment premeditatedly. "Don't worry," said Arabinda Basu. "Nirodbaran will take care of it. If you have come from so far..." and roguishly added: "This is an adventure!" Then he looked at my bag, then at his and uttered: "It is good for putting some things in it!" Needless to say how much I enjoyed the company of an eminent scholar who behaved in a most simple and sweet way! We chattered for a while about Nirodbaran, how good he looked, about my letter ("There is something in it!" he said), and I asked: "I'd like to do some job here." "All right", Arabinda Basu said, "Ask Nirodbaran, he'll give you a job." I wanted to know if there are some rules or occupations at the Ashram besides meditations in which I could to participate. To this he said, "Oh, no! You can go to the market. Enjoy yourself!"

I am sure, that such a rare combination of an extremely refined and sharp mind, swift reactions, short talk, apparent simplicity and sense of humour are distinguishing features of great men (and women, of course). These are a distinct part of Nirodbaran's personality as well, shining like rare gems in the dust of day-to-day life. "*Figures of infinite beauty laugh like Dawn...*" I can't but write down here, in this context, suitable

reminiscences about the other extraordinary personality – Pranab. In 1995, during my first stay at the Ashram, I was almost killed by heat: it was hard to undergo an acclimatisation. I thought how nice it would be to dip in the refreshing water of the sea! But where? So I decided to go to Pranab to ask for permission to enter the Ashram’s Tennis Ground on the beach – from here I would safely have a swim near the shore. When I entered the room, I saw the Rishi sitting near the table. His magnificent and stern figure would easily give rise to awe. However I gathered all my courage and told him about my wish. “It is dangerous”, he said. “There are poisonous jelly-fish in the sea”. “Indeed?”, I was curious. “What jelly-fish?”, I asked. Pranab with an imperious wave of his hand ordered somebody to bring an encyclopaedia and explained me, how they look: like transparent blue bubbles with a suture or tail at one end. “They bite”, Pranab warned me harshly. Then I remembered how I used to swim every day in an Atlantic Ocean in Miami, Florida, and I wondered what kind of seemingly dead strange blue bubbles hold near the shore. There were hundreds of them floating around, but nobody cared about them! Now I knew they were alive and dangerous! I said: “I used to swim among those jelly-fish, but they never bit me!” That was true! Pranab laughed at me and gave the pass!

Thus I readily followed the Arabinda Basu’s advice. I went to the market, to Kamban Kalai Arangam to see the performances of eminent Masters of classical Indian music and dance, to the Ashram school to learn how children were being taught music, to Auroville and other places. Of course, I used to come to Nirodbaran for a cup of tea. He was busy with his duties and visitors; a big group has come from Italy, next Wayne Bloomquist arrived from USA and many others too came. Dolly told me, that the number of visitors had grown during the last years. Besides, everybody was busy preparing for the Darshan day. So the scene had changed.

In spite of everything I felt lost and unhappy. After a long period of ecstasy and rapid progress I was forced to meet my “trials” and the work took another turn. I felt I was left all alone like a child, lost in woods. It was a *bardo* state, as Buddhists call it. Sometimes I felt angry at a whole world! I could not be “sustained in the air without any support” yet! My main complaint to Nirodbaran was that my experiences had stopped for quite a long time, and outer life seemed to be breaking as well! To this Nirodbaran retorted: “Everybody, who is meant for spiritual life, is unhappy in a worldly one,” and “Madam, life is difficult everywhere. You know more than we know.” He was merciless, indeed. Our relationship could easily remind one of that of

the patient Father and *enfant terrible*, but somewhere in a depth of my heart I knew he loved me and cared for me. One day, when I came to the Samadhi he saw me; he was pacing. I was a bit nervous. Nirodbaran at once came up to me, in the courtyard and asked if I'd already found a place. I said yes. One month has passed exactly from the day I arrived. I had to change the hotel. What a stubborn nature I had, that I didn't accept his care! But at that time I felt like I didn't want to give him additional worries. Nirodbaran was walking hither and thither. I hadn't seen him like that before! I said: "I've written to you that I had difficulties. My experiences stopped." "Yes," came the short reply. "I think I was too weak." "Everybody is weak." "What about the name? The Mother was giving spiritual names. I wish you could give me one." Nirodbaran shook his head and said, "No. You have a very good name, 'Daiva'. It is not necessary to change it. It is full of meaning. If you want, will it be 'Doibi'?" What a Divine derision! But I liked the Bengal form as well. Then the very important conversation followed. As I see now, he pointed to me the main trends of my *sadhana*. He clearly saw that I am standing at the crossroad. But the only way for me was to cross the Rubicon all by myself. That's why, I think, Nirodbaran didn't console me the way I wished: it would be like giving the wheel-chair to the warrior instead of the charger! He said I must take my scholarly work as a *sadhana*. He reminded me that I have to bring up my child. Like Dalai Lama XIV to Heinrich Harrer about his son: "You must go home and be his father"! "You ask the Mother and go on", he said. I believe he wanted to push me like the mother-cat her kitten in order to teach me how to jump the abyss. I won't forget his figure, as if forged from bronze, and cheerful, intent look, when he dramatically waved to the side of the Samadhi and shouted: "Look! Look! One day it will be in Lithuania!"

Nirodbaran always repeated the same: "ask the Mother" and "it [Force] works behind the veil". I am sure of it. In fact, there is nobody, who can explain the experiences we have. We must wait until the meaning is clear: the seeing comes from the innermost being. When I used to refer to Nirodbaran about some occult matter happening in my surroundings, he usually didn't have an answer: "*Your two letters long and short: one philosophical, psychological and the other occult (?). The latter one is mystifying and I don't really know what to make of it.*" (9 January 1997) Next time he wrote: "*I have gone through your letter, but can't make head or tail out of it.*" (8 April 2001) Nirodbaran advised to "call the Mother for help". It was a lesson for me. The intercourse between Divine and man is a secret; it is unique and must be kept for

oneself. Whatever He shows to us or enables us to do, it is done only for us, not for anybody else. This is how the Lord works in us: after unbelievable experiences, incomprehensible to the ordinary mind, He eliminates the obstacles in the same miraculous manner! And what tremendous work Sri Aurobindo and the Mother must have done for us, that we can have recourse to them without any intermediaries and still be safe in spite of evident dangers and hostile forces!

Nirodbaran once gave me another advice: “Take life as it is.” To that I gave my reply: *“I find your advice ‘to take life as it is’ superb. I understand that all the problems and their solutions on earth have their own laws and processes but the soul is free from all that indeed. And what is the soul’s next step, what a wonderful miracle would it see tomorrow? If it could only break loose, to leave behind a pity chain of past desires and notions and memories... To come to the point where the dead past does not exist any more and to become as fresh, clean, light and empty as a new born child, to be born every moment for the sake of Divine play of Sat-Chit-Ananda. To take life properly – doesn’t it mean to realise the very principle of God’s Lila and seriously to accept this invitation for play but not to take for it the unserious playful attitude or playing with serious things, which are hiding themselves behind the play.”* (1 December 1996) Today I would make this passage more clear. To take life as it is means to rise above the play of *gunas* and to participate in Lila like Arjuna on the field of Kurukshetra. The Kurukshetra battle is to be won in oneself first of all. In that respect Nirodbaran for me was and will remain forever as the most outstanding example of faith, sincerity, ardent *tapasya*, strong will and perfect stoicism.

...I took the Arabinda Basu’s advice again. I asked Nirodbaran to give me some work. He ordered me to go and make garlands of flowers for the Samadhi. “It helps”, he said. So I used to come every day and helped the other women make wonderful garlands.

I admire Nirodbaran’s activity participation in the life of the Ashram and with the spirit he evidently keeps to this day. What he is for his age, is indeed a miracle. *“Now you wish to know about me! Well, I am as you saw me last only different from your bright present and future. Of course I must not speak of the future for about it only the Guru can say. I depend on him alone for good or bad, but he is silent and quiet about it.”* (17 July 1999) “Remember my age”, he used to repeat. But this is exactly what I didn’t want to remember! It was hard to believe he would ever change, looking at his light youthful step, listening to his witty talk, feeling the radiating energy around

his strong body. I remember I met him at the Playground. That day the movie with Mel Gibson was on, 'The Brave Heart'. We were sitting together, and I was curious to know what the reverend *yogin* would think of the terrible Europeans! In spite of the fact, that the most outrageous scenes were cut out, the whole thing seemed too cruel for Ashramites, not accustomed to such rough conduct of characters: now and then they uttered a cry of horror! In the Ashram atmosphere the movie was even more improper. I was wondering how it had received the Oscars! I felt so ashamed, that I left before it finished! But it reminded me of how much cruelty is still left in a real world, especially these times of terrorism. As Nirodbaran had written to me, "The whole world is in a mud", indeed.

I noticed that days before the Darshan were running incredibly quickly and everybody was rushing about. There were about 11,000 visitors to come! At last came the 21st of February – the goal of my second visit. With the other people, after a long waiting in a killing sunlight, I had an opportunity to enter the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's rooms just for a while! But a few minutes were enough to make me feel that I had stepped into the purest place upon earth – so pure, that it is hard to believe it exists in reality. About that experience as well as about the Ashram and Auroville I've written a long article in Lithuanian press after I went back. And what struck me most was Nirodbaran. I saw him dressed in festive clothes, sitting on the floor in Sri Aurobindo's room. He was an embodiment of Obedience and Devotion – the most grand and beautiful picture of Nirodbaran I've ever seen. The Divine Servant at the feet of his Master. He looked at me, and his gaze told me everything.

Soon after I left the Ashram and Bharat. Our correspondence resumed. *"Received your letter after months. I thought you have forgotten us and the Ashram and are now attached to some other goal. But your letter speaks a different thing, reading of which I am full of joy and love for you"*, wrote Nirodbaran in 1999. In every letter, without exception, he asked when I was going to visit the Ashram again. But the only reason, which kept me from coming, was the scarcity of money. Still I *was thinking about staying at the Ashram for good; I felt it was my home, though I wasn't sure* about my son, considering his age and fragile constitution. It was still a dream. To this Nirodbaran had written that it may be possible. And in fact my "trials" didn't come to an end, yet. In Nirod's words, "Even the Avatars have to pass through ordeals. It is a test." I waited for an *adesha*. I had to know what my real purpose in this lifetime was, to know my *swabhava*. I felt I had to do something more for my homeland on a spiritual

level. He wrote, *“The Mother is here. She will pull you up. Have faith and endure. You’ll visit us in time. Go on fighting with a smile. You are Daiva, a goddess.”* Alas! Sometimes I felt myself the poorest human being in the whole world! Even my cat seemed to be better off. For how long God will keep me in obscurity, I thought. All the same, I knew inside that all this had been predestined. And the letters from Nirodbaran have helped me since I met him. *“Try to write articles us now and then for the Mother India. It will be very helpfull for all of us.”* (5 November 2000) Was it a golden key Nirodbaran handed to me? The written word has always been sacred to me. If the Mother wants me to be an instrument in that way, I’d accept it with gratitude.

Who Nirodbaran is in reality we can learn from his literary heritage. Of it, Nirodbaran’s poems are very special, an intimate field, in which his authentic spirit stretches out its subtle wings. When in his own words his “dormant love” for poetry “caught fire”, he started to compose “mystic-surrealistic” poetry, this fire being an *agni*, capable of inflaming delight and kindling a psychic flare in the readers’ hearts. I am not an expert in English verse, and can’t give an evaluation even if I were a poetess myself. Nevertheless, *Fifty Poems of Nirodbaran with Corrections & Comments by Sri Aurobindo* are my beloved ones, and, I am afraid, the doctor’s word carries in itself a “contagious response”...

“I draw from Thy Spirit’s inexhaustible source
A wealth of beauty that illumines each mood
And opens one by one the secret doors
Behind which burns the spark of Thy god-hood.”

I stay thousands of miles from the Ashram, the Service tree, the humble room, in which the most outstanding personality of our times resides: the living miracle. But the “Divine is everywhere”, and “Everything is possible”. While writing these lines Nirodbaran looks at me from the photo on my desk. His look is questioning, as if waiting for something, with a sweet smile. *“As for me you know what I am passing through – I have crossed the normal limit of age and all friends are hoping that I might reach my centenary. Well, I have left it to the Supreme authority as He decides. I now wonder the why He has kept me going. When all my usefulness seems to be at an end, and I am superfluous...”* (12 June 2000) The Lord does not put stop at the soul’s journey, because it is endless. To soar into the vastness of Infinite, Eternal, Beyond – in it lies its real end. Let us all pay homage to Nirodbaran: the Rishi, who by his splendid *siddhi* shows us the way to the bright future.

17-29 November 2002

Straipsnis parašytas R. Y. Deshpandes prašymu Nirodbarano šimtmečiui skirtai knygai *Nirodbaran: Divinity's Comrade*. Ed. Hemant Kapoor, Sri Mira trust, Pondicherry: 2004. Nirodbaranas šį pasaulį paliko 2006 metų liepos 17 dieną.