The Mother used to have meetings with some of the disciples in 1928 in the “Prosperity” Room in the Library House. Both Dyuman and I belonged to that group.

Once the Mother raised the question: “Who among you has progressed the most during the past year?”

The answer would not mean which sadhak or sadhika was the most advanced in general. It would declare which one had taken the most marked step forward during the preceding twelve months.

While recollecting this question, I turned to Dyuman and asked whether it had struck in his memory too. He said “Yes”. Then I asked him whether he recalled the answer. He looked at me but kept quiet. I smiled and said: “We thought of Nolini, Amrita, Champaklal, Pavitra and Anilbaran, all old timers. But the Mother named you.” Dyuman’s face beamed and he exclaimed: “So you remember this?”

I replied: “Who could forget so great a compliment?”

— Amal Kiran

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Dyuman-da or Dyumanbhai, as he was popularly known, was one of the sadhaks who moulded himself in the light of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. His life is an example of selfless and relentless work in Their service. Let us pay our respect to him on his centenary on 19th June 2003, and remember him in fondness and be grateful for all that he has done for Them and for us.

Krishna Chakravarti completed her Higher Course from the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education in 1966. She was assigned to work at the Central Office by the Mother and continues to work there today. From 1969 to 1992 she was in regular contact with Dyumanbhai, who was closely connected to the Central Office. Her reminiscences are partly based on How They Came to Sri Aurobindo and The Mother (Volume I) by Shyam Kumari.

Occasionally, late at night, one would observe an interesting and amusing sight inside the Ashram main building. The Mother would call from Her room on the first floor, “Dyuman!” Instantly, a man in his early thirties would rush out of his room below with a ladder in his hands, place it near the open terrace of his room, climb it and announce, “Yes, Mother. I am here.” He did this so he would not lose time using the staircase (which was further away from his room) and then cross the corridor to reach the Mother. Should one keep the Divine waiting! The Mother would ask him some questions or give him some instructions and he would climb down the ladder, go back to his room, and carry out Her wishes. Thus was the magnitude of his devotion, dedication and urge to serve.

Chunibhai Desaibhai Patel was known as Dyuman — the luminous one — the name given to him by Sri Aurobindo. The Mother found him to be a wonderful worker when She met him for the first time. He joined the Ashram at the age of twenty-four (in 1927) and till his passing at the age of eighty-nine, he assisted, managed, and laboured for its growth and prosperity. This devotion was reflected clearly in a letter written by Sri Aurobindo in 1936 when replying to an inmate of the Ashram: “If Dyuman and a few others had not made themselves the instruments of the Mother and helped her to reorganise the whole material side of the Ashram, the Ashram would have collapsed long ago under the weight of mismanagement, waste, self-indulgence, disorder, chaotic self-will and disobedience. He and they faced unpopularity and hatred in order to help her to save it.”

He came from Gujarat, the land where the Narmada, one of the seven holy rivers flows and meets the sea. During the formative years of the Ashram, many sadhaks including Champaklalji, Puraniji and Pujalalji flocked around Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to further their *tapasya* for attainment to Supramental yoga and also laid the foundation of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother’s vast and daring work. Dyuman, the *karmayogi*, was one of the pillars on whose selfless work and faithfulness the Ashram grew to its present stature.

Born on 19th June 1903 in Napada village near Anand, Gujarat, at the age of eight he was called away from school and married to Kashi-ba, also eight. When he was eleven, he realized that his life was not to be an ordinary one, but was meant for something higher. Since then, an unknown force guided his life. He was restless and kept searching for something without knowing what it was or where to find it. He travelled all over the country, went to Shantiniketan and Belurmath and when he came back home, he also met Gandhiji. He also came to know Lele, but his thirst was not quenched. Little did he know then that his destiny lay south, beyond the Vindhyas, on the eastern shore of India, in a small town under French rule, lulled by the chant of the blue waters of the Bay of Bengal.

Bhakti-ba, a relative of Kamalaben, was aware of
Chunibhai’s restlessness. When she returned after visiting Pondicherry, she told him, “Your place is not here with us, but at the feet of Aravinda Babu in Pondicherry.” Chunibhai forgot everything else — even Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, whom he revered — only one name filled his whole being: Pondicherry. He had heard of Sri Aurobindo in 1920 and had already started reading Aryan, and The Secret of the Veda. In his school, his boy-scout troop was called “Aravinda troop.” Finally, Bhakti-ba got permission from Sri Aurobindo and arranged for his journey to Pondicherry. Chunibhai and his wife Kashi-ba reached Pondicherry on 11th July 1924.

They both had the Darshan of Sri Aurobindo in the Library House. Chunibhai told Him that he had come here for Yoga and Sri Aurobindo talked to him about it for about an hour. His ears heard every word and in his heart Chunibhai replied, “You are my all. This is my life, this is my home.” Kashi-ba offered her gold bangles at the feet of Sri Aurobindo. One offered his life and the other her precious possession. That was the end of Chunibhai’s search. At last he had found his home — his Guru — his life’s fulfillment.

They went back to Gujarat after two months. Chunibhai wrote to Sri Aurobindo every week seeking the Guru’s permission to stay permanently in the Ashram. The long wait finally ended when he came to the Ashram permanently in May 1927. He left behind his parents, his wife, and the non-cooperation movement of Gandhiji. He even left his fight for the freedom of India. The moment he joined the Ashram, he no longer felt the pull of all his old connections.

He met the Mother for the first time in 1927. Her remark to Sri Aurobindo was, “He will go very far.” She asked him to help Satyen in serving rice in the Dining Room in the main building of the Ashram — that was 22nd May 1927, and till his passing on 19th August 1992, his close connection with the Dining Room remained uninterrupted. It grew deeper and closer as he treated the workers there as his close family members. The Mother accepted him as Her close attendant — a faithful, dependable worker. On his part, he had already accepted Her in 1924 as the Mother, even though he had not even met Her!

This was the beginning of a close association between the Mother and Her child, Dyuman. Sri Aurobindo had given him that name on 24th November 1928 based on his request earlier that year. His only aim in life became to serve Her. Yoga was far away, but through his work, he started understanding the yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. That is why one day the Mother told him, “You do my work and I will do yours” — meaning his sadhana. In those early years, the emphasis was on discipline and work. No sadhak could talk to another without informing Her. So when Kashi-ba came in 1930, the Mother asked him not to talk to her. He obeyed and met her only once in the presence of the Mother when she went to Her for pranam before leaving Pondicherry.

The Mother asked him to keep two notebooks. One was to note down his daily inner movements and the other was about the details of daily work. One was given to Her at noon and the other at night. One day the Mother asked him if it was necessary to keep these diaries. He replied, “Not necessary, Mother.” She instructed him to inform Her whenever any difficulty arose. That was the end of his writing the diaries. The external need was over. Henceforth, his inner guide would guide him. She gave him a picture of Her taken in Japan and told him to meditate in front of it before opening the Dining Room door in the morning and before closing the door at night.

His inner contact with the Mother was such that he could draw her out of the deepest trance. This I was told by Udar in connection with the last hours of Sri Aurobindo. The Mother had gone away to rest sometime before the end was expected, so that Sri Aurobindo might have a passage free of the Mother’s constant inevitable impulse to prevent him from his contemplated self-sacrifice to effect a radical step forward for the earth-consciousness. Dyuman was sent to call her inwardly out of her trance into which she had gone in the interval — between her leaving Sri Aurobindo’s side and his taking his last breath. Without a whisper or a touch he is said to have informed her of the need to go back to Sri Aurobindo’s room.

— Amal Kiran
His passion for gardening began when along with others he participated in a flower exhibition at the Pondicherry Botanical Garden in 1930. The people of Pondicherry were surprised to see the size of the carnations and discovered that these men of the Ashram were not making bombs but were engaged in growing flowers! It was at that time that the Mother asked them to get a sapling of a Service tree from the Botanical Garden. Manibhai, Ambubhai and Dyuman-da planted it at the place indicated by the Mother. They watered it and took care of it. Planted in 1930, the tree still stands high and mighty in all its majesty over the Samadhi — proud, protective and undaunted. From then on, he started his double work of Dining Room and gardening and this was soon followed by numerous errands as the Mother slowly started putting more confidential work into his trustworthy hands.

In the Dining Room, which was then located in the Ashram main building, the cooking was done by servants under the guidance of an inmate. When Tara-di and Lila-di joined the Ashram, they proposed to the Mother that they would cook for the inmates. Later they took charge of Datta’s kitchen, which came to be known as Sri Aurobindo and Mother’s kitchen and was managed by Dyuman-da. He would carry Their food upstairs — a service that could only be done by a punyatma. When the fruit room had a cold chamber, he arranged to get fruits from various parts of the country to have an uninterrupted supply for Them. The Dining Room was shifted to its present building on 4th January 1934. Life went on smoothly in Their service but the strain started with World War II. More and more people joined the Ashram and the money was not enough. Dyuman-da was worried. How to feed so many! One day, as he was walking down Gandhi Road and thinking about the funds, he was taken in his subtle body to visit Kubera’s treasures and realized that everything was there — he need not worry. Somehow or the other, the funds would come and the needs of the Ashram would be provided for.

Once in 1937-38, the Mother gave him a piece of Her jewellery and asked him to sell it as an inmate was in dire need of some money. That was the first time, but it was not to be the last! Soon, selling Her jewellery became one source of income for the Ashram to maintain the numerous devotees who had started pouring in. The Mother gave Her ornaments — the timepiece given by Her grandmother, the Durga crown, which She did not want to sell but had to because of adverse circumstances, and even her pearl necklace, which She was in the habit of wearing on Darshan days. However, She wanted to know whom these were given to as they carried a special aura and power and any mishandling would be disastrous for those who had bought them. She warned them against misuse. Dyuman-da became Her instrument for such work. Soon Her jewellery coffer became empty.

Her next step was to sell Her saris. That disturbed Dyuman-da a lot and he protested as Her children embroidered most of them for their loving Mother. But She insisted on selling them in one lot to a single person. The saris were brought out and Vasudhaben wept on seeing them. But who could imagine the play of Dyuman-da! He collected the amount that the Mother wanted from a disciple who was close to him, took away the saris and kept them in his room! The generous disciple did not want the saris even though they were paid for. However, he requested Dyuman-da to sell them piece-by-piece and offer the proceeds to the Mother.

The Mother also used to distribute saris to inmates and devotees who were present before each Darshan. Once She wished to give Her own saris to Her children but alas, the remaining saris were not enough. When Dyuman-da heard about this, he told Her that Her wish would be fulfilled and brought nearly 500 saris from his room from the lot that was supposed to have been sold! What joy, what inner fulfillment he must have felt to be an instrument to execute Her wish! Not only this, but no one really knows how many of Her wishes he fulfilled. For example, She once saw a blue Ford V8 car and wished to have a similar one. Dyuman-da collected the required amount from a friend and bought an exact replica of the car She wanted. But was he satisfied with this? No! She must have something better; so he again collected money from some friends and bought a Humber for Her. The Mother used that car till 1952. Imagine how closely he was connected with those devotees staying far away from
Pondicherry that they immediately gave — in cash or in kind — whatever he wanted for the Mother, without a question or a doubt crossing their mind. The trust they had in him only reflected the trust the Divine Mother had in him. If Hanuman was the Dasa of Rama, then truly, Dyuman-da was no less a Dasa of the Mother.

The work to clean Sri Aurobindo's room was given to Dyuman-da, as Pavitra-da was unable to do it because of his knee problem. Dyuman-da cleaned Sri Aurobindo's room for five years and never even glanced at Him as that was the Mother's instruction and he obeyed it. Once he had to repair the beams of Sri Aurobindo’s room as some bees had made holes in them. He had to climb a ladder, clean the beams with a vacuum cleaner, and seal them without dropping anything on Sri Aurobindo, who was lying on the bed directly below the beams. Surely that must have been the toughest work in his life-long service! And he was aware that the Mother had put him to test; he did his work to Her satisfaction.

The Ashram started growing rapidly with the School, Playground and many other departments. Dyuman-da's activities also increased; other than his regular work, he now also had the additional responsibilities of a trustee. The Mother created the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust on 1st May 1955 and She made Dyuman-da one of the Founder Trustees. She gave each of the four trustees the flower “Divine’s Love” on the first day and the next day, She gave each of them the flower “Faithfulness.” It was a duty he discharged till the end even though the other Founder Trustees had long since passed away. He had to stay, for that was the Mother’s wish and She wrote it on his Birthday card in 1972:

“To Dyuman
Bonne Fête
And a long, long, long life of happy and remarkably useful life.
With love and blessings...”

For February 29, 1960, the first recurrence of the leap year after the Supramental Manifestation, Dyuman-da decided that the entire celebrations would be in golden colour. We were given golden-coloured dresses, the saris had a golden border, the Meditation Hall was decorated with golden satin curtains and the lights glowed golden. Her room was spread with golden satin. On the first floor corridor, he spread golden satin so She could walk on it to the Balcony Darshan. Her dress had gold buttons, and the cutlery She used was of a golden hue. She distributed gold-coated symbols to the Ashramites. The whole Ashram vibrated with a golden aura; truly a dreamland on earth! In the evening, the Service Tree was decorated with coloured lamps; in the quietness of the night, they glowed golden — a fairyland — a wonderland in the universe! She asked him, “Why do you want to do all this?” His reply was that even if the vibration touched one soul, he would be happy and fulfilled. Then the Mother asked, “And if I ask you to sell all these things off later?” His immediate reply without any hesitation was, “Yes, Mother I will do it.” A detached, unsentimental, disinterested worker.

One day when he saw that the Mother wanted to lie down after coming back from the Playground in the evening, he was worried. She must have a room of Her own. The Mother hesitated. Finally, She agreed to have one constructed on the second floor with money he would collect from his friends. She shifted to Her new room on 9th December 1953, but slowly, even that room turned into Her working place when She retired there in 1962.

That was not the end of his untiring endeavour. He found out that a parcel of land near the Lake was up for sale. Once again he collected funds from his friends so that the Ashram could purchase the land. Here his normal life pattern changed again. Until now his responsibilities included looking after the Mother, the Dining Room, the Granary, going to the market to buy vegetables for Dining Room, the store, etc. Now he had to look after a farm. His dream was to grow vegetables and fruits without chemical fertilizers because the Mother was against its use. So how could he give Her food that was grown with chemical fertilizers? His life was simple because he had a single, one-pointed aim — to serve Them in whatever way he could.

He was a visionary and never stepped back for fear of overwork or paucity of funds to give shape to his vision. It was his idea to make the documentary film “Sri Aurobindo Ashram — Four Chapters.” It was filmed by

The Strength of Dyuman’s character is his essential straightness of aim, fidelity to the highest he sees and intensity of will to receive the Light and serve the Truth.
— Sri Aurobindo, 10-4-1934
Ajit Bose and was displayed in many centres of the Ashram. Where the money came from, no one knew, and neither did anyone need to know. The immense archival value of the documentary can never be measured. It is a treasure for future generations as it shows some of the activities of the Mother in real life. His preparation for the centenary of Sri Aurobindo in 1972 started many years in advance and he got a steam boiler in 1967 for the Dining Room, which was well geared to cater to innumerable visitors who came for the celebration. For the second time in the history of the Ashram, the Service Tree glowed with coloured lamps in the evening:

There showered upon the floating atmosphere
Colours and lights and evanescent gleams
That called to follow into a magic heaven,
...

He personally arranged the celebrations of the Mother’s centenary in 1978 and saw to it that the Dining Room met its requirements. The distribution process went on till the evening. Among other things, the most prized possession was a folder containing the pieces of cloth worn by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. He single-handedly managed the distributions and did not require any support or help from others. It was his work and he must perform it — the body must serve. The body obeyed his spirit in harmony and bliss.

Once when Indira Gandhi, then the Prime Minister of India, spent one night in the Ashram main building, she stayed on the first floor in Pavitra-da’s room. A sentry was posted there on guard duty, but Dyuman-da sent him away and did the duty himself all through the night, all-watchful and guarding the Prime Minister.

April 4th, 1985 was approaching — the 75th anniversary of Sri Aurobindo’s coming to Pondicherry. Dyuman-da thought it would be a good idea if we could visit the room in Sankar Chetty house where Sri Aurobindo was staying at the time. However, the house belonged to someone not connected with the Ashram. This did not daunt Dyuman-da. He approached the owner who gladly agreed to his suggestion. The Ashramites and devotees had the opportunity to pay their respects to the Lord in His room where He stayed on 4th April 1910.

Dyuman-da could do all this and many other things because he had the conviction, the courage, and the indomitable spirit and trust in the Divine as his assistants. Service, only to serve, was his motto. No going to the Playground for him — no cinema; no cultural activity of any kind. From early morning till late at night, he was occupied with various kinds of work. They too had such confidence and trust in him! Once when the Ashram was passing through a critical financial crisis Sri Aurobindo was asked what He would do if He had to feed five hundred people. He simply replied, “Why, I will send them to Dyuman!”

The Mother tested him but also played with him! In 1934 She asked him to go to Her kitchen and tell Lila-di and others that it was his birthday. That day they cooked eleven dishes and since then something special is always served in the Dining Room on his birthday. For a person who never joined Group (physical activities), the Mother called him to the Playground on one of his birthdays. She made him sit on the hands of two men and they carried him around the ground and She stood in front of the map of undivided India and Pranab-da greeted him by saying, “Bonne Fête to Dyuman!” This continued till 1958 when the Mother retired from Playground activities.

Dyuman-da was so selfless in his service to Her! She used to give books or other items to people on their birthdays but he never got anything. During the napkin or message distribution, he used to stand by Her side and hand over the items to Her one by one. But he never got any! He never asked for these nor did he feel any resentment for not receiving them. She would often say, “You don’t care to have these things.” And Dyuman-da’s answer always was, “Yes, Mother, as long as you are there I don’t care.” Yes, She gave him things. Once She gave him a picture of Ganesh and wrote behind it, “Let him become your generous friend.” Another time, She took his right hand in Hers and said, “Lakshmi is your friend.” And truly, how he assisted, managed, and laboured for the growth and prosperity of the Ashram. He never wasted money and tried to put a stop to wasteful spending, and naturally, faced criticism and opposition. A letter written by Sri Aurobindo on March 6th, 1932 proves how priceless his actions were: “Your spirit of economy is very precious and extremely helpful to us, the more so as it is rare in the Ashram where the push conscious or subconscious is towards the other extreme.”

Years passed by in the service of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. As a trustee, he continued his usual work. He would bring food to the Mother three times a day, visit the granary and the Dining Room early in the morning, go to the market to buy vegetables for the Dining Room, visit the gardens, look after the Mother’s store, vacuum...
the 1st floor, look after Her kitchen, etc. When Amrita-da left his body in 1969, the added responsibility of the Central Office also fell on him. When the Mother retired completely in 1973, the monetary affairs of the Ashram fell on him. He worked relentlessly. When She left Her body, he saw to it that things continued without a break and remained as they had been during Her time. A disruption anywhere would damage the core of the Ashram.

Work increased with the passing away of Nolini-da and Pradyut-da. The devotees who were associated with them found in him their loving, caring, elder brother. Each additional work got adjusted to his already busy daily schedule as if time stretched itself out to accommodate his spirit. His gait, his look, his talk never showed any sign of stress or strain, or hurry — his body adjusted that much. He had had a nervous breakdown in 1934. When he recovered, the Mother asked him to put on Pavitra-da’s hat and walk in the midday sun every day. Sometime back I came across some of his letters of earlier years written to the Mother about his failing health. I wonder by what method or in what manner he changed that failing physical body to acquire tenacity and stature of uninterrupted service. It must be the physical aspiration of a Karmayogi to change the capacity of the body by selfless work in Their service.

The Ashram was growing at a fast rate. More and more devotees started coming. He kept in touch with some of them through letters. Often, just a few lines, but that was sufficient to keep their contact with the Ashram. On the eve of Darshan, or on Darshan Day, after distribution late at night one would find him sitting with just a dhoti on, his upper body bare, deeply engrossed in writing letters. The Karmayogi at work. We would often complain about his late night work. He would be up very early in the morning, go throughout the day without even a short break, meet visitors and not neglect his daily routine, and go on past midnight. This was too much for us. But not for him. Devotees in India and abroad would be waiting eagerly for Darshan messages and blessings packets. How could he while away time in sleep or rest! That was the magnitude of his consideration.

Once on his early morning rounds, his all-watchful eyes picked up a cycle without a seat cover near the Ashram. He watched for a few days and then concluded that the person might be coming early in the morning to serve Nolini-da or to work at the Samadhi. It did not matter if he did not even know the name of the person. He got a seat cover and had it put on the cycle. On enquiry, the bewildered person found out that it was Dyuman-da’s idea. At the Theatre, participants used to have their dinner in aluminium dishes. He happened to see this just once. The next time, they had dinner in stainless steel dishes. He moved fast, without wasting time in pondering and dillydallying. The entire Ashram was his family. He would drop in at homes unannounced or uninvited, but not unexpectedly — especially on birthdays. Does anyone invite a family member?! Never. So it was with him. He was so informal and very close to one and all.

As Pondicherry was becoming over-populated, the rent of houses was also shooting up considerably. He moved at once. “We must have our own houses. We can’t be at the mercy of the house owners.” By that time the financial position of the Ashram had improved. Funds were available for buildings. Thus the projects of New Creation, Park Guest House and others began. In the afternoon after finishing the cash work and signing of money orders, clad in dhoti and a white coat on his fatua, sunglasses on and a hat on his head, he would stride to the car waiting for him and drive off to the new construction sites before pushing off to Gloria — his dream farm. He would be back in the evening, sign the receipts of donations received, take his meagre dinner lovingly served by Swarno-di, and then would help inmates with their problems, or talk to devotees wanting to hear some words. In the dead of night, he would read or write letters not only in reply to the ones he had received, but would drop two lines to someone he remembered in the day and enclose a Blessings packet. And it often happened that the person was remembering him or had some difficulty and was in dire need of Blessings from the Mother! He had so much joy in giving; perhaps as much as the person who was receiving!

But that was not to be in his relationship with Kashi-ba. She settled down in Pondicherry in the eighties.
Dyuman-da made it clear to her that she should not expect any special consideration from him. She stayed in a room given by Ambapremiji and was looked after by Ashokbhai. There was hardly any communication between them.

Dyuman-da was a poet at heart. He would not express his feelings in writing but would share the joy with others by calling them up to the first floor of the Ashram main building, and from the corridor window would show them the palm tree with fresh new green leaves sprouting. The beauty of it could not be seen from the courtyard. When the Service tree would be in full bloom, he would say the scenery was ethereal from Ravindraji’s terrace on a full moon night! Or so often, he would describe the beauty of the Kadamba tree covered with golden “Supra-mental Sun” at the Gloria land.

When the Managing Trustee, Counoumaji’s health began deteriorating in the 1980s, Dyuman-da got more involved in the day-to-day running of the Ashram. He consulted his colleagues and took decisions — always unassumingly, with no show of power or position — with the same attitude of serving Them by serving the Ashramites and devotees. He became the Managing Trustee after Counoumaji left his body in 1991. A huge responsibility indeed. For one who had served Them from the age of twenty-four, it was a culmination of Their faith and trust in him.

Now, devotees began demanding or requesting him to visit their place. He visited Orissa and Bengal to be with them, be a part of their celebrations. His health was failing. However, he had a wonderful way of curing too. Give the body a rest and he would be up serving. Even when he would be admitted to the Nursing Home, he would sit up and sign the receipts or discuss the work. Work was his food and not his daily meal.

His next big assignment was to celebrate the golden jubilee of the School in 1993. He met Paru-di and Pranab-da to discuss the celebrations. It was his brainchild. He moved quickly to collect the addresses of ex-students. We did have the celebrations. But alas, without him. He left his body the year before.

Did nothing upset him or ever disturb him? Yes, occasionally. I have seen him pass through these phases. He had a wonderful method of coming out of these spells. He would sleep not only at night, but also throughout the day. I have seen him sleeping more than twenty-four hours and when he would get up, he would be his own self — the hurt or the disturbance vanishing as if it did not exist at all.

Though he looked very strict and stoic, in his heart he was like a child. He had a child-like trust in people. His room was never locked. It could be used by anyone to keep their mats or cushions for sitting in the Ashram or their books before going to the Group, anything at all. They would just walk in — even if he was sitting or sleeping — keep or take their things and go out. There was no need to ask or take his permission. At nights he would sleep on the first floor with just a mat and a pillow, as was his habit since the Mother’s time.

Once on the eve of his birthday in 1992, he was presented with a new pair of Dhotis. He was overjoyed. “Two new Dhotis! I will wear them both!” He did so. After a few days he told me it was the first time in his life he had changed clothes during the day. Till the end he washed his own clothes. His life-style was so simple — in his entire life he had very little need of material things. But his inner gains who could measure? That happened to be his last birthday.

The most striking and admirable aspect of his personality was his attitude of clinging to the Mother, come what may. Often he would say that whatever happens or whatever one does follow one thing — never leave the Mother, cling to Her. He would give a very beautiful and touching image: a toddler clings to the sari of his mother, never letting her go — following her wherever she goes — even if the mother had scolded him for doing something wrong. The toddler would cling to her sari crying his heart out, but would never let her be away from him. That was the way one should cling to the Divine Mother. It was the most important lesson I learnt from him. He was a workaholic. He would say, “When I die and
am put in the funeral pyre, you will burn my body but my soul would jump out of the flame and take birth immediately to be able to serve the Mother.” That was the karmayogi from the Narmada Valley.

He was a Siddha Purusha too. Did he have a premonition of his death? In a diary in his office, Dyuman-da used to note down the daily amount received for Dining Room expenses. As he would be very busy before Darshan, he used to note the amount in advance for the next few days, as the sum given was a fixed one. In August 1992, a few days before Darshan, he told me he had filled up the amount in advance in the diary. On the evening of 14th August, his talk was broadcast by All India Radio Pondicherry. His voice was resonant and young — not the voice of an eighty-nine-year-old man at all. The speech stirred everyone who heard it. The Darshan on 15th August went on till late afternoon. Dyuman-da distributed Darshan messages all day. The next day he had fever, but he refused to go to the Nursing Home. There were many devotees who had come from out-of-town and wanted to see him. He attended the funeral of Ichcha-di. The next morning, he was persuaded to go to the Nursing Home. He walked to the car by himself. The next day, we went to him with some work. He attended to that. He also did office work on the 19th, and then suddenly left his body in the evening. At the end of the month, I took out the daily diary to work on the accounts. To my disbelief, it was filled up to 19th August! Was it a premonition or a coincidence? Or was it Ichchamrityu? I remember vividly my last meeting with him on 19th August. He was sitting on his bed, we discussed office work, and then I left. But before closing the door of his room, I looked back. He was sitting on his bed looking in my direction, and with both his hands, he was doing namaste. I was surprised and thought I had seen wrong. But that night when the news of his passing reached me, I realized it was not a hallucination — he was bidding me adieu.

He must have heard the Mother call “Dyuman” from the other world and must have immediately rushed up that invisible ladder that connects this world with Hers and said “Yes Mother, I am here.” All ready to be at Her service there.

**IMMORtALITY**

We renounce ourselves in order to find ourselves; for in the mental life there is only a seeking, but never an ultimate finding till mind is overpassed. Therefore there is behind all our mentality a perfection of ourselves which appears to us as an antinomy and contrast to what we are. For here we are a constant becoming; there we possess our eternal being. Here we conceive of ourselves as a changeful consciousness developed and always developing by a hampered effort in the drive of Time; there we are an immutable consciousness of which Time is not the master but the instrument as well as the field of all that it creates and watches. Here we live in an organisation of mortal consciousness which takes the form of a transient world; there we are liberated into the harmonies of an infinite self-seeing which knows all world in the light of the eternal and immortal. The Beyond is our reality; that is our plenitude; that is the absolute satisfaction of our self-existence. It is immortality and it is “That Delight”.

Here in our imprisoned mentality the ego strives to be master and possessor of its inner field and its outer environment, yet cannot hold anything to enjoy it, because it is not possible really to possess what is not-self to us. But there in the freedom of the eternal our self-existence possesses without strife by the sufficient fact that all things are itself. Here is the apparent man, there the real man, the Purusha: here are gods, there is the Divine: here is the attempt to exist, Life flowering out of an all-devouring death, there Existence itself and a dateless immortality.

— Sri Aurobindo (Kena Upanishad)