

# Pranab da: The Uttar Sadhak

Sri Ananda Reddy  
Pondicherry

Namaskar! Its been very long since I spoke to you! Indeed I often miss the Odissi audience for their rapt and devoted attention when listening to some one speaking on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother! I was once told by a participant that you capture more the vibrations of love for the Mother in the speaker more than the words and the sound-expressions from the speaker, be it in Odissi or Bengali or English! It has been almost 15 years since I came to Orissa, and this year I was planning to come to you and meet you all but it seems God disposed for I am now indisposed and cannot make the journey to Cuttack!

Well, I am now being given five minutes to reach you on the mobile and to tell you a bit about Pranab da! I shall try to do the impossible, for how can I capture in minutes what Dada has done for many births, past and present?

I had come to the Ashram in 1958 and then the only name that was predominant in the atmosphere of the Ashram, apart from that of the Mother, was that of Pranab-da or Dada! I remember seeing Dada every time with the Mother and my early childhood impressions were that he was a great man who stood for truth, for the justice, one who was fearless and was very powerful, especially in the PED! So we, the kids, used to be a little afraid of him because whenever we did something wrong we knew that Dada would really catch us in our mistakes... And, in fact there was a joke in those times that when somebody was being chased by a dog, he ran for a few steps and then he stopped, turned around and said, "*Dada ko bol dega*"( I will tell Dada! ) he thought that even the dog would be afraid of Dada and he would be protected by Dada!

We used to be not only frightened of Dada but we knew that he was our protector, our inner conscience. So we used to love him on one side and on the other side we used to be afraid of him. So that was our beloved Dada.

And of course I remember him playing tennis with the Mother. I watched him many times playing at Her side and gently assisting and making Her play rather than himself play for his own entertainment! He carried a nobleness around him, a confidence of inner power and outer strength for indeed he was the body guard of the Mother. I do remember him very clearly walking behind the Mother as She entered the Playground with a royal pace. I remember very well that unforgettable scene; it is etched on my soul! We, the group members, used to stand on both sides of the Playground gate when Dada and the Mother entered it. They were marching towards the Mother's room in the

Playground. Dada would be always striding a couple of feet behind the Mother. Some of you, who have witnessed this march, may remember that the Mother used to walk very fast, even in her advanced age of 80 or so! Dada walking behind Her was a real picture of lion accompanying Durga!

Dada was really a very mysterious figure for us, the children. A man with a glowing face, a personality that did not tolerate untruth or falsehood, a man much loved and honoured even by the Mother for did She not celebrate his birthday in a grand manner? For us 18th October was a red letter day in our calendar, apart from the main four Darshan days. We used to prepare gifts for him on his birthday, look forward to the celebrity lunch at the Corner House...we breathed a very special air on that day. We did a lot of extra things for him: but he did nothing out of the way on that day. Dada remained same, uninfluenced or untouched by the celebrations: he had the same smile and gentleness which he normally carried. His white shorts and shirt carrying a rose given by the Mother, was the same as every day! Of course he would be very thankful in his attitude to all the children. He was an enigma to us... Why was he so very special even in the eyes of the Mother? We could not understand.

It is only much later that as we grew up we came to know why the Mother really took to him as Her body guard. It was long after that a deeper understanding of him came to my mind. After finishing my Higher Course in the Ashram School in 1969, I left for Auroville and then to Hyderabad to pursue higher education. It was only when I returned to the Ashram in 1981 and joined the Physical Education Department and worked with Dada that I really came to know who Dada was in his inner being. But in 1981 when I joined Dada's department one day he gave me the greatest privilege that was to show his personal diary ,a diary which he had not shown to many people in fact very few people have seen this personal diary and there I saw with my own eyes what Mother had written about him, his role and how because of him She is still continuing to exist in the physical body, I can still feel the tremor that I had in my body when I touched that diary, the most sacred diary .so I was very fortunate that Dada showed me his wonderful sacred diary . He was so very generous and kind in confiding in me by showing me his very personal diary in which the Mother had written many confidential things to him. In the gap of these long years, since I had left the Ashram and Auroville, my own understanding of deeper things of spirituality had improved and I could understand somewhat why the Mother had written to him "To thee chosen by my love when the time has come to begin my work at the most material level". Dada was the person who was really chosen by the Mother for Her own work of physical transformation. As most of us know, even when Dada had come to the Ashram in 1945 or so, the Mother has said that his body was already prepared for the transformation. So, I feel that his was a body that has been prepared since many births for the supramental transformation. He had surrendered his body for this exclusive work of the Mother.

In fact, very interestingly, in the year 1980 I had a dream in which I saw Dada's body had many points of golden cells – cells that were transformed, all luminous and golden in hue. They were spread all over his body. When I told Dada about my dream, he confirmed it but then he said there is a lot more work needs to be done and that until the whole work is done nothing is done! So that was the man who had really quietly done his supramental integral yoga and he never bragged about his achievements. He came quietly, did his inner work quietly. His external being was almost a camouflage of his inner work: no one could have guessed that the person who was seen always smiling and chatting and telling stories to young and old was really engaged in the extremely serious business of physical transformation. Nor could anyone have guessed that he was well stationed in his psychic being for it was the Mother who had given him the gift of the psychic realization in the 1960s!

This question of Mother choosing him is relevant also because, as all of us know, when Sri Aurobindo left his body it was but natural, I use the word 'natural', that the Mother would also leave her body instantly because of Their absolute identity on the psychic level. But She had promised to Sri Aurobindo to continue His work and to complete it. So She called Dada and told that he should not leave Her unaccompanied even for a moment, not even for a single moment! So Dada sleeplessly and tirelessly he remained as a shadow to the Mother during those critical days and saw to it that the Mother really stayed back upon the earth for sake of humanity. So you can see how Dada acted like a physical anchor for keeping the Mother tied to Her physical body! It is but for Dada we can say now, that The Mother would have left Her body along with Sri Aurobindo. We owe Dada much in what he did in this hour of crisis!

He himself wrote somewhere that he was the *uttar sadhak*, that is, one who continues the work of the guru after the guru has left his or her body. Indeed he continued Her work in the physical transformation and at the same time he seems to have been the last bastion or scaffolding in the Mother's building of the Ashram.

He had come a long way before becoming her *uttar sadhak*! It was in 1934 that for the first time Dada had seen the pictures of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in his house. As he later narrated, he was surprised to see in the temple of *chandimandap* the photographs of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and in the beginning he had not liked it. He said to himself: 'How can there be photos of two human beings, however great they maybe, in *chandimandap*?' But then, slowly, after a few days, he started liking Them or was it that he started to recognise Them from his previous births, and started even putting flowers on the photos of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The flowers that he used to put were the kamini flowers. Later, after coming to the Ashram, he came to know that the Mother had named the kamini flower: "At peace in the vital, the result of abolition of desire".

I personally feel that towards the end his life Dada had achieved an absolute peace in his whole being, not only in the vital but the physical and the other parts of the being. When he chose to leave his body on 8<sup>th</sup> of January this year, I went to see him in the office of the PED where I had chatted with him for long hours. But somehow when I went to see his body I did not at all see death on his face. It was really glowing. The face was really glowing in a mellow gold colour. There was tremendous peace and there was benevolence on his face. It was as if he had really conquered death on some level of this being. I have also seen many people in the Ashram who have passed away. But Dada's body was very different. It was as if death had not touched him. It was he himself who had chosen to leave the body in order to continue the Mother's work on a different level.

So this is what I feel that he really was: a great soldier of the Mother's work. He was the very leader of all the soldiers of the Mother's work. He was indeed one of those apostles of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother who have really grasped the new consciousness and anchored it in the earth consciousness. I feel that sadhaks like Nolini da, Champaklal ji, Pavitra da have really succeeded in implanting the great supramental consciousness in human consciousness and it is because of that that today we can all speak so very confidently about the supramental force working upon earth. And I feel that the work of these apostles is very important because the Mother and Sri Aurobindo too require some human agency so that the new consciousness and power brought down by Them is engraved upon human consciousness.

Pranab da or Dada was in my understanding one of those intimate agencies of the supramental work for the earth. We really miss him, and at same time I do not miss him today because I always feel that he is around us helping all in their fight for truth and justice and order and discipline on the physical level. My first impression of him remains the last one in my heart: a beautiful slave of god marching along side with the Divine in Her work upon earth. May the peace that he achieved in his passing – a peace of union with the Divine – pervade the Ashram and all other institutions and people close to his heart.

*An edited transcription of a telephonic talk on 7<sup>th</sup> March, 2010, to the delegates of 40<sup>th</sup> All Orissa Sri Aurobindo Study Circle Conference at Matrubhaban, Cuttack.*