

MOTHER INDIA

Managing Editor:
K. R. PODDAR

FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW

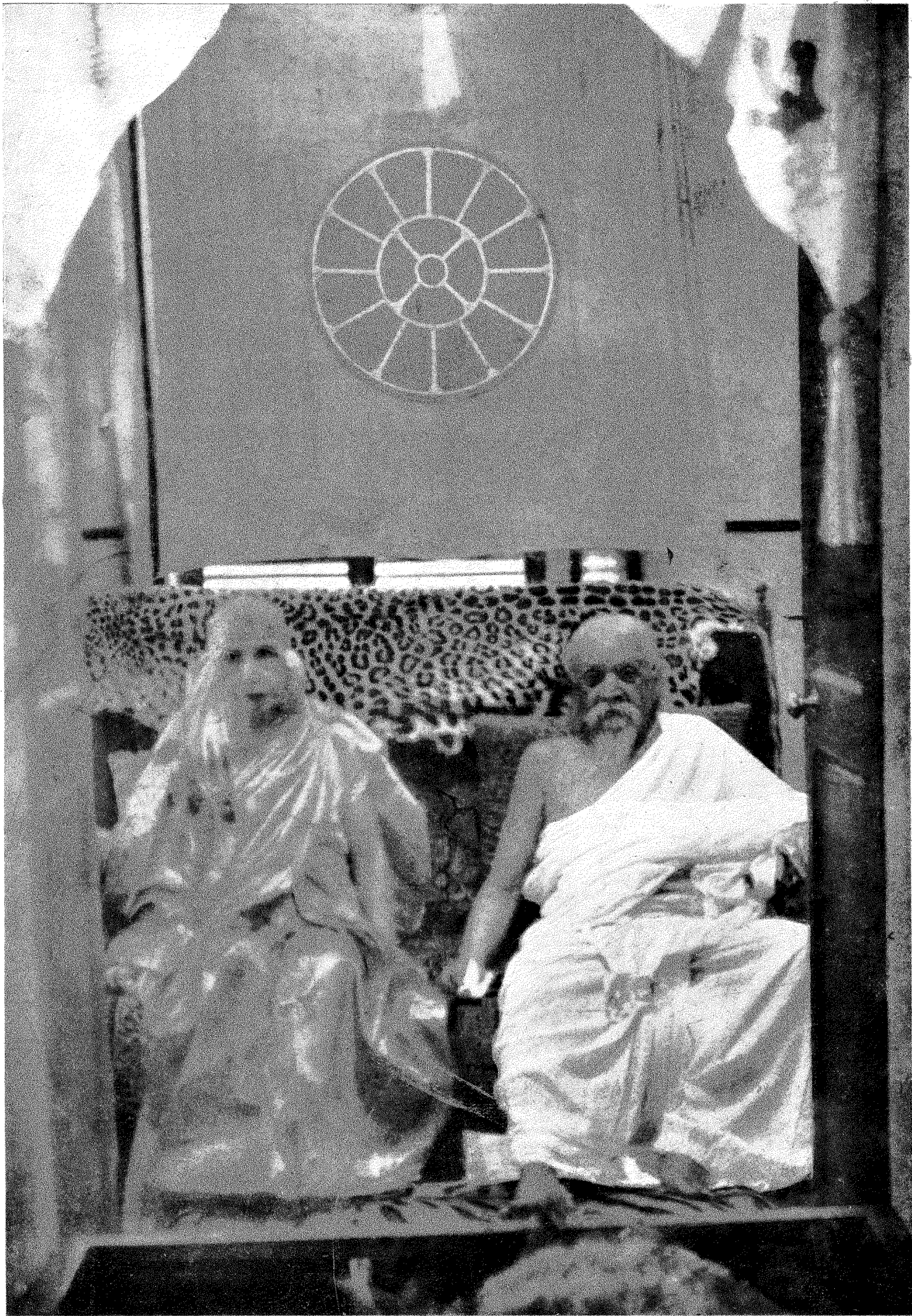
Editor:
K. D. SETHNA

"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

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SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER ON DARSHAN DAY

Photograph by Henri Cartier Bresson

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SLAVERY

NO LAW CAN LIBERATE WOMEN UNLESS THEY LIBERATE THEMSELVES. WHAT
MAKES THEM SLAVES IS:

- (1) ATTRACTION TOWARDS THE MALE AND HIS STRENGTH,
- (2) DESIRE FOR HOME LIFE AND ITS SECURITY,
- (3) ATTACHMENT TO MOTHERHOOD.

IF THEY GET FREE FROM THESE THREE SLAVERIES, THEY WILL TRULY BE THE
EQUAL OF MEN.

MEN ALSO HAVE THREE SLAVERIES:

- (1) SPIRIT OF POSSESSION, ATTACHMENT TO POWER AND DOMINATION,
- (2) DESIRE FOR SEXUAL RELATION WITH WOMAN,
- (3) ATTACHMENT TO THE SMALL COMFORTS OF MARRIED LIFE.

IF THEY GET RID OF THESE THREE SLAVERIES, THEY CAN TRULY BECOME
THE EQUAL OF WOMEN.

AUGUST 1, 1951.

THE MOTHER

AUGUST 15 AND THE SOUL OF INDIA

Independence Day—the flag of free India high in the air and a glow and a flutter in millions of hearts below! Here indeed is greatness, but this is not all that sums up August 15. The great day comes dawning with significances of the very soul of our ancient country—the soul whose glorious cradle-song were the Vedas and the Upanishads. For, this day does not only commemorate India's political liberation: it is also bound up with the names of two figures in whom the Vedas and the Upanishads and all that has continued and developed the light of those scriptures of God-realisation found the most powerful, the most meaningful embodiment in modern times. On August 15 Sri Ramakrishna died and Sri Aurobindo was born.

In an age when our culture was almost forgotten in the midst of a suppressed life and a burden of foreign mentality, when even the movement towards political self-assertion was along lines of Western thought and aimed at a Westernised India achieving a new status, Sri Ramakrishna flashed out the naked truth, as it were, of the Indian nation. No mere material progress or intellectual advancement or artistic efflorescence could fulfil India: all these were required, but much more essentially there was the need of the flaming forth of the God concealed in man. The inspired ecstatic of Dakshineswar showed that secret Splendour pure and sheer. Immediately the best minds of the day recognised the core of India's culture, the superhuman fount from which the human should draw its manifold creativity, the pre-eminent gift of this home of Yoga to the world. It was for this hidden Wonder that India was to be freed from the glittering superficiality of the modern West—and it was also to make the West discover its own depths that this mysterious Marvel was to be given a freely evolving India in which to shine out as of old. By Ramakrishna's presence the fight for our country's independence took on its true meaning and gained its real motive.

Both the meaning and the motive are often lost by people who hoist up the flag of independence. That very flag is not sufficiently emblematic of them. We do not live in the centre of the typical Indian consciousness. To do that and to irradiate with its power our whole cultural and even our entire political activity we must steep nationalism in the vision that ruled the politics of Bengal when its leader against foreign rule was Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Ramakrishna's master-word of spirituality was the Divine Mother. Sri Aurobindo, catching up the cry of Bankim Chandra's song of songs *Vande Mataram*, made it by his own inspired personality the *mantra*, the master-word of the national movement. The Divine Mother was intuited not only as the creatrix of the worlds but also as the Soul of India, the presiding genius of India's humanity, the super-individual being of our motherland whose history has been predominantly a search for the Infinite and the Eternal. Sri Ramakrishna did not directly permeate the political consciousness with his central vision: its light fell upon it. Sri Aurobindo kindled it in the very midst of the country's life no less than of the country's intellect, so that the spiritual intuition stood not only as a light above or within but also as a flame in the forefront, fusing as it were the body with the soul.

That is why the occurrence of the birthday of our country's political fulfilment on the day of Sri Aurobindo's birth is no coincidence to the eye of insight. It can be so to those alone in whom the truth of Indian nationalism

revealed by Sri Aurobindo has grown dim and such Indians, whatever fine or forceful rôle may be theirs, will never be perfect instruments of the renaissance national genius. Our history can never march in complete tune with the *leit motif*, the sovereign note of its development, unless it takes an Aurobindonian tone, for Sri Aurobindo was the embodiment *par excellence*, in outer no less than inner intensity, of Indian culture at its most comprehensive and creative.

What Sri Ramakrishna gathered up of India's past into a pure and sheer spiritual splendour which held the common power of many approaches and attainments of Yoga became in Sri Aurobindo's experience the starting-point for a rich, complex, integrally harmonised future. The one revived the Indian genius and, by a general summing up of its potentialities, prepared it for whatever the coming age may hold: the other fixed it firm in its renaissance, lit with it all the spheres of man's evolutionary labour and charged it with a mission beyond any of the past and laid down the luminous pattern of the new age itself. The end of the synthesis made by the one is the beginning of the integrality achieved by the other. That is why the day of Sri Ramakrishna's passing merges in the day of Sri Aurobindo's advent.

And the Independence Day is pregnant with the merger by which these two great spiritual figures constitute the core of present-day India—the versatile force of the forerunner Ramakrishnanian glow never annulled yet taken up into the all-embracing power of the final Aurobindonian effulgence. This effulgence is all-embracing because not only does it seek to carry every faculty of man to the Truth within and above but also to bring that Truth into every faculty and establish the divine consciousness in the whole of man's being, including even his physical substance which it promises to transform by a revolutionary evolution. Mind, vitality, body—all these and their functions in all the fields of human aspiration and enterprise must be comprehended in the Yogic realisation and re-created into their own divine terms in the most literal and concrete manner.

Sri Aurobindo is not satisfied with anything short of absolute perfection, the Divine manifested down to the last detail of outward existence. An India in the process of such perfection and calling to the whole world to share the new life is the India of his vision, the India for which he was born. If August 15 which celebrates our independence is to lead us to our destiny we must see in the face of Sri Aurobindo the sun that is the light of that day.

Yes, the face of Sri Aurobindo—but let us not forget the supreme message which it utters: the Divine Mother. This was the message of the politician in him and it remains that of the Master Yogi. Rather it has grown intenser and more direct. For the Master Yogi points not only towards the concealed Presence: he points also towards a Presence in our midst. For side by side with him worked one whom he regarded as his Shakti of manifestation, his power of detailed perfection embodied in a human form. If Sri Aurobindo is the Avatar of our age, the divine Shakti is this radiant co-worker who is called the Mother by the Ashram over which she presides and within which she continues the mighty labour entrusted to her by him. It is to her who alone can be the true Soul of India that we must turn on August 15 with the words that begin our National Song and are the fount of all real freedom: "I bow to you, O Mother!"

K. D. S.

Within

Alone within the agonising night,
Earth-broken, ignorant, to Thee I call,
O Mother-Love who art my all in all,
To gather me unto thy heart of light:

My body quivers with small flames of white;—
Over the waters of pain, through Matter's wall,
Within the heart echoes thy loved footfall,
Approaching down thy mystery-haloed height....

The pathway of the darkness bends and breaks
Within abysses of eternal suns;
Within earth's veins and cells the white fire runs,
The storms of pain relax to silvern seas;
And all my being lost in Thee awakes
Within thy body of unutterable peace.

TEHMI

Black Swan

A Black Swan broods o'er the waters
And the brightness is stilled by his shape....
O Mystery drowsing the waters,
Will ever your night undrape?....

But I care not if never naked
You stand of your dress of doom—
You widen, a lovely forgetting,
And the heart is drunk with your gloom.

Drowned are all throbbing planets
In the viewless depth of your wine—
O nectarous numbing quencher
Of my reverie's skyward shine!

Not death is your beauty's shadow:
For him that maketh his eyes
Your two vague wings of farness,
Each tear of mortality dries.

K. D. SETHNA

SRI AUROBINDO on HIS OWN POETRY

EDITOR'S NOTE

The following letter of Sri Aurobindo's, except for a passage at the end, was never published during his life-time for certain reasons mentioned by him in another letter to me. He wrote: "It was to be, as I suggested, between ourselves; there is too much that is private and personal in it for publicity. It is something that can be shown to those who can appreciate and understand, but to an ordinary reader I might seem to be standing on my defence rather than attacking and demolishing a criticism which might damage the appreciation of my poetry in readers who are not sure of their own critical standard, the reliability of their taste and so might be shaken by well-phrased and plausible reasonings such as your friend's: they might make the same confusion as he himself between an apology and an apologia. An idea might rise that I am not sure of the value of my own poetry especially the earlier poetry and accept his valuation of it. The 'humility' you speak of is very largely a Socratic humility, the element of irony in it is considerable; but readers not accustomed to fineness of shades might take it literally and conclude wrongly that I accepted the strictures passed by an unfavourable criticism. A poet who puts no value or a very low value on his own writing has no business to write poetry or to publish it or keep it in publication; if I allowed the publication of the *Collected Poems* it is because I judged them worth publishing... On the other hand, in defending I may seem to be eulogising my own work, which is not a thing that can be done in public even if a poet's estimate of his achievement is as self-assured as that of Horace, *'Exegi monumentum aere perennius'*, or as magnificent as Victor Hugo's. Similarly, the reply was not meant for your friend himself and I do not think the whole can be shown to him without omissions or some editing, but if you wish and if you think that he will not resent any strictures I have made you can show him the passages relevant to his criticism."

Now that Sri Aurobindo has departed from his body, the "private" and "personal" appear in a different light and what could not be made public because the writer was in our midst loses much of its directly controversial aspect and acquires a new self-revealing value. Combined with the private and the personal, here there is also such an amount of illuminating comment of a highly literary nature that under the altered circumstances it would be a great pity to keep it any longer from the world's eyes.

You have asked me to comment on your friend's comments* on my poetry and especially on *Savitri*. But, first of all, it is not usual for a poet to criticise the criticisms of his critics though a few perhaps have done so; the poet writes for his own satisfaction, his own delight in poetical creation or to express himself and he leaves his work for the world, and rather for posterity than for the contemporary world, to recognise or to ignore, to judge and value according to its perception or its pleasure. As for the contemporary world he might be said rather to throw his poem in its face and leave it to resent this treatment as an unpleasant slap, as a contemporary world treated the early poems of Wordsworth and Keats, or to accept it as an abrupt but gratifying attention, which was ordinarily the good fortune of the great poets in ancient Athens and Rome and of poets like Shakespeare and Tennyson in modern times. Posterity does not always confirm the contemporary verdict, very often it reverses it, forgets or depreciates the writer enthroned by contemporary fame, or raises up to a great height work little appreciated or quite ignored in its own time. The only safety for the poet is to go his own way careless of the blows and caresses of the critics; it is not his business to answer them. Then you ask me to right the wrong turn your friend's critical mind has taken; but how is it to be determined what is the right and what is the wrong turn, since a critical judgment depends usually on a personal reaction determined by the critic's temperament or the aesthetic trend in him or by values, rules or canons which are settled for his intellect and agree with the viewpoint from which his mind receives whatever comes to him for judgment; it is that which is right for him though it may seem wrong to a different temperament, aesthetic intellectuality or mental viewpoint. Your friend's judgments, according to his own account of them, seem to be determined by a sensitive temperament finely balanced in its own poise but limited in its appreciations, clear and open to some kinds of poetic creation, reserved towards others, against yet others closed and cold or excessively depreciative. This sufficiently explains his very different reactions to the two poems, *Descent* and *Flame-Wind*, which he unreservedly admires and to *Savitri*. However, since you have asked me, I will answer, as between ourselves, in some detail and put forward my own comments on his comments and my own judgments on his judgments. It may be rather long; for if such things are done, they may as well be clearly and thoroughly done. I may also have something to say about the nature and intention of my poem and the technique necessitated by the novelty of the intention and nature.

Let me deal first with some of the details he stresses so as to get them out of the way. His detailed intellectual reasons for his judgments seem to me to be often arbitrary and fastidious, sometimes based on a misunderstanding and therefore invalid or else valid perhaps in other fields but here inapplicable. Take, for instance, his attack upon my use of the prepositional phrase. Here, it seems to me, he has fallen victim to a grammatical obsession and lumped together under the head of the prepositional twist a number of different turns some of which do not belong to that category at all. In the line,

Lone on my summits of calm I have brooded with voices around me,
there is no such twist; for I did not mean at all "on my calm summits", but intended straightforwardly to convey the natural, simple meaning of the

* They were made apropos of the book, 'The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo' by K. D. Sethna.

word. If I write "the fields of beauty or "walking on the paths of truth" I do not expect to be supposed to mean "in beautiful fields" or "in truthful paths"; it is the same with "summits of calm", I mean "summits of calm" and nothing else; it is a phrase like "He rose to high peaks of vision" or "He took his station on the highest summits of knowledge". The calm is the calm of the highest spiritual consciousness to which the soul has ascended, making those summits its own and looking down from their highest heights on all below: in spiritual experience, in the occult vision or feeling that accompanies it, this calm is not felt as an abstract quality or a mental condition but as something concrete and massive, a self-existent reality to which one reaches, so that the soul standing on its peak is rather a tangible fact of experience than a poetical image. Then there is the phrase "A face of rapturous calm" in the lines,

*Infinity's centre, a face of rapturous calm
Parted the eternal lids that open heaven;*

he seems to think it is a mere trick of language, a substitution of a prepositional phrase for an epithet, as if I had intended to say "a rapturously calm face" and I said instead "a face of rapturous calm" in order to get an illegitimate and meaningless rhetorical effect. I meant nothing of the kind, nothing so tame and poor and scanty in sense: I meant a face which was an expression or rather a living image of the rapturous calm of the supreme and infinite consciousness,—it is indeed so that it can well be "Infinity's centre". The face of the liberated Buddha as presented to us by Indian art is such an expression or image of the calm of Nirvana and could, I think, be quite legitimately described as a face of Nirvanic calm, and that would be an apt and live phrase and not an ugly artifice or twist of rhetoric. It should be remembered that the calm of Nirvana or the calm of the supreme Consciousness is to spiritual experience something self-existent, impersonal and eternal and not dependent on the person— or the face— which manifests it. In these two passages I take then the liberty to regard the criticism as erroneous at its base and therefore invalid and inadmissible.

Then there are the lines from the *Songs of the Sea*:

*The rains of deluge flee, a storm-tossed shade,
Over thy breast of gloom....*

"Thy breast of gloom" is not used here as a mere rhetorical and meaningless variation of "thy gloomy breast"; it might have been more easily taken as that if it had been a human breast, though even then, it could have been entirely defensible in a fitting context; but it is the breast of the sea, an image for a vast expanse supporting and reflecting or subject to the moods or movements of the air and the sky. It is intended, in describing the passage of the rains of deluge over the breast of the sea, to present a picture of a storm-tossed shade crossing a vast gloom: it is the gloom that has to be stressed and made the predominant idea and the breast or expanse is only its support and not the main thing: this could not have been suggested by merely writing "thy gloomy breast". A prepositional phrase need not be merely an artificial twist replacing an adjective; for instance, "a world of gloom and terror" brings forward the gloom and terror as the very nature and constitution, the whole content of the world and not merely an attribute. So also if one wrote "Him too wilt thou throw to thy sword of sharpness" or "cast into thy pits of horror", would it merely mean "thy sharp sword" and "thy horrible pits" and would not the sharpness and the horror rather indicate or represent formidable powers of which the sword is the instrument and the pits the habitation or lair? That would be rheto-

Sri Aurobindo On His Own Poetry—Continued from previous page.

ric but it would be a rhetoric not meaningless but having in it meaning and power. Rhetoric is a word with which we can batter something we do not like; but rhetoric of one kind or another has been always a great part of the world's best literature; Demosthenes, Cicero, Bossuet and Burke are rhetoricians, but their work ranks with the greatest prose styles that have been left to us. In poetry the accusation of rhetoric might be brought against such lines as Keats'

*Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird,
No hungry generations tread thee down . . .*

To conclude, there is "the swords of sheen" in the translation of *Vande Mataram*. That might be more open to the critic's stricture, for the expression can be used and perhaps has been used in verse as merely equivalent to shining swords; but for any one with an alert imagination it can mean in certain contexts something more than that, swords that emit brilliance and seem to be made of light. Your friend says that to use this turn in any other than an adjectival sense is unidiomatic, but he admits that there need be no objection provided that it creates a sense of beauty, but he finds no beauty in any of these passages. But the beauty can be perceived only if the other sense is seen, and even then we come back to the question of personal reaction; you and other readers may feel beauty where he finds none. I do not myself share his sensitive abhorrence of this prepositional phrase; it may be of course because there are coarser rhetorical threads in my literary taste. I would not, for instance, shrink from a sentence like this in a sort of free verse, "Where is thy wall of safety? Where is thy arm of strength? Whither has fled thy vanished face of glory?" Rhetoric of course, but it has in it an element which can be attractive, and it seems to me to bring in a more vivid note and mean more than "thy strong arm" or "thy glorious face" or than "the strength of thy arm" and "the glory of thy face".

I come next to the critic's trenchant attack on that passage in my symbolic vision of Night and Dawn in *Savitri*, in which there is recorded the conscious adoration of Nature when it feels the passage of the omniscient Goddess of eternal Light. Trenchant, but with what seems to me a false edge; or else if it is a sword of Damascus that would cleave the strongest material mass of iron he is using it to cut through subtle air, the air closes behind his passage and remains unsevered. He finds here only poor and false poetry, unoriginal in imagery and void of true wording and true vision, but that is again a matter of personal reaction and everyone has a right to his own, you to yours as he to his. I was not seeking for originality but for truth and the effective poetical expression of my vision. He finds no vision there, and that may be because I could not express myself with any power; but it may also be because of his temperamental failure to feel and see what I felt and saw. I can only answer to the intellectual reasonings and judgments which turned up in him when he tried to find the causes of his reaction. These seem to me to be either fastidious and unsound or founded on a mistake of comprehension and therefore invalid or else inapplicable to this kind of poetry. His main charge is that there is a violent and altogether illegitimate transference of epithet in the expression "the wide-winged hymn of a great priestly wind". A transference of epithet is not necessarily illegitimate, especially if it expresses something that is true or necessary to convey a sound feeling and vision of things: for instance, if one writes in an Ovidian account of the *dénouement* of a lover's quarrel,

In spite of a reluctant sullen heart

My willing feet were driven to thy door,

it might be said that it was something in the mind that was willing and the ascription of an emotion or state of mind to the feet is an illegitimate transfer of epithet; but the lines express a conflict of the members, the mind reluctant, the body obeying the force of the desire that moves it and the use of the epithet is therefore perfectly true and legitimate. But here no such defence is necessary because there is no transfer of epithets. The critic thinks that I imagined the wind as having a winged body and then took away the wings from its shoulders and clapped them on to its voice or hymn which could have no body. But I did nothing of the kind; I am not bound to give wings to the wind. In an occult vision the breath, sound, movement by which we physically know of a wind is not its real being but only the physical manifestation of the wind-god or the spirit of the air, as in the Veda the sacrificial fire is only a physical birth, temporary body or manifestation of the god of Fire, Agni. The gods of the Air and other godheads in the Indian tradition have no wings, the Maruts or storm-gods ride through the skies in their galloping chariots with their flashing golden lances, the beings of the middle world in the Ajanta frescoes are seen moving through the air not with wings but with a gliding natural motion proper to ethereal bodies. The epithet "wide-winged" then does not belong to the wind and is not transferred from it, but is proper to the voice of the wind which takes the form of a conscious hymn of aspiration and rises ascending from the bosom of the great priest, as might a great-winged bird released into the sky and sinks and rises again, aspires and fails and aspires again on the altar hills. One can surely speak of a voice or a chant of aspiration rising on wide wings and I do not see how this can be taxed as a false or unpoetic image. Then the critic objects to the expression "altar hills" on the ground that this is superfluous as the imagination of the reader can very well supply this detail for itself from what has already been said: I do not think this is correct, a very alert reader might do so but most would not even think of it, and yet the detail is an essential and central feature of the thing seen and to omit it would be to leave a gap in the middle of the picture by dropping out something which is indispensable to its totality.

Finally he finds that the line about the high boughs praying in the revealing sky does not help but attenuates, instead of more strongly etching the picture. I do not know why, unless he has failed to feel and to see. The picture is that of a conscious adoration offered by Nature and in that each element is conscious in its own way, the wind and its hymn, the hills, the trees. The wind is the great priest of this sacrifice of worship, his voice rises in a conscious hymn of aspiration, the hills offer themselves with the feeling of being an altar of the worship, the trees lift their high boughs towards heaven as the worshippers, silent figures of prayer, and the light of the sky into which their boughs rise reveals the Beyond towards which all aspires. At any rate this "picture" or rather this part of the vision is a complete rendering of what I saw in the light of the inspiration and the experience that came to me. I might indeed have elaborated more details, etched out at more length but that would have been superfluous and unnecessary; or I might have indulged in an ampler description but this would have been appropriate only if this part of the vision had been the whole. This last line—"The high boughs prayed in revealing sky"—is an expression of an experience which I often had whether in the mountains or on the plains of Gujarat or looking from my window in Pondicherry not only in the dawn but at other times and I am unable to find any feebleness either in the experience or in the words that express it. If the critic or any reader does not feel or see what I so often felt and saw, that may be my fault, but that is not sure, for you and others have felt very differently about it; it may be a mental or a temperamental failure on their part and it will be then my or perhaps even the critic's or reader's misfortune.

I may refer here to your friend's disparaging characterisation of my epithets. He finds that their only merit is that they are good prose epithets, not otiose but right words in their right place and exactly descriptive but only descriptive without any suggestion of any poetic beauty or any kind of magic. Are there then prose epithets and poetic epithets and is the poet debarred from exact description using always the right word in the right place, the *mot juste*? I am under the impression that all poets, even the greatest, use as the bulk of their adjectives words that have that merit, and the difference from prose is that a certain turn in the use of them accompanied by the power of the rhythm in which they are carried lifts all to the poetic level. Take one of the passages from Milton:

On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues . . .

Blind Thamyras and blind Maeonides

And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old.

Here the epithets are the same that would be used in prose, the right word in the right place, exact in statement, but all lies in the turn which makes them convey a powerful and moving emotion and the rhythm which gives them an uplifting passion and penetrating insistence. In more ordinary passages such as the beginning of *Paradise Lost* the epithets "forbidden tree" and "mortal taste" are of the same kind, but can we say that they are merely prose epithets, good descriptive adjectives and have no other merit? If you take the lines about Nature's worship in *Savitri*, I do not see how they can be described as prose epithets; at any rate I would never have dreamt of using in prose unless I wanted to write poetic prose such expressions as "wide-winged hymn" or "a great priestly wind" or "altar hills" or "revealing sky"; these epithets belong in their very nature to poetry alone whatever may be their other value or want of value. He says they are obvious and could have been supplied by any imaginative reader; well, so are Milton's in the passages quoted and perhaps there too the very remarkable imaginative reader whom your friend repeatedly brings in might have supplied them by his own unflinching poetic verve. Whether they or any of them prick a hidden beauty out of the picture is for each reader to feel or judge for himself; but perhaps he is thinking of such things as Keats' "magic casements" and "foam of perilous seas" and "fairy lands forlorn", but I do not think even in Keats the bulk of the epithets are of that unusual character.

I have said that his objections are sometimes inapplicable. I mean by this that they might have some force with regard to another kind of poetry but not to a poem like *Savitri*. He says, to start with, that if I had had a stronger imagination, I would have written a very different poem and a much shorter one. Obviously, and to say it is a truism; if I had had a different kind, of imagination, whether stronger or weaker, I would have written a different poem and perhaps one more to his taste; but it would not have been *Savitri*. It would not have fulfilled the intention or had anything of the character, meaning, world-vision, description and expression of spiritual experience which was my object in writing this poem. Its length is an indispensable condition for carrying out its purpose and everywhere there is this length, critics may say an "unconscionable length"—I am quoting the description of the *Times' Literary Supplement's* reviewer in his otherwise eulogistic criticism of *The Life Divine*—in every part, in every passage, in almost every canto or section of a canto. It has been planned not on the scale of *Lycidas* or *Comus* or some brief narrative poem, but of the longer epical narrative, almost a minor, though a very minor *Ramayana*; it aims not at a minimum but at an exhaustive exposition of its world-vision or world-interpretation. One artistic method is to select a limited subject and even on that to say only what is indispensable, what is centrally suggestive and leave the rest to the imagination or understanding of the reader. Another method which I hold to be equally artistic or, if you like, architectural is to give a large and even a vast, a complete interpretation, omitting nothing that is necessary, fundamental to the comple-

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teness; that is the method I have chosen in *Savitri*. But your friend has understood nothing of the significance or intention of the passages he is criticising, least of all, their inner sense—that is not his fault, but is partly due to the lack of the context and partly to his lack of equipment and you have there an unfair advantage over him which enables you to understand and see the poetic intention. He sees only an outward form of words and some kind of surface sense which is to him vacant and merely ornamental or rhetorical or something pretentious without any true meaning or true vision in it: inevitably he finds the whole thing false and empty, unjustifiably ambitious and pompous without deep meaning or, as he expresses it, pseudo and phoney.* His objection of *longueur* would be perfectly just if the description of the night and the dawn had been simply of physical night and physical dawn; but here the physical night and physical dawn are, as the title of the canto clearly suggests, a symbol, although what may be called a real symbol of an inner reality and the main purpose is to describe by suggestion the thing symbolised; here it is a relapse into Inconscience broken by a slow and difficult return of consciousness followed by a brief but splendid and prophetic outbreak of spiritual light leaving behind it the "day" of ordinary human consciousness in which the prophecy has to be worked out. The symbol and this opening canto are, it may be said, a key beginning and announcement. So understood there is nothing here otiose or unnecessary; all is needed to bring out by suggestion some aspect of the thing symbolised and so start adequately the working out of the significance of the whole poem. It will of course seem much too long to a reader who does not understand what is written or, understanding, takes no interest in the subject; but that is unavoidable.

To illustrate the inapplicability of some of his judgments one might take his objection to repetition of the cognates "sombre vast", "unsounded void", "opaque Inane", "vacant vasts" and his clinching condemnation of the inartistic inelegance of their occurrence in the same place at the end of the line. I take leave to doubt his statement that in each place his alert imaginative reader, still less any reader without that equipment, could have supplied these descriptions and epithets from the context, but let that pass. What was important for me was to keep constantly before the view of the reader, not imaginative but attentive to seize the whole truth of the vision in its totality, the ever-present sense of the Inconscience in which everything is occurring. It is the frame as well as the background without which all the details would either fall apart or stand out only as separate incidents. That necessity lasts until there is the full outburst of the dawn and then it disappears; each phrase gives a feature of this Inconscience proper to its place and context. It is the entrance of the "lonely splendour" into an otherwise unconscious obstructing and unreceptive world that has to be brought out and that cannot be done without the image of the "opaque Inane" of the Inconscience which is the scene and cause of the resistance. There is the same necessity for reminding the reader that the "tread" of the Divine Mother was an intrusion on the vacancy of the Inconscience and the herald of deliverance from it. The same reasoning applies to the other passages. As for the occurrence of the phrases in the same place each in its line, that is a rhythmic turn helpful, one might say necessary to bring out the intended effect, to emphasise this reiteration and make it not only understood but felt. It is not the result of negligence or an awkward and inartistic clumsiness, it is intentional and part of the technique. The structure of the pentameter blank verse in *Savitri* is of its own kind and different in plan from the blank verse that has come to be ordinarily used in English poetry. It dispenses with enjambment or uses it very sparingly and only when a special effect is intended; each line must be strong enough to stand by itself, while at the same time it fits harmoniously into the sentence or paragraph like stone added to stone; the sentence consists usually of one, two, three or four lines, more rarely five or six or seven: a strong close for the line and a strong close for the sentence are almost indispensable except when some kind of inconclusive cadence is desirable; there must be no laxity or diffusiveness in the rhythm or in the metrical flow anywhere,—there must be a flow but not a loose flux. This gives an added importance to what comes at the close of the line and this placing is used very often to give emphasis and prominence to a key phrase or a key idea, especially those which have to be often reiterated in the thought and vision of the poem so as to recall attention to things that are universal or fundamental or otherwise of the first consequence—whether for the immediate subject or in the total plan. It is this use that is served here by the reiteration at the end of the line.

I have not anywhere in *Savitri* written anything for the sake of mere picturesqueness or merely to produce a rhetorical effect; what I am trying to do everywhere in the poem is to express exactly something seen, something felt or experienced; if, for instance, I indulge in the wealth-burdened line or passage, it is not merely for the pleasure of the indulgence, but because there is that burden, or at least what I conceive to be that, in the vision or the experience. When the expression has been found, I have to judge, not by the intellect or by any set poetical rule, but by an intuitive feeling, whether it is entirely the right expression and, if it is not, I have to change and go on changing until I have received the absolutely right inspiration and the right transcription of it and must never be satisfied with

any *à peu pres* or imperfect transcription even if that makes good poetry of one kind or another. This is what I have tried to do. The critic or reader will judge for himself, whether I have succeeded or failed; but if he has seen nothing and understood nothing, it does not follow that his adverse judgment is sure to be the right and true one, there is at least a chance that he may so conclude, not because there is nothing to see and nothing to understand, only poor pseudo-stuff or a rhetorical emptiness but because he was not equipped for the vision or the understanding. *Savitri* is the record of a seeing, of an experience which is not of the common kind and is often very far from what the general human mind sees and experiences. You must not expect appreciation or understanding from the general public or even from many at the first touch; there must be a new extension of consciousness and aesthesis to appreciate a new kind of mystic poetry. Moreover if it is really new in kind, it may employ a new technique, not perhaps absolutely new, but new in some or many of its elements: in that case old rules and canons and standards may be quite inapplicable; evidently, you cannot justly apply to the poetry of Whitman the principles of technique which are proper to the old metrical verse or the established laws of the old traditional poetry; so too when we deal with a modernist poet. We have to see whether what is essential to poetry is there and how far the new technique justifies itself by new beauty and perfection, and a certain freedom of mind from old conventions is necessary if our judgment is to be valid or rightly objective.

Your friend may say as he has said in another connection that all this is only special pleading or an apology rather than an apologia. But in neither case have I the feeling that I had been guilty of some offence or some shortcoming and therefore there could be no place for an apology or special pleading such as is used to defend or cover up what one knows to be a false case. I have enough respect for truth not to try to cover up an imperfection; my endeavour would be rather to cure the recognised imperfection; if I have not poetical genius, at least I can claim a sufficient, if not an infinite capacity for painstaking; that I have sufficiently shown by my long labour on *Savitri*. Or rather, since it was not labour in the ordinary sense, not a labour of painstaking construction, I may describe it as an infinite capacity for waiting and listening for the true inspiration and rejecting all that fell short of it, however good it might seem from a lower standard until I got that which I felt to be absolutely right. The critic was evidently under a misconception with regard to my defence of the wealth-burdened line; he says that the principle enounced by me was sound but what mattered was my application of the principle, and he seems to think that I was trying to justify my application although I knew it to be bad and false by citing passages from Milton and Shakespeare as if my use of the wealth-burdened style were as good as theirs. But I was not defending the excellence of my practice, for the poetical value of my lines was not then in question; the question was whether it did not violate a valid law of a certain chaste economy by the use of too many epithets massed together: against this I was asserting the legitimacy of a massed richness, I was defending only its principle, not my use of the principle. Even a very small poet can cite in aid of his practice examples from greater poets without implying that his poetry is on a par with theirs. But he further asserts that I showed small judgment in choosing my citations, because Milton's passage,

*With hideous ruin and combustion down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamant chains and penal fire,*

is not at all an illustration of the principle and Shakespeare's

*Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
Seal up the shipboy's eyes and rock his brains
In cradle of the rude imperious surge?*

is inferior in poetic value, lax and rhetorical in its richness and belongs to an inferior Shakespearean style. He says that Milton's astounding effect is due only to the sound and not to the words. That does not seem to me quite true: the sound, the rhythmic resonance, the rhythmic significance is undoubtedly the predominant factor; it makes us hear and feel the crash and clamour and clangour of the downfall of the rebel angels: but that is not all, we do not merely hear as if one were listening to the roar of ruin of a collapsing bomb-shattered house, but saw nothing, we have the vision and the full psychological commotion of the "hideous" and flaming ruin of the downfall, and it is the tremendous force of the words that make us see as well as hear. Your friend's disparagement of the Shakespearean passage on "sleep" and the line on the sea considered by the greatest critics and not by myself only as ranking amongst the most admired and admirable things in Shakespeare is surprising and it seems to me to illustrate a serious limitation in his poetic perception and temperamental sympathies. Shakespeare's later terse and packed style with its more powerful dramatic effects can surely be admired without disparaging the beauty and opulence of his earlier style; if he had never written in that style, it would have been an unspeakable loss to the sum of the world's aesthetic possessions. The lines I have quoted are neither lax nor merely rhetorical, they have a terseness of their own, different in character from the lines, let us say, in the scene of Antony's death or other memorable passages written in his great tragic style but none the less at every step packed with pregnant meanings and powerful significances which would not be possible if it were merely a loose rhetoric. Anyone writing such lines

* The Critic's Note: "Could I have anticipated that my letter would meet his eyes, had I even intended the criticism for print, I would have written in the more becoming spirit of a student, in a strain free from the suspicion of levity, and I would have abstained from words like (well, I shrink from writing them now), using others untinged with offence, and perhaps more nearly expressive of my feeling."

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would deserve to rank by them alone among the great and even the greatest poets.

That is enough for the detail of the criticism and we can come to the general effect and his pronounced opinion upon my poetry. Apart from his high appreciation of *Flame-Wind* and *Descent*, *Jivan Mukta* and *Thought the Paraclete* and his general approval of the mystic poems published along with my essay on quantitative metre in English, it is sufficiently damning and discouraging and if I were to accept his verdict on my earlier and latest poetry, the first comparatively valueless and the last for the most part pseudo and phoney and for the rest offering only a few pleasant or pretty lines but not charged with the power and appeal of true or great poetry, I would have to withdraw the *Collected Poems* from circulation, throw *Savitri* into the waste paper basket and keep only the mystical poems,—but these also have been banned by some critics, so I have no refuge left to me. As your friend is not a negligible critic and his verdict agree with that of the eulogist of my philosophy in the *Times' Literary Supplement*, not to speak of others less authoritative like the communist reviewer of Iyengar's book who declared that it was not at all certain that I would live as a poet, it is perhaps incumbent on me to consider in all humility my dismal position and weigh whether it is really as bad as all that. There are some especial judgments in your friend's comments on the *Collected Poems* but these seem to concern only the translations. It is curious that he should complain of the lack of the impulse of self-expression in the *Songs of the Sea* as in this poem I was not busy with anything of the kind but was only rendering into English the self-expression of my friend and fellow-poet C. R. Das in his fine Bengali poem *Sagar Sangit*. I was not even self-moved to translate this work, however beautiful I found it; I might even be accused of having written the translation as a pot-boiler, for Das knowing my impecunious and precarious condition at Pondicherry offered me Rs. 1,000 for the work. Nevertheless I tried my best to give his beautiful Bengali lines as excellent a shape of English poetry as I could manage. The poet and littérateur Chapman condemned my work because I had made it too English, written too much in a manner imitative of traditional English poetry and had failed to make it Bengali in its character so as to keep its native spirit and essential substance. He may have been right; Das himself was not satisfied as he appended a more literal translation in free verse but this latter version does not seem to have caught on while some at least still read and admire the English disguise. If your friend is right in finding an overflow of sentiment in the *Songs*, that must be my own importation of an early romantic sentimentalism, a contribution of my own "self-expression" replacing Das's. The sea to the Indian imagination is a symbol of life,—one speaks of the ocean of the *Samsara* and Indian Yoga sees in its occult visions life in the image of a sea or different planes of being as so many oceans. Das's poem expresses his communing with this ocean of universal life and psychic intimacies with the Cosmic Spirit behind it and these have a character of grave emotion and intense feeling, not of mere sentimentalism, but they come from a very Indian and even a very Bengali mentality and may seem in translation to a different mind a profuse display of fancy and sentiment. The *Songs* are now far away from me in a dim backward of memory and I will have to read them again to be sure, but for that I have no time.

Again, I am charged with modern nineteenth century romanticism and a false imitation of the Elizabethan drama in my rendering of Kalidasa's *Vikramorvasie*; but Kalidasa's play is romantic in its whole tone and he might almost be described as an Elizabethan predating by a thousand years at least the Elizabethans; indeed most of the ancient Sanskrit dramas are of this kind, though the tragic note is missing, and the general spirit resembles that of Elizabethan romantic comedy. So I do not think I committed any fault in making the translation romantic and in trying to make it Elizabethan, even if I only achieved a sapless pseudo-Elizabethan style. One who knew the Sanskrit original and who, although an Indian, was recognised as a good critic in England as well as a poet, one too whose attitude towards myself and my work had been consistently adverse, yet enthusiastically praised my version and said if Kalidasa could be translated at all, it was only so that he could be translated. This imprimatur of an expert may perhaps be weighed against the discouraging criticism of your friend. The comment on my translation of Bhartrihari is more to the point; but the fault is not Bhartrihari's whose epigrams are as concise and lapidary as the Greek, but in translating I indulged my tendency at the time which was predominantly romantic: the version presents faithfully enough the ideas of the Sanskrit poet but not the spirit and manner of his style. It is comforting, however, to find that it makes "attractive reading,"—I must be content with small mercies in an adversely critical world. After all, these poems are translations and not original work and not many can hope to come within a hundred miles of the more famous achievements of this kind such as Fitzgerald's splendid misrepresentation of Omar Khayyam, or Chapman's and Pope's mistranslations of Homer which may be described as first class original poems with a borrowed substance from a great voice of the past. The critic does not refer specifically to *Love and Death*, to which your enthusiasm first went out, to *Poems*, to *Urvashie* and to *Perseus the Deliverer* though this last he would class, I suppose, as sapless pseudo-Elizabethan drama; but that omission may be there because he only skimmed through them and afterwards could not get the first volume. But perhaps they may come under his general remark that this part of my work lacks the glow and concentration of true inspired poetry and his further judgment

classing it with the work of Watson and Stephen Phillip and other writers belonging to the decline of Romantic poetry. I know nothing about Watson's work except for one or two short pieces met by chance; if I were to judge from them, I would have to regard him as a genuine poet with a considerable elevation of language and metrical rhythm but somewhat thin in thought and substance; my poems may conceivably have some higher quality than his in this last respect since the reviewer in the *Times' Literary Supplement* grants deep thought and technical excellence as the only merits of my uninspired poetry. It is otherwise with Stephen Phillips: I read *Marpessa* and *Christ in Hades*, the latter in typescript, shortly before I left England and they aroused my admiration and made a considerable impression on me. I read recently a reference to Phillips as a forgotten poet, but if that includes these two poems I must consider the oblivion as a considerable loss to the generation which has forgotten them. His later poetry disappointed me, there was still some brilliance but nothing of that higher promise. The only other poet of that time who had some influence on me was Meredith, especially his *Modern Love* which may have helped in forming the turn of my earlier poetic expression. I have not read the other later poets of the decline. Of subsequent writers or others not belonging to this decline I know only A.E. and Yeats, something of Francis Thompson, especially the *Hound of Heaven* and the *Kingdom of God*, and a poem or two of Gerard Hopkins; but the last two I came across very late, Hopkins only quite recently, and none of them had any influence on me, although one English reviewer in India spoke of me in eulogistic terms as a sort of combination of Swinburne and Hopkins and some have supposed that I got my turn for compound epithets from the latter! The only romantic poets of the Victorian Age who could have had any influence on me, apart from Arnold whose effect on me was considerable, were Tennyson perhaps, subconsciously, and the earlier poems of Swinburne, for his later work I did not at all admire. Still it is possible that the general atmosphere of the later Victorian decline, if decline it was, may have helped to mould my work and undoubtedly it dates and carries the stamp of the time in which it was written. It is a misfortune of my poetry from the point of view of recognition that the earlier work forming the bulk of the *Collected Poems* belongs to the past and has little chance of recognition now that the aesthetic atmosphere has so violently changed, while the later mystical work and *Savitri* belong to the future and will possibly have to wait for recognition of any merit they have for another strong change. As for the mystical poems which your friend praises in such high terms, they are as much challenged by others as the rest of my work. Some reviewers have described them as lacking altogether in spiritual feeling and void of spiritual experience; they are, it seems, mere mental work, full of intellectually constructed images and therefore without the genuine value of spiritual or mystic poetry.

Well, then, what is the upshot? What have I to decide as a result of my aesthetic examination of conscience? It is true that there are voices on the other side, not only from my disciples but from others who have no such connection with me. I have heard of individuals nameless or fameless in England who chanced to come across *Love and Death* and had the same spontaneous enthusiasm for it as yourself; others have even admired and discovered in my earlier work the beauty and the inspiration which your friend and the *Times'* reviewer find to be badly lacking in it. It is true that they have differed in the poems they have chosen; Andrews cited particularly the *Rishi* and the epigram on Goethe as proof of his description of me as a great poet; an English critic, Richardson, singled out *Urvashie* and *Love and Death* and the more romantic poems, but thought that some of my later work was less inspired, too intellectual and philosophical, too much turned towards thought, while some work done in the middle he denounced altogether, complaining that after feeding my readers on nectar for so long I came later on to give them mere water. This critic made a distinction between great poets and good poets and said that I belonged to the second and not to the first category, but as he classed Shelley and others of the same calibre as examples of the good poets, his praise was sufficiently "nectarous" for anybody to swallow with pleasure. Krishnaprem (Ronald Nixon), Moore and others have also had a contrary opinion to the adverse critics and these, both English and Indian, were men whose capacity for forming a true literary judgment is perhaps as good as any on the other side. Krishnaprem I mention, because his judgment forms a curious and violent contrast to your friend's: the latter finds no overtones in my poetry while Krishnaprem who similarly discourages Harindranath Chattopadhyaya's poetry on the ground of a lack of overtones finds them abundant in mine. One begins to wonder what overtones really are, or are we to conclude that they have no objective existence but are only a term for some subjective personal reaction in the reader? I meet the same absolute contradiction everywhere; one critic says about *Perseus* that there is some good poetry in it but it is not in the least dramatic except for one scene and that the story of the play is entirely lacking in interest, while another finds in it most of all a drama of action and the story thrilling and holding a breathless interest from beginning to end. Highest eulogy, extreme disparagement, faint praise, mixed laudation and censure—it is a see-saw on which the unfortunate poet who is incautious enough to attach any value to contemporary criticism is balanced without any possibility of escape. Or I may flatter myself with the idea that this lively variation of reaction from extreme eulogy to extreme damnation indicates that my work must have after all something in it that is real and alive. Or I might perhaps take

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refuge in the supposition that the lack of recognition is the consequence of an untimely and too belated publication, due to the egoistic habit of writing for my own self-satisfaction rather than any strong thirst for poetical glory and immortality and leaving most of my poetry in the drawer for much longer than, even for twice or thrice, the time recommended by Horace who advised the poet to put by his work and read it again after ten years and then only, if he still found it of some value, to publish it. *Urvashi*, the second of the only two poems published early, was sent at first to Lionel Johnson, a poet and littérateur of some reputation who was the Reader of a big firm. He acknowledged some poetic merit, but said that it was a repetition of Matthew Arnold and so had no sufficient reason for existence. But Lionel Johnson, I was told, like the Vedantic sage who sees Brahman in all things, saw Arnold everywhere, and perhaps if I had persisted in sending it to other firms, some other Reader, not similarly obsessed, might have found the merit and, as Romanicism was still the fashion, some of the critics and the public too might have shared your and Richardson's opinion of this and other work and, who knows, I might have ranked in however low a place among the poets of the romantic decline. Perhaps then I need not decide too hastily against any republication of the *Collected Poems* or could even cherish the hope that, when the fashion of anti-Romanicism has passed, it may find its proper place, whatever that may be, and survive.

As regards your friend's appraisal of the mystical poems, I need say little. I accept his reservation that there is much inequality as between the different poems: they were produced very rapidly—in the course of a week, I think—and they were not given the long reconsideration that I have usually given to my poetic work before publication; he has chosen the best, though there are others also that are good, though not so good; in others, the metre attempted and the idea and language have not been lifted to their highest possible value. I would like to say a word about his hesitation over some lines in *Thought the Paraclete* which describe the spiritual planes. I can understand this hesitation; for these lines have not the vivid and forceful precision of the opening and the close and are less pressed home, they are general in description and therefore to one who has not the mystic experience may seem too large and vague. But they are not padding; a precise and exact description of these planes of experience would have made the poem too long, so only some large lines are given, but the description is true, the epithets hit the reality and even the colours mentioned in the poem, "gold-red feet" and "crimson-white mooned oceans" are faithful to experience. Significant colour, supposed by intellectual criticism to be symbolic but there is more than that, is a frequent element in mystic vision; I may mention the powerful and vivid vision in which Ramakrishna went up into the higher planes and saw the mystic truth behind the birth of Vivekananda. At least, the fact that these poems have appealed so strongly to your friend's mind may perhaps be taken by me as a sufficient proof that in this field my effort at interpretation of spiritual things has not been altogether a failure.

But how then are we to account for the same critic's condemnation or small appreciation of *Savitri* which is also a mystic and symbolic poem although cast into a different form and raised to a different pitch, and what value am I to attach to his criticism? Partly, perhaps, it is this very difference of form and pitch which accounts for his attitude and, having regard to his aesthetic temperament and its limitations, it was inevitable. He himself seems to suggest this reason when he compares this difference to the difference of his approach as between *Lycidas* and *Paradise Lost*. His temperamental turn is shown by his special appreciation of Francis Thompson and Coventry Patmore and his response to *Descent* and *Flame-Wind* and the fineness of his judgment when speaking of the *Hound of Heaven* and the *Kingdom of God*, its limitation by his approach towards *Paradise Lost*. I think he would be naturally inclined to regard any very high-pitched poetry as rhetorical and unsound and declamatory, wherever he did not see in it something finely and subtly true coexisting with the high-pitched expression,—the combination we find in Thompson's later poem and it is this he seems to have missed in *Savitri*. For *Savitri* does contain or at least I intended it to contain what you and others have felt in it but he has not been able to feel because it is something which is outside his own experience and to which he has no access. One who has the kind of experience which *Savitri* sets out to express or who, not having it, is prepared by his temperament, his mental turn, his previous intellectual knowledge or psychic training, to have some kind of access to it, the feeling of it if not the full understanding, can enter into the spirit and sense of the poem and respond to its poetic appeal; but without that it is difficult for an unprepared reader to respond,—all the more if this is, as you contend, a new poetry with a new law of expression and technique.

Lycidas is one of the finest poems in any literature, one of the most consistently perfect among works of an equal length and one can apply to it the epithet "exquisite" and it is to the exquisite that your friend's aesthetic temperament seems specially to respond. It would be possible to a reader with a depreciatory turn to find flaws in it, such as the pseudo-pastoral setting, the too powerful intrusion of St. Peter and puritan theological controversy into that incongruous setting and the image of the hungry sheep which someone not in sympathy with Christian feeling and traditional imagery might find even ludicrous or at least odd in its identification of pseudo-pastoral sheep and theological human sheep: but these would be hypercritical objections and are flooded out by the magnificence of the poetry. I am prepared to admit the very patent defects of *Paradise*

Lost: Milton's heaven is indeed unconvincing and can be described as grotesque and so too is his gunpowder battle up there, and his God and angels are weak and unconvincing figures, even Adam and Eve, our first parents, do not effectively fill their part except in his outward description of them; and the later narrative falls far below the grandeur of the first four Books but those four Books stand for ever among the greatest things in the world's poetic literature. If *Lycidas* with its beauty and perfection had been the supreme thing done by Milton even with all the lyrical poetry and the sonnets added to it, Milton would still have been a great poet but he would not have ranked among the dozen greatest; it is *Paradise Lost* that gives him that place. There are deficiencies if not failures in almost all the great epics, the *Odyssey* and perhaps the *Divina Commedia* being the only exceptions, but still they are throughout in spite of them great epics. So too is *Paradise Lost*. The grandeur of his verse and language is constant and unsinking to the end and makes the presentation always sublime. We have to accept for the moment Milton's dry Puritan theology and his all too human picture of the celestial world and its denizens and then we can feel the full greatness of the epic. But the point is that this greatness in itself seems to have less appeal to your friend's aesthetic temperament; it is as if he felt less at home in its atmosphere, in an atmosphere of grandeur and sublimity than in the air of a less sublime but a fine and always perfect beauty. It is the difference between a magic hill-side woodland of wonder and a great soaring mountain climbing into a vast purple sky: to accept fully the greatness he needs to find in it a finer and sublimer strain as in Thompson's *Kingdom of God*. On a lower scale this, his sentence about it seems to suggest, is the one fundamental reason for his complete pleasure in the mystical poems and his very different approach to *Savitri*. The pitch aimed at by *Savitri*, the greatness you attribute to it, would of itself have discouraged in him any abandonment to admiration and compel from the beginning a cautious and dubious approach; that soon turned to lack of appreciation or a lowered appreciation even of the best that may be there and to depreciation and censure of the rest.*

But there is the other reason which is more effective. He sees and feels nothing of the spiritual meaning and the spiritual appeal which you find in *Savitri*; it is for him empty of anything but an outward significance and that seems to him poor, as is natural since the outward meaning is only a part and a surface and the rest is to his eyes invisible. If there had been what he hoped or might have hoped to find in my poetry, a spiritual vision such as that of the Vedantin, arriving beyond the world towards the Ineffable, then he might have felt at home as he does with Thompson's poetry or might at least have found it sufficiently accessible. But this is not what *Savitri* has to say or rather it is only a small part of it and, even so, bound up with a cosmic vision and an acceptance of the world which in its kind is unfamiliar to his mind and psychic sense and foreign to his experience. The two passages with which he deals do not and cannot give any full presentation of this way of seeing things since one is an unfamiliar symbol and the other an incidental and, taken by itself apart from its context, an isolated circumstance. But even if he had had other more explicit and clearly revealing passages at his disposal, I do not think he would have been satisfied or much illuminated; his eyes would still have been fixed on the surface and caught only some intellectual meaning or outer sense. That at least is what we may suppose to have been the cause of his failure,† if we maintain that there is anything at all in the poem; or else we must fall back on the explanation of a fundamental personal incompatibility and the rule *de gustibus non est disputandum*, or to put it in the Sanskrit form *nana ruchihi lokah*. If you are right in maintaining that *Savitri* stands as a new mystical poetry with a new vision and expression of things, we should expect, at least at first, a widespread, perhaps, a general failure even in lovers of poetry to understand it or appreciate; even those who have some mystical turn or spiritual experience are likely to pass it by if it is a different turn from theirs or outside their range of experience. It took the world something like a hundred years to discover Blake; it would not be improbable that there might be a greater time-lag here, though naturally we hope for better things. For in India at least some understanding or feeling

* The Critic's Note: "To illustrate my discomfiture at the slightness of the appeal of Sri Aurobindo's epic in comparison with that of his mystical lyrics, I put myself in the place, the supposititious place, of a reader who discovers a similar gulf between the effect made upon himself by a smaller and comparatively slighter poem like *Lycidas* and by *Paradise Lost*. This sentence Sri Aurobindo, in his haste or owing to my own faulty expression, seems to have misconstrued; and perhaps taking it in conjunction with the impression made by other remarks in my letter, he has concluded that I am naturally more receptive of the 'exquisite' in poetry than of the 'high-pitched' and 'sublime' generally."

Editor's Note on the above: The critic's sentence ran: "I feel rather like one who, having read *Lycidas* with extreme delight, finds to his dismay that he must greet *Paradise Lost* with strictly modified rapture." Whatever the actual intention of these rather ambiguous words, Sri Aurobindo's interpretation seems to have been based on an intuitive no less than intellectual sense of the writer's mind at work not only here but in the whole letter. What I may say from personal acquaintance with the critic is that his response to the 'exquisite' appears to come at least more easily, more swiftly.

† The Critic's Note: "It is not unlikely that there is a strangeness in the passages—their mere novelty, which inhibits a full giving of myself to them: this strangeness will pass when the poet has come to an end of his long labour, unshaking, unshaking, and I have *Savitri* in full to read, re-read, and return to... It is possible that, while the sublime and high-pitched is not wholly sealed up from my apprehension, that of the Dawn-prelude (like that of the other passages) is fused with certain other qualities, spiritual and intellectual, of a kind that renders the verse imperfectly conductive of its force to myself. Some instinct of the mystical I needs must have, if for none other reason, at least for that I am an Indian. But my knowledge of the sacred lore is neither extensive nor peculiar, and 'psychic training' or 'equipment' I have none... And this quite apart from the extra-ordinary character of the spirituality, the cosmicity, that informs the epic..."

TOWARDS A WORLD-STATE

Extract from "THE IDEAL OF HUMAN UNITY"
by SRI AUROBINDO

The question now put by evolving Nature to mankind is whether its existing international system, if system it can be called, a sort of provisional order maintained with constant evolutionary or revolutionary changes cannot be replaced by a willed and thought-out fixed arrangement, a true system, eventually a real unity serving all the common interests of the earth's peoples. An original welter and chaos with its jumble of forces forming wherever it could larger or smaller masses of civilisation and order which were in danger of crumbling or being shaken to pieces by attacks from the outer chaos was the first attempt at cosmos successfully arrived at by the genius of humanity. This was finally replaced by something like an international system with the elements of what could be called international law or fixed habits of intercommunication and interchange which allowed the nations to live together in spite of antagonisms and conflicts, a security alternating with precariousness and peril and permitting of too many ugly features, however local, of oppression, bloodshed, revolt and disorder, not to speak of wars which sometimes devastated large areas of the globe. The indwelling deity who presides over the destiny of the race has raised in man's mind and heart the idea, the hope of a new order which will replace the old unsatisfactory order and substitute for it conditions of the world's life which will in the end have a reasonable chance of establishing permanent peace and well-being. This would for the first time turn into an assured fact the ideal of human unity which, cherished by a few, seemed for so long a noble chimera; then might be created a firm ground of peace and harmony and even a free room for the realisation of the highest human dreams, for the perfectibility of the race, a perfect society, a higher upward evolution of the human soul and human nature. It is for the men of our days and, at the most, of tomorrow to give the answer. For, too long a postponement or too continued a failure will open the way to a series of increasing catastrophes which might create a too prolonged and disastrous confusion and chaos and render a solution too difficult or impossible; it might even end in something like an irremediable crash not only of the present world-civilisation but of all civilisation. A new, a difficult and uncertain beginning might have to be made in the midst of the chaos and ruin after perhaps an extermination on a large scale, and a more successful creation could be predicted only if a way was found to develop a better humanity or perhaps a greater, a superhuman race.

The central question is whether the nation, the largest natural unit which humanity has been able to create and maintain for its collective living, is also its last and ultimate unit or whether a greater aggregate can be formed which will englobe many and even most nations and finally all in its united totality. The impulse to build more largely, the push towards the creation of considerable and even very vast supranational aggregates has not been wanting; it has even been a permanent feature in the life-instincts of the race. But the form it took was the desire of a strong nation for mastery over others, permanent possession of their territories, subjugation of their peoples, exploitation of their resources; there was also an attempt at quasi-assimilation, an imposition of the culture of a dominant race and, in general, a system of absorption wholesale or as complete as possible. The Roman Empire was the classic example of this kind of endeavour, and the Graeco-Roman unity of a single way of life and culture in a vast framework of political and administrative unity was the nearest approach within the geographical limits reached by this civilisation to something one might regard as a first figure or an incomplete suggestion of a figure of human unity. Other similar attempts have been

made though not on so large a scale and with a less consummate ability throughout the course of history, but nothing has endured for more than a small number of centuries. The method used was fundamentally unsound inasmuch as it contradicted other life-instincts which were necessary to the vitality and healthy evolution of mankind and the denial of which must end in some kind of stagnation and arrested progress. The imperial aggregate could not acquire the unconquerable vitality and power of survival of the nation-unit. The only enduring empire-units have been in reality large nation-units which took that name like Germany and China and these were not forms of the supranational State and need not be reckoned in the history of the formation of the imperial aggregate. So, although the tendency to the creation of empire testifies to an urge in Nature towards larger unities of human life,—and we can see concealed in it a will to unite the disparate masses of humanity on a larger scale into a single coalescing or combined life-unit—it must be regarded as an unsuccessful formation without a sequel and unserviceable for any further progress in this direction. In actual fact a new attempt of world-wide domination could succeed only by a new instrumentation or under novel circumstances in englobing all the nations of the earth or persuading or forcing them into some kind of union. An ideology, a successful combination of peoples with one aim and a powerful head like Communist Russia, might have a temporary success in bringing about such an objective. But such an outcome, not very desirable in itself, would not be likely to ensure the creation of an enduring World-State. There would be tendencies, resistances, urges towards other developments which would sooner or later bring about its collapse or some revolutionary change which would mean its disappearance. Finally, any such stage would have to be overpassed; only the formation of a true World-State, either of a unitary but still elastic kind,—for a rigidly unitary State might bring about stagnation and decay of the springs of life,—or a union of free peoples could open the prospect of a sound and lasting world-order.

...The most desirable form would be a federation of free nationalities in which all subjection or forced inequality and subordination of one to another would have disappeared and, though some might preserve a greater natural influence, all would have an equal status. A confederacy would give the greatest freedom to the nations constituting the World-State, but this might give too much room for fissiparous or centrifugal tendencies to operate; a federal order would then be the most desirable. All else would be determined by the course of events and by general agreement or the shape given by the ideas and necessities that may grow up in the future. A world-union of this kind would have the greatest chances of long survival or permanent existence. This is a mutable world and uncertainties and dangers might assail or trouble for a time; the formed structure might be subjected to revolutionary tendencies as new ideas and forces emerged and produced their effect on the general mind of humanity but the essential step would have been taken and the future of the race assured or at least the present era overpassed in which it is threatened and disturbed by unsolved needs and difficulties, precarious conditions, immense upheavals, huge and sanguinary world-wide conflicts and the threat of others to come. The ideal of human unity would be no longer an unfulfilled ideal but an accomplished fact and its preservation given into the charge of the united human peoples. Its future destiny would lie on the knees of the gods and, if the gods have a use for the continued existence of the race, may be left to lie there safe.

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and an audience few and fit may be possible. Perhaps by some miracle there may be before long a larger appreciative audience.

At any rate this is the only thing one can do, especially when one is attempting a new creation, to go on with the work with such light and power as is given to one and leave the value of the work to be determined by the future. Contemporary judgments we know to be unreliable; there are only two judges whose joint verdict cannot easily be disputed, the World and Time. The Roman proverb says, *securus judicat orbis terrarum*; but the world's verdict is secure only when it is confirmed by Time. For it is not the opinion of the general mass of men that finally decides, the decision is really imposed by the judgment of a minority and élite which is finally accepted and settles down as the verdict of posterity; in Tagore's phrase it is the universal man, *Viswa Manava* or rather something universal using the general mind of man, we might say the Cosmic self in the race that fixes the value of its own works. In regard to the great names in literature this final verdict seems to have in it something of the absolute,—so far as anything can be that in a temporal world of relativities in which the Absolute reserves itself hidden behind the veil of human ignorance. It is no use for some to contend that Virgil is a tame and elegant writer of a wearisome work in verse on agriculture and a tedious pseudo-epic written to imperial order and Lucretius the only really great poet in Latin literature or to depreciate Milton for his Latin English and inflated style and the largely uninteresting character of his two epics; the world either refuses to listen or there is a temporary effect, a brief fashion in literary criticism, but finally the world returns to its established verdict. Lesser reputations may fluctuate, but finally whatever has real value in its own kind settles itself and finds its just place in the durable judgment of the world. Work which was neglected and left aside like Blake's or at first admired with reservation and eclipsed like Donne's is singled out by a sudden glance of Time and its greatness recognised; or what seemed buried slowly emerges

or re-emerges; all finally settles into its place. What was held as sovereign in its own time is rudely dethroned but afterwards recovers not its sovereign throne but its due position in the world's esteem; Pope is an example and Byron who at once burst into a supreme glory and was the one English poet, after Shakespeare, admired all over Europe but is now depreciated, may also recover his proper place. Encouraged by such examples, let us hope that these violently adverse judgments may not be final and absolute and decide that the waste paper basket is not the proper place for *Savitri*. There may still be a place for a poetry which seeks to enlarge the field of poetic creation and find for the inner spiritual life of man and his now occult or mystical knowledge and experience of the whole hidden range of his and the world's being not a corner and a limited expression such as it had in the past but a wide space and as manifold and integral an expression of the boundless and innumerable riches that lie hidden and unexplored as if kept apart under the direct gaze of the Infinite as has been found in the past for man's surface and finite view and experience of himself and the material world in which he has lived striving to know himself and it as best he can with a limited mind and senses. The door that has been shut to all but a few may open; the kingdom of the Spirit may be established not only in man's inner being but in his life and his works. Poetry also may have its share in that revolution and become part of the spiritual empire.

I had intended as the main subject of this letter to say something about technique and the inner working of the intuitive method by which *Savitri* was and is being created and of the intention and plan of the poem. Your friend's idea of its way of creation, an intellectual construction by a deliberate choice of words and imagery, badly chosen at that, is the very opposite of the real way in which it was done. That was to be the body of the letter and the rest only a preface. But the preface has become so long that it has crowded out the body. I shall have to postpone it to a later occasion when I have more time.

THE DIVINE POWER OF PERFECTION

By SRI AUROBINDO

Here are three chapters republished for the first time from the pages of Sri Aurobindo's philosophical monthly "Arya" which ran from 1914-1921. They form a part of the final section of "The Synthesis of Yoga", entitled "The Yoga of Self-Perfection."

THE DIVINE SHAKTI

The relation between the Purusha and Prakriti which emerges as one advances in the Yoga of self-perfection is the next thing that we have to understand carefully in this part of the Yoga. In the spiritual truth of our being the power which we call Nature is the power of being, consciousness and will and therefore the power of self-expression and self-creation of the self, soul or Purusha. But to our ordinary mind in the ignorance and to its experience of things the force of Prakriti has a different appearance. When we look at it in its universal action outside ourselves, we see it first as a mechanical energy in the cosmos which acts upon matter or in its own created forms of matter. In matter it evolves powers and processes of life and in living matter powers and processes of mind. Throughout its operations it acts by fixed laws and in each kind of created thing displays varying properties of energy and laws of process which give its character to the genus or species and again in the individual develops without infringing the law of the kind minor characteristics and variations of a considerable consequence. It is this mechanical appearance of Prakriti which has pre-occupied the modern scientific mind and made for it its whole view of Nature, and so much so that science still hopes and labours with a very small amount of success to explain all phenomena of life by laws of matter and all phenomena of mind by law of living matter. Here soul or spirit has no place and nature cannot be regarded as power of spirit. Since the whole of our existence is mechanical, physical and bounded by the biological phenomenon of a brief living consciousness and man is a creature and instrument of material energy, the spiritual self-evolution of Yoga can be only a delusion, hallucination, abnormal state of mind or self-hypnosis. In any case it cannot be what it represents itself to be, a discovery of the eternal truth of our being and a passing above the limited truth of the mental, vital and physical to the full truth of our spiritual nature.

But when we look, not at external mechanical Nature to the exclusion of our personality, but at the inner subjective experience of man the mental being, our nature takes to us a quite different appearance. We may believe intellectually in a purely mechanical view even of our subjective existence, but we cannot act upon it or make it quite real to our self-experience. For we are conscious of an I which does not seem identical with our nature, but capable of a standing back from it, of a detached observation and criticism and creative use of it, and of a will which we naturally think of as a free will; and even if this be a delusion, we are still obliged in practice to act as if we were responsible mental beings capable of a free choice of our actions, able to use or misuse and to turn to higher or lower ends our nature. And even we seem to be struggling both with our environmental and with our own present nature and striving to get mastery over a world which imposes itself on and masters us and at the same time to become something more than we now are. But the difficulty is that we are only in command, if at all, over a small part of ourselves, the rest is subconscious or subliminal and beyond our control, our will acts only in a small selection of our activities; the most is a process of mechanism and habit and we must strive constantly with ourselves and surrounding circumstances to make the least advance or self-amelioration. There seems to be a dual being in us; Soul and Nature, Purusha and Prakriti, seem to be half in agreement, half at odds, Nature laying its mechanical control on the soul, the soul attempting to change and master nature. And the question is what is the fundamental character of this duality and what the issue.

The Sankhya explanation is that our present existence is governed by a dual principle. Prakriti is inert without the contact of Purusha, acts only by a junction with it and then too by the fixed mechanism of her instruments and qualities; Purusha, passive and free apart from Prakriti, becomes by contact with her and sanction to her works subject to this mechanism, lives in her limitation of ego-sense and must get free by withdrawing the sanction and returning to its own proper principle. Another explanation that tallies with a certain part of our experience is that there is a dual being in us, the animal and material, or more widely the lower nature-bound, and the soul or spiritual being entangled by mind in the material existence or in world-nature, and freedom comes by escape from the entanglement, the soul returning to its native planes or the self or spirit to its pure existence. The perfection of the soul then is to be found not at all in, but beyond Nature.

But in a higher than our present mental consciousness we find that this duality is only a phenomenal appearance. The highest and real truth of

existence is the one Spirit, the supreme Soul, Purushottama, and it is the power of being of this Spirit which manifests itself in all that we experience as universe. This universal Nature is not a lifeless, inert or unconscious mechanism, but informed in all its movements by the universal Spirit. The mechanism of its process is only an outward appearance and the reality is the Spirit creating or manifesting its own being by its own power of being in all that is in Nature. Soul and Nature in us too are only a dual appearance of the one existence. The universal energy acts in us, but the soul limits itself by the ego-sense, lives in a partial and separate experience of her workings, uses only a modicum and a fixed action of her energy for its self-expression. It seems rather to be mastered and used by this energy than to use it, because it identifies itself with the ego-sense which is part of the natural instrumentation and lives in the ego experience. The ego is in fact driven by the mechanism of Nature of which it is a part and the ego-will is not and cannot be a free will. To arrive at freedom, mastery and perfection we have to get back to the real self and soul within and arrive too thereby at our true relations with our own and with universal nature.

In our active being this translates itself into a replacement of our egoistic, our personal, our separately individual will and energy by a universal and a divine will and energy which determines our action in harmony with the universal action and reveals itself as the direct will and the all-guiding power of the Purushottama. We replace the inferior action of the limited, ignorant and imperfect personal will and energy in us by the action of the divine Shakti. To open ourselves to the universal energy is always possible to us, because that is all around us and always flowing into us, it is that which supports and supplies all our inner and outer action and in fact we have no power of our own in any separately individual sense, but only a personal formulation of the one Shakti. And on the other hand this universal Shakti is within ourselves concentrated in us, for the whole power of it is present in each individual as in the universe, and there are means and processes by which we can awaken its greater and potentially infinite force and liberate it to its larger workings.

We can become aware of the existence and presence of the universal Shakti in the various forms of her power. At present we are conscious only of the power as formulated in our physical mind, nervous being and corporeal case sustaining our various activities. But if we can once get beyond this first formation by some liberation of the hidden, recondite, subliminal parts of our existence by Yoga, we become aware of a greater life force, a Pranic Shakti, which supports and fills the body and supplies all the physical and vital activities,—for the physical energy is only a modified form of this force,—and supplies and sustains too from below all our mental action. This force we feel in ourselves also, but we can feel it too around us and above, one with the same energy in us, and can draw it in and down to aggrandise our normal action or call upon and get it to pour into us. It is an illimitable ocean of Shakti and will pour as much of itself as we can hold into our being. This pranic force we can use for any of the activities of life, body or mind with a far greater and effective power than any that we command in our present operations, limited as they are by the physical formula. The use of this pranic power liberates us from that limitation to the extent of our ability to use it in place of the body-bound energy. It can be used so to direct the prana as to manage more powerfully or to rectify any bodily state or action, as to heal illness or to get rid of fatigue, and to liberate an enormous amount of mental exertion and play of will or knowledge. The exercises of Pranayama are the familiar mechanical means of freeing and getting control of the pranic energy. They heighten too and set free the psychic, mental and spiritual energies which ordinarily depend for their opportunity of action on the pranic force. But the same thing can be done by mental will and practice or by an increasing opening of ourselves to a higher spiritual power of the Shakti. The pranic Shakti can be directed not only upon ourselves, but effectively towards others or on things or happenings for whatever purposes the will dictates. Its effectivity is immense, in itself illimitable, and limited only by defect of the power, purity and universality of the spiritual or other will which is brought to bear upon it; but still, however great and powerful, it is a lower formulation, a link between the mind and body, an instrumental force. There is a consciousness in it, a presence of the spirit, of which we are aware, but it is encased, involved in and preoccupied with the urge to action. It is not to this action of the Shakti that we can leave the whole burden of our activities; we have either to use its lendings by our own enlightened personal

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will or else call in a higher guidance; for of itself it will act with greater force, but still according to our imperfect nature and mainly by the drive and direction of the life-power in us and not according to the law of the highest spiritual existence.

The ordinary power by which we govern the pranic energy is that of the embodied mind. But when we get clear above the physical mind, we can get too above the pranic force to the consciousness of a pure mental energy which is a higher formulation of the Shakti. There we are aware of a universal mind consciousness closely associated with this energy in, around and above us,—above, that is to say, the level of our ordinary mind status,—giving all the substance and shaping all the forms of our will and knowledge and of the psychic element in our impulses and emotions. This mind force can be made to act upon the pranic energy and can impose upon it the influence, colour, shape, character, direction of our ideas, our knowledge, our more enlightened volition and thus more effectively bring our life and vital being into harmony with our higher powers of being, ideals and spiritual aspirations. In our ordinary state these two, the mental and the pranic being and energies, are very much mixed up and run into each other, and we are not able clearly to distinguish them or get a full hold of the one on the other and so control effectively the lower by the higher and more understanding principle. But when we take our station above the physical mind, we are able then to separate clearly the two forms of energy, the two levels of our being, disentangle their action and act with a clearer and more potent self-knowledge and an enlightened and a purer will-power. Nevertheless the control is not complete, spontaneous, sovereign so long as we work with the mind as our chief guiding and controlling force. The mental energy we find to be itself derivative, a lower and limiting power of the conscious spirit which acts only by isolated and combined seeings, imperfect and incomplete half-lights which we take for full and adequate light, and with a disparity between the idea and knowledge and the effective will-power. And we are aware soon of a far higher power of the spirit and its Shakti concealed or above, superconscious to mind or partially acting through the mind, of which all this is an inferior derivation.

The Purusha and Prakriti are on the mental level as in the rest of our being closely joined and much involved in each other and we are not able to distinguish clearly soul and nature. But in the purer substance of mind we can more easily discern the dual strain. The mental Purusha is naturally able in its own native principle of mind to detach itself, as we have seen, from the workings of its Prakriti and there is then a division of our being between a consciousness that observes and can reserve its will-power and an energy full of the substance of consciousness that takes the forms of knowledge, will and feeling. This detachment gives at its highest a certain freedom from the compulsion of the soul by its mental nature. For ordinarily we are driven and carried along in the stream of our own and the universal active energy partly floundering in its waves, partly maintaining and seeming to guide or at least propel ourselves by a collected thought and an effort of the mental will muscle; but now there is a part of ourselves, nearest to the pure essence of self, which is free from the stream, can quietly observe and to a certain extent decide its immediate movement and course and to a greater extent its ultimate direction. The Purusha can at last act upon the Prakriti from half apart, from behind or from above her as a presiding person or presence, *adhyaksha*, by the power of sanction and control inherent in the spirit.

What we shall do with this relative freedom depends on our aspiration, our idea of the relation we must have with our highest self, with God and Nature. It is possible for the Purusha to use it on the mental plane itself for a constant self-observation, self-development, self-modification, to sanction, reject, alter, bring out new formulations of the nature and establish a calm and disinterested action, a high and pure sattvic balance and rhythm of its energy, a personality perfected in the sattvic principle. This may amount only to a highly mentalised perfection of our present intelligence and the ethical and the psychic being or else, aware of the greater self in us, it may impersonalise, universalise, spiritualise its self-conscious existence and the action of its nature and arrive either at a large quietude or a large perfection of the spiritualised mental energy of its being. It is possible again for the Purusha to stand back entirely and by a refusal of sanction allow the whole normal action of the mind to exhaust itself, run down, spend its remaining impetus of habitual action and fall into silence. Or else this silence may be imposed on the mental energy by rejection of its action and a constant command to quietude. The soul may through the confirmation of this quietude and mental silence pass into some ineffable tranquillity of the spirit and vast cessation of the activities of Nature. But it is also possible to make this silence of the mind and ability to suspend the habits of the lower nature a first step towards the discovery of a superior formulation, a higher grade of the status and energy of our being and pass by an ascent and transformation into the supramental power of the spirit. And this may even, though with more difficulty, be done without resorting to the complete state of quietude of the normal mind by a persistent and

progressive transformation of all the mental into their greater corresponding supramental powers and activities. For everything in the mind derives from and is a limited, inferior, groping, partial or perverse translation into mentality of something in the supermind. But neither of these movements can be successfully executed by the sole individual unaided power of the mental Purusha in us, but needs the help, intervention and guidance of the divine Self, the Ishwara, the Purushottama. For the supermind is the divine mind and it is on the supramental plane that the individual arrives at his right, integral, luminous and perfect relation with the supreme and universal Purusha and the supreme and universal Para Prakriti.

As the mind progresses in purity, capacity of stillness or freedom from absorption in its own limited action, it becomes aware of and is able to reflect, bring into itself or enter into the conscious presence of the Self, the supreme and universal Spirit, and it becomes aware too of grades and powers of the spirit higher than its own highest ranges. It becomes aware of an infinite of the consciousness of being, an infinite ocean of all the power and energy of illimitable consciousness, an infinite ocean of Ananda, of the self-moved delight of existence. It may be aware of one or other only of these things, for the mind can separate and feel exclusively as distinct original principles what in a higher experience are inseparable powers of the One, or it may feel them in a trinity or fusion which reveals or arrives at their oneness. It may become aware of it on the side of Purusha or on the side of Prakriti. On the side of Purusha it reveals itself as Self or Spirit, as Being or as the one sole existent Being, the divine Purushottama, and the individual Jiva, soul, can enter into entire oneness with it in its timeless self or in its universality, or enjoy nearness, immanence, difference without any gulf of separation and enjoy too inseparably and at one and the same time oneness of being and delight-giving difference of relation in active experiencing nature. On the side of Prakriti the power and Ananda of the Spirit come into the front to manifest this Infinite in the beings and personalities and ideas and forms and forces of the universe and there is then present to us the divine Mahashakti, original Power, supreme Nature, holding in herself infinite existence and creating the wonders of the cosmos. The mind grows conscious of this illimitable ocean of Shakti or else of her presence high above the mind and pouring something of herself into us to constitute all that we are and think and will and do and feel and experience, or it is conscious of her all around us and our personality a wave of the ocean of power of spirit, or of her presence in us and of her action there based on our present form of natural existence but originated from above and raising us towards the higher spiritual status. The mind too can rise towards and touch her infinity or merge itself in it in trance of samadhi or can lose itself in her universality, and then our individuality disappears, our centre of action is then no longer in us, but either outside our bodied selves or nowhere; our mental activities are then no longer our own, but come into this frame of mind, life and body from the universal, work themselves out and pass leaving no impression on us, and this frame of ourselves too is only an insignificant circumstance in her cosmic vastness. But the perfection sought in the integral Yoga is not only to be one with her in highest spiritual power and one with her in her universal action, but to realise and possess the fullness of this Shakti in our individual being and nature. For the supreme Spirit is one as Purusha or as Prakriti, conscious being or power of conscious being, and as the Jiva in essence of self and spirit is one with the supreme Purusha, so on the side of Nature, in power of self and spirit it is one with Shakti, *para prakritir jivabhuta*. To realise this double oneness is the condition of the integral self-perfection. The Jiva is then the meeting-place of the play of oneness of the supreme Soul and Nature.

To reach this perfection we have to become aware of the divine Shakti, draw her to us and call her in to fill the whole system and take up the charge of all our activities. There will then be no separate personal will or individual energy trying to conduct our actions, no sense of a little personal self as the doer, nor will it be the lower energy of the three gunas, the mental, vital and physical nature. The divine Shakti will fill us and preside over and take up all our inner activities, our outer life, our Yoga. She will take up the mental energy, her own lower formation, and raise it to its highest and purest and fullest powers of intelligence and will and psychic action. She will change the mechanical energies of the mind, life and body which now govern us into delight-filled manifestations of her own living and conscious power and presence. She will manifest in us and relate to each other all the various spiritual experiences of which the mind is capable. And as the crown of this process she will bring down the supramental light into the mental levels, change the stuff of mind into the stuff of supermind, transform all the lower energies into energies of her supramental nature and raise us into our being of gnosis. The Shakti will reveal herself as the power of the Purushottama, and it is the Ishwara who will manifest himself in his force of supermind and spirit and be the master of our being, action, life and Yoga.

The Divine Power of Perfection

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THE ACTION OF THE DIVINE SHAKTI

This is the nature of the divine Shakti that it is the timeless power of the Divine which manifests itself in time as a universal force creating, constituting, maintaining and directing all the movements and workings of the universe. This universal Power is apparent to us first on the lower levels of existence as a mental, vital and material cosmic energy of which all our mental, vital and physical activities are the operations. It is necessary for our sadhana that we should thoroughly realise this truth in order to escape from the pressure of the limiting ego view and universalise ourselves even on these lower levels where ordinarily the ego reigns in full force. To see that we are not the originators of action but that it is rather this Power that acts in ourselves and in all others, not I and others the doers, but the one Prakriti, which is the rule of the Karma-yoga, is also the right rule here. The ego sense serves to limit, separate and sharply differentiate, to make the most of the individual form and it is there because it is indispensable to the evolution of the lower life. But when we would rise above to a higher divine life we must loosen the force of the ego and eventually get rid of it—as for the lower life the development of ego, so for the higher life this reverse movement of elimination of the ego is indispensable. To see our actions as not our own but those of the divine Shakti working in the form of the lower Prakriti on the inferior levels of the conscious being, helps powerfully towards this change. And if we can do this, then the separation of our mental, vital and physical consciousness from that of other beings thins and lessens; the limitations of its workings remain indeed, but they are broadened and taken up into a large sense and vision of the universal working; the specialising and individualising differentiations of Nature abide for their own proper purpose, but are no longer a prison. The individual feels his mind, life and physical existence to be one with that of others amid all differences and one with the total power of the spirit in Nature.

This, however comparatively large and free, is still subject to the inferior nature. The sattvic, rajasic and tamasic ego is diminished but not eliminated; or if it seems to disappear, it has only sunk in our parts of action into the universal operation of the gunas, remains involved in them and is still working in a covert, subconscious fashion and may force itself to the front at any time. The sadhaka has therefore first to keep the idea and get the realisation of a one self or spirit in all behind all these workings. He must be aware behind Prakriti of the one supreme and universal Purusha. He must see and feel not only that all is the self-shaping of the one Force, Prakriti or Nature, but that all her actions are those of the Divine in all, the one Godhead in all, however veiled, altered and as it were perverted—for perversion comes by a conversion into lower forms—by transmission through the ego and the gunas. This will farther diminish the open or covert insistence of the ego and, if thoroughly realised, it will make it difficult or impossible for it to assert itself in such a way as to disturb or hamper the farther progress. The ego-sense will become, so far as it interferes at all, a foreign intrusive element and only a fringe of the mist of the old ignorance hanging on to the outskirts of the consciousness and its action. And, secondly, the universal Shakti must be realised, must be seen and felt and borne in the potent purity of its higher action, its supramental and spiritual workings. This greater vision of the Shakti will enable us to escape from the control of the gunas, to convert them into their divine equivalents and dwell in a consciousness in which the Purusha and Prakriti are one and not separated or hidden in or behind each other. There the Shakti will be in its every movement evident to us and naturally, spontaneously, irresistibly felt as nothing else but the active presence of the Divine, the shape of power of the supreme Self and Spirit.

The Shakti in this higher status reveals itself as the presence or potentiality of the infinite existence, consciousness, will, delight, and when it is so seen and felt, the being turns towards it in whatever way, with its adoration or its will of aspiration or some kind of attraction of the lesser to the greater, to know it, to be full of and possessed by it, to be one with it in the sense and action of the whole nature. But at first while we still live in the mind, there is a gulf of division or else a double action. The mental, vital and physical energy in us and the universe is felt to be a derivation from the supreme Shakti, but at the same time an inferior, separated and in some sense another working. The real spiritual force may send down its messages or the light and power of its presence above us to the lower levels or may descend occasionally and even for a time possess, but it is then mixed with the inferior workings and partially transforms and spiritualises them, but is itself diminished and altered in the process. There is an intermittent higher action or a dual working of the nature. Or we find that the Shakti for a time raises the being to a higher spiritual plane and then lowers it back into the inferior levels. These alternations must be regarded as the natural vicissitudes of a process of transformation from the normal to the spiritual being. The transformation, the perfection cannot for the integral Yoga be complete until the link between the mental and the spiritual action is formed and a higher

knowledge applied to all the activities of our existence. That link is the supramental or gnostic energy in which the incalculable infinite power of the supreme being, consciousness, delight formulates itself as an ordering divine will and wisdom, a light and power in the being which shapes all the thought, will, feeling, action and replaces the corresponding individual movements.

This supramental Shakti may form itself as a spiritualised intuitive light and power in the mind itself, and that is a great but still a mentally limited spiritual action. Or it may transform altogether the mind and raise the whole being to the supramental level. In any case this is the first necessity of this part of the Yoga, to lose the ego of the doer, the ego idea and the sense of one's own power of action and initiation of action and control of the result of action and merge it in the sense and vision of the universal Shakti originating, shaping, turning to its ends the action of ourselves and others and of all the persons and forces of the world. And this realisation can become absolute and complete in all the parts of our being only if we can have that sense and vision of it in all its forms, on all the levels of our being and the world being, as the material, vital, mental and supramental energy of the Divine, but all these, all the powers of all the planes must be seen and known as self-formulations of the one spiritual Shakti, infinite in being, consciousness and Ananda. It is not the invariable rule that this power should first manifest itself on the lower levels in the lower forms of energy and then reveal its higher spiritual nature. And if it does so come, first in its mental, vital or physical universalism, we must be careful not to rest content there. It may come instead at once in its higher reality, in the might of the spiritual splendour. The difficulty then will be to bear and hold the Power until it has laid powerful hands on and transformed the energies of the lower levels of the being. The difficulty will be less in proportion as we have been able to attain to a large quiet and equality, *samata*, and either to realise feel and live in the one tranquil immutable self in all or else to make a genuine and complete surrender of ourselves to the divine Master of the Yoga.

It is necessary here to keep always in mind the three powers of the Divine which are present and have to be taken account of in all living existences. In our ordinary consciousness we see these three as ourselves, the Jiva in the form of the ego, God—whatever conception we may have of God—and Nature. In the spiritual experience we see God as the supreme Self or Spirit, or as the Being from whom we come and in whom we live and move. We see Nature as his Power or God as Power, Spirit in Power acting in ourselves and the world. The Jiva is then himself this Self, Spirit, Divine, *so'ham*, because he is one with him in essence of his being and consciousness, but as the individual he is only a portion of the Divine, a self of the Spirit, and in his natural being a form of the Shakti, a power of God in movement and action, *para prakritir jivabhuta*. At first, when we become conscious of God or of the Shakti, the difficulties of our relation with them arise from the ego consciousness which we bring into the spiritual relation. The ego in us makes claims on the Divine other than the spiritual claim, and these claims are in a sense legitimate, but so long as and in proportion as they take the egoistic form, they are open to much grossness and great perversions, burdened with an element of falsehood, undesirable reaction and consequent evil, and the relation can only be wholly right, happy and perfect when these claims become part of the spiritual claim and lose their egoistic character. And in fact the claim of our being upon the Divine is fulfilled absolutely only then when it ceases at all to be a claim and is instead a fulfilment of the Divine through the individual, when we are satisfied with that alone, when we are content with the delight of oneness in being, content to leave the supreme Self and Master of existence to do whatever is the will of his absolute wisdom and knowledge through our more and more perfected Nature. This is the sense of the self-surrender of the individual self to the Divine, *atma-samarpana*. It does not exclude a will for the delight of oneness, for participation in the divine consciousness, wisdom, knowledge, light, power, perfection, for the satisfaction of the divine fulfilment in us, but the will, the aspiration is ours because it is his will in us. At first, while there is still insistence on our own personality, it only reflects that, but becomes more and more indistinguishable from it, less personal and eventually it loses all shade of separateness because the will in us has grown identical with the divine Tapas, the action of the divine Shakti.

And equally when we first become aware of the infinite Shakti above us or around or in us, the impulse of the egoistic sense in us is to lay hold on it and use this increased might for our egoistic purpose. This is a most dangerous thing, for it brings with it a sense and some increased reality of a great, sometimes a titanic power, and the rajasic ego, delighting in this sense of new enormous strength, may instead of waiting for it to be purified and transformed throw itself out in a violent and impure action and even turn us for a time or partially into the selfish and arrogant Asura

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using the strength given him for his own and not for the divine purpose: but on that way lies, in the end, if it is persisted in, spiritual perdition and material ruin. And even to regard oneself as the instrument of the Divine is not a perfect remedy; for when a strong ego meddles in the matter, it falsifies the spiritual relation and under cover of making itself an instrument of the Divine is really bent on making instead God its instrument. The one remedy is to still the egoistic claim of whatever kind, to lessen persistently the personal effort and individual straining which even the sattwic ego cannot avoid and instead of laying hold on the Shakti and using it for its purpose rather to let the Shakti lay hold on us and use us for the divine purpose. This cannot be done perfectly at once—nor can it be done safely if it is only the lower form of the universal energy of which we are aware, for then, as has already been said, there must be some other control, either of the mental Purusha or from above,—but still it is the aim which we must have before us and which can be wholly carried out when we become insistently aware of the highest spiritual presence and form of the divine Shakti. This surrender too of the whole action of the individual self to the Shakti is in fact a form of real self-surrender to the Divine.

It has been seen that a most effective way of purification is for the mental Purusha to draw back, to stand as the passive witness and observe and know himself and the workings of Nature in the lower, the normal being; but this must be combined, for perfection, with a will to raise the purified nature into the higher spiritual being. When that is done, the Purusha is no longer only a witness, but also the master of his prakriti, Ishwara. At first it may not be apparent how this ideal of active self-mastery can be reconciled with the apparently opposite ideal of self-surrender and of becoming the assenting instrument of the divine Shakti. But in fact on the spiritual plane there is no difficulty. The Jiva cannot really become master except in proportion as he arrives at oneness with the Divine who is his supreme Self. And in that oneness and in his unity with the universe he is one too in the universal self with the will that directs all the operations of Nature. But more directly, less transcendently, in his individual action too, he is a portion of the Divine and participates in the mastery over his nature of that to which he has surrendered himself. Even as instrument, he is not a mechanical but a conscious instrument. On the Purusha side of him he is one with the Divine and participates in the divine mastery of the Ishwara. On the nature side of him he is in his universality one with the power of the Divine, while in his individual natural being he is an instrument of the universal divine Shakti, because the individualised power is there to fulfil the purpose of the universal Power. The Jiva, as has been seen, is the meeting-place of the play of the dual aspect of the Divine, Prakriti and Purusha, and in the higher spiritual consciousness he becomes simultaneously one with both these aspects, and there he takes up and combines all the divine relations created by their interaction. This it is that makes possible the dual attitude.

There is, however a possibility of arriving at this result without the passage through the passivity of the mental Purusha, by a more persistently and predominantly kinetic Yoga. Or there may be a combination of both the methods, alternations between them and an ultimate fusion. And here the problem of spiritual action assumes a more simple form. In this kinetic movement there are three stages. In the first the Jiva is aware of the supreme Shakti, receives the power into himself and uses it under her direction, with a certain sense of being the subordinate doer, a sense of minor responsibility in the action,—even at first, it may be, a responsibility for the result; but that disappears, for the result is seen to be determined by the higher

Power, and only the action is felt to be partly his own. The sadhaka then feels that it is he who is thinking, willing, doing, but feels too the divine Shakti or Prakriti behind driving and shaping all his thought, will, feeling and action: the individual energy belongs in a way to him, but is still only a form and an instrument of the universal divine Energy. The Master of the Power may be hidden from him for a time by the action of the Shakti, or he may be aware of the Ishwara sometimes or continually manifest to him. In the latter case there are three things present to his consciousness, himself as the servant of the Ishwara, the Shakti behind as a great Power supplying the energy, shaping the action, formulating the results, the Ishwara above determining by his will the whole action.

In the second stage the individual doer disappears, but there is not necessarily any quietistic passivity; there may be a full kinetic action, only all is done by the Shakti. It is her power of knowledge which takes shape as thought in the mind; the sadhaka has no sense of himself thinking, but of the Shakti thinking in him. The will and the feelings and action are also in the same way nothing but a formation, operation, activity of the Shakti in her immediate presence and full possession of all the system. The sadhaka does not think, will, act, feel, but thought, will, feeling, action happen in his system. The individual on the side of action has disappeared into oneness with universal Prakriti, has become an individualised form and action of the Divine Shakti. He is still aware of his personal existence, but it is as the Purusha supporting and observing the whole action, conscious of it in his self-knowledge and enabling by his participation the divine Shakti to do in him the works and the will of the Ishwara. The Master of the power is then sometimes hidden by the action of the power, sometimes appears governing it and compelling its workings. Here too there are three things present to the consciousness, the Shakti carrying on all the knowledge, thought, will, feeling, action for the Ishwara in an instrumental human form, the Ishwara, the Master of existence governing and compelling all her action, and ourself as the soul, the Purusha of her individual action enjoying all the relations with him which are created by her workings. There is another form of this realisation in which the Jiva disappears into and becomes one with the Shakti and there is then only the play of the Shakti with the Ishwara, Mahadeva and Kali, Krishna and Radha, the Deva and the Devi. This is the intensest possible form of the Jiva's realisation of himself as a manifestation of Nature, a power of the being of the Divine, *para prakritir jivabhuta*.

A third stage comes by the increasing manifestation of the Divine, the Ishwara in all our being and action. This is when we are constantly and uninterruptedly aware of him. He is felt in us as the possessor of our being and above us as the ruler of all its workings and they become to us nothing but a manifestation of him in the existence of the Jiva. All our consciousness is his consciousness, all our knowledge is his knowledge, all our thought is his thought, all our will is his will, all our feeling is his Ananda and form of his delight in being, all our action is his action. The distinction between the Shakti and the Ishwara begins to disappear; there is only the conscious activity in us of the Divine with the great self of the Divine behind and around and possessing it; all the world and Nature is seen to be only that, but here it has become fully conscious, the Maya of the ego removed, and the Jiva is there only as an eternal portion of his being, *ansha sanatana*, put forth to support a divine individualisation and living now fulfilled in the complete presence and power of the Divine, the complete joy of the Spirit manifested in the being. This is the highest realisation of the perfection and delight of the active oneness; for beyond it there could be only the consciousness of the Avatara, the Ishwara himself assuming a human name and form for action in the Lila.

FAITH AND SHAKTI

The three parts of the perfection of our instrumental nature of which we have till now been reviewing the general features, the perfection of the intelligence, heart, vital consciousness and body, the perfection of the fundamental soul powers, the perfection of the surrender of our instruments and action to the divine Shakti, depend at every moment of their progression on a fourth power that is covertly and overtly the pivot of all endeavour and action, faith, *sraddha*. The perfect faith is an assent of the whole being to the truth seen by it or offered to its acceptance, and its central working is a faith of the soul in its own will to be and attain and become and its idea of self and things and its knowledge, of which the belief of the intellect, the heart's consent and the desire of the life mind to possess and realise are the outward figures. This soul faith, in some form of itself, is indispensable to the action of the being and without it man cannot move a single pace in life, much less take any step forward to a yet unrealised perfection. It is so central and essential a thing that the Gita can justly say of it that whatever is a man's *sraddha*, that he is, *yo yachchraddhah sa eva sah*, and, it may be added, whatever he has the faith to see as possible, in himself and strive for, that he can create and become. There is one kind of faith demanded as indispensable by the integral Yoga and that may be described as faith in God and the Shakti,

faith in the presence and power of the Divine in us and the world, a faith that all in the world is the working of the one divine Shakti, that all the steps of the Yoga, its strivings and sufferings and failures as well as its successes and satisfactions and victories are utilities and necessities of her workings and that by a firm and strong dependence on and a total self-surrender to the Divine and to his Shakti in us we can attain to oneness and freedom and victory and perfection.

The enemy of faith is doubt, and yet doubt too is an utility and necessity, because man in his ignorance and in his progressive labour towards knowledge needs to be visited by doubt, otherwise he would remain obstinate in an ignorant belief and limited knowledge and unable to escape from his errors. This utility and necessity of doubt does not altogether disappear when we enter on the path of Yoga. The integral Yoga aims at a knowledge not merely of some fundamental principle, but a knowing, a gnosis which will apply itself to and cover all life and the world action, and in this search for knowledge we enter on the way and are accompanied for many miles upon it by the mind's unregenerated activities before these are purified and transformed by a greater light: we carry with us a number of intellectual beliefs and ideas which

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are by no means all of them correct and perfect and a host of new ideas and suggestions meet us afterwards demanding our credence which it would be fatal to seize on and always cling to in the shape in which they come without regard to their possible error, limitation or imperfection. And indeed at one stage in the Yoga it becomes necessary to refuse to accept as definite and final any kind of intellectual idea or opinion whatever in its intellectual form and to hold it in a questioning suspension until it is given its right place and luminous shape of truth in a spiritual experience enlightened by supramental knowledge. And much more must this be the case with the desires or impulses of the life mind, which have often to be provisionally accepted as immediate indices of a temporarily necessary action before we have the full guidance, but not always clung to with the soul's complete assent, for eventually all these desires and impulses have to be rejected or else transformed into and replaced by impulses of the divine will taking up the life movements. The heart's faith, emotional beliefs, assents are also needed upon the way, but cannot be always sure guides until they too are taken up, purified, transformed and are eventually replaced by the luminous assents of a divine Ananda which is at one with the divine will and knowledge. In nothing in the lower nature from the reason to the vital will can the seeker of the Yoga put a complete and permanent faith, but only at last in the spiritual truth, power, Ananda which become in the spiritual reason his sole guides and luminaries and masters of action.

And yet faith is necessary throughout and at every step because it is a needed assent of the soul and without this assent there can be no progress. Our faith must first be abiding in the essential truth and principles of the Yoga, and even if this is clouded in the intellect, despondent in the heart, outworn and exhausted by constant denial and failure in the desire of the vital mind, there must be something in the innermost soul which clings and returns to it, otherwise we may fall on the path or abandon it from weakness and inability to bear temporary defeat, disappointment, difficulty and peril. In the Yoga as in life it is the man who persists unwearied to the last in the face of every defeat and disillusionment and of all confronting, hostile and contradicting events and powers who conquers in the end and finds his faith justified because to the soul and Shakti in man nothing is impossible. And even a blind and ignorant faith is a better possession than the sceptical doubt which turns its back on our spiritual possibilities or the constant carping of the narrow petty critical uncreative intellect, *asuya*, which pursues our endeavour with paralysing incertitude. The seeker of the integral Yoga must, however, conquer both these imperfections. The thing to which he has given his assent and set his mind and heart and will to achieve, the divine perfection of the whole human being, is apparently an impossibility to the normal intelligence, since it is opposed to the actual facts of life and will for long be contradicted by immediate experience, as happens with all far-off and difficult ends, and it is denied too by many who have spiritual experience but believe that our present nature is the sole possible nature of man in the body and that it is only by throwing off the earthly life or even all individual existence that we can arrive at either a heavenly perfection or the release of extinction. In the pursuit of such an aim there will for long be plenty of ground for the objections, the carpings, *asuya*, of that ignorant but persistent criticising reason which founds itself plausibly on the appearances of the moment, the stock of ascertained fact and experience, refuses to go beyond and questions the validity of all indices and illuminations that point forward; and if he yields to these narrow suggestions, he will either not arrive or be seriously hampered and long delayed in his journey. On the other hand ignorance and blindness in the faith are obstacles to a large success, invite much disappointment and disillusionment, fasten on false finalities and prevent advance to greater formulations of truth and perfection. The Shakti in her workings will strike ruthlessly at all forms of ignorance and blindness and all even that trusts wrongly and superstitiously in her, and we must be prepared to abandon a too persistent attachment to forms of faith and cling to the saving reality alone. A great and wide spiritual and intelligent faith, intelligent with the intelligence of that larger reason which assents to high possibilities, is the character of the *sraddha* needed for the integral Yoga.

This *sraddha*—the English word faith is inadequate to express it—is in reality an influence from the supreme Spirit and its light a message from our supramental being which is calling the lower nature to rise out of its petty present to a great self-becoming and self-exceeding. And that which receives the influence and answers to the call is not so much the intellect, the heart or the life, mind, but the inner soul which better knows the truth of its own destiny and mission. The circumstances that provoke our first entry into the path are not the real index of the thing that is at work in us. There the intellect, the heart, or the desires of the life mind may take a prominent place, or even more fortuitous accidents and outward incentives; but if these are all, then there can be no surety of our fidelity to the call and our enduring perseverance in the Yoga. The intellect may abandon the idea that attracted it, the heart weary or fail us, the desire of the life mind turn to other objectives. But outward circum-

stances are only a cover for the real workings of the spirit, and if it is the spirit that has been touched, the inward soul that has received the call, the *sraddha* will remain firm and resist all attempts to defeat or slay it. It is not that the doubts of the intellect may not assail, the heart waver, the disappointed desire of the life mind sink down exhausted on the wayside. That is almost inevitable at times, perhaps often, especially with us, sons of an age of intellectuality and scepticism and a materialistic denial of spiritual truth which has not yet lifted its painted clouds from the face of the sun of a greater reality and is still opposed to the light of spiritual intuition and inmost experience. There will very possibly be many of those trying obscurations of which even the Vedic Rishis so often complained, "long exiles from the light", and these may be so thick, the night on the soul may be so black that faith may seem utterly to have left us. But through it all the spirit within will be keeping its unseen hold and the soul will return with a new strength to its assurance which was only eclipsed and not extinguished, because extinguished it cannot be when once the inner self has known and made its resolution.* The Divine holds our hand through all and if he seems to let us fall, it is only to raise us higher. This saving return we shall experience so often that the denials of doubt will become eventually impossible and, when once the foundation of equality is firmly established and still more when the sun of the gnosis has risen, doubt itself will pass away because its cause and utility have ended.

Moreover not only a faith in the fundamental principle, ideas, way of the Yoga is needed, but a day to day working faith in the power in us to achieve, in the steps we have taken on the way, in the spiritual experiences that come to us, in the intuitions, the guiding movements of will and impulsion, the moved intensities of the heart and aspirations and fulfilments of the life that are the aids, the circumstances and the stages of the enlrging of the nature and the stimuli or the steps of the soul's evolution. At the same time it has always to be remembered that we are moving from imperfection and ignorance towards light and perfection, and the faith in us must be free from attachment to the forms of our endeavour and the successive stages of our realisation. There is not only much that will be strongly raised in us in order to be cast out and rejected, a battle between the powers of ignorance and the lower nature and the higher powers that have to replace them, but experiences, states of thought and feeling, forms of realisation that are helpful and have to be accepted on the way and may seem to us for the time to be spiritual finalities, are found afterwards to be steps of transition, have to be exceeded and the working faith that supported them withdrawn in favour of other and greater things or of more full and comprehensive realisations and experiences, which replace them or into which they are taken up in a completing transformation. There can be for the seeker of the integral Yoga no clinging to resting-places on the road or to half-way houses; he cannot be satisfied till he has laid down all the great enduring bases of his perfection and broken out into its large and free infinities, and even there he has to be constantly filling himself with more experiences of the Infinite. His progress is an ascent from level to level and each new height brings in other vistas and revelations of the much that has still to be done, *bhuri kartwam*, till the divine Shakti has at last taken up all his endeavour and he has only to assent and participate gladly by a consenting oneness in her luminous workings. That which will support him through these changes, struggles, transformations which might otherwise dishearten and baffle,—for the intellect and life and emotion always grasp too much at things, fasten on premature certitudes and are apt to be afflicted and unwilling when forced to abandon that on which they rested,—is a firm faith in the Shakti that is at work and reliance on the guidance of the Master of the Yoga whose wisdom is not in haste and whose steps through all the perplexities of the mind are assured and just and sound, because they are founded on a perfectly comprehending transaction with the necessities of our nature.

The progress of the Yoga is a procession from the mental ignorance through imperfect formations to a perfect foundation and increasing of knowledge and in its more satisfyingly positive parts a movement from light to greater light, and it cannot cease till we have the greatest light of the supramental knowledge. The motions of the mind in its progress must necessarily be mixed with a greater or lesser proportion of error, and we should not allow our faith to be disconcerted by the discovery of its errors or imagine that because the beliefs of the intellect which aided us were too hasty and positive, therefore the fundamental faith in the soul was invalid. The human intellect is too much afraid of error precisely because it is too much attached to a premature sense of certitude and a too hasty eagerness for positive finality in what it seems to seize of knowledge. As our self-experience increases, we shall find that our errors even were necessary movements, brought with them and left their element or suggestion of truth and helped towards discovery or supported a necessary effort and that the certitudes we have now to abandon had

* Sankalpa, Vyavasaya.

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yet their temporary validity in the progress of our knowledge. The intellect cannot be a sufficient guide in the search for spiritual truth and realisation and yet it has to be utilised in the integral movement of our nature. And while therefore, we have to reject paralysing doubt or mere intellectual scepticism, the seeking intelligence has to be trained to admit a certain large questioning, an intellectual rectitude not satisfied with half-truth, mixture of error or approximations and, most positive and helpful, a perfect readiness always to move forward from truths already held and accepted to the greater corrective, completing or transcending truths which at first it was unable or, it may be, disinclined to envisage. A working faith of the intellect is indispensable, not a superstitious, dogmatic or limiting credence attached to every temporary support or formula, but a large assent to the successive suggestions and steps of the Shakti, a faith fixed on realities, moving from the lesser to the completer realities and ready to throw down all scaffolding and keep only the large and growing structure.

A constant *sraddha*, faith, assent of the heart and the life too are indispensable. But while we are in the lower nature the heart's assent is coloured by mental emotion and the life movements are accompanied by their trail of perturbing or straining desires, and mental emotion and desire tend to trouble, alter more or less grossly or subtly or distort the truth, and they always bring some limitation and imperfection into its realisation by the heart and life. The heart too when it is troubled in its attachments and its certitudes, perplexed by throw-backs and failures and convictions of error or involved in the wrestlings which attend a call to move forward from its assured positions, has its draggings, wearinesses, sorrowings, revolts, reluctances which hamper the progress. It must learn a larger and surer faith giving in the place of the mental reactions a calm or a moved spiritual acceptance to the ways and the steps of the Shakti which is in its nature the assent of a deepening Ananda to all necessary movements and a readiness to leave old moorings and move always forward towards the delight of a greater perfection. The life mind must give its assent to the successive motives, impulsions, activities of the life imposed on it by the guiding power as aids or fields of the development of the nature and to the successions also of the inner Yoga, but it must not be attached or call a halt anywhere, but must always be prepared to abandon old urgency and accept with the same completeness of assent new higher movements and activities, and it must learn to replace desire by a wide and bright Ananda in all experience and action. The faith of the heart and the life mind, like that of the intelligence, must be capable of a constant correction, enlarging and transformation.

This faith is essentially the secret of *sraddha* of the soul, and it is brought more and more to the surface and there satisfied, sustained and increased by an increasing assurance and certainty of spiritual experience. Here too the faith in us must be unattached, a faith that waits upon Truth and is prepared to change and enlarge its understanding of spiritual experiences, to correct mistaken or half true ideas about them and receive more enlightening interpretations, to replace insufficient by more sufficient intuitions, and to merge experiences that seemed at the time to be final and satisfying in more satisfying combinations with new experience and greater largenesses and transcendences. And especially in the "psychical" and other middle domains there is a very large room for the possibility of misleading and often captivating error, and here even a certain amount of positive scepticism has its use and at all events a great caution and scrupulous intellectual rectitude, but not the scepticism of the ordinary mind which amounts to a disabling denial. In the integral Yoga psychical experience, especially of the kind associated with what is often called occultism and savours of the miraculous, should be altogether subordinated to spiritual truth and wait upon that for its own interpretation, illumination and sanction. But even in the purely spiritual domain, there are experiences which are partial and, however attractive, only receive their full validity, significance or right application when we can advance to a fuller experience. And there are others which are in themselves quite valid and full and absolute, but if we confine ourselves to them, will prevent other sides of the spiritual truth from manifestation and mutilate the integrality of the Yoga. Thus the profound and absorbing quietude of impersonal peace which comes by the stilling of the mind is a thing in itself complete and absolute, but if we rest in that alone, it will exclude the companion absolute, not less great and needed and true, of the bliss of the divine action. Here too our faith must be an assent that receives all spiritual experience, but with a wide openness and readiness for always more light and truth, an absence of limiting attachment and no such clinging to forms as would interfere with the forward movement of the Shakti towards the integrality of the spiritual being, consciousness, knowledge, power, action and the wholeness of the one and the multiple Ananda.

The faith demanded of us both in its general principle and its constant particular application amounts to a large and ever increasing and a constantly purer, fuller and stronger assent of the whole being and all its parts to the presence and guidance of God and the Shakti. The faith

in the Shakti, as long as we are not aware of and filled with her presence, must necessarily be preceded or at least accompanied by a firm and virile faith in our own spiritual will and energy and our power to move successfully towards unity and freedom and perfection. Man is given faith in himself, his ideas and his powers that he may work and create and rise to greater things and in the end bring his strength as worthy offering to the altar of the Spirit. This spirit, says the Scripture, is not to be won by the weak, *nayam atma balahimena labhyah*. All paralysing self-distrust has to be discouraged, all doubt of our strength to accomplish, for that is a false assent to impotence, an imagination of weakness and a denial of the omnipotence of the spirit. A present incapacity, however heavy may seem its pressure, is only a trial of faith and a temporary difficulty and to yield to the sense of inability is for the seeker of the integral Yoga a non-sense, for his object is a development of a perfection that is there already, latent in the being, because man carries the seed of the divine life in himself, in his own spirit, the possibility of success is involved and implied in the effort and victory is assured because behind is the call and guidance of an omnipotent power. At the same time this faith in oneself must be purified from all touch of rajasic egoism and spiritual pride. The sadhaka should keep as much as possible in his mind the idea that his strength is not his own in the egoistic sense but that of the divine universal Shakti and whatever is egoistic in his use of it must be a cause of limitation and in the end an obstacle. The power of the divine universal Shakti which is behind our aspiration is illimitable, and when it is rightly called upon it cannot fail to pour itself into us and to remove whatever incapacity and obstacle, now or later; for the times and durations of our struggle while they depend at first, instrumentally and in part, on the strength of our faith and our endeavour, are yet eventually in the hands of the wisely determining secret Spirit, alone the Master of the Yoga, the Ishwara.

The faith in the divine Shakti must be always at the back of our strength and when she becomes manifest, it must be or grow implicit and complete. There is nothing that is impossible to her who is the conscious Power and universal Goddess all-creative from eternity and armed with the Spirit's omnipotence. All knowledge, all strength, all triumph and victory, all skill and works are in her hands and they are full of the treasures of the Spirit and of all perfections and *siddhis*. She is Maheshwari, goddess of the supreme knowledge, and brings to us her vision for all kinds and widenesses of truth, her rectitude of the spiritual will, the calm and passion of her supramental largeness, her felicity of illumination: she is Mahakali, goddess of the supreme strength and with her are all mights and spiritual force and severest austerity of *tapas* and swiftness to the battle and the victory and the laughter, the *attahasya*, that makes light of defeat and death and the powers of the ignorance: she is Mahalakshmi, the goddess of the supreme love and delight, and her gifts are the spirit's grace and the charm and beauty of the Ananda and protection and every divine and human blessing: she is Mahasaraswati, the goddess of divine skill and of the works of the Spirit, and hers is the Yoga that is skill in works, *yogah karmasu kausalam*, and the utilities of divine knowledge and the self-application of the spirit to life and the happiness of its harmonies. And in all her powers and forms she carries with her the supreme sense of the masteries of the eternal Ishwari, a rapid and divine capacity for all kinds of action that may be demanded from the instrument, oneness, a participating sympathy, a free identity, with all energies in all beings and therefore a spontaneous and fruitful harmony with all the divine will in the universe. The intimate feeling of her presence and her powers and the satisfied assent of all our being to her workings in and around it is the last perfection of faith in the Shakti.

And behind her is the Ishwara and faith in him is the most central thing in the *sraddha* of the integral Yoga. This faith we must have and develop to perfection that all things are the workings under the universal conditions of a supreme self-knowledge and wisdom, that nothing done in us or around us is in vain or without its appointed place and just significance, that all things are possible when the Ishwara as our supreme Self and Spirit takes up the action and that all that has been done before and all that he will do hereafter was and will be part of his infallible and foreseeing guidance and intended towards the fruition of our Yoga and our perfection and our life work. This faith will be more and more justified as the higher knowledge opens, we shall begin to see the great and small significances that escaped our limited mentality and faith will pass into knowledge. Then we shall see beyond the possibility of doubt that all happens within the working of the one Will and that that will was also wisdom because it develops always the true workings in life of the self and nature. The highest state of the assent, the *sraddha* of the being will be when we feel the presence of the Ishwara and feel all our existence and consciousness and thought and will and action in his hand and consent in all things and with every part of our self and nature to the direct and immanent and occupying will of the Spirit. And that highest perfection of the *sraddha* will also be the opportunity and perfect foundation of a divine strength: it will base, when complete, the development and manifestation and the works of the luminous supramental Shakti.



THE KALKI AVATAR

By "Alastor"

Deeper than the depths of Hell,
In the Caverns of the Night,
Where darkness is wrapped within darkness,
And even Tartarus is light,

In a Lockless Vault of sombre air,
In Chaos deep, 'midst shifting sand,
Sits the Inconscient's Demon Power,
King of the Nether Land.

He reigns supreme on earth's wide realm,
A fatal Shadow on the soul of man,
His yoke not even a god can break,
Such the need of the Cosmic Plan.

Now there's cursing and wailing in Darkness,
Laws fixed and decrees unbending
Are changed and re-ordained
By a Will that is All-transcending.

Lo, the Avatar of Heaven has descended,
With his spear of gold-light and blue,
With the strength of the Almighty
He sundered the Vault-gate in two.

* * *

Meanwhile earth moves in sorrow and tears,
A figure lies wrapped up in trance—
Hundreds and thousands are seeking
Its strange significance.

One of the hundreds who are grieving
Hearkens in a Silence deep
To the Voice of the Infinite Spaces
From that figure of luminous sleep.

"Look, O man, but not with human eyes
Into yon Abyss of Doom,
Where serpents in mud and dragons in swoon
Float in the Inconscient gloom.

"Turn thy face from this Mask,
Though dear to thy heart it be,
See the Truth behind the Vesture,
Thy Lord abides with thee.

"I am going down for a purpose
To the devil's dominion—
To flood the hidden Vault of Death
With the beams of the Celestial Sun.

"I shall rise in a body radiant
Of heaven-blue and ether-vibrations,
Of crystal cells of a golden hue,
When earth's dormant soul awakens."

* * *

Below, the Demon his scorn unfurls:
"Who art thou, intruding wraith,
That defiest decrees perennial
And darest the Chamber of Death?"

"I descend from the land of the Eternal Sun,
Beyond Time's blind kingdom,
I am the dweller of the Golden Vasts,
To bring the Light I come."

"Away from here, cursed phantom of light,"
Shouts the Demon with anger and hate,
"Fly ere I smite with giant-might
And seal forever thy fate."

"Knowest not thou me, thy Maker Supreme?"
Answers the Divine Incarnation,
"I am the light of Vishnu, the might of Shiva,
Brahma Himself—Lord of Creation.

"Release from thy clutch of Death
Man's heart forever ascendant,
Abjure thy kingdom, ends now thy reign,
I give the Command Transcendent."

The Fiend shakes with suspense and terror,
As the Avatar now bides his time,
And drives the gold-lighted spear
In the hideous heart of Cosmic Crime.

The Demon spouts hell's lava
To burn the earth to cinder,
Poison to kill the globe itself
And drown man's heavenward endeavour.

The Avatar soon absorbs the poison,
And takes on himself all disaster,
But the foe is caught in the death-embrace,
The devil has met his master.

The battle now rages fiercer
As Hell aids Chaos in the fight,
But never can all Cosmic Power
Vanquish the Transcendent Light.

With skulls of Ogres and Titans
The barren ground is littered,
A battle-field of Truth and Falsehood—
Pandemonium lies shaken and shattered.

Descends now the body in trance.
Over-spreading his aura of golden blaze
Performs the Avatar a rite mysterious,
Inscrutable to mortal gaze.

The secret of secrets he only knows,
The Death-Chamber doubly invaded
In body terrestrial and subtle,
The devil in his den is raided.

He rises again to his Eternal Sun
With regions Inconscient left behind,
To send down Bliss and Life immortal—
Benediction to all mankind.

The two ends of Being now commune,
For 'tis writ on tablets of yore:
Earth shall consort with high Heaven—
God's Kingdom Kalki shall secure.

God-love shall clasp the hearts of men
In a New Creation's day,
The House of Aurobindo shall be built in Time
From the gold of the Supermind's Ray.

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

By RISHABHCHAND

AN EPOCHAL SYNTHESIS

There are three basic postulates of the synthesis which form the heart of Sri Aurobindo's Integral or Purna Yoga. The first is that no union with the Supreme can be called perfect unless it is a union in all His states, poises, and modes of being. The supreme Purusha or the omnipresent Reality has four poises or statuses, according to the Upanishads—"Sohya-mātmā chatuspāt". The first poise is that of the waking state (*jagaritasthāna*), which is extraverted or externally cognitive (*vahiprajna*), and enjoyer of the gross (*suhulabhuk*). This is the *Vaishvanara* or *Virat* state of Brahman. The second poise is that of the dream state (*svapnasthāna*) introverted, or internally conscious and enjoyer of the subtle (*praviviktabhuk*). This is the *Taijas* state of Brahman. The third is that of the deep-sleep state (*sushuptisthāna*), unified, a massed consciousness (*prajñānaghana*), made of bliss (*ānandamāya*) and enjoyer of the bliss (*ānandabhuk*). This is the Lord of all (*Sarveshvara*), the all-knowing (*sarvajna*), the inner control (*antaryāmin*), the source and dissolution of all beings (*prabhavāpyayau*). This is the status of the supreme Godhead, the sovereign majesty and glory of the creator Brahman. The fourth poise is that state of Brahman which is neither extraverted nor introverted, neither massed consciousness nor unconsciousness, unseen, relationless, featureless, inconceivable, ineffable, the supreme peace (*shantam*), the supreme good (*shivam*) and the supreme, inalienable oneness without a second (*advaitam*). This is the absolute state of Brahman.*

This illuminating description of the integral Brahman is preceded by a categorical affirmation, interspersed in many representative Upanishads, that verily everything here is Brahman—*sarvam hyetad Brahma*. There is nothing like illusion or hallucination; the world and all its names and forms—*idam sarvam*—all are, indeed, the indivisible and all-pervading Brahman. . . "*Brahmaivedam Vishvamidam Varishtham*"—the supreme Brahman and no other is all this world. And yet it is no pantheism that the Upanishads preach; for though Brahman is *Vishvātmā*, the Soul of the cosmos, and *Vishvarupah*. He who has assumed the form of the cosmos, is yet the womb of the cosmos, *Vishvayonih*, and beyond all cosmos and cosmic differentiations, *vashischa*.

It is then, evident that the integrality of Brahman includes all the above four statuses, and that to realise them all, not successively, but simultaneously, is to realise the integral Brahman, the supreme Divine or Purushottama who is a Person, superior to the Immutable (*aksharādapichottama*) and higher than the Unmanifest (*abyaktāt parah*). Beyond this Person, this supreme Purusha, there is nothing whatsoever (*Purushanna parma kinchit*). The ideal of the *Nirveeja* or *Nirvikalpa* samadhi, a complete self-loss by absorption in the immutable Absolute is not the highest ideal, for it takes cognisance of only the peak state and not of all the four constituent states of Brahman; and as the head of a man is not his whole body, so the *Turiya* or transcendent Absolute is not the integral Brahman. Sri Aurobindo's Yoga aims at the realisation of the integral union with the integral Divine, which means a union in all the four Brahmic poises together. This is his synthesis of the poises and states of Reality, and it is on the basis of this synthesis that he has reared his immense structure of the Life Divine for man upon this earth. For, this synthesis does not exclude anything; it includes all, the world and all its multiform relations and activities as the waking state (waking from our standpoint, for really speaking, Brahman is ever awake—*sa jāgarti*—) of Brahman, as well as His *Turiya* or absolute status. This synthesis is an epoch-making contribution to Yoga and Philosophy. Since the synthesis of the Gita, which, by the way, has hardly ever been practised in the mediaeval and modern times except in a fragmentary way, either by the exclusive pursuit of knowledge or love or works, no spiritual culture has based itself with any steady vision and firm faith upon the fourfold integrality of Brahman. Most of them—I might say, all, including even Tantra—have been more or less swayed by the ascetic and renunciatory tendency initiated in the Upanishadic times and fostered and developed by later extremist spirituality, and envisaged the *Turiya* or the transcendent Unthinkable as the ultimate goal of the being of man. Jnanayoga, Bhakti yoga, Karmayoga, Rajayoga, Hathayoga, Tantra, all have fixed upon the supracosmic consummation, whether it is Moksha or Nirvana or a permanent proximity to the Supreme Beloved in a world of eternal Light and Love, Goloka or Vaikuntha. It is Sri Aurobindo's synthesis alone that recovers the unifying vision of the Vedic and Upanishadic seers and reinstates the *chatuspāt*, fourfold, Brahman in the heart of man as the sole object of aspiration and realisation, and it is again his synthesis alone that bids fair to make that object of human aspiration and realisation a manifest Reality, a self-revealed Splendour here in this dim world of Matter.

The Synthesis of the Parts of Man

The second postulate is that this union with *Chatuspāt* Brahman can and is to be realised not only by the soul, but by the whole being—soul and

nature—of man. The mind, the life and even the body of man are to participate, as well as the soul, in the blissful experience of identity, union and communion with the Supreme Being. How can that be possible? How can the twilight mind, the restless, desire-driven life and the dense, obtuse and inert body of man house the ineffable Presence or even enter into the ecstasy of some kind of union with it? Is it not the human intelligence that detaches itself from the rest of the nature and, by the final act of self-extinction, leaves the soul in the unutterable peace and silence of the Impersonal; or the ardours of the human heart in their fiery intensity that plunge the soul into the bliss of the divine embrace? In either case there is an abstraction of the most developed part of the being from the rest which remains sunk in its habitual obscurity or is at best distantly irradiated by the reflected light of the abstracted part. The union is enjoyed by the soul in the depths of the human consciousness or on its serene summits, but not in the whole being. The Vedic seers knew the secret of making the divine light, the divine bliss and force accessible to the entire human nature, and some of them tried individually to realise it; but there was no conception of making that realisation an imperative collective ideal and aspiration. And yet that is the very purpose of the creation of man and his ultimate and inevitable destiny in the material world.

Sri Aurobindo says that each part of the being of man is derived from the Supreme, is permeated and sustained by the Supreme and is developed and led towards a conscious union and communion with Him which is its birth-right. Each part is a living and indispensable member of the evolving organism, and the eventual harmonious perfection and divine fulfilment, which is the goal of human existence, can be possible only through the perfection and fulfilment of each part, each faculty and each function of the human being. This was the knowledge upon which the ancient Vedic culture was founded, though it was not fully worked out in that age, and this was the knowledge which continued, if grown somewhat remote and pale, down to the closing period of the Upanishads, investing the whole of human existence with a sacramental significance. Matter, of which the body is made, is Brahman (*Annam Brahman*), life is Brahman and mind is Brahman—so declare the Upanishads. This being the essential truth of the parts of human nature, it would not be irrational to hold that, however debased or darkened they may have become by reason of their evolution from Inconscience, their conversion to their spiritual equivalents is not only possible, but well within the ambit of a strong probability. But what are their spiritual equivalents? From what principles of Brahman are they severally derived? From Sat, the self-existent eternal substance of Sachchidananda, comes Matter, turned gross and dense by the Inconscience out of which it emerges in evolution; from Chit or the Consciousness of Sachchidananda comes life, from Ananda comes the soul and from Vijnana, or what Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind, comes mind. If, therefore, the human mind could be united with its original term and source, the Supermind, the life with Chit-tapas, the body with the infinite, immortal substance, and the soul with the plenary Ananda, there would then be an automatic union between Sachchidananda and the entire being of man.

There is another point to consider in this connection. Each of the three primal principles, Sat, Chit and Ananda, contains in itself the other two, so that Sat can never be without Chit and Ananda, nor Chit without Sat and Ananda, nor Ananda without Sat and Chit; which inversely means that each of the parts of our being has all the potentiality of Sachchidananda in it, and a perfect development of any presupposes a perfect development of all. But such is the complex interrelation and interaction of the parts of our being that without a radical illumination and transformation and a harmonious unification of them, they cannot be united with Sachchidananda. It is not so difficult to have a little light in the mind or a little joy and peace in the heart or an intermittent play of a higher force in our life-parts; but in order to be united with the Divine in an undeviating closeness and constancy of God-possessed thought and feeling and emotion and will and sensation and action, in order, that is to say, to belong entirely and irrevocably to the Master of our existence in all the ways of our being, two things are essential, two that form a distinctive feature of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga: integration and transformation. Integration means the harmonising and welding of the different parts of the being into an organic whole, so that they can move in perfect unison in the steps of the divine Will; and transformation means a radical change and conversion of the natural parts into their spiritual equivalents, so that the whole of human nature may be sublimated and transfigured into the divine Supernature. This transformation, as we have already seen above, is not mere purification or quiescence of the nature parts; it is nothing less than a turning of the lead of man's normal humanity into the pure gold of divinity. And the crux of the labour of transformation is the illumination and conquest of the subconscious and inconscient layers of our being, which teem with the aboriginal impressions and impulses of our unregenerate nature. They have to be illuminated and

* For a fuller description see Mandukaya Upanishad.

AN EPOCHAL SYNTHESIS—Continued from previous page.

emancipated from the hold of ignorance and inertia, if the integration and transformation of our nature are to be complete. The Gita's way of the renunciation of all desire and attachment is the right way and a very effective method of purification, so far as the surface nature is concerned and the regions just below the surface, but it hardly touches the murky depths where the animal appetites and passions and the inertia and falsehood and obscurity of our material heritage lie simmering or slumbering in a promiscuous mass. These depths too are part of ourself, they too have a voice, probably often an imperious voice, in the complex business of our life. No synthesis can be complete and enduring that neglects to deal radically with these dark recesses of our being. And for a radical and effective dealing with them, the light and force we command in our mental consciousness are all too feeble and inadequate. The dismal failure of the great Tantric experiment is a standing warning to those who would venture to raise up the blind forces of these regions in order to purify and transmute them without taking precious care to arm themselves with the authentic light of the Divine. The light of the human mind can be no guide to these arcane depths; even the light of the spiritualised mind has no imperative power here. The Subconscious and the Inconscious submit only to the supernal Light of the Vijnana, the supreme creative Light, and to no other.

No post-Vedic Yoga except Tantra, has ever had this ideal of the integration and transformation of human nature in view. The adventure of the Tantric Yoga was large and amazingly bold, but less profound,—its union with Light was not so sure as its polarity to Force. The other Yogas did not bother about this ideal. Their object being to help the soul pass out of the meshes of Nature, they took hold of any one part or principle of human nature and used it as a gate of exit. Either knowledge or love or will to action, carried to its consummation, was deemed potent enough to release the soul into the infinity and immortality of the Absolute or the love and delight of the transcendent Godhead. A synthesis was either not conceived at all or thought redundant, even impracticable.

But if the object is to enrich and expand the being of man till it unites with the Supreme and manifests Him in a splendour of Light and Power and Bliss, then integration and transformation impose themselves. The Gita's triple path of knowledge, love and works, followed with an utter sincerity of aspiration and self-giving, resolves many anomalies and discords of the human nature and forges its divergent parts into a more or less harmonious unity, but that is not enough, so long as the synthesis, thus attained, is confined to the mental plane, however high and wide it may be; the synthetic sacrifice has to ascend beyond mind and, invoking a descent of the supernal Light, achieve, first, a reproduction of itself and then a reproduction of the divine glory in the submerged parts of the human being.

The Supramentalised Synthesis

Therefore, the third postulate is that the synthesis of knowledge, love and works, or of man's mental, vital and physical parts, organised round the soul or the psychic being as the quickening and co-ordinating centre, has to climb to the Supermind or the supreme Truth-Consciousness (*Rita-chit*), in order to be remade into its inviolable harmony, and then descend, led by the Light and Force of the Supermind, to instal itself in the chaos and obscurity of the Subconscious and the Inconscious. Synthesis on the expressive planes of our being, synthesis on its creative summits and synthesis at its nether base—this is the triple formula of the synthesis envisaged by the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

The Synthesis of the Terms of the Soul

There are two more aspects of the synthesis aimed at by the Integral Yoga. In most of the Yogas the individuality of the human soul, widened and impersonalised, is wafted straight to the Transcendent. Universality, which is the middle term of the soul, is almost left undeveloped, or is developed, more or less imperfectly, only on its static side, and hardly, except in the *Samrājyasiddhi* of Tantra, on the dynamic. In some Yogas the dynamic universality is studiously eschewed. But the destiny of the embodied soul is to possess simultaneously and with a plenary perfection both in status and dynamis, its triple term of existence—individuality, universality and transcendence. Its union with the Supreme cannot be complete unless it is a union with Him in His universal immanence as well as in His featureless transcendence. The three terms of the embodied soul have their corresponding terms in the Supreme and a constant and complete union between them is the apex of human attainment. The Divine has to be realised as the One, but also as the many, as each being, each thing and each happening; and the liberated soul, liberated also in its nature, must rise into an identification, at once static and dynamic, with the cosmic Divine, feel itself in all and all in itself, God in all and all in God, even while enjoying the indescribable bliss of the supracosmic union. And it is important to note that this universality of the soul is not meant to be a passing phase or a transitional passage in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo, a passage through which the soul is to escape into the silence of the incommunicable; it is to be firmly held and permanently possessed as the middle term of its spiritual existence. Its self-realisation and divine realisation

will be incomplete without its secure participation in the universality of Brahman; and it is this universality that justifies its continued co-operation, even after its individual liberation, in the upward labour of all beings towards the freedom and bliss of the Divine: *sambhutyāmritamashnuté*, "by the Birth he enjoys immortality." "Immortality beyond the universe is not the object of manifestation in the universe, for that the Self always possessed. Man exists in order that through him the Self may enjoy Immortality in the birth as well as in the non-becoming".* Individual liberation is not the end of man's life; his glory lies in striving through countless births, if need be, for the liberation of his fellow-mortals who are equally his own self, and without whose liberation his own personal freedom remains an imperfect attainment. And the object of liberation is not an eventual retreat from all individual and universal play of God's delight in creation into His immutable transcendence, but a perfect manifestation of His Love and Light and Power and Bliss in this suffering and inharmonious world, His unimpeded self-expression in humanity.

The Synthesis of the Three Vedantic Realisations

Another synthesis effected by the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is between the visions and experiences of the three great schools of Vedantic spiritual culture, Advaita, Vishistādvaita and Dvaita. It is not a philosophical synthesis, though it has a momentous bearing on philosophy, but a spiritual, rather a supramental, synthesis which validates and explains the realisation of each of the three Vedantic schools and fuses them all into its manifold comprehensiveness. According to Sri Aurobindo, there are three poises of the creative Supermind. "The first founds the inalienable unity of things, the second modifies that unity so as to support the manifestation of the Many in One and One in Many; the third further modifies it so as to support the evolution of a diversified individuality which, by the action of Ignorance, becomes in us at a lower level the illusion of the separate ego."** In the first poise there is no individualisation, all is held and developed in the unitarian consciousness as one and not as many. When the reflection of this primary poise of the Supermind falls upon our purified and tranquillised mental consciousness, we lose all sense of individuality and are immersed in the illimitable ocean of unity. This is the basic truth and rationale of pure Advaitism. In the second poise of the Supermind, "the Divine Consciousness stands back in the idea from the movement which it contains, realising it by a sort of apprehending consciousness, following it, occupying and inhabiting its works, seeming to distribute itself in its forms."** There is here a multiple concentration and a creation of countless soul-forms, but all within the fundamental unity and harmony of the One. The original unity is manifestly and effectively modified, but there is yet no division or essential difference. When the reflection of this secondary poise of the Supermind falls upon our calm mind, we realise our soul-individuality as distinct from and at the same time united with the One. This is the truth and justification of the experience of Qualified Monism. In the third poise the stress of consciousness falls on multiplicity, though well within the infinite play of unity. The soul-forms develop an increasing network of relations among themselves as well as with the One, and seem to be tending towards the diversified delight of the One in the Many and of the Many in the One. This poise is "a sort of fundamental blissful dualism in unity—no longer unity qualified by a subordinate dualism—between the individual Divine and its universal source."** This is the truth of Dualism or Dvaitavada.

Now, all these three experiences are genuine and perfectly valid, and an integral supramental realisation would regard them as, indispensable strains of its developing harmonies. It is only the human mind with its inveterate habit of exclusive emphasis, trenchant divisions and rigid definitions that insulates the complementaries and poses them as contradictories. It is the human mind with its separative perception and analytical reasoning that cuts up the unity of existence into innumerable bits and goes blundering through them in a vain attempt to arrive at their original unity and fundamental truth.

Sri Aurobindo's epochal synthesis, embracing and manifold in its nature, is at once a repudiation and a fulfilment of the reasoning mind of man. It is destined to lead mankind to the full realisation and enjoyment of the unity in diversity, which is the secret of creation and the goal of evolution. After the intuitive synthesis of the Upanishads, there was the illumined intellectual synthesis of the Gita, and then, on a slightly lower scale, but with a greater fire and vigour of the will, the psycho-vital synthesis of Tantra. Today, standing on the threshold of the new era and in full possession of the living essentials of the spiritual cultural past, not only of India but of the whole world, Sri Aurobindo announces another synthesis, a vast supramental synthesis—the Supermind or Vijnana is the eternal home of all harmonies—for the ascent of man into the truth and unity of the One and the descent of the One into the whole being and life of man. The divine manifestation is the key-note of this synthesis and universal humanity is the field of its perfection.

* "Isha" Upanishad by Sri Aurobindo.

** "The Life Divine" by Sri Aurobindo.

† All these syntheses were spiritual, but their characterisation made here is from the standpoint of the distinctive means employed by each of them.

Embrace of Bliss

Come in this silver silence
When cool and calm is the night,
In the blue the moon is brooding
And the serene stars are bright.

To this eager heart that is waiting
For Thee so long and mute,
Come with Thy voice of harmony,
Thy felicitous flute.

Come to my lonely heart-temple,
O Rhythm-giver, and dance;
For filled is the heart of heaven
With stars smiling in trance.

Life is vain and empty,
Thy holy presence I miss;
Come and wrap my yearning
In Thy wide embrace of Bliss.

CHINU

Moon-Stare

O white-petalled lotus asleep in the throat,
Like two white wings of a lonely dove—
Flight of the Muse on a mystic note
Up-quivering from a heart of love.

Two flowering moons exquisitely shaped
By a burning desire for the hidden Word—
In skies of rapture where beauty is draped
In night—and the moon is as white as curd.

When the heart-flame rises and frames your flower
In ardent fires of inner sight,
Pure inspiration's magic hour
Leaps through the velvet screen of night

To a violet sky, then a vaster blue
Vibrant with Calm o'er a golden air—
Where sound transmutes actinic hue
Into white flames of your... moon-stare.

NORMAN DOWSETT

Just As With Equal Joy . . .

Just as with equal joy the Earth accepts
All things that Heaven deigns to pour on her,—
The scorching sun, the soothing dew, moonlight,
The whizzing hailstones, blazing meteorites,
Or cosmic rays that penetrate her depths:—
Even so will I, the child of Mother Earth,
Take all things equally that Thou wilt choose
To send to me,—good fortune or ill fate,
Grim misery or ease, world's praise or blame.

When I shall feel Thy Presence by my side
Always unintermittently, a Joy,
A Bliss Divine will gather up all things
And turn them all into its own pure self,
Into the radiant substance that it is.
There will no more be pain, no more decay;
Frustration will not be the gloomy end
Of aspirations soaring heavenwards.

When I shall have completely recognised
Thy sweetly working Hand behind all Life,
All mind, all matter, what a sweetness pure
Will then have entered, penetrated deep
Into the texture of my being! What

A daylight will have dawned upon the night
That was the scene of thunderous rain and storm!—
A quiet Dawn transforming into gold
And rose the broken fragments of the clouds
That lie all scattered in the firmament
Like shattered stones of ruined castle-walls
After the cannon-fire has brought them down.

Eternal Bliss—Infinite Consciousness—
The Biune Principle of Being Vast,
That is at present only vaguely glimpsed
Within the Soul, during an inward plunge,
Will then become the dominating note,
In fact, the undertone in all Life's strain.

And then the leaves of Life's Asvattha-tree
Will be quite drenched with dew-drops of Thy Grace,—
Their downward turning tips still drooping more,
Each with its pearl-weight clinging to its end
As if in silent adoration stilled.

Beloved mine, I'll wait for that great Dawn:
Till then I'll fill the lonely final hours
Of darkness with Thy Advent's golden dreams.

RAJANIKANT MODY

Poet

O Poet of the high and hidden silence,
Brooding in a cove of memory,
Sounding the backwash of an open sea:
Lone primitive fisher in immobile trance

Staring at thoughts darting with speed of sight,
Words minnowing in a rock-crannied mind,
And lazing on the rhythmic sigh of the wind...
Ha! Phosphor-trailing a wake of spun night,

There swims a silver image idly by.
Whaa! Arrow-swift the fisher-poet had dived
As broken flash! bare boney hands contrived
To snatch, smartly to land the living cry.

Hail! O Poet of the Hidden Silence,
Come, bring to earth this catch of rare effulgence!

ELEANOR MONTGOMERY

SRI AUROBINDO, THE LEADER OF THE EVOLUTION

PART II OF "THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA"

By "Synergist"

SECTION III : THE NEW WORLD-VIEW

(i) THE SPIRITUAL METAPHYSIC

(ii) KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINE REALITY

MIND AND SUPERMIND. II

In the previous essays in this Epistemological Section, the gnostic-spiritual ranges of cognition between mind and Supermind were first discussed—the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, the Intuitive Mind, and the Overmind. Then the difference between the mode of acquiring knowledge on the mental and Supramental planes was indicated, because it was found that the best way to understand the nature of the Supramental cognition was to contrast it with the only kind of cognition really known to man—the mental cognition.

It is necessary here to draw attention to a certain aspect of supra-intellectual knowledge which has not been taken into consideration by the rationalists in their criticism of those who believe in knowledge acquired through non-sensory and non-rational means. Owing to an inadequate understanding of ranges of consciousness greater than the rational, they do not admit the existence of a higher order of knowledge; they seem to think that all such knowledge must be extremely unreliable because if it is not acquired through the reason it must be built on emotional reactions and vague imaginings, and the so-called "intuition" must be a purely subjective phenomenon. But actually there is no such issue at stake—the whole problem is incorrectly stated. It is the loose use of the term "intuition" and an ignorance of the gnostic ranges of cognition that have created the difficulty. There is no question here of the abdication of the reason in favour of irrational emotional responses; it is a question of the possibility of enlarging the total awareness, raising the level of consciousness, heightening the powers and faculties of the mind through its gradual transformation, giving it powers that it did not possess before, improving its insight and discernment, turning thought into vision, the mental thinker into the enlightened seer and sage, the epistemological "book-maker" into Plato's "Spectator of all Time and all Existence."

The rationalists' reaction towards pseudo-mystics, whose sources of so-called "intuitive knowledge" are mostly of a chaotic infra-rational nature, and towards half-baked yogis who at the first touch of a supraphysical light seem to think that they have attained the highest illumination, is not unjustifiable. On the basis of the assertions made by such "mystics" it would not be possible to organise knowledge. But this reaction becomes almost a superstition when it refers to the knowledge attained by men of genuine spiritual experience. As we have seen, the *a priori* disbelief in all that transcends one's own experience and the experience of those who stand on the same psycho-spiritual level as oneself, the average man, is certainly not a scientific attitude; Goethe called this type of disbelief "inverted superstition".

Therefore, before this Epistemological Section is finished, it will be necessary to show how the various faculties of the ordinary mind like observation, judgment, reason, memory, imagination, the capacity to analyse and synthesise, get substituted on the Supramental level by greater powers with a corresponding action. The manner in which the powers of the intuitive mentality like inspiration and revelation are heightened will also be shown. The reader will see that mental faculties do not get abolished on the higher levels but are replaced by equivalent gnostic powers; for example, observation is replaced by a direct truth-vision, judgment by an inherent discrimination, a self-luminous discernment, the usual reasoning process of the logical mind by "a swift intuitive proceeding which sees the conclusion or fact at once and all the evidence by which we arrive at it not as its evidence, but as its circumstances and relations seen in one comprehensive view", and imagination by a truth-inspiration; he will see that the ordinary memory which stores knowledge in the depths of the subconscious now becomes a thing consciously and luminously possessed, as something contained in one's consciousness which can be brought forward at will and seen in self-vision.

Regarding the gnostic ideation Sri Aurobindo says that "it takes up all our present means of knowledge immensely extended, active and effective where they are now debarred, blind, infructuous, and turns them into a high and intense perceptive activity" of the Supermind. It uplifts even the sense-action and illumines it.

In the last essay a very general statement about the mental and Supramental cognition was made; before we proceed to a detailed analysis of the transformation of the powers of the mind, we shall see the development from the mind to the intuitive mentality and from the latter to the Supermind; as Sri Aurobindo says: "The supermind... lifts up the action of the

mental consciousness towards and into the intuition, creates an intermediate intuitive mentality insufficient in itself but greater in power than the logical intelligence, and then lifts up and transforms that too into the true supramental action."

The real epistemic implications of our central thesis that a change in the consciousness entails a corresponding change in the strain of ideation and that the wider and more luminous the awareness the greater is the grasp of reality, will be seen here clearly.

Spiritual intuition, as pointed out already, is a flash of light from a higher plane—a ray from the Supermind which enters the mind, not directly but through the intermediate gnostic planes; it is modified in its passage through these planes, and then undergoes a second modification when it contacts the mind substance. The influx of the higher light into the mind gradually changes from spasmodic flashes to a continuous stream; the process is quickened as the mind gets transformed and becomes intuitivised. This intuitive mentality, being more powerful and enlightened than the ordinary rational mentality, is naturally able to perform all the functions of the logical intelligence but by its own superior process. As its psychological and epistemic basis has been altered, it acquires the faculties of direct truth-vision, inspiration, and immediate seizing of significances. To complete the intuitivisation an ascent of the consciousness to the gnostic planes is also necessary; as the process of ascent and descent becomes more frequent and there is a growth into the Spirit, "a greater action of knowledge and will and spiritual feeling manifests and seems to organise itself above the mind" says Sri Aurobindo. When this stage is reached even the intuitive mentality "becomes a secondary and inferior movement waiting upon the higher power, responding and assenting to all its illuminations and dictates... It takes in fact the same place and relation with regard to it as was taken with regard to itself by the ordinary intelligence at an earlier stage of the Yoga."

A difficulty will always remain in understanding these supra-intellectual distinctions because the mind has a tendency to interpret them in its own terms and then understand them. A certain amount of spiritual illumination is necessary to have an adequate grasp of these subtle distinctions. In this connection the extract given here from *The Synthesis of Yoga* should be very helpful to the reader:

"It is difficult for the intellect to grasp at all what is meant by these supramental distinctions: the mental terms in which they can be rendered are lacking or inadequate and they can only be understood after a certain sight or certain approximations in experience. A number of indications are all that at present it can be useful to give. And first it will be enough to take certain clues from the thinking mind; for it is there that some of the nearest keys to the supramental action are discoverable. The thought of the intuitive mind proceeds wholly by four powers that shape the form of the truth, an intuition that suggests its idea, an intuition that discriminates, an inspiration that brings in its word and something of its greater substance and a revelation that shapes to the sight its very face and body of reality. These things are not the same as certain movements of the ordinary mental intelligence that look analogous and are easily mistaken for the true intuition in our first experience. The suggestive intuition is not the same thing as the intellectual insight of a quick intelligence or the intuitive discrimination as the rapid judgment of the reasoning intellect; the intuitive inspiration is not the same as the inspired action of the imaginative intelligence, nor the intuitive revelation as the strong light of a purely mental close seizing and experience.

"It would perhaps be accurate to say that these latter activities are mental representations of the higher movements, attempts of the ordinary mind to do the same things or the best possible imitations the intellect can offer of the functionings of the higher nature. The true intuitions differ from these effective but insufficient counterfeits in their substance of light, their operation, their method of knowledge. The intellectual rapidities are dependent on awakenings of the basic mental ignorance to mental figures and representations of truth that may be quite valid in their own field and for their own purpose, but are not necessarily and by their very nature reliable. They are dependent for their emergence on the suggestions given by mental and sense data or on the accumulation of past mental knowledge. They search for the truth as a thing outside, an object to be found and looked at and stored as acquisition and, when found, scrutinise its surfaces, suggestions or aspects. This scrutiny can never give a quite complete and

THE ASHRAM REVISITED

By TAN YUN-SHAN

Founder-Director of the Sino-Indian Cultural Society

I had the opportunity and privilege of visiting the Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry and of having the *Darshan* of the Mother and the Master for the first time in 1939. The impression I then had has ever remained fresh and vivid in my mind. It is indeed not only a great pleasure but a divine blessing for me to have attended the Sri Aurobindo Memorial Convention and stayed in the Ashram for more than a month this time. With the blessings of the Mother I hope I shall be able to stay there for a still longer period next time.

The Ashram has now grown up into a big organisation than which I cannot think of a more perfect one. The number of Sadhaks and Sadhikas, old and young, including little children, has now increased to the neighbourhood of a thousand. It is a growing not of the nature of an ordinary society or association. It is a growing towards a divine life.

The Sri Aurobindo Ashram is not an Ashram of any old pattern or in the old traditional sense. It is entirely a new Institution with quite a new significance. "At the Ashram of Rishi Aurobindo in Pondicherry there is no race or religious distinction", as Mahatma Gandhi once said. In fact, there is absolutely no distinction or discrimination of any kind in the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. It is indeed a divine home for all. The only relationship that exists there is through the gracious love and kindness of the Mother for everyone, and through the genuine devotion and reverence of all for the Mother. The inmates seem to have outgrown their petty individual selves. Whatever work they do, they do for the Mother. At seven every morning they have *Darshan* of the Mother at the Balcony, and at eight they receive the Mother's Blessings at the Meditation Hall. On the 1st of the month they receive from the Mother all their requirements. There are no rules, regulations or restrictions regarding anything; yet there is a kind of excellent discipline to which all are accustomed. Neither is there any compulsion or constraint in any matter. Everything is done by the sadhaks and sadhikas willingly and with good cheer. There is neither indulgence nor austerity, neither complaint nor complacency, not to mention any kind of disappointment or discord. In one word, the Ashramites are seeking to realise the real aspirations of their souls, they are trying to sink their individualities in the Divine Love of the Mother. To be more precise, it is the force of the Divine Love that is leading to this self-negating surrender.

It reminds me of the inscription on the Palace wall of the Mughal Emperors in Old Delhi: "If there is a paradise in the world, it is this, it is this." Of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram I would say: "If there is a divine home in the world, it is this, it is this." But there is no comparison between the paradise of the Mughal Palace and the divine home of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. The Mughal Palace was only a material show of the luxuries of the Mughal Emperors and with no happiness in it of any real sense. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram is entirely a spiritual home with real happiness but with no material show, not to speak of luxury.

The passing of Sri Aurobindo is, of course, a great loss not only to the Ashram but to the whole country and to the whole world. The Ashramites have naturally been shocked to a great extent but they have very quickly recovered themselves to their normal life, because they are very sure and confident that Sri Aurobindo's living Presence and Spiritual Force are always with them. As the Mother very emphatically said on the occasion of the Sri Aurobindo Memorial Convention: "Sri Aurobindo is present in

our midst, and with all the power of his creative genius he presides over the formation of the University Centre which for years he considered as one of the best means of preparing the future humanity to receive the supramental light that will transform the élite of today into a new race manifesting upon earth the new light and force and life." It is very true and I myself not only believe it but feel it.

The Mother is a very dynamic personality: she is strong, active and energetic, she works the whole day from very early morning till very late into the night without any rest and fatigue. She even does not sleep in the night, only reposes for a few hours sitting in meditation. She looks not only to every detail of the Ashram affairs but also to the activities and well-being of all the Ashramites, and even of the temporary visitors and guests. But she never worries or frets about anything. She is never angry or sullen. She is not only the presiding deity of the Ashram but also the symbol and silent force of execution of her own divine mission and the divine mission of Sri Aurobindo, for they are one and the same with perhaps this difference that while Sri Aurobindo's Compassion works largely in secret, the Mother's Love and Compassion work both in secret and in the open. Let us hope and pray that the Mother will live long shaping the world to be till its perfection.

It is indeed in the fitness of things that an International University Centre, I would say if I may, a World University Centre, has been projected in commemoration of Sri Aurobindo and will be started soon at Pondicherry with the Ashram as its organic adjunct and field of expression. In fact, the Ashram is already a University in its latent sense.

It seems that this International University will be, in certain respects, similar to the famous Visva-Bharati University at Santiniketan which was founded thirty years ago by the great poet and sage, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore. But as the new University, besides being a cultural institution is also a yogic and spiritual centre, its lines and methods of work will be naturally different from those of the Visva-Bharati. However, on the cultural level there will be a certain amount of similarity in their aims, such as the synthesis of cultures, unity of humanity and peace of the world.

It is further gratifying that the Central Government of India has recently recognised the Visva-Bharati as a Central University, relieving it from the financial stringency which burdened the Institution and handicapped its great work very much. I am sure the same Government will pay its due attention and do the same to this new World University of Sri Aurobindo too when the time comes.

I am again reminded of the words of the great Chinese Buddhist pilgrim and scholar Hsuan-Tsang: "India is the land where saints and sages have appeared in succession in order to guide the people direct to their right way." It is wonderful that India should produce at the same time during the present age, three great teachers namely, the poet and sage Gurudeva Rabindranath Tagore, the political and moral leader Mahatma Gandhi, and the philosopher-saint and rishi Sri Aurobindo. I sincerely hope and pray that the Indian people may ever remember them and keep the fire of their life, their spirit and their teaching always burning so that it may illuminate not only India but also the whole world.

MIND AND SUPERMIND —Continued from previous page.

adequate truth idea. However positive they may seem at the time, they may at any moment have to be passed over, rejected and found inconsistent with fresh knowledge.

"The intuitive knowledge on the contrary, however limited it may be in its field or application, is within that scope sure with an immediate, a durable and especially a self-existent certitude. It may take for starting-point or rather for a thing to light up and disclose in its true sense the data of mind and sense or else fire a train of past thought and knowledge to new meanings and issues, but it is dependent on nothing but itself and may leap out of its own field of lustres, independent of previous suggestion or data, and this kind of action becomes progressively more common and adds itself to the other to initiate new depths and ranges of knowledge. In either case there is always an element of self-existent truth and a sense of absoluteness of origination suggestive of its proceeding from the spirit's knowledge by identity. It is the disclosing of knowledge that is secret but already existent in the being: it is not an acquisition, but something that was always there and revealable. It sees the truth from within and illumines with that inner vision the outsides and it harmonises, too, readily—provided we keep intuitively awake—with whatever fresh truth has yet to arrive. These characteristics become more pronounced and intense in the higher, the proper supramental ranges: in the intuitive mind they may not be always recognisable in their purity and completeness, because of the mixture of mental stuff and its accretion, but in the divine reason and greater supra-

mental action they become free and absolute.

"The suggestive intuition acting on the mental level suggests a direct and illumining inner idea of the truth, an idea that is its true image and index, not as yet the entirely present and whole sight, but rather of the nature of a bright memory of some truth, a recognition of a secret of the self's knowledge. It is a representation, but a living representation, not an ideative symbol, a reflection, but a reflection that is lit up with something of the truth's real substance. The intuitive discrimination is a secondary action setting this idea of the truth in its right place and its relation to other ideas. And so long as there is the habit of mental interference and accretion it works also to separate the mental from the higher seeing, to discrete the inferior mental stuff that embarrasses with its alloy the pure truth substance, and labours to unravel the mingled skein of ignorance and knowledge, falsehood and error. As the intuition is of the nature of a memory, a luminous remembering of the self-existent truth, so the inspiration is of the nature of truth hearing: it is an immediate reception of the very voice of the truth, it readily brings the word that perfectly embodies it and it carries something more than the light of its idea; there is seized some streams of its inner reality and vivid arriving movement of its substance. The revelation is of the nature of direct sight, *pratyaksha*, *drishti*, and makes evident to a present vision the thing in itself of which the idea is the representation. It brings out the very spirit and being and reality of the truth and makes it part of the consciousness and the experience."

SRI AUROBINDO UNIVERSITY CENTRE FUND

An International University Centre is being established at Pondicherry in memory of Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo consecrated his whole life to the realisation of a new consciousness in humanity that will make it transcend itself, rise out of falsehood and ignorance and live in light and truth. The University is meant to give a practical and concrete shape to Sri Aurobindo's life-long effort.

The education imparted in the University will be based upon his teaching. As desired by him, the education will be given free to chosen students from all nations, religions and professions. The institution will have no commercial basis or aim.

The present Ashram itself is already a miniature international university and all can see for themselves how on a smaller scale the above efforts are being translated into practice.

We appeal to all who have good will and sympathy for the undertaking to contribute generously to the foundation and maintenance of the institution.

Contributions can be made in money or in material expressly required. Payment should be made only to those persons specifically authorised by the Mother, or direct to her at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

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SRI P. PARIJA,
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Banaras Hindu University.
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SRI PADAMPAT SINGHANIA
SRI SRI RAM
SRI CHUNILAL V. MEHTA
MR. J. R. D. TATA
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SRI RAMNIVAS RUIA
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SRI BABU RAMNARAYAN SINGH (M.P.)
SRI RAM SUBHAG SINGH (M.P.)
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THE SRI AUROBINDO UNIVERSITY CENTRE ITS PURPOSE

By M. P. PANDIT

Gen. Secretary, Sri Aurobindo University Centre Fund Committee

What is the distinctive character of the proposed Sri Aurobindo University Centre meriting special claim on public support? The answer is to be found in the way of life as it is developed at the Ashram and in the school which forms an integral part of the main institution.

The collective life that has grown up in the Ashram with the basis of an inner life of the individual practitant is best studied on three levels—the spiritual, the mental and the physical. There is, to begin with, the dominating emphasis on the life of the soul, the help and guidance for entering into the depths of one's being and to live from within outwards. The very presence of the Mother charged with the Spirit of Sri Aurobindo has created an atmosphere conducive to a natural growth of godward aspiration. Mind is nearest to the heights of the spirit and it is in the intellectual, cultural and aesthetic aspects of the Ashram that the results of the mode of life here are most spectacular. Under the lead given by the Master, a new type of literature, in prose and poetry, has grown up. Original research work of far-reaching consequence has been carried on in the field of ancient Indian culture and spirituality, notably the Veda and Upanishads. Successful experiments have been made towards the evolution of spiritual or mystic poetry the prototypes of which are to be found only in the hymnal literature of the Vedic Age. This literary and cultural activity is pursued and has found expression in some of the major languages of the country, as also in classical ones like Sanskrit; the half-a-dozen and more of the journals connected with the Ashram have carried wide only a part of the work in the line. There are artists, old and young, who find newer founts of vision, there are musicians finding newer melodies flowing through their fingers and vocal chords. And then,—this is an important feature—great care and industry is bestowed on the reclamation and development of the physical body with the sole view of housing in it the splendour of the Spirit. A discipline is being maintained towards perfection whereby the body with all its members can be made as supple, as intelligent as needed to meet the demands of the Soul on this its basic instrument.

Behind and above all this intense life there reigns a spiritual Power, the Light of a Higher Consciousness brought down by the Master and left to be completed in the new type that is in the making by the Mother. It is that which invests everything here with significance. The present writer was intrigued in the beginning, when in the course of his work his finger would automatically lie on the particular card or paper or file that was wanted amidst hundreds. Recurrence of the phenomenon with increased frequency eliminated the possibility of Chance and the working of a faculty or consciousness which is self-acting had to be recognised. Again, though never noted for strong memory, he found in himself an unusual capacity to remember hundreds of names with attendant details, and, it is interesting to note, they would clean fade away once the necessity was over. Similar is the experience of most of the inmates, in varied ways, working in the different departments of the Ashram. These instances are given just to draw attention to the functioning of these higher faculties in an atmosphere congenial to their manifestation. Mind and Reason are not the last word.

This is the background of the institution proposed to be erected for providing facilities to a larger number of men and women to build themselves in all their fullness in the light of the Ideal inspired and implanted by Sri Aurobindo. There is already in the Ashram a nucleus for it—a school where nearly a hundred pupils including children of tender age are receiving training. The school was started some years ago by the Mother under the auspices of Sri Aurobindo with his blessings and he considered it as the beginning of the making of a new vehicle of expression for his Message. The Mother has preferred children of young age for the simple reason that habits are not yet formed in them and they offer plastic material for moulding into the desired shape. There is no attempt at teaching them truths of spiritual life or yoga or moral precepts; they imbibe them in the general atmosphere and learn to react instinctively to things of the Spirit in a direct and unsophisticated manner without the inhibitions of awe and fear intervening between them and their Maker. There is undoubtedly a syllabus and an examination system to support the studies at the school. The students are encouraged to devote themselves to particular subjects for which they have aptitude. Thus one may read history in the fourth class while studying mathematics in the second; deficiency in one subject is not allowed to arrest progress in others. Contrary to what Pundits of Education say, it is found here that young children have a striking capacity to pick up languages—only they should not have to learn them compulsorily. Any boy (or girl) in the Ashram, for instance, knows English, French, Hindustani, his mother-tongue Bengali or Gujerati etc. in addition to something of the local language Tamil. Children interest themselves in arts like photography and painting; some choose to know crafts in the workshops and carpentry sections of the Ashram. Needless to add, these extra-curricular activities are

encouraged and promoted. The guiding principle is, in the words of Sri Aurobindo:

“Every child is a lover of interesting narrative, a hero-worshipper and a patriot. Appeal to these qualities in him and through them let him master without knowing it the living and human parts of his nation's history. Every child is an enquirer, an investigator, analyser, a merciless anatomist. Appeal to those qualities in him and let him acquire without knowing it the right temper and the necessary fundamental knowledge of the scientist. Every child has an insatiable intellectual curiosity and turn for metaphysical enquiry. Use it to draw him on slowly to an understanding of the world and himself. Every child has the gift of imitation and touch of imaginative power. Use it to give him the groundwork of the faculty of the artist”.

The proposed University Centre is to rise and radiate round this nucleus. Select men and women of all races, nationalities and religions will be enabled to live here and develop themselves in any line they choose but with a spiritual background and motif. All branches of learning, Humanities, Sciences, theoretical and applied, will be taught. The practical side of the spiritual discipline followed here will also be rendered accessible to those who have a call for it. It goes without saying that in an atmosphere as this where mind and its normal operations are at best regarded as just one of the means open to man to acquire knowledge of the world and the Sciences, other faculties will be encouraged to come into play for a growing enlargement of the frontiers of human knowledge.

Already we have here students from the five continents and offers have come from many countries to serve the University. The medium of instruction will be the mother-tongue of the student.

The University with full modern equipment will be a residential one, with arrangements for separate group life of students from different countries within the framework of the larger community. An International Museum is proposed to be built where students (and visitors) will find all important civilisations, past and present, of the world presented in line, design and lay-out in so many blocks. Artists from various countries will carry out the task of giving expression to their national life.

The sole authority for founding and fostering this institution naturally rests in the sacred hands of her who founded and developed the Ashram for Sri Aurobindo thirty years ago and who alone knows best how to translate effectively his Ideals into practice,—the MOTHER. The institution will be an autonomous body with no scope for outside interference. For its life is to continue unaffected by any likely change in the Government or political status of the place where it is situate.

The way of life here will be the way of Sri Aurobindo's conception. It will be neither American nor European, neither western nor eastern; it will include the best of both, the dynamism of the West and the poise of the East, and much more because it will be in consonance with the Great Ideal of Perfect Man to which the Sage devoted over forty years of his magnificent life in unparalleled concentration. He has taught that the Unity of the Human Race will proceed only from man's harmonious relation with man on the level of the soul and all life here has necessarily to centre round his key-conception.

It is to be noted that in this institution the commercial basis will be altogether absent. ‘I will not sell education’,—these are the noble words of the Mother and it is up to the world now to see that it is made possible to carry out the promise. We have appealed to the public for cooperation and assistance. We approach all who have the good will and sympathy for the undertaking, not with a begging bowl for survival, but as a comrade extending to a comrade the privilege of contributing towards the evolution of the community of a new Order.

Advent

From far away beyond thy reach, O mind!
On wings of love She comes to this dark land;
My heart reveals its petals to her gaze—
Enfolding all I am She seeks my hand.

Swiftly we cross the pale of your horizon,
On murmuring waves of soft delight we roam
Where silence whispers and where stillness flows—
Where all is love my soul is there at home

INDIRA

SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME

By DILIP KUMAR ROY

CHAPTER XIII

ASHRAM SPORTS

I have quoted in the preceding chapter a letter Sri Aurobindo wrote to me vindicating the attitude of a seer which might well look like self-superiority to others. But appearances are not always a reliable guide to reality. For instance, many may call over-assertive his answer to a gibe of mine (I wrote that the Supramental looked very much like a juggler whose legerdemain leaves us eventually high and dry in the land of nowhere):

"There is no question of jugglery about it. What is not true is not Supramental. As for calm and silence, there is no need of the Supramental to get that. One gets it even on the level of the Higher Mind which is the next above the human intelligence. I got these things in 1908, twenty-seven years ago, and I can assure you they are solid and marvellous enough in all conscience without any need of Supramentality to make them more so. Again, 'a calm that looks like action and motion' is a phenomenon of which I know nothing. A calm or silence, that is what I have had—the proof is that out of an absolute silence of the mind I edited the *Bande-Mataram* for four months and wrote six volumes of the *Arya*, not to speak of all the letters, messages *etcetra* I have written since. If you say that writing is not an action or motion but only something that *looks* like it—a jugglery of the consciousness—well, still out of that calm and silence I conducted a pretty strenuous political activity and have also taken my share in keeping up an Ashram which has at least an appearance to the physical senses of being solid and material! If you deny that these things are material or solid (which, of course, metaphysically you can) then you land yourself plump into Shankara's Illusionism, and there I will leave you."

Or let us take his statement: "My experience is not limited to a radiant peace. I know very well what ecstasy and *ananda* are from the *Brahmananda* down to the *sharira ananda* (physical bliss) and I can experience them at any time. But of these things I prefer to speak only when my work is done—for it is in a transformed consciousness here and not only above where the *ananda* always exists that I seek their base of permanence."

Or his rejoinder to my charge about his readiness to answer mental questions while denying the mind even a *Lebensraum* in God's good earth:

"But I do not understand how all that can prevent me from answering mental questions. On my own showing, if it is necessary for the divine purpose it has to be done. Sri Ramakrishna himself answered thousands of questions, I believe. But the answers must be such as he gave and such as I try to give, answers from a higher spiritual experience, from a deeper source of knowledge and not lacubrations of the logical intellect trying to co-ordinate its ignorance; still less can there be a placing of the Divine truth before the judgment of the intellect to be condemned or acquitted by that authority—for the authority here has not sufficient jurisdiction or competence."

Now, such statements when torn out of their context might well be misunderstood by the reader who, arguing from his lesser platform, might well dismiss the vista, that opens on a higher, as chimerical or unreal. Some others might even go farther and hold all such claims as pretentious inasmuch as they lack the neat flawlessness of commendable humility.

But I submit that such deductions will all be wrong and so will scarcely touch him. For he was nothing if not humble to the point of shyness. I know it is presumptuous on the part of a disciple to appear to certify the humility of his Guru, but as my main object has been to reminisce about him, I may venture to speak simply about his simplicity and humbly about his humility, even though here too, those who have never known a real Guru are, I fear, unlikely to appreciate the full import of what I am going to say.

It happened about twenty years ago. The Mother used to come to my room every Sunday and answer our questions which were taken down by an American sadhika who was an expert stenographer. One day somebody asked her a question about the value of humility, whereupon I said ironically that it was a rare virtue. Mother smiled and nodded. "Yes" she said, "and even rarer than one believes. I have known only one person here who can be called perfectly humble."

And were we not intrigued? "Who can it be?" was the unspoken thought which visited each of us who hoped against hope. like the holder of a Derby ticket. . . . but alas, she disappointed us all with an impeccable impartiality when she revealed that it was no other than Sri Aurobindo himself.

It was but a chance remark but it wrought an important change in my outlook on qualities like modesty and humility, for it helped me realise how far removed was the common brand of modesty from authentic humility when I contrasted the genteel veneer of the former with the pure white but essentially soothing glow of the latter. In other words, I began to feel something new into Sri Aurobindo's letters so sincere in their simplicity as well as spontaneous in their outspokenness. It was just an unadorned statement of his viewpoint and vision, naturally confidential in its very nature—since he was always averse to self-advertisement—but utterly confident that his recipient would take it as such. In this he was often, alas, let down by many of us, but nothing could vitiate the virgin simplicity that spouted out of his soul like natural spring-water—beneficent, crystalline and uncontaminated by anything that could be deleterious to those who drank deep

at its pure fount. I will give an instance or two to make my meaning clear.

I wrote to him once when some of his disciples in the Ashram praised his gravity to the skies (which I took to be a frontal attack on my own "vital cheerfulness" as they called it) that I doubted whether the dehumanised psychic gravity which he sponsored could ever be as warm and living as the vital *joie de vivre*—and so on. (I often attacked what he called the "psychic" and ended in calling the Supramental suspect—whenever somebody or other nagged at my social light-heartedness.) To that he wrote back: "Something else in you was inclined to see as the only alternative some hard grim ascetic ideal, the blank featureless Brahman and imagined that the Supramental was that; something in the vital looked on the conquest of wrong movements as a hard desperate *tapasaya*, not as a passage into purity and joy of the Divine,—even now something in you seems to insist on regarding the psychic attitude as something extraordinary, difficult, un-human and impossible! There were these and other lingerings of the mind and the vital; you have to clear them out and look at the simplicity of the Truth with a straight and simple gaze. The Russellian fear of emptiness is the form the active mind gives to Silence. Yet it was on what you call emptiness, on the Silence that my whole yoga was founded and it was through it that there came afterwards all the inexhaustible riches of a greater Knowledge, Will and Joy, all the experience of greater mental, psychic and vital realms, all the ranges up to Overmind and beyond. The cup has often to be emptied before it can be new-filled; the Yogin, the sadhak ought not to be afraid of emptiness or silence. It is not that there is anything peculiar to you in these difficulties; every sadhak entering the way has to get over similar impediments. It took me four years of inner striving to find a real way, even though the Divine help was with me all the time, and even then it seemed to come by an accident; and it took me ten years more of intense yoga under a supreme inner guidance to find the Way and that was because I had my past and the world's past to assimilate and overpass before I could find and found the future."

But the old Adam in me was not to be so easily appeased in those days—the early thirties. So I wrote back to him:

"O, Guru,

You do disconcert country innocents like us even as Krishna did his contemporaries with his *vyāmīsrāni vākyaṇi* (contradictory statements). For in one mood you say that the Divine must answer all sincere aspirations and then, in the very next, bewilder us by your enigmatic statement that even the 'Divine help' seemed to come to you by an 'accident' But at least do have a little commiseration for the human in me who longs to take you at your word if you will only be so kind as not to make it too impossible. And also how can we get on with this Divine of yours if even His help on which so much eloquence has been spent down the ages has to be waited for in stupified passivity since it can only come 'by an accident'?"

Imperturbable as ever he wrote back:

"I think you have made too much play with my phrase 'an accident', ignoring the important qualification, 'it seemed to come by an accident'. After four years of *pranayam* and other practices on my own, with no other result than an increased health and energy, some psycho-physical phenomena, a great outflow of poetic creation, a limited power of subtle sight (luminous patterns and figures etc.) mostly with the waking eye, I had a complete arrest and was at a loss. At this juncture I was induced to meet a man without fame whom I did not know, a *bhakta* with a limited mind but with some experience and evocative power. We sat together and I followed with an absolute fidelity what he instructed me to do, not myself in the least understanding where he was leading me or where I was myself going. The first result was a series of tremendously powerful experiences and radical changes of consciousness which he had never intended—for they were Advaitic and Vedantic and he was against Advaita Vedanta—and which were quite contrary to my own ideas, for they made me see with a stupendous intensity the world as a cinematographic play of vacant forms in the impersonal universality of the Absolute Brahman. The final upshot was that he was made by a Voice within him to hand me over to the Divine within me enjoining an absolute surrender to its will—a principle or rather a seed force to which I kept unswervingly and increasingly till it led me through all the mazes of an incalculable Yogic development bound by no single rule or style or dogma or *shastra* to where and what I am now and towards what shall be hereafter. Yet he understood so little what he was doing that when he met me a month or two later, he was alarmed, tried to undo what he had done and told me that it was not the Divine but the Devil that had got hold of me. Does not all that justify my phrase 'it seemed to come to me like an accident?' But my meaning is that the ways of the Divine are not like that of humans or in accord with our patterns so that it is impossible to judge them or to lay down for him what he shall or shall not do, for the Divine knows better than we do. If we admit the Divine at all, then the true reason and *bhakti* seem to me to be at one in demanding implicit faith and surrender. I do not see how without them there can be *avyabhicharini bhakti* (one pointed adoration)."

With time this spontaneous self-revealing became almost habitual with him, and along with it his friendly argumentativeness with me, so much so

SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME —Continued from previous page

that he almost seemed like taking my cussedness seriously as it were. Not that he did not know or that there were any *lacunae* in his understanding of our human nature. He knew very well how oddly it acted especially when it was, as it had to be, lured off the track by its perverse moods. He came down to us merely because he had felt a simple impulse of generosity guided by his profound wisdom. To give a really convincing instance, he wrote a long letter which moved me deeply because I had carped at what I called his fundamental incapacity to understand the mentality of the average man as against those who are spiritual giants like himself. That is why, I wrote, he always went on talking so glibly about rejecting all doubts or treading the pure sunlit path. As I went on, I gathered further momentum till I broke out into a passionate indictment: "You write calmly, Guru, that we have only to withdraw from all egoistic movements—whereupon I can but smile sadly. For you seem to assure us placidly that we can't get rid of the tyranny of pain because we won't—being in love, congenitally, with the drama which the tyrant brings in its wake. Such statements do baffle me! For if what you say was true, it would follow (would it not?) that all suffering must be a make-believe, a *maya* since we like it so much?—ergo, why not welcome it in glee? That is why I often wonder whether the Supramental consciousness of your ideal stratospheres can ever truly enter into the world of fact of us, mental humans! For I can tell you that we—common mortals, constituted as we are—dislike nothing as intensely as suffering and agony and self-pity and despair. Not only in my own case but in that of others as well. For my mind has never felt anything but deep discomfort to see anybody suffer or groan or writhe with agony. How can I then help doubting whether your ascending peak of Yogic consciousness has not made you somewhat aloof, perforce, from what really happens down in our plains of blood and sweat and tears? And then it is not for the fun of doubt either. For diagnose as you will, I defy you to convince me that I derive any real pleasure in heckling you at every turn—you whose message made me cut away from my dearest moorings and plunge for the unknown! It is only because I find your prescription too outlandish that I have to bandy words with you even when I know, alas, that I cannot possibly cope with your intellectual arguments! But, Guru, what do you come to gain by winning in the lists of wordy arguments? For have you not yourself said again and again that arguments however weighty can never do duty for Yogic joy and peace and love—the goods we came for, trusting that you would be able to deliver them if only we followed your lead. But then—and here is the crux of the problem—how can a human, being human, follow such an utterly divine lead as yours so disconcertingly alien to reason? There is a saying in English that you can catch a swallow if you put salt on its tail. You seem to prescribe similarly: 'detach yourself, don't lend your ears to hostile suggestions, open yourself and go on doing it all the time sleeplessly, till, one fine morning, you will find your ships simply haled into the harbour of bliss beyond the dark storms!' But how to detach oneself, how to open oneself—how to think only the right thoughts? We ask such questions again and again—only to receive the same answers, everlastingly! Well, Guru, there you have in a nutshell my difficulty, or rather the typical impasse of an average aspirant. But you seem very much like those great doctors who go to a pauper and prescribe remedies for him which only a prince can procure. No wonder we do not recover from our ailments—have little progress to show, alas!"

After despatching the letter I felt even worse—more depressed than ever which, in its turn, made me fear that this time he was going to dismiss me, for hadn't I transgressed the limit and invited dismissal by my virtual refusal to recognise him even as a competent Guide, not to mention a God-realised Guru? But there again he came out once more unperturbed with his balm of sympathy which only a truly humble Guru could offer to one who had failed him utterly and deliberately.

"I never said," he wrote back, "that to overcome doubts was easy, it is difficult because it is the nature of something in the human physical mind to cling to doubt for its own sake. It is not easy to overcome gloom, depression, grief and suffering because something in the human vital clings to it and almost needs it as part of the drama of life. So also I have never said that sex, anger, jealousy, etc., were easy to overcome: I have said it was difficult because they were ingrained in the human vital and even if thrown out were always being brought back into it either by its own habit or by the invasion of the general Nature and the resurgence of its old response. Your idea that my difficulties were different from those of human nature is a mental construction or inference without any real basis. If I were ignorant of human difficulties and therefore intolerant of them how is it that I am so patient with them as you cannot deny that I am? Why for years do I go on patiently arguing with your doubts, spending so much of my time, always trying to throw light on your difficulties, to show how things stand, to give reasons for a knowledge gained by long and indisputable experience? Am I writing these letters to you every night because I have no sympathy with you in your doubts and difficulties? Why do I tolerate and help and write soothing and encouraging letters to these women who break out and hunger-strike and threaten suicide once a fortnight? Why do we bear all this trouble and *tracas* and *fracas* and resistance and obloquy and hard criticism from the *sadhakas*, why were we so patient with men like B and H and others if we had no understanding and no sympathy with the difficulties of human nature? Is it because I press always for faith and discourage doubt as a means of approach to the spiritual realisation? But what spiritual guide with a respect for truth can do otherwise?"

Then with my regard to his diagnoses and prescription about pain he went on to argue with me once again for the hundredth time:

"As to the statement about drama and something in you liking to suffer, nobody doubts that your external consciousness dislikes its suffering. The physical mind and consciousness of man hates its own suffering and, if left to itself, dislikes also to see others suffer. But if you will try to fathom the significance of your own admission of liking drama or of the turn towards drama—from which very few human beings escape—and if you go deep enough, you will find there is something in the vital which likes suffering and clings to it for the sake of the drama. It is something below the surface, but it is strong, almost universal in human nature and difficult to eradicate unless one recognises it and gets inwardly away from it. The mind and the physical of man do not like suffering, for if they did it would not be suffering any longer, but this thing in the vital wants it in order to give spice to life. It is the reason why constant depressions can go on returning and returning even though the mind longs to get rid of them, because this in the vital responds and goes on repeating the same movement like a gramophone as soon as it is got going and insists on turning the whole round of the oft-repeated record. It does not really depend on the reasons which the vital gives for starting off to the round, these are often of the most trivial character and wholly insufficient to justify it. It is only by a strong will to detach oneself, not to reject, not to welcome, that one can get rid of this most troublesome and dangerous streak in human nature. When, therefore, we speak of the vital comedy, of the vital drama, we are speaking from a psychological knowledge which does not end with the surface of things but looks at these hidden movements—it is impossible to deal with things for the purpose of yoga if we confine ourselves to the surface consciousness only. It is also according to the rule of these reactions that your despondence should have come immediately after a considerable progress in *bhakti* and the will to surrender in the inner being—for it comes from the spirit of darkness which attacks the *sadhaka* whenever it can and that spirit resents fiercely all progress made and hates the very idea of progress and its whole policy is to convince him by its attacks and suggestions that he has made none or that what progress he has made is after all null and inconclusive."

To drive my charge home I had in my letter referred to the failure of of his superhuman prescription with a gifted human whom I will call Mr. Philo (abbreviated from Philosopher) who had to be sent away from the Ashram because he refused to give up drink. What about his views, I asked, about God himself being as much bound by his own laws as his creatures were by their own karma?

"As to Philo," Gurudev answered, in the same letter, "the Mother and I have always thought poorly of his thinking mind: he was never able to understand with the mind anything but the orthodox Advaitic ideas in their most general and popular form—As for his idea of the Divine being bound, being a hostage to law as much as Philo himself or his cat, that was an old pet idea of his... an idea that can be accepted only by those who are unable to think philosophically or make the necessary spiritual distinctions. The laws of this world as it is are the laws of the ignorance and the Divine in the world maintains them so long as there is ignorance—if he did not, the universe would crumble to pieces—*utsidevur ime lokah*, as the Gita puts it. There are also, very naturally, conditions for getting out of the Ignorance into the Light. One of them is that the mind of the *sadhaka* should co-operate with the Truth and that his will should co-operate with the Divine Power which, however slow its action may seem to the vital or to the physical mind, is uplifting the nature towards the Light. When that co-operation is complete the progress can be rapid enough; but the *sadhaka* should not grudge the time or the labour needed to make that co-operation fully possible to the blindness and weakness of human nature and effective.

"All this call of yours for faith, sincerity, surrender is only an invitation to make that co-operation more easily possible. If the physical mind ceases to judge all things including those that it does not yet know or are beyond it, like the deeper things of the spirit, then it becomes easier for it to receive the Light and know by illumination and experience the things that it does not yet know. If the mental and vital will place themselves in the Divine Hand without reservation, then it becomes easier for the Power to work and produce *tangible* effects. If there is resistance, then it is natural that it should take more time and the work should be done from within or, as it might appear, underground, so as to prepare the nature and undermine the resistance. Read the letter of your friend Professor Mohini-mohan on Yoga and the spiritual life. Beautifully idealistic, but it does not make allowance for the hard struggle of the spiritual emergence and leaps to fulfilment with a too radiant and ethereal sweep."

"Struggle for spiritual emergence,"—the phrase has indeed often recurred to me in my dark hours of stress and tension, but perhaps never with the same revealing force as when I learnt my first deep lesson in spiritual humility. The occasion, the context of my humiliation, will stand out as a landmark in the history of my Yogic evolution in retrospect. I may as well relate it here as the experience bordered on the miraculous and I have witnessed very few miracles in my life.

It happened in May, 1936. I had been in the Ashram since November, 1928, and now longed to go out for a while to seek a little respite from my exhausting wrestles with my ego. But it hurt my pride to be forced to go out for a temporary relief. I wanted to achieve something durable before seeking diversion. I knew that the only way to achieve anything worth

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while was to surrender one's self-will to the Guru's will. But I wished to dismiss this knowledge as hearsay. "What nonsense!" rebuked my mental vital. "What you need is a strong tonic—a bout of heart-warming, virile *sadhana*: in other words, *doing it*. But this surrender of yours is a myth—synonymous with *undoing it*, and your resignation is a mere camouflage, a respectable name for indolence. Remember the Upanishad's exhortation: '*Nayam atma valahinena labhyah.*' (None but the strong wins to the kingdom of the soul!)"

Not that I was unaware in my heart of hearts that I was merely temporising with something suspect—to put off the inevitable, that in the end I would have to surrender my self-will. But the more I ached to surrender the less I favoured the prospect. Was there no other way—I asked myself in sheer agony till, desperately, I decided on the alternative: the path of *tapasya*. I persevere, the Divine is bound to respond, so why must I kotow to a will other than my own? I questioned the very basis of *Guruvada* as unmitigated authoritarianism. No wonder my untamed vital jumped to exploit the convenient sophism. "No more bowing," it roared, "to what is imposed from without: the only deity is the Resident within—Him alone worship, 'break all other idols.'" I borrowed the great Vivekananda's *mantra* without stopping to think I was not built in his heroic mould! "To tread the austere path, the manly path!"—I goaded my drooping spirits in order to be a master in my own house. No more petitioning to Gurudev and Mother in lacklustre self-pity, I must rise to the occasion and rely on myself alone. I withdrew from all social pleasures and went into a heroic seclusion increasing, day after barren day, my hours of meditation and prayer to the exclusion even of reading and writing. This was the most difficult of all feats, but the more difficult I found it the less I liked to scotch the project, the more I was coaxed by Gurudev to take the sunlit path of the psychic the more I repeated to myself a Sanskrit couplet which said:

*Rely on thine own strength and grinding thy teeth
Defy with heroic deeds the Tyrant, Fate.**

So in the end I decided not even to apprise Gurudev of my grim resolve of chalking out my path "alone, unfriended" if not "melancholy, slow."

But alas, "Krishna," say the Rishis, "assays you by your attitude, not deeds."† Neither is God mocked. So the more I shut myself in, vowed to plucking the stars from on high by dint of my Herculean *japa* and meditation, the more receded from me all joy of life and zest for *sadhana* till I found myself groping in a veritable catacomb as it were. Life seemed dismal beyond endurance and I did not know where to turn now, having ruled out the Guru's help as hearsay. But it was not even the gloom that mortified me most, but its stark irrelevance in the context of my ardour and aspiration. I could neither understand why my heroic attempt to soar should have been rewarded by clipped wings nor explain how a march forward towards the east should have pushed me back to a sunset of the last gleam of hope. I had plumed myself all along on my intelligence and energy and yet here was I in the grip of a gloom I could neither account for nor know how to deal with. Did I not grind my teeth hard enough? Why then did I fail so ignominiously in wresting the laurels from the hands of the tyrant, Fate? The hopelessness of it all brought me only humiliation but I found no way out now that I had whisked Gurudev off my programme. So there was nothing for it but to grind my teeth harder still, but the more I persisted the less I succeeded in penetrating the mystery of my dire pain which only deepened till—it happened! What it was let the good reader judge from the correspondence which passed between Sri Aurobindo and me.

"O Guru," I wrote after giving him a full history of all that I had gone through riding on my folly, "I wanted to achieve it all by my unaided efforts and meditated and concentrated as never before, for days and days. But the more I persevered, the deeper grew the gloom and the mental agony till, last evening, when I was utterly cut off from light and felt like one completely stranded, I prayed, in tears, up on my lonely terrace. 'O Krishna,' I said, 'you know I have wanted only you all my life, or at least aspired to want nothing but your Grace. You know also that I decided of late to arrive through *tapasya* because I was told that you never let a sincere prayer go unheeded. And yet how is it that the more I sue you the more you melt away like a shadow form to the eager clutch? I do not understand your *lila*, Lord, but have mercy on one who is at the end of his tether! I own at last that my much-vaunted intelligence cannot find a key to the enigma. I have only learnt one thing; that there is no ignominy in not understanding it all and the true understanding can come only when one realises that one is completely impotent by oneself. In any event, I appeal to you in this deep impasse to respond to me—give me a sign that you are not a chimera.'

"O Guru, as soon as this prayer issued from my heart of humility, I experienced a velvety softness within and a feeling of ineffable plasticity which rapidly grew into something so concrete that I felt almost as if I could *touch* it with my fingers! But even this was not all. As soon as my pride admitted defeat all my piled-up gloom of despair and frustration vanished as though by magic: my restlessness redeemed by peace and my darkness by a radiance which seemed too incredible to be true and yet too vivid to be dismissed as wishful thinking. And to me it seemed so utterly convincing because it seemed to descend, like an avalanche, from nowhere—to sweep me off my feet when I had least expected it. Kanai congratulates

me and insists that I have a real and important *psychic experience* without knowing it. What have you to say thereto, Guru? To think that even I could have an experience and a psychic one at that!"

To that came his reply duly, the next morning.

"It was certainly an experience," he wrote, "and as Kanai very accurately described it, an experience of great value: a psychic experience *par excellence*. A feeling of 'velvety softness' and an 'ineffable plasticity within,' is a psychic experience and can be nothing else. It means a modification of the substance of the consciousness especially in the vital emotional part, and such a modification prolonged or repeated till it became permanent would mean a great step in what I call the psychic transformation of the being. It is just these modifications in the inner substance that make transformation possible. Further, it was a modification that made a beginning of knowledge possible—for by knowledge in Yoga we mean not thought or ideas about spiritual things but psychic understanding from within and spiritual illumination from above. Therefore the first result was this feeling of yours that '*there was no ignominy in not understanding it all and that the true understanding could come only when one realised that one was completely impotent by oneself.*' This was itself a beginning of true understanding: a psychic understanding—something felt within which sheds a light or brings up a spiritual truth that mere thinking would not have given, also a truth that is effective, bringing both the enlightenment and solace you needed, for what the psychic being brings with it always is light and happiness, an inner understanding and relief and solace.

"Another very promising aspect of this experience is that it came as an immediate response to an appeal to the Divine. You asked for the understanding and the way out and at once Krishna showed you both: the way out was the change of the consciousness within, the plasticity which makes the knowledge possible and also the understanding of the condition of mind and vital in which the true knowledge or power of knowledge could come. For the inner knowledge comes from within and above (whether from the Divine in the heart or from the Self above) and for it to come the pride of the mind and vital in the surface mental ideas and their insistence on them must go. One must know that one is ignorant before one can begin to know. This shows that I am not wrong in pressing for the psychic opening as the only way out. For as the psychic opens, such responses and much more also become common and the inner change also proceeds by which they are made possible."

Upon this I wrote to him once again asking whether a "feeling" could be called an "experience". Was not a mere feeling something too adventitious and subjective to be able to claim the status of an "experience"? To this he replied promptly once more.

"I doubt," he wrote, "whether I am able to answer your question or whether even I quite understand it. There is no law that a feeling cannot be an experience. Experiences are of all kinds and take all forms in the consciousness. When the consciousness undergoes, sees or feels anything spiritual or psychic or even occult—that is an experience (in the technical Yogic sense, for there are of course all sorts of experiences which are not of that character.) The feelings themselves are of many kinds. The word 'feeling' is often used for an emotion, and there can be psychic emotions which are numbered among Yogic experiences such as a wave of pure *bhakti* or the rising of love towards the Divine. A feeling also means a perception of something felt—a perception in the vital or psychic or in the essential substance of the consciousness. Even I find a mental perception when it is very vivid described often as a feeling. If you exclude all these feelings and kindred ones saying they are feelings and not experiences, then you leave very little room for experiences.

"Feeling and vision are the main forms of spiritual experience. One sees and feels the Brahman everywhere; one feels a force enter or go out of one; one feels or sees the presence of the Divine within or around one; one feels or sees the descent of light; one feels the descent of peace or *ananda*. Kick all that on the ground that it is but a feeling, not an experience (what the deuce then is an experience?) and you make a clean sweep of most of the things that we call experience. Again we feel a change in the substance of the consciousness or the state of consciousness. We feel ourselves spreading in wideness and the body only as a small thing in the wideness (this can be seen also). We feel the heart-consciousness being wide instead of narrow, soft instead of hard, illumined instead of obscure, the head consciousness also, the vital, even the physical. We feel thousands of things of all kinds and why are we not to call them experiences? Of course it is an inner sight, an inner feeling, not material like the feeling of a cold wind, but as the inner consciousness deepens it is not less vivid or concrete, it is rather more so.

"In this case what you felt was not an emotion—though something emotional came with it—you felt a condition in the very substance of consciousness—a softness, a plasticity, even a *velvety softness*, an *ineffable plasticity*. Any fellow who knows anything about Yoga would immediately say: 'What a fine experience—a very clear and spiritual and psychic experience.'"

But, as Tagore used to say, and rightly, a boon can never be *given*, it has to be *won*, to wit, one has to be mature enough to assimilate it. So, for years to come, the "fine experience" was not repeated—possibly because the prayer of humility did not issue from out the heart's core with anything like the same intensity. No wonder shadow fell on my path once more after the brief interlude of light, and the old anarchy of darkness and doubt resumed its sway till, sore and weary, I asked him, somewhat foolishly,

* "Param pourusham āshritya dantair dantān vichurnayan.
Shubhenāshubhamudyuktam prāktanam pourusham jāyet."

† "Bhāvagrāhi Janārdana".....Janārdana is a name of Krishna.

Sri Aurobindo

By V. K. Gokak

*Neither the sylph-like call of dreams,
The siren lure of extremes,
The visitations or the gleams
Could hinder him.
He plunged into the vast abyss,
Climbed the steepest precipice
And forged the spirit's path of bliss
Time cannot dim.*

A world-illuminating shaft of blue and gold
Light-housed in clay,
Conquering body and mind; the Child divine
Come down to play.

A kindler of new, luminous constellations
On the verge of human sight;
A builder of light-pillars in the ocean
Of Time, inpouring light.

The Marvellous Master, the seeker's Rock of Ages,
The Force of deathless laughter,
The Wonder-Worker, the new world's great Law-Giver,
Seer of before and after.

You were the temple, the deity in the temple,
The gleam within the deity.
You were the heart hushed by the magic touch,
The seeker and his piety.

Decipherer of the star-spelt manuscript
Manumitting the captive sons of light,
Carrying the banner of man empyrean-high
To the spirit's highest height!

Annexing Inconscience to man's domain,
Spanning the Lethe streams,
You built the winding stair of consciousness
That leads the being through dreams

To a clear heaven of peace and pure delight,
Supernal height
Where Power and Love and Thought and Deed are born
Of the eternal Light;

Where man's refashioned in the image of God
And the Impersonal puts on
The miracle of Person, kindles forth
And nurses a new dawn:—

Transcendent Grace self-manifest in the realm
Of Universal Law,
Transforming ape into man, man into god;
Achieves without a flaw

Rounded perfection of the destined worlds,
Harmony, life divine:
Master! Your song, your cosmic utterance
Will be my bread and wine.

Two heaven-blue lights have hallowed the earth-altar,
Light-equivalents of Om.
The mother-light remains. The other light
Leaves the skiey dome.

The very kidneys flowered red and white
And strewed the master's path
When down he leapt into the nether night
To quell the dragon's wrath.

No, no! He has not passed away, I said,
Bursting into tears:
The Presence abides, the Effulgence endures
Horizoned by the years,—

A bodiless rapture, a voiceless ecstasy,
A wide calm and peace,
A star upon the forehead of the world,
Awareness of All that Is.

Yes. I speak with a voice washed in tears.
But I speak true.
The Master abides. He twinkles in the star
And beckons in the blue.

The golden-bodied sage, 'tween sense and soul
Of the bridge the engineer,
Prophet and seer, the grand astronomer
Of the supra-cosmic year

Will not appear. We bury the human form,
Burn incense at his shrine.
The Master resurrects in every heart,
Kindling the spark divine.

Him the law-giver, him the light-bringer,
Him the saviour, adore him.
Him the million-mirrored, him the time-cradled,
Him the ever-present, implore him.

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whether the vicissitudes were imposed on me from without or by the Guru himself to keep his *lila* going. I complained also about his keeping silent when we wanted to be told of the working of occult forces. What on earth did he mean by

*This earth alone is not our teacher and nurse,
The powers of all the worlds have entrance here.**

He replied tenderly as ever:

"For me the path of Yoga has always been a battle as well as a journey, a thing of ups and downs, of light followed by darkness followed by greater light, but nobody is better pleased than myself when a disciple can arrive out of all that to the smooth and clear path which the human physical mind quite rightly yearns after."

And then to pacify me further he went on to add:

"If I write about these questions from the Yogic point of view, even though on a logical basis, there is bound to be much that is in conflict with the current opinions, e.g., about miracles, the limits of judgment by sense-data etc. I have avoided as much as possible writing about these subjects because I would have to propound things that cannot be understood except by reference to data other than those of the physical senses or of reason founded on these alone. I might have to speak of laws and forces not recognized by reason or physical science. In my public writings as well as my letters to *sadhakas* I have not dealt with these because they go out of the range of ordinary knowledge and the understanding founded on it. These things are known to some but they do not usually speak about it, † while

the public view of much of those that are known is either credulous or incredulous, but in both cases without experience or knowledge. The Yogi arrives at a sort of division in his being in which the inner *Purusha*, fixed and calm, looks at the passions of an unreasonable child: that once fixed, he can proceed afterwards to control the outer man also; but a complete control of the outer man needs a long and arduous *tapasaya*. But even for the *siddha*-Yogi you cannot always expect a perfect perfection: there are many who do not even care for perfection of the outer nature which cannot be held as a disproof of their realisation and experience. If you so regard it, you have to rule out of court the greater number of Yogis of the past and Rishis of the old time also.

"I own that the ideal of my Yoga is different, but I cannot bind by it other spiritual men and their achievements and discipline. My own ideal is transformation of the outer nature, perfection as perfect as it can be. But you cannot say that those who have not achieved it or did not care to achieve it had no spirituality. Beautiful conduct, not politeness which is an outer thing, however valuable—but beauty founded upon a spiritual realisation of unity and harmony projected into life, is certainly part of the perfect harmony."

Whenever I got restive he wrote to me in that vain—firm but not over-assertive, sure of his vision yet unwilling to impose it, persuasive but never insistent. That was always *his* way of being humble.

But no letters that he has written to me all these years were as soft with humility as his three or four recent ones on sports. Here I must pause a little, as much to explain the context as to obviate a possible misunderstanding on the part of the general reader.

To be continued

* Savitri.....Book II, Canto V.

† Cf Laotse's famous epigram:

The one who knows the Secret does not speak:
The one who speaks does not yet know the Secret.

BOOKS in the BALANCE

INDIA'S CULTURE THROUGH THE AGES

By M. L. Vidyarthi

Publishers: Tapeswari Sahitya Mandir, Kanpur. Rs. 5

An Indian Statesman was once asked by a British Viceroy as to the secret of his success in handling the English language in the masterly way he always did. 'That, I suppose,' he replied, 'is due to the five thousand years of culture behind me.' The answer is revealing and throws a world of ideas on the subject of Culture. What is culture? Is it a static concept or a dynamic factor in human progress? Does it apply to the individual or does it also refer to the collectivity?

There are a hundred definitions of the term *culture* and we would be serving no useful purpose by attempting one more. Besides, definitions always tend to limit, to confine the connotation within the conceptual bounds of the observing mind and reflect more of the nature of the defining intellect than of the contents of the defined. An elastic term like culture is easier and better described. We may at once say that it is the level of refinement attained,—the extent of the grossness outgrown and the degree of control established over the mechanism of Nature,—and the resultant way of living that we think of when we speak of the culture of an individual or of a society. The Indian word *Samaskāra* sums up all that is implied in culture. Every intelligent being subjects himself or is subjected by Nature to a processing, *samskarana* and the extent to which the processing is undergone, the manner in which its results are expressed in life, can be said to be the measure of one's culture.

One's responses to the stimuli and contacts in every-day life, his movements proceeding out of himself—all these are necessarily influenced and governed to a large extent by the elements that have gone to constitute his culture. Man is a complex being and it is not all sides of his personality that are developed at once. In some it is the physical side, in some it is the mental and in others it is the predominance of the soul-factor that is more marked than others. Not merely in the individuals, but in the aggregates of individuals also this holds good. For the collective society has also a being and life of its own and its culture, in some respects, lends itself more easily to study and observation than the individual. According as one or other side of its life is emphasised, the Culture comes to be characterised—viz. spiritual, ethical, aesthetic, intellectual, physical.

We may note in passing that it is the method of Nature to take up parts in Man one by one, develop each to a sufficient level of maturity and pass on to the other with the intention of taking up all the prepared parts later to form a perfected whole. So also in the larger sphere, each nation or people has been led to make its own contribution by way of its particular development of culture and the signs of the times point unmistakably to an eventual blossoming of a composite World-culture in which all the strains of the cultures evolved hitherto will combine to form an orchestral whole. And if we would have an adequate idea of the lines on which the future of humanity is likely to be shaped in its cultural aspect, it is necessary that we study the various cultures that have been so far thrown upon the banks of Time by the stream of History. The book before us is a helpful contribution to the subject, dealing as it does with *India's Culture through the Ages*.

India's culture is easily one of the oldest of cultures on earth and significantly the only one of its antiquity to be yet alive, not merely alive but self-rejuvenating, growing and vigorous. Its story of more than five millenniums—from the early dawns of pre-historic ages to the present day—has been narrated by Prof. Vidyarthi as comprehensively as it was possible to do so in four hundred pages. The author has drawn upon most of the authoritative writing on the subject. There are indeed other books that have done the same; but the special feature of this work lies in that the author has taken the vision and exposition of Indian Culture by Sri Aurobindo as his basis and presented the thesis in this new light. Sri Aurobindo's *Defence of Indian Culture* stands unrivalled as the most revealing study and elucidation of the Fundamentals of Indian Culture inspired in all its complex web and it will be a major development in the cultural history of India when this work is made available to the public and allowed to occupy its rightful place as the Divine Charter of India's Life. Pending such a happy event—and we are glad to say steps are being taken in this direction—a book like Prof. Vidyarthi's is invaluable inasmuch as it helps us to look at our cultural heritage with this fresh eye or at any rate prepares us to do so.

The treatise opens with a brief discourse on the subject of Culture, the bearings of geography and Race migrations on Indian Culture, and the note of unity that has always been patent in some field or other of the life of this sub-continent. A rapid survey of the Indus Valley civilisation is followed by chapters on the beginnings and development of Aryan civilisation and culture through the Vedic, Epic and post-epic epochs. The author has dwelt in detail on Indian culture in the Mauryan, Kushan and Gupta ages. A special chapter is devoted to the spread of Indian Culture Abroad. He draws attention to the appearance of Indian ideas and institutions on the Mediterranean countries of Europe, some in changed garb and some in un-

modified form. To quote the author:

'At least some ideas of Christianity are traceable to Indian influences' for instance, relic-worship and the use of the rosary, popularity of asceticism among many Christian orders, doctrine of the plurality of heavens, practice of non-violence as preached by Christ in the 'Sermon on the Mount' and the resemblance between the Christian Church and the old Buddhist Chaityas... resemblances between Neo-Platonism and Buddhism are very close. The Neo-Platonist strives by meditation to free his soul from the body, and to attain union with the Supreme. This is the doctrine of Yoga, also to be found in Buddhism'. (P. 179).

The more spectacular and pervasive expansion of Indian Culture however was in countries touching the Eastern boundaries and those in South East Asia (Central Asia and Tibet were also influenced). The author notes, with appositeness, the special character of this cultural conquest which is radically different from that of the colonising expeditions undertaken in later history by the Western Powers.

'The Hindus went to South East Asia, established their colonies but did not regard them as an outlet for their excessive population and an exclusive market for their growing trade. They were not regarded as a source of exploitation for the benefit of the conquerors. Ours was a cultural mission. Wherever we settled, we introduced our culture and civilisation, were influenced by the native culture and thus evolved a new culture whose dominant note, of course, was Indian because of its richness and depth. Hindus there became children of the soil and not foreigners...'. (P. 181).

The reign of Harsha marks, says the author, the end of the Creative Era and the beginning of the 'regulative era'. 'The principles that were proclaimed in the previous eras are now implemented in all their details', and 'this involves by the end of our present period a decline in the cultural genius of Hinduism. We are lost in the wood'. The author proceeds to sketch the subsequent developments through the early medieval period and the Middle ages (when the influence of Islam entered on the Indian scene) with special reference to the cultural aspect of the story and devoted a considerable portion of the book to recent history—the impact of the West on India, the advent and exit of the British and the Indian Renaissance—events of far-reaching importance that seem to have been pre-ordained by a far-seeing Providence for the re-awakening of India from her slumber of exhaustion and setting her again on her feet. For it was important for the future of humanity that India should not only survive but take an effective part in shaping it by contributing what is her special heritage to the advancement of mankind. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

'Spirituality is indeed the master-key of the Indian mind; the sense of the infinite is native to it... The first age of India's greatness was a spiritual age when she sought for the truth of existence... but this spiritual tendency does not shoot upward only to the abstract... it casts its rays downward and outward to embrace the multiplicities of thought and the richness of life. Therefore the second long epoch of India's greatness was an age of the intellect, the ethical sense, the dynamic will in action enlightened to formulate and govern life in the lustre of spiritual truth. After the age of the Spirit, the age of the Dharma; after the Veda and Upanishads, the heroic centuries of action and social formation, typical construction and thought and philosophy when the outward forms of Indian life and culture were fixed in their large lines and even their later developments were being determined in their seed. The great classical age of Sanskrit culture was the flowering of this intellectuality into curiosity of detail... we see at this time too the sounding not only of aesthetic, but of emotional and sensuous, even of vital and sensual experience. But the old spirituality reigned behind all this mental and all this vital activity, and its later period, the post-classical, saw a lifting up of the whole lower life and an impressing upon it of the values of the spirit. This was the sense of the Puranic and Tantric systems and the religions of Bhakti...'

The Indian renaissance is arising... the recovery of the old spiritual knowledge and experience in all its splendour, depth and fullness is its first most essential work; the flowing of this spirituality into new forms of philosophy, literature, art, science and critical knowledge is the second; an original dealing with modern problems in the light of Indian spirit and the endeavour to formulate a greater synthesis of a spiritualised society is the third and most difficult. Its success on these lines will be the measure of its help to the future of humanity.'

The book is neatly got up and priced to suit the average pocket. Though written for college students, it is bound to appeal to a wider public, to all lovers of India's Culture.

M. P. PANDIT.

BOOKS in the BALANCE —Continued from previous page.

RUMI: POET AND MYSTIC

Selected and Translated with Introduction and Notes by Reynolds A. Nicholson

Publishers: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London. 8s. 6d.

It has often happened in the history of thought that a great creative thinker takes up all the philosophies of life that have risen before his time, weaves together threads of many hues, and out of their contradictions creates a new unity. Such a thinker, if he happens to be a great personality, is never content with mere selections. His thought is not a beggar's cloak of patches nor is his brain the beggar's bowl containing pieces of bread of many kinds. A great thinker's thought is always creative. The contradictory opinions current before him serve only as raw materials in his hands, as old colours out of which he paints a new picture. The outlines and features of the composition are his own. According to a wellknown saying of Emerson, a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of petty minds, who close their eyes to many an important fact of life for fear of logical contradictions. No great thinker was ever frightened by logical contradictions.

One such thinker was Jalal-ud-Din Rumi (1207-73 A.D.) He had before him an immense wealth of thought, originating from the Muslim thinkers and Sufis, on the one hand, and the Greek thinkers whom the Muslims had rediscovered on the other. Rumi could not wholly ignore any of these bodies of thought. Whatever truth he saw in any of them he took up and harmonised the whole with the wisdom of faith and the Quran. For, with all his free thinking Rumi was a devout Muslim. But his Islam was that of the Prophet, above sectarianism and free from all that cramps and holds back the upward flight of the spirit. Rumi adopted verse in place of prose as his instrument of expression, which helped to maintain consistency of argument without the necessity of removing logical inconsistencies.

The theme that occurs over and again in the writings of Rumi is that Real Knowledge cannot be obtained through logic and that it is spiritual experience alone which can help us in perceiving the Reality. This spiritual apprehension is called Love by the Sufis; and Love is the mainspring of all religions and high morality. Without it religion and morality become merely mechanical and formal. Reason without Love remains in utter darkness. In Rumi's *Mathnawi* and *Diwan* we come across lines on the ecstasies of love, so sweet, so enrapturing and exalting, so profound and withal so numerous that no poet in the world's history has surpassed him in the treatment of this theme:

*'Tis heart-ache lays the lover's passion bare:
No sickness with heart-sickness may compare.
Love is a malady apart, the sign
And astrolabe of mysteries divine.
Whether of heavenly mould or earthly cast,
Love still doth lead us Yonder at the last.
Reason, explaining Love, can naught but flounder
Like ass in mire: Love is Love's own expounder.
Does not the sun himself the sun declare?
Behold him! All the proof thou seek'st is there.*

By virtue of love everything strives incessantly to return to the source of its being. The delight of sight is love and it is love that tears the veil aside from the face of the Being. Love is the instrument, and the melting fiery strains proceeding from that instrument are also from love:

*Hearken to this Reed forlorn
Breathing, ever since 'twas torn
From its rushy bed, a strain
Of impassioned love and pain.*

*"The secret of my song, though near,
None can see and none can hear:
Oh, for a friend to know the sign
And mingle all his soul with mine!
'Tis the flame of Love that fired me,
'Tis the wine of Love inspired me.
Wouldst thou learn how lovers bleed,
Hearken, hearken to the reed!"*

Rumi was an evolutionary thinker. According to the evolutionists not only Man but rather the Whole Universe is rising from a lower to a higher level. There is no limit to the progress of Man. By the power of his desire and purity of endeavour new worlds may not only be revealed to man but even created by him. In the following lines Rumi anticipates the modern scientific theories, with the only difference that for him the evolution is primarily of the soul, the evolution of the body is only incidental or consequential:

*I died as mineral and became a plant,
I died as plant and rose to animal,
I died as animal and I was Man.
Why should I fear? When was I less by dying?
Yet once more I shall die as Man, to soar
With angels blest; but even from angelhood
I must pass on: all except God doth perish.
When I have sacrificed my angel-soul,
I shall become what no mind e'er conceived.
Oh, let me not exist! for Non-existence
Proclaims in organ tones, "To Him we shall return."*

The present work is a selection from Rumi's writings, translated from the Persian with Introduction and Notes by Professor R. A. Nicholson. This is the last great work of this noted orientalist and scholar of Persian. The main text of the book was complete when Nicholson died in August 1945, but the Introduction was unfinished, and the task of completing it fell upon his old pupil and friend, Professor A. J. Arberry. The literary output of Rumi was immense, and the present selection has drawn mainly upon his *Diwan-i-Shamsi-Tabriz* and the *Mathnawi*. The translation of Professor Nicholson is beautiful and faithful and is illustrated by notes on Sufi doctrine and experience.

A word about the series "Ethical and Religious Classics of the East and West" of which the present selection from Rumi is only the first volume. In the belief that all the great religions have similarities that confirm and differences that enrich men's spiritual outlook upon the world, a number of eminent scholars have decided to inaugurate this series which will bring out the essentials of religion in this age of doubt and discouragement. The series will consist of books of three kinds: translations of imaginative, devotional and philosophic works, with Introduction or Commentary; reproductions of masterpieces of religious art; and Background Books showing the environment in which this literature and art arose and developed. Thus the series as a whole will seek to bring home to the modern world the highest spiritual achievements of mankind both in the East and the West. Those who have the opportunity of reading *Rumi; Poet and Mystic* will eagerly look forward to the subsequent volumes in the series.

WILLIAM HOOKENS

Ego

Give yourself. Surrender your ego! Not on your terms but on His terms. Surrender not with resignation but with exultation. You exult because you discover your roots. Not, "Thy will be done"—for me it has a flavour of tired resignation, giving in to the threat of overpowering might—but Thy will be mine. Surrender your ego and know the Divine Will in return. Then you will be able to work with His determination, and strength and joy; with one-pointed pressure you can break through steel. Then the mind becomes firm and the heart so full that it can hardly hold its love. Then you can work and play and lose and win. You can be active and inert and actively tranquil as the moment demands. You can meditate twenty-four hours a day, meditate best when you work the hardest. You can enjoy and suffer and love and yet be free. You can give yourself completely and yet there is detachment. You can even take sides in the drama of life but always as a spectator and never, never as an actor. But the actors—your senses—become your most obedient servants. That is the beauty of freedom. Real freedom. Give up your will, my friend, give up the will of your ego.

'Give up my will?' you will ask me. 'Without my will, my determination, I cannot do anything in life.' Yes, you can. No flower has a will of its own, but it blossoms. Perfection lies in the seed. Let me, O, Mother, live like a tree.

Dinshaw K. Malegamvala

THE HERO

AN EPISODE OF THE EIGHTEEN-SEVENTIES

BY K. D. SETHNA

Quiet, to a musician, is not relief from sound; it is only a chance to make him listen better to the voice of his art. André Chaudanson found night the happiest time, for he could then concentrate most intently on the sounds that rose and fell continually through his mind. And on this particular night he listened more intently than ever because he felt the sorest need of soothing harmonies. Life was breaking up all around him; discords were written on the face of every man he met. The Prussians were reported to be less than thirty miles from the town where he lived. Any moment the tide of war might sweep towards the inhabitants of X and submerge the slow sweet routines of peace. Hitherto the red waves had boomed elsewhere, but a sudden *contretemps* had turned them south to Rouen and if the little army opposing them failed to stem the rush, there would be Uhlans galloping through the streets and German gutturals and polysyllables shattering the air of Gallic grace which played round the thoughts and emotions of X.

André kept on his piano a picture of his Master, and before composing anything he would gaze a long time into those eyes of deep fire and at that brow at once narrow and high which spoke the pure intensity of the soul of René de Bourneval. Surely that face had seen a glory beyond our world; and why should he, André, doubt it who had watched the Master at work and marvelled at that religious passion of his which made the white hair look like a halo over his head. It was not only music that bound André to his Master; it was the particular glow of the Beyond, the far-away note, in the music. He himself had striven to keep the same note sounding in his own work, so that his music might have the distance of a deep slumber as well as the immediacy of a tremendous hand stretched across that distance to touch the hearts of men and guide them towards some great living peace. And now when two nations were at bitter strife, peace was indeed a thing to be desired. So André gazed and gazed at the picture, praying for inspiration.

He imagined the face in front of him to be full of a slow movement, alive with intimate expression, conveying to him what he should put into his music. He thought the eyes shifted gently upwards, and with that motion something in André seemed to pierce a veil of silence extended infinitely above his head, and through the rent in that veil he felt a thin light stream down. With a start he looked up: it was only the skylight letting in from the roof the rays of the moon that had climbed high over the housetops of X. But how could he have felt that moonlight? It flowed in a line behind his back and he had not caught any reflection of it in his eyes. Strange that he should have had that luminous feeling and the moon should have just thrown a thin silver thread through the skylight. There was indeed the candle burning before him but its flicker could not have caused the faint tremble of white fire above his head. What blending of the occult and the natural was here—experienced by him as though through his Master's eyes? Anyway, it was no use keeping the candle burning now that the moon was gradually beautifying the room. André blew out the delicate cone that had kept a wavering play of gleam and shade over the Master's picture; but with the puff with which he blew it out he breathed a spontaneous sigh—an unconscious self-expression, but no sooner had it escaped him than a far music floated to his ears in answer to his yearning and seemed to pass across his face, as it were, fluttering his eyelids, caressing his nostrils with a strange fragrance, curving his mouth into a mysterious smile—until a flame possessed his brain, thrilled through his nerves and the hands ran up and down the keyboard.

There was a tinkle of bells and there was the rush of a mighty wind, both almost combined as though a tempest set dancing an innumerable carillon. But the tempest itself, as it swept again and again round that invisible belfry, became a giant tune—so immense that André feared his piano might burst with that endless sonority. What puzzled him was that the ringing of bells persisted in spite of the large music and it was a steady unvarying sweetness, a centre to the changing and sweeping glory and rapture. Then his fingers leaped and glided through a more subdued pattern of sound, yet in and out of the controlled harmony the old energy moved until there appeared to be no need any more for power to hurl itself gorgeously at some intractable enemy and a restrained richness swayed like some virgin goddess through the room, all her body a multiform moonlit message of pure peace. Suddenly André stopped; an ominous thud came afar—another—still one more—and he was on his feet. A scurrying of steps led to his door and his wife rushed in.

"Oh André, Jacques just came to say that our gallant men have lost. We're at the mercy of the enemy. What shall we do?"

"Be at rest, my treasure. Whatever happens, no harm can befall you."

"Jacques also says the whole town is astir to put up a defence."

"That would be extraordinary! We'd be the first to bring a civilian force—a step of men brave indeed. All my sympathy is with them. But I must have a short spell of leisure before it's too late. Leave me a while, and I'll be down with you presently."

She left. André took out his blank sheets of paper and scribbled hastily. The music was still fresh in his ears; he wrote for nearly an hour, adding as he went along, pursuing further in his mind strains he had been too excited to capture wholly; but he felt that what he had got was only a fragment—greater revelations, more powerful enchantments were to come; for, he had echoed but the first few footfalls of some divine peace harmonising the life of the earth—the peace he had invoked in face of the ruin that threatened the town. There was too much noise and confusion in the rest of the house and in the street. The whole town was up; men were shouting, women talked shrilly, and repeated calls reached him from below. He got up and went to meet the general clamour.

"It's unavoidable!" A chorus of voices enveloped him. "We must fight—they are within a few miles. The barricades are already raised. Not an inch of French soil will be surrendered without being soaked in our blood. But what about our families? There's no time for them to fly."

"We don't care," cried André's own wife. "We shall stand beside you. But don't let the Prussians mock at us as at cowards."

André was surprised at the fierce energy shown by his pretty little wife. He was a gentle citizen, he had never been a fighter, but the defiant note in the woman's voice stirred him. Yes, manhood must be upheld. Let them not take the citizens like rabbits; they will have to march over the murdered body of a heroic resistance. Most of the citizens already carried pistols and rifles. André walked back to his house, and pulled down from the wall his gun, opened the breech and started loading it. Then he carried the fire-arm upstairs to his music-room. The piano stood invitingly, his dear companion; he laid the gun aside, went to the still unshut keyboard, let his fingers drag lovingly over the ivories; a sudden tremor ran through his frame and he heard music again. A shout of joy escaped him as he darted to his stool and sat—but no! he wouldn't play: how could he? All the same, there was no harm in recording as rapidly and as quietly as he could the inflowing harmonies. So he picked up the score-sheets he had cast off and began writing; but before he had gone a couple of lines forward he felt guilty. Was this the time to waste on art? His fellows were preparing to face death. What if the Prussians were known not to molest anybody who offered no resistance? He could not stick at home and let others fight: his manhood was greater than his art... But he hated killing; he had never indulged even in shooting birds, he had been almost squeamish about these things. He felt terribly perplexed. Flinging away his papers, he fell on his knees. Tears gushed from his eyes, as he spoke, slowly and with deep resolution: "Holy Spirit, ruler of this world—Spirit to whom I have prayed for peace—here I kneel before you, offering up my life at the altar of that Conscience which you have planted in me. If your voice there points me to the battle-field, I will not hang back. Bring out the hero hidden in me as in each man—slay my personal fears, my personal attachments. Let me serve you alone. I have prayed for peace, and I will not shrink when you offer me the peace of the grave."

The door flung open and his wife sank beside him. "Oh André, my hero, I have heard you. But forgive me for being weak. Stay back, do not go: I have your child in me—and who shall protect me if you die? I spoke rashly in the street."

"Would my child like to know that its father was a coward?"

Josephine was silent.

"Besides, you will not starve, my dear. Your father has enough to keep you happily."

"Happily? How shall I live without you? It is not starvation I dread. Why are you so cruel?"

"Why count on my death?" And yet he knew that short of death there was no issue out of the problem—none save shirking the problem altogether. Men were aware of his frail health; they would not mind if he kept back with his wife and her aged father. But he could not: his health was after all not so broken really as to excuse him at this critical hour; all the fibres of his manhood protested.

He got up from his knees, took his gun and led his wife downstairs. When he made his appearance outside, his thin hands holding the rifle, all the men shouted "Bravo!" and came and slapped him with a rough affection

A Slab of Marble

By Terence Heywood

Though stratified millenniums were thy burthen
Ere thou wast struck in darkness; though 'twas force
Dislodged thee and updragged thee from thy earthen
Bedding of baseness, though thy course
 Out of the quarry
Down the steep hill-side boulder-blocked,
 Into the lorry
Jolted and jarred thee, and thy journey long
To this great city saw thee rocked and knocked;
Despite the rasping cruel blade's excision;
 Despite thy towering load of suffered wrong—
Thou yet retainest an unstinted throng
Of pictured joys, fruits of a saintly vision.

Thy import resteth latent
 To every vulgar eye,
But unto me 'tis patent,
 For, lo! I can descry
In thee a sweet suggestiveness
Of things and places never viewed
But from the Heights of Solitude—
 Of dreams that are not lived in to excess.

The day's heat and its toil are over now,
Breezes of meditation fan the brow;
 And first of all appeareth
A time-tinged garden whence a fragrance climbs,
Where lengthening shadows lie along the lawns,
And late light lingers in enormous limes.
 But even as this cleareth
A tranquil, even sea-beach slowly dawns
 With streaked sky, and moonlight's milky mist
Over the whole, as if the briefest visit
By thing, or sound, or straying thought
 Was never made,—where to exist
Is to be fraught
With joy exquisite.

By pendant boughs of greening larches
Blithely I sweep about,

While everlasting rainbow-arches
Entube my passage, and anon
 Tranced I light upon
Sweetly-attired maidens dancing round
 And in-and-out
Of pergolas wistaria-wound.

Next, of such calms as cause pearls to be born
I take cognizance; superficial troubles
 Are soon forgot, while deep down I am torn
To peer about like luminous-orbed fishes
 (Creatures that move so gently that they scarce make bubbles),
To see by what strange beauties each one swishes
 His lustrous body scaly:—
Delicate trees, their dresses sidelong swaying;
 In little dells of yellow-pink
 Frail flowers blooming palely;
Deep-grottoed banks, out of whose every chink
Nebulous-mauve cascades of mist are straying.

Now appear marshlands where gold kingcups glint
And irises caress the miles;
 Vast skies of azurean tint,
Skies that the wild clouds love as ships their ocean;
 Quaint panoramas of forgotten isles
That have for loveliness a simple-sweet devotion.

All these,—and more,—I view, whose beauty gleams
From slender fragments of projected dreams.
Broken they are; and yet they make me tingle
More than could others in completeness shut.
Realities are boundless: they can end
 Only if thoughts that intermingle
And let their essences abut
One on the other, and so blend
 Be said to finish.—Leave me with my pleasures,
Martyr to dire oppression,
 And let me grasp the treasures
Moving before me by in slow procession.

THE HERO —Continued from previous page.

on his shoulders. But it was not for their praise that he was giving the sacrifice.

* * *

A week later, an old man was on his way to the town of X. He reached it towards nightfall, much hampered on the route by Prussian officials who held up the train often to inspect the passengers. Here in the town, however, there were only a few of the enemy left, as after capturing it and shooting many of the surviving civilian fighters they had surged onward in a westerly direction. Hardly anybody knew who the old man was; some months ago he had visited the place and a number of interested youths had clustered round him, but those youths were to be seen no more. And because André was one of them the Master had come down from Paris to collect whatever he could of his pupil's papers and to console the young widow.

She was sitting beside her father, near the fire. On seeing René de Bourneval through the window, she rushed to the door.

"Oh my friend, you've come! But poor André! How happy he would have been, André my hero."

And then the whole pathetic story was related. How his wife had overheard his prayer, that heart-rending self-dedication. Then the fight in the streets and the supreme courage displayed by the weak musician. He was among the first to meet the Uhlans. His comrades had wavered a moment at sight of the overwhelming numbers against them, and André had jumped forward, calling on them to follow. The scuffle had been short but fierce. André was shot down; yet his example had put miraculous valour into his friends and they had fought desperately. Even the Prussians remarked, later, on the recklessness with which the men gave battle. And special consideration was shown towards the young widow of that fair-haired and frail berserk who had led the charge. It was great honour that even an enemy reputed to be brutal had shown chivalrous appreciation.

As the story proceeded, two or three wounded men joined the group

and added their testimony to the dead musician's boldness. One of them who had evidently heard about that last prayer remarked:

"He had the soul to live music, not only write it. He moved to his death to the glorious harmony of rifle shots. Admirable I call it. Man who knew the voice of God in his conscience!"

The Master kept silent. Words of consolation failed him. When the talk was over, he expressed a wish to see his dear pupil's papers. "Here they are, sir," cried Josephine. "I have tied them up carefully; they contain the last thing he composed; he was disturbed in the middle of it by the guns."

The Master opened the roll and glanced at the last sheets; his face lit up. "Where is the piano?" he asked, but now in tones almost threatening. Josephine, a little frightened, led him upstairs. He sat and played the unfinished piece. Once more the unearthly bells and the storm of music; once more the controlled cadences—and the paths of peace. The old man got up, trembling,—kept a check upon his features and insisted on leaving. "I'll come back," he said, "I want to breathe the open air."

Out into the darkness he walked. Across the streets he went into the clear night of the adjoining fields. And there he stood, his face buried in his hands. Tears rolled down through his fingers. Like a child he wept. Then in the midst of those tears a great fury broke from his lips.

"Fool! Imbecile! To think that he could serve God by heroism. Who ever created him to be a hero? Thousands of men can fight—not one in a thousand can produce masterpieces of music—and he sacrificed himself to the ideal of manhood just to please his petty conscience, when he was made the receptacle of God's rarest gift—that superhuman gift—genius! Sot with the mind of a genius and the conscience of a paltry patriot. Waster, disgusting traitor to God, coward enough not to be able to resist his third-rate conscience and serve the Divine. Hero forsooth! Bah...."

“SAVITRI”, AN EPIC BY A. B. PURANI

This is Part II of the author's forthcoming book, SRI AUROBINDO'S "SAVITRI": AN APPROACH AND A STUDY

Once speaking at the Lingraj College, Belgaum, on Sri Aurobindo's personality I said that looking round for a personality of the past with whom Sri Aurobindo could be compared in the wideness and the versatility of his genius, in the grandeur of revelation, in a superhuman atmosphere of sympathy for humanity which pervades his temperament and works, in high poetic achievement, in complexity and subtlety of intellect, in a rare synthesising and integrating power, in a total view of human perfection individual and collective, I could not find anybody except perhaps Veda Vyas, the great seer-poet of India. But, Veda Vyas has been regarded as a mythical figure by European scholars, for they could not believe that one single person could have written all the various works ascribed to him. They admit he must have written some works, but believe that subsequent generations have gone on adding to his works in order to borrow the halo of his genius and authority. But, if ever I believe now in the existence of to him, it is because I have known Sri Aurobindo. It is not easily possible to him, it is because I know Sri Aurobindo today. It is not easily possible to believe that one and the same person could have not only written the greatest masterpiece of philosophy of the time but also indicated solutions for social problems and international politics, laid down new lines of poetical criticism and written not only short poems of striking merit from the point of view of both substance and form—some of them ranking equal to the highest lyrical expression in the English language—but also a great epic poem of humanity.

This is an age of what is called "modernist" poetry and even the possibility of an epic being written in modern times is strongly discounted. It is supposed that the epic requires a certain primitive atmosphere for its birth and growth, and as modern times are anything but primitive it is impossible for an epic to be written now. Even though in some of their latest tendencies in painting, sculpture and poetry the modernists are trying hard to reproduce, or create according to, primitivism with a vengeance, still, this being a critical age in which reason dominates and materialism is a living force, it is considered a practical impossibility to attempt a great epic and succeed. But we should be prepared for agreeable surprises from the creative spirit which can burst forth at most unexpected moments in human history, for, the breath of the Lord bloweth where it listeth.

The conclusion about the impossibility of writing an epic in modern times rests mainly upon the examination of the trend of the poetical spirit by European critics. They have taken for granted the cultural domination of the world by Europe as they took its economic and political domination. But culture is something much deeper than economics and politics. There are historical instances where a declining culture, politically dominated by another nation, has revived with a remarkable power of creativity. Very often the literary impact of an alien culture stimulates, invigorates and resuscitates the dormant creative possibilities of the subject race. This seems to have happened in the case of modern India. It is true that the various literatures of the regional Indian languages were stagnant on account of the decline of national life, and all of them received a powerful impetus by the impact of European culture, especially as represented by the English language. Novel, drama, poetry, criticism, history, research along all the lines of literary effort got an unprecedented fillip as a means for the expression to the national genius. A remarkable degree of literary progress was achieved in every Indian language. But apart from these regional languages, English was adopted all over the vast continent not only as a medium of instruction but also as a vehicle of literary expression by its most advanced writers and thinkers. This gave rise to what has been termed Indo-English literature, and has led to a curious literary phenomenon which is a very hopeful prelude to the cultural unification of mankind.

While the creative spirit of the European nations is showing distinct signs of exhaustion and even some tendencies of decline, the resurgent spirit of India with all its rich spiritual heritage and possibilities is finding expression in the English language. The first sign of this remarkable achievement in poetic creation was given by the success of Tagore's *Gitanjali*. It showed that the expression of the Indian Spirit, even in a remarkably Indian manner, can find a high place in the cultural achievement of humanity. In fact, what finds expression in Tagore is something of the fundamental spiritual elements and forms of Indian culture, though not its widest sweep and utter depth. National resurgence after a period of political and social decline stirs the soul of the race to its very depths in the process of its re-awakening, throwing up all the elements of the culture with their characteristics into a ferment. Those elements that are found capable of survival, utility and vitality are retained, while those that have outlived their utility are rejected and dissolved. The basis of Indian culture goes back to the living spiritual experience embodied in the Vedas and Upanishads, the Gita, the Tantras and the Vedanta. Apart from the wide diffusion of spirituality in the mentality of the masses, a traditional continuity of the practical process of self-realisation runs throughout the period of Indian history including the period of her decline. The names of Kabir, Nanak, Ramanand, Tulsi, Dadu, Chaitanya and others easily come to the mind while tracing the continuity to the very dawn of the Indian renaissance, which can be said to begin with the appearance of the colossal

spiritual figure of Ramakrishna Paramhansa.

The fundamentally spirituo-religious character of the first forms which this movement of awakening took shows that it is not merely in isolated individuals that the Indian spiritual tradition persists but that it has entered into the conscious life-forms, religious, social and others—and even the sub-conscious ones—of the whole race. The Brahma Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, the Arya Samaj are some of its well-known expressions. The national awakening and the struggle for political freedom gave inspiration to many writers and poets who boldly experimented with new literary forms.

Poets are not lacking who tried to invent new forms suitable to the utterance of the rising spirit of the nation and in almost every Indian regional language all the forms of European poetical expression have been accepted and experimented upon. Blank verse, prose poetry and the rest have been tried, some with remarkable success. They all contributed to the awakening of the new literary spirit, though it must be acknowledged that a conscious search for an epic form did not meet with success. Usually it ended with the discovery of a new metre, or of new combinations of old metres or a novel use of an old metre by introducing into it new laws of rhythm so as to yield some form very near to the blank verse of the English language. But a search for a mere new poetic form for an epic was perhaps bound to fail because though the form is important, and very important in literary expression, yet it is the spirit that really gives life to the embodying form.

It augers well for the cultural unification of mankind that India has begun to pay back the cultural debt she owes to Europe by her new creations in the English language. It was therefore a phenomenon of very great significance when Sri Aurobindo turned his remarkable poetical capacity to the creation of an epic in English to embody his grand vision of the Spirit. It is well known that Sri Aurobindo devoted himself to the pursuit of spirituality which is the foundation of Indian culture. He is not merely a revivalist, his spirituality is not of the type of a traditional repetition. It is a resurgence, a reorientation which carries the tradition many steps forward by his spiritual discovery of the Supermind. In him the Indian spirit finds its greatest exponent. The Divine, the sense of that living Reality, the need of bringing the influence and the presence of the Divine into all human activities and the consequent transformation of human nature and life into an expression of the Divine,—these are some of the fundamental concepts of his vision of man's future. In the words of K. D. Sethna: "Philosophical statement lending logical plausibility to facts of the Spirit is necessary in a time like ours when the intellect is acutely in the forefront and Sri Aurobindo has answered the need by writing that expository masterpiece, *The Life Divine*. . . . To create a poetic mould equally massive and multiform as *the Life Divine* for transmitting the living Reality to the furthest bound of speech—such a task is incumbent on one who stands as the maker of a new spiritual epoch". *Savitri* fulfils that task.

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Epic as a form of literary expression has not been static and conventional but has been continually developing, both with regard to the subject-matter, manner and form. This can be seen from the remark of a critic who says: "Homer fixes the type and way and artistic purpose; Virgil perfects the type; Milton perfects the purpose". Whether one agrees with this opinion or not, it is clear that the epic has not been a stereotyped form of literary expression throughout history. Nor has it been a form constantly present, it has been recurrent. Looking at the whole field of epic poetry, one may divide it into two main classes: the authentic epic, generally intended for recitation, and the literary epic mainly intended for reading. The first type has a simple concrete subject and a sustained rush and splendour. Generally it concerns a great story which has been absorbed into the prevailing consciousness of the people. The story is supposed to have taken place in what has been termed the "heroic age" in which hot racial elements and nascent cultural trends are brought out boldly and simply. While in the *Iliad*, *Odyssey* and *Aeneid*, and in the *Nibelungenlied*, the subject matter concerns a great fight or labour which has stamped itself indelibly on the mentality of the race, there is in Dante's *Divine Comedy* no story at all in that sense. With regard to this difference, an eminent critic says, "It is not necessary for the story to be a historical fact. Only it must have poetic reality." The authentic epic tells the story greatly, that is, in a high manner. This consists in endowing life with significance. One of its purposes can be said to be to create values in life. Life by itself seems to have no significance, it is valueless. When there is this sense of utter want of significance of life, a sense of its ultimate uselessness, "a blankness of unperturbable darkness", then, says a critic, "the word 'hell' is not too strong to express it". In the authentic epic wherein courage in the face of danger and heroism in fighting for a cause are portrayed the significance of life is brought out, its value found. This bringing out of the purpose in the epic may not be intellectually precise, but it is deeply felt. Let us observe in passing also that courage and heroism are not the only values of life, and that love, sacrifice, attainment of per-

"SAVITRI", AN EPIC —Continued from previous page

fection and other ideals can rank even higher.

Another critic of the epic says, "Epic-purpose will have to abandon the necessity of telling a story". We have already observed that the *Divine Comedy* has neither a mythological nor a historical story. It is in fact allegorical. Dante himself distinguishes between two senses in a poem,—a literal and an allegorical sense. The literal sense of the *Divine Comedy* is the poet's journey through the other world. Its allegorical sense is the destiny of man and "the idea of perfect justice". Dante has made a reliable symbol out of his own experience. In Milton's *Paradise Lost* the pure story element is absent. "Milton from the knowledge of himself created Satan and Christ"—says Lascelles Abercrombie. His angels are not like Homer's Gods. To Homer the Gods are close and real, whereas Milton's angels are far and seem abstract. Milton's story deals with the mystery of the individual will in eternal opposition to the Divine will. Satan, the creator of all evil on earth, is conscious—very acutely conscious,—of his limitations and also of the Divine Power that contains and drives him. It seems almost certain that after Milton an epic dealing entirely with an objective story is not possible, for, the rationalism with which the modern age began has been pushing man more and more towards a greater and greater subjective trend.

Sometimes it is said that "man and man's purpose in the world" are the theme for all epics. This may be accepted if a progressive evolution of man and of his purpose also is admitted. Man has been trying to discover or "uncover" his Self—and in this momentous discovery he is bound to discover also his purpose as an individual and as a collectivity.

Efforts at writing an epic in the European languages after Milton have, so far, not been successful. The feeling among the critics is that epic-manner and epic-content are trying for a divorce at present. The last effort, on a sufficiently large scale on the continent, was Goethe's *Faust*, which, however, falls far short of the epic height and grandeur. Efforts in the English language were more or less in the nature of exercises and experiments lacking vitality and inspiration, and have therefore not attained success. Shelley's *Revolt of Islam*, Keat's *Hyperion* have something of the epic accent, but they do not go far enough. Hugo's *La Légende des Siècles* or Browning's *The Ring and the Book*, Hardy's *Dynasts*—all seem to have some element which can be called epic in the sense of a developing significance of life which they see, but they fail to achieve the largeness, the grandeur and the sustained height and the integration which can give a sense of unity. We have already referred to a feeling among critics that the authentic epic as a literary form is doomed. Guesses have been hazarded as to the possible future of the epic content and of the epic form. The question has been debated whether it is possible to combine the epic and the dramatic forms with success. Some have thought of a connected sequence of separate poems like Hugo's as a possible and even an appropriate form. But the creative spirit has its own surprises for us. This was exemplified once in the past when the dictum that an epic should be a narrative on a large scale was falsified by Dante. For the modern lover of the muse another such agreeable surprise is offered in *Savitri*.

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European critics have not taken any serious notice of the epics of India, both authentic and literary, because naturally the Indian form did not fall within the idea and the form—or rather the formal definition—of epic in the West. But that is no reason to deny the right of epic to the Indian *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana* and *Bhagavata* of the Sanskrit language and *Shahnama* of the Persian, besides literary epics like the *Raghuvamsha* of Kalidasa and *Janakiharanam* of Kumardas. The Indian epics represent "the ancient historical or legendary traditional history turned to creative use as a significant mythus or tale expressive of some spiritual or religious or ethical or ideal meaning, and thus formative of the people... The work of these epics was to popularise high philosophic and ethical ideas and cultural practice".

Sri Aurobindo has given an estimate of the two Indian epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, in his *Defence of Indian Culture*:

"The *Mahabharata* especially is not only a story of the Bharats, the epic of an early event which had become a national tradition, but on a vast scale the epic of the soul and religious and ethical mind and social and political ideals and culture and life of India. It is said popularly of it and with a certain measure of truth that whatever is in India is in the *Mahabharata*. The *Mahabharata* is the creation and expression not of a single individual mind but of the mind of a nation. It would be vain to apply to it canons of a poetical art applicable to an epic poem with a smaller and a more restricted purpose, but still a great and quite conscious art has been expanded both in its detail and its total structure. The whole poem has been built like a vast national temple unrolling slowly its immense and complex idea from chamber to chamber, crowded with significant groups and sculptures and inscriptions, the grouped figures carved in divine or semi-divine proportions, a humanity aggrandised and half-uptifted to superhumanity and yet always true to the human motive and idea and feeling, the strain of the real constantly raised by the tones of the ideal, the life of this world amply portrayed but subjected to the conscious influence and presence of the powers of the worlds beyond it, and the whole unified by the long embodied procession of consistent idea worked out in

the wide steps of the poetic story.

"As is needed in an epic narrative, the conduct of the story is the main interest of the poem and it is carried through with an at once large and minute movement, wide and bold in the mass, striking and effective in detail, always simple, strong and epic in its style and space. At the same time though supremely interesting in substance and vivid in the manner of the telling as a poetic story, it is something more—a significant tale, *Itihas*, representative throughout of the central ideas and the ideals of Indian life and culture.

"The Vedic idea of the struggle between powers of light and powers of darkness, powers of truth and powers of falsehood is continued in these epics and takes the figure of a story. It is the old struggle of Deva and Asura, God and Titan, but represented in terms of human life.

"The *Ramayana* is a work of the same essential kind as the *Mahabharata*; it differs only by a greater simplicity of plan, a more delicate ideal temperament and a finer glow of poetic warmth and colour. The main bulk of the poem is evidently by a single hand—in spite of much accretion—and has a less complex and more obvious unity of structure. There is less of the philosophic, more of the purely poetic mind, more of the artist, less of the builder. The whole story is from beginning to end of one piece and there is no deviation from the stream of the narrative. At the same time, there is a like vastness of vision, and even more wide-winged flight of epic sublimity in the conception and sustained richness of minute execution in the detail. The structural power, strong workmanship and method of disposition of the *Mahabharata* remind one of the art of the Indian builders; the grandeur and the boldness of outline and wealth of colour and minute decorative execution of the *Ramayana* suggest rather a transcript into literature of the spirit and style of Indian painting....

"On one side is portrayed an ideal manhood, a divine beauty of virtue and ethical order, a civilisation founded on the Dharma and realising an exaltation of the moral ideal which is presented with a singularly strong appeal of aesthetic grace and harmony and sweetness; on the other are wild and anarchic and almost amorphous forces of superhuman egoism and self-will and exultant violence, and the two ideas and powers of mental nature living and embodied are brought into conflict and led to a decisive issue of the victory of the divine Man over the Rakshasa.

"The poetical manner of these epics is not inferior to the greatness of their substance. The style and the verse in which they are written have always a noble epic quality, a lucid classical simplicity and directness, rich in expression but stripped of superfluous ornaments, a swift, vigorous, flexible and fluid verse constantly sure of the epic cadence. There is a difference in the temperament of the language. The characteristic diction of the *Mahabharata* is almost austere masculine, trusting to the force of sense and inspired accuracy of term, almost ascetic in its simplicity and directness and a frequent fine and happy bareness; it is the speech of a strong and rapid poetical intelligence and a great and straightforward vital force, brief and telling in phrase but by virtue of a single-minded sincerity and without any rhetorical labour of compactness, a style like the light and strong body of a runner nude and pure and healthily lustrous and clear without superfluity of flesh or exaggeration of muscle, agile and swift and untired in the race. There is inevitably much in this vast poem that is in an inferior manner, little or nothing that falls below a certain sustained level in which there is always something of this virtue.

"The diction of the *Ramayana* is shaped in a more attractive mould, a marvel of sweetness and strength, lucidity and warmth and grace; its phrase has not only poetic truth and epic force and diction but a constant intimate vibration of the feeling of the idea, emotion or object; there is an element of fine ideal delicacy in its sustained strength and breath of power. In both it is high poetic tone and inspired intelligence that is at work; the directly intuitive mind of the Veda and the Upanishads has retired behind the veil of the intellectual and outwardly psychological imagination".

We shall close this long citation of the estimate of the two great Indian epics by Sri Aurobindo with a comparison with the European epic which he himself has given:—

"These epics are therefore not a mere mass of untransmuted legend and folk-lore, as is ignorantly objected, but a highly artistic representation of intimate significance of life, the living presentment of a strong and noble thinking, a developed ethical and aesthetic mind and a high social-political ideal, the ensouled image of a great culture. As rich in freshness of life but immeasurably more profound and evolved in thought and substance than the Greek, as advanced in maturity of culture but more vigorous and vital and young in strength than the Latin epic poetry, the Indian epic poems were fashioned to serve a greater and completer national and cultural function; and that they should have been received and absorbed by both the high and the low, the cultured and the masses and remained through twenty centuries an intimate and formative part of the life of a whole nation is of itself the strongest possible evidence of the greatness and fineness of this ancient Indian culture."

To be continued

LOTUS-FLAME

PART IV: THE SELF-KNOWLEDGE

By ROMEN

This is an instalment from one of the sections of a long poem being composed on Sri Aurobindo under remarkable circumstances of spiritual inspiration. Part I appeared in the Sixth Annual of the Sri Aurobindo Circle.

He stood on the dim outpost of the world
 Withdrawn on a vast summit of poise and calm.
 There ended all the gropings of the earth;
 There started his celestial ascent;
 There world and time and life and birth stopped dead;
 There commenced his brilliant flight to the unknown.
 Dust now remained below hidden from his gaze;
 He was alone with the sheer Infinite.
 No twilight thought came to veil his crystal mind;
 No clay-hearts attracted his immortal heart;
 No small glory of passion, no penury
 Touched his life's deep immobile waters of rest.
 He was drunk with the Blue's illimitable wine.
 A high and golden space of sun's domain
 Remained above him like a topless sky
 Beacons incessantly to wing and merge
 In its ageless and unbodied eternity
 And be encrowned with a God-aureoled light.
 Prisoner no more of things that live and die,
 Of hearts burdened with death's gigantic shade,
 No wayfarer of the hour's intransient road,
 He stayed above locked in a giant peace.
 Unconcerned, aloof, intangible, alone
 Not in disdain this bourneless equipoise,
 But an entire oblivion of earth,
 A luminous sleep that covered his spirit's eye
 And blotted out the tablets of the dust,
 A dim calligraphy of meaningless signs.
 Blank, calm, he awaited the Invisible's tread,
 For the golden touch of an undying fire,
 For the heavens to paint with an almighty brush
 The image of the True and the Wonderful.
 His canvas was wiped clean of dusty tones,
 Pigmented with the white-base of the sky.
 A formless beatitude clutched his whole being.
 Swept down a limitless grandeur of the heights
 Into his frame a slave of the abyss no more.
 All his heart sang the anthem of the unseen;
 All his mind filled deep with the huge crescendo
 Of unwall'd music of the sun and the stars.
 There he stood deaf for ever to the clangs
 And the unharmonied sounds of the warring clay
 And the skyless monotone of the human din
 But heard the august silence of hidden seas,
 Unparalleled, thrilling, magnificent
 Notes that are the fixed base of the Universe.
 No need he felt of time's dim lexicon
 To read the language of the vast world-mind,
 He with the crystal code of the spirit's sight
 Read the epic stillness of the cosmic soul.
 There all was crystalline, unbound and free.
 Gone were the near-sighted glasses of the hour.
 Which could not go beyond the meaningless I.
 But on him a spaceless optician bestowed
 A gaze horizonless, immaculate;
 His eyes were attuned to the Invisible;
 His ears ravished by the Inexpressible.
 Here was a rapt gigantic world where nothing
 Was concealed, where nothing lay covert or masked;
 Here was a seeing supreme and absolute,
 A domain of pure unvestured radiance,
 An endless realm of sheer totality,
 Nothing half-seen, half-felt as on anguished earth,
 But everything completeness and perfection
 And harmony without end or pause or fall;
 Nothing was here that recalled the gloam of the gulf,
 The night's gloom could not climb to this domain
 Of faultless sculpture of a magical poise.
 Born out of its own womb was this kingdom vast.
 A world of an ageless and a deathless being,
 An entity that is above this globe
 In virginal silence, pristine solitude,
 A luminous threshold to continents
 Of Being and Sight roseate-hued immense,

Vastitudes of the empire of mystic mind,
 Unfathomed oceans of suddenness of flame,
 And truth-worlds of a grandeur illimitable
 Whose mystery is unconned and unreach'd.
 Devoid of the gloried puissance of the vast
 Which is the bright citadel of paradise,
 It was the self of a majestic sea,
 Untremored waters eternally alone.
 It mirrored all the heaven-secrecies,
 But in itself was a blankness without end.
 And the unquenchable Lotus-flame arose and stood
 Like a strong messenger beside a throne,
 Nude, a calm stranger from an alien sphere,
 And gazed at the infinity in its depths.
 An august solitude embraced his heart
 And in that hush a summit-glow he glimpsed,
 An azure light, an index of the sun,
 A measureless pinnacle of the unnamable.
 And he gazed up, a child of voicelessness
 Eyeing the height of a stupendous seat
 Of flaming rapture and lightning ecstasies,
 The mirror of an effulgence yet unborn
 Televised to his spirit's occult screen.
 Here upon this immense expanse of light
 He came making it his own base and his stand
 Not on impalpable shifting grounds of night
 But on the radiant fields of high heaven-soul.
 Here was his foot-hold above the Universe
 Of change and time and finitudes of earth;
 Here was a diving-board to the Unknown;
 Here was a brilliant lofty resting-place
 Of souls seeking to plunge into earthly seas;
 Here was the empire of plenitude and hush,
 A tranquil and a waveless, timeless lake
 Bosoming rapture-swans multitudinous.
 On its voiceless surface limitlessly free
 He sensed all his mortality fall back
 To release the locked transcendence in his soul.
 He felt alien no more to divinity,
 Nor stranger deemed himself upon this sphere.
 He recognised the cosmic beings of light,
 The countless swan-souls floating on that sea,
 As his spirit-mates and co-eternal fires,
 The million flame-hearts and the myriad light-minds
 From the deathless, timeless and supreme Sun-core.
 His heart felt the pulse of their radiant breasts,
 His spirit shared their truth and ecstasy.
 He felt a sky-pure formless pristine love
 Overbrim all his mould with its nectared wine.
 The veiled Mother's love came and touched his heart
 And turned his eyeless human solitudes
 Into a celestial compassion of light.
 Her grace and wideness now became his soul;
 Standing beyond the worlds of time and change
 His spirit breathed her magic, ageless air;
 All his mind felt looming above its peak
 A silence and knowledge unconceivable.
 His life space glimpsed a grandeur without end.
 Only his flesh-caves were left unillumed,
 Unheeded like a dark and granite mask.
 The great Mother of his infinity,
 The deathless Consort of his stupendous self,
 The marvel child-might of his viewless being,
 His supernal effulgence, his topless ray-dome
 Winged over him, a mystic peacock of flame,
 Even as an eagle watching her child below,
 Or a sun gazing at a new-born star
 Born out of the immense cave-wombs of might.
 Instilled with a radiance that is heaven's own,
 He saw a path that none had trod or faced,
 He glimpsed the lone undiscovered avenue
 Upon the breast eternal, a beam of light,
 And sensed the whole immensity of his climb.
 Endowed with a flame of the Ineffable,

LOTUS FLAME

Continued from previous page

He could cross the ethereal heights with mighty ease;
 But an invisible chain of the Universe
 Was on his being like a dire load
 And though unbound and beyond the span of the hours,
 His was the limitless toil colossal and long
 Of carrying the endless oceans of the worlds
 To the pinnacle-altar of the throne of God.
 A great unnamable thirst was in his mind
 For a greater vision and a wider Being,
 A yearning to confront the summit-truth
 Unveiled, unmasked, unapparelled, sheer and sole,
 A pursuit of a reality beyond
 All seas and all domains and all time-breadths.
 The tread of a light higher than the earth's
 Had already his entire frame possessed;
 A flaming greatness crowned his mute earthliness
 As he overstepped her zones of nescience
 And took his seat upon a heavenlier base.
 A wider sky was his mind's soaring ground;
 More spaceless grew his spirit's steep ascent;
 Into a vaster altitude climbed his soul;
 The dormant seed of effulgence divine began

To awake within his ever-timeless breast.
 Bound for an infinite end that lay ahead.
 Like a perpetual receding sky-rim,
 His wide heart touched not any lesser goals
 Of freedom and rapture-ease and puissance-blaze
 But embraced a high urge uncontrollable,
 The vast goad of a god-will from behind
 To seize the golden prize illimitable,
 No partial benediction or brief boon.
 Standing upon a sphere clear of earth-smoke,
 The smoke of birth and twilight mist of mind,
 He breathed the ozone of the Ineffable.
 Then all his instruments crystal became
 Like a white stirless and transparent pool
 Showing unscreened its verdant or rocky floor
 Or the amber goblet of a flaming wine
 That lays bare its translucent sun-graped depths.
 Mistless, he perceived an inviolable sheen
 Outpouring through the trinity of his base,
 The triple-storied mansion of his frame,
 The glimmer of the flame of his Self unborn

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To be continued

NOTICE

THE NEXT ISSUE OF "MOTHER INDIA" WILL BE
 ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 1.