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"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

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CONTENTS

SRI AUROBINDO ON "SAVITRI"	1	THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO by Rishabhchand	
EDITOR'S NOTE		THE TRIPLE AIM	10
LETTERS ON "SAVITRI"		BE MUTE... (Poem) by Tehmi	12
SAVITRI by Sri Aurobindo		THE SHADOW ON THE SUNLESS SURF (Poem) by Eleanor Montgomery	12
Book VII: The Book of Yoga—Canto 4: The Triple Soul-Forces	4	BOOKS IN THE BALANCE	
SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME by Dilip Kumar Roy		THIS EUROPE by Grijia Mookerji (Reviewed by William Hookens)	12
CHAPTER XIII: ASHRAM SPORTS	6		

SRI AUROBINDO ON "SAVITRI"

EDITOR'S NOTE

Sri Aurobindo intended to write a long Introduction to *Savitri: a Legend and a Symbol*. Together with one Book out of the twelve of his epic—significantly enough the Book of Death—the eagerly awaited Introduction never got written. Nothing that anybody may pen, however acute, can replace it as an expository and illuminative document on the unusual poetic afflatus—unusual both in message and music—that blows through the twenty-five thousand and odd lines of this Legend of the past that is a Symbol of the future. But luckily we have a substantial number of letters by Sri Aurobindo on what can be called, if any one achievement by so vastly and variously creative a genius can lay claim to the title, his literary life-work. Out of these letters an introductory *ensemble*—necessarily in certain places more informal, personal, unreserved, focussed on details, quick-shifting, repetitive than a specially composed piece for the public would be—has been made with the object of throwing, in the poet's own valuable words, some light on the poem's conception and development and on its qualities of inspiration, vision and technique.*

It will perhaps be of interest to touch upon the origin of the series of notes that have been culled and presented here. No sooner did I commence my contact with Sri Aurobindo in 1927 than I found the air of his Ashram humming with rich rumours of the masterpiece that had been on the make ever since his days in Baroda. Having always had a passion for poetry and having myself tried to catch a spark of the celestial fire, I was extremely thrilled and longed to set eyes on this most significant work of his which he was repeatedly recasting to make it accord with the ever higher ascension of his own consciousness in Yoga. But Sri Aurobindo was in no hurry to show it before it reached the intensest spiritual perfection. It was I, on the contrary, who kept showing him my own little efforts at expressing the few strange glimmers of beauty and truth that at times my discipleship under so gracious a spiritual and literary guru brought me. On one such occasion, to illustrate some point, he sent back with his helpful comments two lines describing "the Ray from the transcendent penetrating through the mind's passive neutral reflection of the supreme quietude of the silent Brahman." They ran:

*Piercing the limitless unknowable,
Breaking the vacancy and voiceless peace.*

I was struck by the profound word-reverberations that reinforced the mystical word-suggestions with a tremendous immediacy of spiritual fact. I asked where the lines came from. The reply was: "*Savitri*."

I never forgot this first brief impact of the closely guarded secret. Even before it, Sri Aurobindo had tried to make me conscious of a certain element in poetry that hailed from what he called the Overhead planes, the hidden ranges of consciousness above the intellect, with their inherent light of knowledge and their natural experience of the infinite. He distinguished four planes: Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind. The last-named has been, according to him, the top reach of the dynamic side of man's spirituality so far: a transcendental poise of immutable Brahman or featureless Nirvana is the Beyond to it usually realised when in isolated cases there is a leap to the ultimate status of that infinite silence of self-liberation which can be attained on any plane of the cosmos by an inner withdrawal. The master dynamism of the Divine, the integral earth-trans-

*Some of the more general letters—whole or in part—have already appeared in "Letters of Sri Aurobindo" (Third Series). But as they are linked up with the kind of poetry that *Savitri* is and as they were actually written with direct or indirect reference to this poem, their most significant place is in the same setting as those treating of particular points. Among the latter, one or two short entries are included not so much because they illustrate anything in the poem as because they have either a flavour of personality or some other psychological bearing. The letters have been divided into sections, each section determined mostly by similarity of theme in its contents or by their broad subsumableness under a common head. The order of the sections—and sometimes also that of their contents—is dictated by two considerations. One is semi-logical sequence; the other is contextual reference—that is, passages that allude to something in other passages have to come later and certain remarks must be on later pages because, without this being so, their exact sense may not emerge.

formative power which Sri Aurobindo designated as Supermind or Gnosis or Truth-Consciousness and which was his own outstanding personal realisation, rendering his Yoga a unique hope for the world, has lain unmanifest and mostly unseized and, until certain radical conditions are completely fulfilled, cannot find direct expression in life or literature. Even the expression of the Overmind with its massive and comprehensive yet intensely immediate vision—especially in the entire authenticity of its undertones and overtones of rhythm—is rare, as is also to a less degree that of the Higher Mind's broad connective clarity, the Illumined Mind's many-sided opulence of colourful insight, the Intuition's swift and close and all-seizing focus. What the ancients termed the *mantra*—the stuff of Divinity itself appearing to become revelatory scriptural word as in some parts of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita—is the clearest voice of the Overmind in its few past visitations on earth. Less openly, the Overmind is the chief presence in the world's greatest poetic phrases of various types. More and more Sri Aurobindo sought—by patiently criticising, appraising, distinguishing—to help me not only respond, in my appreciation of poetry, to the rising scale of the Overhead note but also bring some strain of it into my own verses. The quest of that note grew for me a dominant occupation and most I prayed for a touch of the Overmind.

One day, emboldened by his innumerable favours of tutorship, I made a singular request. I wrote:

"I shall consider it a favour indeed if you will give me an instance in English of the inspiration of the pure Overmind. I don't mean just a line like Milton's

Those thoughts that wander through eternity
or Wordsworth's

Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone,
which has a brief burst of it, but something sustained and plenary. I want to steep my consciousness in its rhythm and its revelation. It will be a most cherished possession. Please don't disappoint me by saying that, as no English writer has a passage of this kind, you cannot do anything for me."

He wrote back in his characteristic vein:

"Good Heavens! how am I to avoid saying that, when it is the only possible answer—at least so far as I can remember? Perhaps if I went through English poetry again with my present consciousness I might find more intimations like that line of Wordsworth, but a passage sustained and plenary? These surely are things yet to come—the 'future poetry' perhaps, but not the past."

With the familiarity—almost the impudence—he permitted us, I replied:

"I think the favour I asked was expressed in perfectly clear language. If no English poet has produced the passage I want, then who has done so in English? God alone knows. But who is capable of doing it? All of us know. Well, then why not be kind enough to grant this favour? If difficult metres could be illustrated on demand, is it impossible to illustrate in a satisfying measure something so naturally Aurobindonian as the Overmind? I am not asking for hundreds of lines—even eight will more than do—all pure gold to be treasured for ever. So please... Perhaps it is possible only on Sunday—the day dedicated to golden *Surya* and rich for you with leisure from correspondence: I can wait answerless for twenty-four hours with a sweet *samata*."

The answer came the very next morning:

"I have to say Good Heavens again. Because difficult metres can be illustrated on demand, which is a matter of metrical skill, how does it follow that one can produce poetry from any blessed plane on demand? It would be easier to furnish you with hundreds of lines already written out of which you could select for yourself anything Overmindish if it exists (which I doubt) rather than produce 8 lines of warranted Overmind manu-

Sri Aurobindo on "Savitri"—Continued from page 1

facture to order. All I can do is to give you from time to time some lines from *Savitri*, on condition you keep them to yourself for the present. It may be a poor substitute for the Overmental, but if you like the sample, the opening lines, I can give you more hereafter—and occasionally better."

And then with an "e.g." there followed in his own fine and sensitive yet forceful hand sixteen lines of the very first Canto of *Savitri* as it stood then*:

*It was the hour before the Gods awake.
Across the path of the divine Event
The huge unslumbering spirit of Night, alone
In the unlit temple of immensity,
Lay stretched immobile upon silence' marge,
Mute with the unplumbed prevision of her change.
The impassive skies were neutral, waste and still.
Then a faint hesitating glimmer broke.
A slow miraculous gesture dimly came,
The insistent thrill of a transfiguring touch
Persuaded the inert black quietude
And beauty and wonder disturbed the fields of God.
A wandering hand of pale enchanted light
That glowed along the moment's fading brink
Fixed with gold panel and opalescent hinge
A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge.*

Below the quotation were the words: "There! Promise fulfilled for a wonder."

After a whole day's absorption in the absolute nectar, I sent him a note:

"Like the sample? Rather! It is useless for me to attempt thanking you. The beauty of what you have sent may move one to utterance but the wideness takes one's breath away. I read the lines over and over again. I am somewhat stunned by the magnitude and memorableness of this day: I think your description of the divine dawn can very well apply to its spiritually poetic importance for me. Perhaps you will laugh, but I had two strange feelings before writing this letter. I was reading your verses, when I had a mute sense of big tears in the heart and a conviction that having seen what I had seen I could not possibly remain a mere mortal! What do you say to my madness?"

* At present this prelude—slightly altered in phrase and with its opening and its close considerably separated—stands in a passage of 93 lines: "Savitri", Vol. I. pp. 1-4.

LETTERS ON "SAVITRI"

I

There is a previous draft of *Savitri*, the result of the many retouchings of which somebody told you; but in that form it would not have been a "magnum opus" at all. Besides, it would have been a legend and not a symbol. I therefore started recasting the whole thing; only the best passages or lines of the old draft will remain, altered so as to fit into the new frame.

No, I do not work at the poem once a week; I have other things to do. Once a month, perhaps, I look at the new form of the first Book and make such changes as inspiration points out to me—so that nothing shall fall below the minimum height which I have fixed for it. (1931)

* * *

Savitri is blank verse without enjambement (except rarely)—each line a thing by itself and arranged in paragraphs of one, two, three, four, five lines (rarely a longer series), in an attempt to catch something of the Upanishadic and Kalidasian movement, so far as that is a possibility in English. You can't take that as a model—it is too difficult a rhythm-structure to be a model. I shall myself know whether it is a success or not, only when I have finished two or three Books. But where is the time now for such a work? When the Supramental has finished coming down, then perhaps. (1932)

* * *

Don't make prophecies. How do you know that *Savitri* is or is going to be Supramental poetry? It is not, in fact—it is only an attempt to render into poetry a symbol of things occult and spiritual. (1933)

* * *

It seems as if you were facing the problem of blank verse by attempting it under conditions of the maximum difficulty. Not content with choosing a form which is based on the single line blank verse (I mean, of course, each line a clear-cut entity by itself) as opposed to the flowing and freely enjambed variety, you try to unite flow lines and single line and farther undertake a form of blank verse quatrains! I have myself tried the blank verse quatrain; even, when I attempted the single line blank verse base on a large scale in *Savitri*, I found myself falling involuntarily into a series of four-line movement. But even though I was careful in the building, I found it led to a stiff monotony and had to make a principle of variation—one line, two line, three line, four line or longer passages (paragraphs as it were) alternating with each other; otherwise the system would be a failure. (1933)

* * *

The day of days was, October 25, 1936. From then onwards, for months, Sri Aurobindo kept sending passages which I typed out and he touched up again or expanded. About the next passage I remarked:

"It goes reverberating in depth upon depth of one's being. What I admire is that the burden of infinite suggestion is carried with such a flexible ease. There is no attempt—as in the poetry of us lesser fry—to make things specially striking or strange or new—but a simple largeness of gesture which most naturally makes one surprising revelation after another of beauty and power."

His comment—intended, no doubt, for only my eyes, for in his public pronouncements he rarely spoke about his own work without reserve—was:

"Well, it is the difference of receiving from above and living in the ambiance of the Above—whatever comes receives the breath of largeness which belongs to that plane."

Our correspondence went on and it continued, though with several long breaks, up to almost the end. It was a correspondence with many features. All the critical appreciation and understanding I was capable of I brought to *Savitri* and all that I could write in my own manner by way of Introduction to the poem was put into the last chapter of my book *The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo*, about which Sri Aurobindo was both generous and modest enough to say: "it seems to me very fine both in style and substance, but as it is in high eulogy of my own writing, you must not expect me to say more." But while I could not help eulogising most of *Savitri* with whatever analytic and imaginative apparatus was at my disposal, I did not abstain from questioning a few things here and there. Nor did Sri Aurobindo either expect or desire me to abstain. The precise character and motive of this questioning have been indicated in a footnote in the body of the selection of replies by Sri Aurobindo which I have made from my file. And the amount of fault-finding was too little for me to be ashamed of, but even so I feel that occasionally I encroached with the play of the surface intelligence overmuch on Sri Aurobindo's meagre and precious spare time. On the other hand, without that little amount and without my pressing upon his notice some unfavourable comments by an academic friend outside the Aurobindonian circle, the chance would have been missed for ever of seeing the finest critic I have known pass elucidatory judgment on the greatest poem I have read—a poem written by the most enlightened Master of Yoga and the most patient as well as considerate Superman one could hope to have the privilege to serve.

K. D. SETHNA

There is no invariable "how" in inspiration—except that I receive from above my head and receive changes and corrections from above without any initiation by myself or labour of the brain. Even if I change a hundred times, the mind does not work at that, it only receives. Formerly it used not to be so, the mind was always labouring at the stuff of an unshaped formation. My poems come as a stream, beginning at the first line and ending at the last—only some remain with one or two changes, others have to be recast if the first inspiration was an inferior one. *Savitri* is a work by itself, unlike all the others. I made some eight or ten recasts of it originally under the old insufficient inspiration. Afterwards I am altogether rewriting it, concentrating on the first Book and working on it over and over again with the hope that every line may be of a perfect perfection—but I have hardly any time now for such work. (1934)

* * *

Savitri was originally written many years ago before the Mother came, as a narrative poem in two parts, Part I Earth and Part II Beyond (these two parts are still extant in the scheme,* each of four Books—or rather Part II consisted of three Books and an epilogue)... "Twelve Books" to an epic is a classical superstition, but the new *Savitri* may extend to ten Books—if much is added in the final revision it may be even twelve.† The first Book has been lengthening and lengthening out... As for the second part, I have not touched it yet... There was no "climbing of planes" in the first version—rather *Savitri* moved through the worlds of Night, of Twilight, of Day—all, of course, in a spiritual sense—and ended by calling down the power of the highest worlds of Sachchidananda. I had no idea of what the Supramental World could be like at that time, so it could not enter into the scheme... As for expressing the Supramental inspiration, that is a matter of the future. (1936)

* * *

Savitri is represented in the poem as an incarnation of the Divine Mother. The narrative is supposed to have taken place in far past times when the whole thing had to be opened, so as to "hew the ways of Immortality." (1936)

* * *

The poem was originally written from a mixture perhaps of the inner mind, psychic, poetic intelligence, sublimised vital, afterwards with the Higher Mind, often illumined and intuitivised, intervening. Most of the

* In the present version, there are three parts.

† As is actually the case now.

Sri Aurobindo on "Savitri" —Continued from page 2.

stuff of the first Book is new or else the old so altered as to be no more what it was; the best of the old has sometimes been kept almost intact because it had already the higher inspiration. Moreover, there have been made several successive revisions, each trying to lift the general level higher and higher towards a possible Overmind poetry. As it now stands, there is a general Overmind influence, I believe, sometimes coming fully through, sometimes colouring the poetry of the other higher planes fused together, sometimes lifting any one of these higher planes to its highest or the psychic, poetic intelligence or vital towards them... It is only occasionally that it is pure Higher Mind—a mixture of the Intuitive or Illumined is usually there except when some truth has to be stated to the philosophic intelligence in as precise a manner as possible... The passage*—

*Near to earth's wideness, intimate with heaven,
Exalted and swift her young large-visioned spirit
Voyaging through worlds of splendour and of calm
Overflew the ways of Thought to unborn things.
Ardent was her self-poised unshaking will;
Her mind a sea of white sincerity,
Passionate in flow, had not one turbid wave.
As in a mystic and dynamic dance
A priestess of immaculate ecstasies
Inspired and ruled from Truth's revealing vault
Moves in some prophet cavern of the gods,
A heart of silence in the hands of joy
Inhabited with rich creative beats
A body like a parable of dawn
That seemed a niche for veiled divinity
Or golden temple door to things beyond.
Immortal rhythms swayed in her time-born steps;
Her look, her smile awoke celestial sense
Even in earth-stuff and their intense delight
Poured a supernal beauty on men's lives.
The great unsatisfied godhead here could dwell:
Vacant of the dwarf self's imprisoned air
Her mood could harbour his sublimer breath
Spiritual that can make all things divine.
For even her gulfs were secrecies of light.
At once she was the stillness and the word,
A continent of self-diffusing peace,
An ocean of untrembling virgin fire.
In her he met a vastness like his own,
His high warm subtle ether he refound
And moved in her as in his natural home—*

this passage is, I believe, what I might call the Overmind Intuition at work, expressing itself in something like its own rhythm and language.‡ It is not easy to say about one's own poetry, but I think I have succeeded here and in some passages later on in catching that very difficult note; in separate lines or briefer passages (i.e. a few lines at a time) I think it comes in not unoften... There are two ranges of Overmind which might be called "mental" and "gnostic" respectively—the latter in direct touch with Supermind, the former more like a widened and massive intuition... "All in her pointed to a nobler kind"† is a connecting line which prepares for what follows. It is sometimes good technique to intersperse lines like that, provided they do not fall below standard, so as to give the intellect the foothold of a clear unadorned statement of the gist of what is coming, before taking a higher flight. This is, of course, a technique for long poems and long descriptions, not for shorter things or lyrical writing. (1936)

I do not "think" about the technique because thinking is no longer in my line. But I see and feel for it when the lines are coming through and afterwards in revision of the work. I do not bother about details while writing, because that would only hamper the inspiration. I let it come through without interference; only pausing if there is an obvious inadequacy felt, in which case I conclude that it is a wrong inspiration or inferior level that has cut across the communication. If the inspiration is the right one, then I have not to bother about the technique then or afterwards, for this carries through the perfect line with the perfect rhythm inextricably intertwined or rather fused into an inseparable and single unity; if there is anything wrong with the expression, that carries with it an imperfection in the rhythm—if there is a flaw in the rhythm the expression also does not carry its full weight, is not absolutely inevitable. If, on the other hand, the inspiration is not throughout the right one, then there is an after-examination and recasting of part or whole.

The things I lay most stress on are whether each line is in itself the in-

* This description of Savitri in whom the God of Love found "his perfect shrine" was subsequently expanded from its original 31 lines to 51. (Vol. I, pp. 15-16).

‡ The statement was in reply to the question: "Are not these lines which I regard as the *ne plus ultra* in world-poetry a snatch of the sheer Overmind?" Considering Sri Aurobindo's remark in 1946 about his attitude ten years earlier—"At that time I hesitated to assign anything like Overmind touch or inspiration to passages in English or other poetry and did not presume to claim any of my own writing as belonging to this order"—and considering also that several lines of other poets which he had hesitated about were later adjudged by him to be from the Overmind, it seems certain that this passage which he had ascribed to the Overmind Intuition would have been traced by him to the supreme source if he had been privately asked about it again.

† This line comes just before the passage quoted.

evitable thing not only as a whole but in each word; whether there is the right distribution of sentence lengths (an immensely important thing in this kind of blank verse); whether the lines are in their right place, for all the lines may be perfect but they may not combine perfectly together—bridges may be needed, alteration of position so as to create the right development and perspective. Pauses hardly exist in this kind of blank verse; variations of rhythm, as between the lines, of caesura, of the distribution of long and short, clipped and open syllables, manifold constructions of vowel and consonant sounds, alliterations, assonances, etc., distribution into one line, two line, three or four or five line, many line sentences, care to make each line tell by itself in its own mass and force and at the same time form a harmonious whole sentence—these are the important things. But all that is usually taken care of by the inspiration itself, for as I know and have the habit of the technique, the inspiration provides what I want according to standing orders. If there is a defect I appeal to headquarters, till a proper version comes along or the defect is removed by a word or phrase substitute that flashes—with the necessary sound and sense. These things are not done by thinking or seeking for the right thing—the two agents are sight and call. Also feeling—the solar plexus has to be satisfied and, until it is, revision after revision has to continue. I may add that the technique does not go by any set mental rule—for the object is not perfect technical elegance according to precepts but sound-significance filling out the word-significance. If that can be done by breaking rules, well, so much the worse for the rules. (1936)

I can never be certain of newly written stuff in *Savitri* until I have looked at it again after an interval. Apart from the quality of new lines, there is the combination with others in the whole which I have modified more than anything else in my past revisions. (1936)

Allow me to point out that whatever I did in a "jiffy" would not be any more than provisionally final. It is not a question of making a few changes in individual lines, that is a very minor problem; the real finality only comes when all is felt as a perfect whole, no line jarring with or falling away from the level of the whole though some may rise above it and also all the parts in their proper place making the right harmony. It is an inner feeling that has to decide that... Unfortunately the mind can't arrange these things, and has to wait till the absolutely right thing comes in a sort of receptive self-opening and calling-down condition. Hence the months. (1936)

It is not a question of inclination at all. There is too great a pressure to get necessary things done for the indulgence of poetic inclination to be at all possible. (1937)

I have been kept too occupied with other things to make much headway with the poem—except that I have spoilt your beautiful copy of the "Worlds" under the oestrus of the restless urge for more and more perfection; but we are here for World-improvement, so I hope that is excusable. (1938)

I have tackled the first two sections of *Savitri* again and have pulled up the third to a higher consistency of level; the "Worlds" have fallen into a state of manuscript chaos, corrections upon corrections, additions upon additions, rearrangements on rearrangements, out of which perhaps some cosmic beauty will emerge! (1938)

You will see when you get the full typescript of the first three Books that *Savitri* has grown to an enormous length so that it is no longer quite the same thing as the poem you saw some years ago. There are now three Books in the first part. The first, the Book of Beginnings, comprises five cantos which cover the same ground as what you typed but contains also much more that is new. The small passages about Aswapathi and the other worlds have been replaced by a new Book, the Book of the Traveller of the Worlds, in fourteen Cantos with many thousand lines. There is also a third sufficiently long Book, the Book of the Divine Mother. In the new plan of the poem there is a second part consisting of five Books: two of these, the Book of Birth and Quest and the Book of Love, have been completed and another, the Book of Fate is almost complete. Two others, the Book of Yoga and the Book of Death, have still to be written, though a part needs only a thorough recasting. Finally, there is the third part consisting of four Books, the Book of Eternal Night, the Book of the Dual Twilight, the Book of Everlasting Day and the Return to Earth, which have to be entirely recast and the third of them largely rewritten. So it will be a long time before *Savitri* is complete.

In the new form it will be a sort of poetic philosophy of the Spirit and of Life much profounder in its substance and vaster in its scope than was intended in the original poem. I am trying, of course, to keep it at a very high level of inspiration, but in so large a plan covering most subjects of philosophical thought and vision and many aspects of spiritual experience there is bound to be much variation of tone: but that is, I think, necessary for the richness and completeness of the treatment. (1946)

SAVITRI

By SRI AUROBINDO

BOOK VII: THE BOOK OF YOGA

Canto 4: The Triple Soul-Forces

Here from a low and prone and listless ground
 The passion of the first ascent began;
 A moon-bright face in a sombre cloud of hair,
 A Woman sat in a pale lustrous robe.
 A rugged and ragged soil was her bare seat,
 Beneath her feet a sharp and wounding stone.
 A divine pity on the peaks of the world,
 A spirit touched by the grief of all that lives,
 She looked out far and saw from inner mind
 This questionable world of outward things,
 Of false appearances and plausible shapes,
 This dubious cosmos stretched in the ignorant Void,
 The pangs of earth, the toil, and speed of the stars
 And the difficult birth and dolorous end of life.
 Accepting the universe as her body of woe,
 The Mother of the seven sorrows bore
 The seven stabs that pierced her bleeding heart:
 The beauty of sadness lingered on her face,
 Her eyes were dim with the ancient stain of tears.
 Her heart was riven with the world's agony
 And burdened with the sorrow and struggle in Time,
 An anguished music trailed in her rapt voice.
 Absorbed in a deep compassion's ecstasy,
 Lifting the mild ray of her patient gaze,
 In soft sweet training words slowly she spoke:
 "O Savitri, I am thy secret soul.
 To share the suffering of the world I came,
 I draw my children's pangs into my breast.
 I am the nurse of the colour beneath the stars;
 I am the soul of all who wailing writhe
 Under the ruthless harrow of the Gods.
 I am woman, nurse and slave and beaten beast;
 I tend the hands that gave me cruel blows;
 The hearts that spurned my love and zeal I serve;
 I am the courted queen, the pampered doll,
 I am the giver of the bowl of rice,
 I am the worshipped Angel of the House.
 I am in all that suffers and that cries.
 Mine is the prayer that climbs in vain from earth,
 I am traversed by my creatures' agonies,
 I am the spirit in a world of pain.
 The scream of tortured flesh and tortured hearts
 Fall'n back on heart and flesh unheard by Heaven
 Has rent with helpless grief and wrath my soul.
 I have seen the peasant burning in his hut,
 I have seen the slashed corpse of the slaughtered child,
 Heard woman's cry ravished and stripped and haled
 Amid the bayings of the hell-hound mob,
 I have looked on, I had no power to save.
 I have brought no arm of strength to aid or slay;
 God gave me love, he gave me not his force.
 I have shared the toil of the yoked animal drudge
 Pushed by the goad, encouraged by the whip;
 I have shared the fear-filled life of bird and beast,
 Its long hunt for the day's precarious food,
 Its covert sling and crouch and hungry prowl,
 Its pain and terror seized by beak and claw.
 I have shared the daily life of common men,
 Its petty pleasures and its petty cares,
 Its press of troubles and haggard horde of ills,
 Earth's trail of sorrow hopeless of relief,
 The unwanted tedious labour without joy,
 And the burden of misery and the strokes of fate.
 I have been pity, leaning over pain
 And the tender smile that heals the wounded heart
 And sympathy making life less hard to bear.
 Man has felt near my unseen face and hands;
 I have become the sufferer and his moan,
 I have lain down with the mangled and the slain,
 I have lived with the prisoner in his dungeon cell,
 Heavy on my shoulders weighs the yoke of Time:
 Nothing refusing of creation's load,
 I have borne all and know I still must bear:
 Perhaps when the world sinks into a last sleep,
 I too may sleep in dumb eternal peace.
 I have borne the calm indifference of Heaven,
 Watched Nature's cruelty to suffering things
 While God passed silent by nor turned to help.
 Yet have I cried not out against his will,

Yet have I not accused his cosmic Law.
 Only to change this great hard world of pain
 A patient prayer has risen from my breast;
 A pallid resignation lights my brow,
 Within me a blind faith and mercy dwell;
 I carry the fire that never can be quenched
 And the compassion that supports the suns.
 I am the hope that looks towards my God,
 My God who never came to me till now;
 His voice I hear that ever says 'I come';
 I know that one day he shall come at last."
 She ceased, and like an echo from below
 Answering her pathos of divine complaint
 A voice of wrath took up the dire refrain,
 A growl of thunder or roar of angry beast,
 The beast that crouching growls within man's depths,—
 Voice of a tortured Titan once a God.
 "I am the Man of Sorrows, I am he
 Who is nailed on the wide cross of the universe;
 To enjoy my agony God built the earth,
 My passion he has made his drama's theme.
 He has sent me naked into his bitter world
 And beaten me with his rods of grief and pain
 That I might cry and grovel at his feet
 And offer him worship with my blood and tears.
 I am Prometheus under the vulture's beak,
 Man, the discoverer of the undying Fire,
 In the flame he kindled burning like a moth;
 I am the seeker who can never find,
 I am the fighter who can never win,
 I am the runner who never touched his goal;
 Hell tortures me with the edges of my thought,
 Heaven tortures me with the splendour of my dreams.
 What profit have I of my human soul?
 I toil like the animal, like the animal die.
 I am man the rebel, man the helpless serf;
 Fate and my fellows cheat me of my wage.
 I loosen with my blood my servitude's seal
 And shake from my aching neck the oppressor's knees
 Only to seat new tyrants on my back:
 My teachers lesson me in slavery,
 I am shown God's stamp and my own true signature
 Upon the sorry contract of my fate.
 I have loved, but none has loved me since my birth;
 My fruit of works is given to other hands:
 All that is left me is my evil thoughts,
 My sordid quarrel against God and man,
 Envy of the riches that I cannot share,
 Hate of a happiness that is not mine.
 I know my fate will ever be the same,
 It is my Nature's work that cannot change:
 I have loved for mine, not for the beloved's sake,
 I have loved for myself and not for others' lives.
 Each in himself is sole by Nature's law,
 So God has made his harsh and dreadful world,
 So has he built the petty heart of man;
 Only by force and ruse can man survive:
 For pity is a weakness in his breast,
 His goodness is a laxity in the nerves,
 His kindness an investment for return,
 His altruism is ego's other face:
 He serves the world that him the world may serve.
 If once the Titan's strength could wake in me,
 If Enceladus from Etna could arise,
 I then would reign the master of the world
 And like a God enjoy man's bliss and pain.
 But God has taken from me the ancient force.
 There is a dull consent in my sluggish heart,
 A fierce satisfaction with my special pangs
 As if they made me taller than my kind;
 Only by suffering can I excel.
 I am the victim of titanic ills,
 I am the doer of demoniac deeds;
 I was made for evil, evil is my lot;
 Evil I must be and by evil live;;
 Nought other can I do but be myself;
 What Nature made me, that I must remain.
 I suffer and toil and weep; I moan and hate."
 And Savitri heard the Voice, the echo heard

SAVITRI —Continued from page 4

And turning to her being of pity spoke:
 "Madonna of suffering, Mother of grief divine,
 Thou art a portion of my soul put forth
 To bear the unbearable sorrow of the world.
 Because thou art, men yield not to their doom,
 But ask for happiness and strive with fate;
 Because thou art, the wretched still can hope.
 But thine is the power to solace, not to save.
 One day I will return, a bringer of strength,
 And make thee drink from the Eternal's cup;
 His streams of force shall triumph in thy limbs
 And Wisdom's calm control thy passionate heart.
 Thy love shall be the bond of human kind,
 Compassion the bright King of Nature's acts:
 Misery shall pass abolished from the earth;
 The world shall be freed from the anger of the Beast,
 From the cruelty of the Titan and his pain.
 There shall be peace and joy for ever more."

On passed she in her spirit's upward route.
 An ardent grandeur climbed mid ferns and rocks,
 A quiet wind flattered the heart to warmth,
 A finer perfume breathed from slender trees.
 All beautiful grew, subtle and high and strange.
 Here on a boulder carved like a huge throne
 A Woman sat in gold and purple sheen,
 Armed with the trident and the thunderbolt,
 Her feet upon a couchant lion's back.
 A formidable smile curved round her lips,
 Heaven-fire laughed in the corners of her eyes;
 Her body a mass of courage and heavenly strength,
 She menaced the triumph of the nether gods.
 A halo of lightnings flamed around her head
 And sovereignty a great cestus zoned her robe
 And majesty and victory sat with her
 Guarding in the wide cosmic battle-field
 Against the flat equality of Death
 And the all-levelling insurgent Night
 The hierarchy of the ordered Powers,
 The high changeless values, the peaked eminences,
 The privileged aristocracy of Truth,
 And in the governing Ideal's sun
 The triumvirate of wisdom, love and bliss
 And the sole autocracy of the absolute Light.
 August on her seat in the inner world of Mind,
 The Mother of Might looked down on passing things,
 Listened to the advancing tread of Time,
 Saw the irresistible wheeling of the suns
 And heard the thunder of the march of God.
 Amid the swaying forces in their strife
 Sovereign was her word of luminous command,
 Her speech like a war-cry rang or a pilgrim chant.
 A charm restoring hope in failing hearts,
 Aspired the harmony of her puissant voice:
 "O Savitri, I am thy secret soul.
 I have come down into the human world
 And the movement watched by an unsleeping Eye
 And the dark contrariety of earth's fate
 And the battle of the bright and sombre Powers.
 I stand upon earth's paths of danger and grief
 And help the unfortunate and save the doomed.
 To the strong I bring the guerdon of their strength,
 To the weak I bring the armour of my force;
 To men who long I carry their coveted joy:
 I am fortune justifying the great and wise
 By the sanction of the plaudits of the crowd,
 Then trampling them with the armed heel of Fate.
 My ear is leaned to the cry of the oppressed,
 I topple down the thrones of tyrant kings:
 A cry comes from proscribed and hunted lives
 Appealing to me against a pitiless world,
 A voice of the forsaken and desolate
 And the lone prisoner in his dungeon cell.
 Men hail in my coming the Almighty's force
 Or praise with thankful tears his saviour Grace.
 I smite the Titan who bestrides the world
 And slay the ogre in his blood-stained den.
 I am Durga, goddess of the proud and strong,
 And Lakshmi, queen of the fair and fortunate;
 I wear the face of Kali when I kill,
 I trample the corpses of the demon hordes.
 I am charged by God to do his mighty work,
 Uncaring I serve his will who sent me forth,
 Reckless of peril and earthly consequence.
 I reason not of virtue and of sin
 But do the deed he has put into my heart.
 I fear not for the angry frown of Heaven,

I flinch not from the red assault of Hell;
 I crush the opposition of the gods,
 Tread down a million goblin obstacles.
 I guide man to the path of the Divine
 And guard him from the red Wolf and the Snake.
 I set in his mortal hand my heavenly sword
 And put on him the breastplate of the gods.
 I break the ignorant pride of human mind
 And lead the thought to the wideness of the Truth;
 I rend man's narrow and successful life
 And force his sorrowful eyes to gaze at the sun
 That he may die to earth and live in his soul.
 I know the goal, I know the secret route:
 I have studied the map of the invisible worlds;
 I am the battle's head, the journey's star.
 But the great obstinate world resists my word,
 And the crookedness and evil in man's heart
 Is stronger than Reason, profounder than the Pit,
 And the malignancy of hostile Powers
 Puts craftily back the clock of destiny
 And mightier seem than the eternal Will.
 The cosmic evil is too deep to unroot:
 The cosmic suffering is too vast to heal.
 A few I guide who pass me towards the Light;
 A few I save, the mass falls back unsaved;
 A few I help, the many strive and fail:
 But my heart I have hardened and I do my work:
 Slowly the Light grows greater in the East,
 Slowly the world progresses on God's road.
 His seal is on my task, it cannot fail:
 I shall hear the silver swing of heaven's gates
 When God comes out to meet the soul of the world."
 She spoke and from the lower human world
 An answer, a warped echo met her speech;
 The voice came through the spaces of the mind
 Of the dwarf-Titan, the deformed chained god
 Who strives to master his nature's rebel stuff
 And make the universe his instrument.
 The Ego of this great world of desire
 Claimed earth and the wide heavens for the use
 Of man, head of the life it shapes on earth,
 Its representative and conscious soul,
 And symbol of evolving light and force
 And vessel of the godhead that must be.
 A thinking animal, Nature's struggling lord
 Has made of her his nurse and tool and slave
 And pays to her as wage and emolument
 Inescapably by a deep law in things
 His heart's grief and his body's death and pain;
 His pains are her means to grow, to see and feel;
 His death assists her immortality.
 A tool and slave of his own slave and tool,
 He praises his free will and his master mind
 And is pushed by her upon her chosen paths;
 Possessor he is possessed and, ruler, ruled,
 Her conscious automaton, her desire's dupe.
 His soul is her guest, a sovereign mute, inert,
 His body her robot, his life her way to live,
 His conscious mind her strong revolted serf.
 The voice rose up and smote some inner sun:
 "I am the heir of the forces of the earth,
 Slowly I make good my right to my estate;
 A growing godhead in her divinised mud,
 I climb, a claimant to the throne of heaven.
 The last born of the earth I stand the first;
 Her slow millenniums waited for my birth.
 Although I live in Time besieged by Death,
 Precarious owner of my body and soul
 Housed on a little speck amid the stars,
 For me and my use the universe was made.
 Immortal spirit in the perishing clay,
 I am God still unevolved in human form;
 Even if he is not, he becomes in me.
 The sun and moon are lights upon my path;
 Air was invented for my lungs to breathe,
 Conditioned as a wide and wallless space
 For my winged chariot's wheels to cleave a road,
 The sea was made for me to swim and sail
 And bear my golden commerce on its back:
 It laughs cloven by my pleasure's gliding keel,
 I laugh at its black stare of fate and death.
 The earth is my floor, the sky my living's roof.
 All was prepared through many a silent age.
 God made experiments with animal shapes,
 Then only when all was ready I was born.

Continued on page 6

CHAPTER XIII
ASHRAM SPORTS

(Continued)

Our Ashram, as I have already said, started under the aegis of silence. In point of fact, those who visited it, say, in the late twenties, are scarcely likely to recognise it any more than a child is likely to be recognised in the adult after a space of two or three decades. In the case of our Ashram, however, it is not time alone which is responsible for this momentous change, but athletics and sports, by and large. I have referred in an earlier chapter to new disciples coming in and being admitted along with their children. The latter, as they grew up, had to be taken in hand, that is, given an education, so sports had to be introduced inclusive of games, general exercises and athletics and then—oh what a quandary I was in, overnight!

For me it is somewhat difficult—and embarrassing as well—to have to trace my personal reactions to the Ashram sports and athletics, the more because I had little excuse and even less justification for having chafed against them as I did, initially. But I must face up to it because otherwise I cannot fully bring out what I want to: Gurudev's humility and unassertiveness going hand in hand with his firm vindication of his own vision and the Mother's. So I shall have once again to go back for a little.

When the sports and athletics were first sponsored by the Mother and were being organised under her tireless personal supervision, I found myself, strangely, resenting their trespass into our peaceful Ashram. I say 'strangely' because temperamentally I have never cared much for the sedentary life and the passive kind of peace. Since my adolescence I have had a predilection for sports and games and athletics in general. I do not claim that I had ever had any special aptitude for these things but I have always taken a pronounced pleasure in games like football and tennis and was fond even of exercises such as swimming, riding, dumb-bells, developers etc. I could never miss a good football or tennis match in Calcutta or Wimbledon. In India and also in England I used to play tennis regularly and not too badly. I liked billiards and loved chess passionately, in which I made my mark in England. I liked rowing too at Cambridge. The long and short of it is that I ought, if anything, to have rejoiced when Mother encouraged us to play and exhorted us to take exercise regularly, —in a word, literally drilled us into these with her peerless persuasiveness.

But what happened was just the reverse. From the very start I looked askance at these "frivolous goings on" as I called them and vowed myself never to join the sports—even to save my life. This in itself would not perhaps have done so much harm as it was understood that nobody need join the sports unless he enjoyed them. But I took it into my head to persuade myself that such activities were utterly out of place in an Ashram—forgetting altogether that I was all these years doing regular exercise which so far had kept me in fine trim. But as I strongly approved of my own wry mood, I found plausible arguments enough against what I decided to castigate. In a sense it was disloyalty since I knew perfectly well that both Sri Aurobindo and Mother not only approved of sports but encouraged us all to profit by them. A beautiful quarterly magazine called *Bulletin of Physical Education* was started and printed in the Ashram, in which Sri Aurobindo contributed article after article, a privilege no other magazine in India could claim—during his post-yogic period—except of course the *Arya* of which he himself had been the editor. Also Mother herself wrote for the *Bulletin* regularly and, at considerable expense, had beautiful blocks made of the photographs of our boys and girls marching, playing, drilling or taking exercises. In the very first issue (February 1949) Sri Aurobindo wrote a fairly long article entitled "Message" in which he explained at great length "the deeper *raison d'être* of such associations and especially the need and utility for the nation of a widespread organization of such sports or physical exercises" as were sponsored

SRI AUROBIND

By DILIP

by the Mother with all the emphasis of her strong personality. He dwelt also on the "National aspect" of the subject and was at great pains to explain and underline why "this strictness of training, this habit of discipline and obedience" could not be held to be "inconsistent with individual freedom" which he loved. He pointed out cogently that "in all kinds of concerted action" the habit of discipline created "the condition" not only for "the right use of liberty" but "even for its preservation and survival".

I cannot possibly give long excerpts from his luminous articles in the *Bulletins* and must refer those who are interested to a study of the same. What I am concerned with here is to emphasise the fact that he gave his support to Mother wholeheartedly (as he wrote to me once) in her initiative in bringing in sports. But then had he not himself wanted all along to bring about a synthesis between the East and the West? And had I not read even before I came to the Ashram (in his essay, *Ideal and Progress*): "The message of the East to the West is a true message, 'Only by finding himself can man be saved' and 'what shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul?' The West has heard the message and is seeking out the law and truth of the soul and the evidence of an inner reality greater than the material. The danger is that with her passion for mechanism and her exaggerated intellectuality she may fog herself in an external and false psychism, such as we see arising in England and America, the homes of the mechanical genius, or in intellectual, unspiritual and therefore erroneous theories of the Absolute, such as have run their course in critical and metaphysical Germany.

"The message the West brings to the East is a true message. Man also is God and it is through his developing manhood that he approaches the godhead: Life also is the Divine, its progressive expansion is the self-expression of the Brahman and to deny Life is to diminish the Godhead within us. This is the truth that returns to the East from the West translated into the language of the higher truth the East already possesses; and it is an ancient knowledge. The East also is waking to the message. The danger is that Asia may accept it in the European form, forget for a time her own law and nature and either copy blindly the West or make a disastrous amalgam of that which she has in its most inferior forms and the crudenesses which are invading her."

Moreover, did I not know full well that Sri Aurobindo had never been a traditionalist—never believed in "repeating the past" however glorious? Had he not written in the very first chapter of his *Essays on the Gita*: "We of the coming day stand at the head of a new age of development which must lead to a new and larger synthesis. We are not called upon to be orthodox Vedantins of any of the three schools or Tantrics or to adhere to one of the theistic religions of the past or to entrench ourselves within the four corners of the teachings of the Gita. That would be to limit ourselves, to attempt to create our spiritual life out of the being, knowledge and nature of others, of the men of the past, instead of building it out of our own being and potentialities. We do not belong to the past dawns, but to the noons of the future."

To inspiring messages such as these, born of his unique and comprehensive world-vision, I had always responded with the fervour which had helped me not a little in staying loyal to him in the darkest hours of my spiritual crises. In fact I took a genuine pride in asserting to my friends, with perfect truthfulness, that I revered him not less for his iconoclasm (by which I meant debunking of unillumined faith and dead ritualism which are so often mistaken by traditionalists as of the essence of religion) than for his deep reverence for the highest legacies and revelations of the past both

SAVITRI—Continued from previous page

I was born weak and small and ignorant,
A helpless creature in a difficult world,
Travelling through my brief years with death at my side:
I have grown greater than Nature, wiser than God.
I have made real what she never dreamed,
I have sized her powers and harnessed for my work,
I have shaped her metals and new metals made;
I will make glass and raiment out of milk,
Make iron velvet, water unbreakable stone,
Like God in his astuce of artist skill,
Mould from one primal plasm protean forms,
In single nature multitudinous lives,
All that imagination can conceive
In mind intangible, remould anew
In Matter's plastic solid and concrete;
No magic can surpass my magic's skill.
There is no miracle I shall not achieve.
What God imperfect left, I will complete,
Out of a tangled mind and half-made soul
His sin and error I will eliminate;

What he invented not, I shall invent:
He was the first creator, I am the last.
I have found the atoms from which he built the worlds:
The first tremendous cosmic energy
Missioned shall leap to slay my enemy kin,
Expunge a nation or abolish a race,
Death's silence leave where there was laughter and joy.
Or the fissured invisible shall spend God's force
To extend my comforts and expand my wealth,
To speed my car which now the lightnings drive
And turn the engines of my miracles.
I will take his means of sorcery from his hands
And do with them greater wonders than his best.
Yet through it all I have kept my balanced thought;
I have studied my being, I have examined the world,
I have grown a master of the arts of life.
I have tamed the wild beast trained to be my friend;
He guards my house, looks up waiting my will.
I have taught my kind to serve and to obey.
I have used the mystery of the cosmic waves

CAME TO ME

UMAR ROY

of the East and the West, which had caused him to prophesy: "All this points to a new, a very rich, a very vast synthesis; a fresh and widely embracing harmonisation of our gains is both an intellectual and a spiritual necessity of the future"* Also, had I not lectured often enough to large audiences that it was of the happiest augury that we lived under the aegis of two such rare spirits of the East and West who were out to show the way to the New Orientation, culminating in a new synthesis which alone could bring us effectively out of the global darkness? And, yet, alas! here was I stumbling grievously once again, a pitiful puppet in the hands of the hostile forces whose business it was to cajole us somehow out of the ambit of light back into the penumbra of ignorance. In other words, I tripped, not because I did not know but because I would not see. That is why, in the matter of sports, I could recant so unthinkingly all that I had sworn by in the past, and then—as one gathers momentum when one speeds downward—went on to complain to Gurudev against the Mother herself to whom I had owed so much all through and who had never been unkind to me—no, not once. But the most curious part of it was that, although all the while I was partly conscious of playing a kind of comedy, I felt like one who is suddenly half-obsessed and so has to say things of which he is secretly ashamed. Otherwise how could I have possibly gone on writing to Sri Aurobindo long letters against the Mother who was graciousness itself, accusing her of being a martinet and a disciplinarian, too Western in her outlook to be able to appreciate the millennial wisdom of India, when I knew that she loved India as she loved no other country in the world?

I had indeed complained against the Mother many a time in the past but I do not think that I had ever attacked her so bitterly and defiantly, tuning myself into a heroic pitch and flaunting a mood which nevertheless my heart suspected all the time as being a tragi-comedy. I say this now as I can see clearly and I have laboured to express my vision because I may, by confessing, help others to look at this new movement in the right perspective which is not always easy to achieve. That is why I am at such pains to bring out what many others felt *vis-à-vis* sports though few had the temerity to be so desperately vocal about it. It was at bottom an *imaginary* grievance against what I chose to call the Western brand of discipline, imaginary not only because Mother had made it clear from the very start that joining the sports was *not* compulsory but also because those who joined willingly were avowedly fond of the discipline to which they had voluntarily submitted. And yet I went on inveighing against the Western ways being planted into our spiritual soil, forgetting how often, in the past, I had extolled the Westerners' way of acting on life as against ours of meek fatalism, not to mention my advocacy of their rational scepticism as against our blind acceptance of unquestioning faith and indiscriminate credulity.

But, calm as ever, Sri Aurobindo went on pointing out to me the unconscious paralogsms as well as wilful sophisms I perpetrated. I cannot quote all that he wrote to me from day to day to lead me back to his light but a few excerpts from his letters I give here as much to testify to his humility as to bring home the vast catholicity of his spirit:

"I do not agree myself," he wrote to me in the course of a twelve page letter, "that there is perfect discipline in the Ashram; on the contrary there is a great lack of it, much indiscipline, quarrelling and self-assertion. What there is is organisation and order which the Mother has been able to establish and maintain in spite of it all. That organisation and order is necessary for all collective work; it has been an object of admiration and surprise for all from outside who have observed the Ashram; it is the reason why the

* "The Essays on the Gita," Chapter I.

Ashram has been able to survive and outlive malignant attacks of many people in Pondicherry who would otherwise have got it dissolved long ago. The Mother knew very well what she was doing and what was necessary for the work she has to do.

"Discipline itself is not something Western; in Oriental countries like Japan, China and India it was at one time all-regulating and supported by severe sanctions in a way that Westerners could not tolerate. Socially whatever objections we may make to it, it is a fact that it preserved Hindu religion and Hindu society through the ages and through all vicissitudes. In the political field there was on the contrary indiscipline, individualism and strife; that is one reason why India collapsed and entered into servitude. Organisation and order were attempted but failed to endure. Even in the spiritual life India has had not only the free wandering ascetic, a law to himself, but has felt impelled to create orders of sannyasins with their rules and governing bodies and there has also been monastic institutions with a strict discipline. Since no work can be done successfully without these things—even the individual worker, the artist for instance, has to go through a severe discipline in order to become efficient—why should the Mother be held to blame if she insists on discipline in the exceedingly difficult work she has put in her charge?

"I don't see on what ground you expect order and organisation to be carried on without rules and without discipline. You seem to say that people should be allowed complete freedom with only such discipline as they choose to impose upon themselves; that might do if the only thing to be done were for each individual to get some inner realisation and life did not matter or if there were no collective life or work or none that had any importance. But this is not the case here. We have undertaken a work which includes life and action and physical world. In what I am trying to do, the spiritual realisation is the first necessity, but it cannot be complete without an outer realisation also in life, in men in this world. Spiritual consciousness within but also spiritual life without. The Ashram as it is now is not that ideal, for that all the members have to live in a spiritual consciousness and not in the ordinary egoistic mind and mainly *rajasic* vital nature. But all the same the Ashram is a first form which our effort has taken, a field in which the preparatory work has to be done. The Mother has to maintain it and for that all this order as well as organisation has to be there and it cannot be done without rules and discipline. Discipline is even necessary for the overcoming of the ego and the mental preferences and the *rajasic* vital nature, as a help to it at any rate. If these were overcome, outward rules etc. would be less necessary; spontaneous agreement, unity, harmony and spontaneous right action might take their place—but while the present state of things exists, the abandonment or leaving out of discipline except such as people choose or not choose for themselves, can only result in failure and disaster."

All the same I went on finding new reasons for my dissatisfaction although Mother continued to be kind as ever, all the while knowing full well how I was misrepresenting her. She only said once that she would wait till I saw things in the right perspective. Sri Aurobindo, however, followed a different line: he went on answering my charges against the Mother's outlook point by point. Once he actually wrote in vindication of her tolerance:

"I do not find that Mother is a rigid disciplinarian. On the contrary, I have seen with what a constant leniency, tolerant patience and kindness she has met the huge mass of indiscipline, disobedience, self-assertion, revolt that has surrounded her, even revolt to her very face and violent letters overwhelming her with the worst kind of vituperation. A rigid disciplinarian would not have treated these things like that."

Dr. Johnson once roared: "Sir, there is no such thing as public worry—there is only private worry." I fear the remark conveys a larger measure of truth about human psychology. We may preach from the housetops about our being impelled to certain actions from abstract reasons but it is very often, if not always, some half-avowed or unavowed private cause or motive from which such reasons derive. In my own case as in that of many

SAVITRI—Continued from opposite page

To see far distance and to hear far words:
I have conquered Space and knitted close all earth:
Soon I shall know the secrets of the Mind:
And sin and virtue my inventions are,
I play with knowledge and with ignorance
And sin and virtue my inventions are,
I can transcend or sovereignly use.
I shall know mystic truths, seize occult powers.
I shall slay my enemies with a look or thought,
I shall sense the unspoken feelings of all hearts
And see and hear the hidden thoughts of men.
When earth is mastered, I shall conquer heaven;
The gods shall be my aids or menial folk,
No wish I harbour unfulfilled shall die:
Omnipotence and omniscience shall be mine."
And Savitri heard the voice, the warped echo heard
And turning to her being of power she spoke:
"Madonna of might, Mother of works and force,
Thou art a portion of my soul put forth
To help mankind and help the travail of Time.

Because thou art in him, man hopes and dares;
Because thou art, men's souls can climb the heavens
And walk like Gods in the presence of the Supreme.
But without wisdom power is like a wind,
It can breathe upon the heights and kiss the sky,
It cannot build the extreme eternal things.
Thou hast given men strength, wisdom thou couldst not give.
One day I will return, a bringer of light,
Then I will give to thee the mirror of God;
Thou shalt see self and world as by him they are seen
Reflected in the bright pool of thy soul.
Thy wisdom shall be vast as vast thy power.
Then hate shall dwell no more in human hearts,
And fear and weakness shall desert men's lives,
The cry of the ego shall be hushed within,
Its lion roar that claims the world as food,
All shall be might and bliss and happy force."

To be continued

SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME

—Continued from page 7

others—for the sports were condemned by many of us, of whom I had become a self-chosen spokesman—the reason for our unsportsmanlike attitude towards sports lay in a very private grievance. (Of course we kept it in deep purdah while flourishing the impersonal reasons as the ostensible causes of our antagonism but the Mother knew it and had perforce to pass it by.) This reason so far as it applied to my own case, was that I feared that her increase of interest in children and sportsmen was going to result definitely in a corresponding decrease of interest in those who were neither children nor sportsmen. Not that we felt this only now for the first time. No. It had begun to burrow more and more in our disgruntled selves in proportion as the Ashram members increased. Even before the advent of sports Mother had to curtail her interviews with her disciples as well as the visitors who came. Personally, I did not mind that so much as Sri Aurobindo went on writing to me even after he had stopped writing to most others, so that my personal importance had never been in jeopardy. But with the advent of sports the perspective underwent a further change in that I knew very well that here I would not be able to make my mark, far less compete with the “youngsters” as I called them. So I had to accept to be left out in the cold, and as it felt rather freezing there—the Mother being the life and soul of the Ashram—I cast about for a way to get in edgeways to bask in the light of her approval. But to have to toe the line with the others as one of them—was to bow to mediocrity the very thought of which made my fat self-love bleed. I actually saw my self-complacency gored all over, but I made as if it was something else that made me so frantic with pain: the impersonal reasons about the non-seriousness of sports. I knew that the remedy was to eat humble pie but how could I do that without some “intellectual” (?) bickerings? There were probably a few honest misgivings too that contributed to my unhappiness but these could not possibly have acquired the vitality necessary to the longevity of the dream which I hankered for half-consciously. I am perfectly certain that both Mother and Sri Aurobindo knew full well how I was rationalising my antipathy to sports into a sombre all-work-no-play philosophy, a philosophy which was, in the last analysis, utterly against my grain. But in such matters they always pressed the buttons in their invisible control-rooms and seldom showed their hand till at least we grew somewhat receptive to their vision and purpose. Consequently they had to wait for the time being, doing what they could in their compassion to make the sufferings of our egos a little less hard to bear. At all events that was how I myself was treated—for I went on receiving Sri Aurobindo’s answers to my intermittent questions about the sports. Once for instance I even accused him of his preoccupation with sports. I need not here frame all my charges, for these will be easily inferred from his first letters on sports which I am now going to quote to some length.

“Certainly Mother does not want only sportsmen in the Ashram: that would make it not an Ashram but a playground. The sports and physical exercises are primarily for the children of the school and they also do not play but have to attend to their studies as well. Incidentally, they have improved immensely in health and in discipline and conduct as one very valuable result. Secondly, the younger *sadhakas* are allowed, not enjoined or even recommended, to join in these sports, but certainly they are not supposed to be sportsmen only: they have other and more important things to do. To be a sportsman must necessarily be a voluntary choice and depends on having the taste and inclination. There are plenty of people around the Mother herself—Amrita, for instance—who would never dream of frequenting the playground or engaging in sports and the Mother also would never think of asking him to do so. So equally, she could not think of being displeased with you for shunning these delights. Some, of course, might ask why any sports at all in an Ashram which ought to be concerned only with meditation and inner experiences and the escape from life into the Brahman. But that applies only to the ordinary kind of Ashram to which we have got accustomed and this is not that orthodox kind of Ashram. It includes life in Yoga, and once we admit life we can introduce anything that we find useful for life’s ultimate and immediate purpose and not inconsistent with the works of the Spirit. After all, the orthodox Ashram came into being only after Brahman began to shun all connection with the world and the shadow of Buddhism stalked over all the land and the Ashrams turned into monasteries. The old Ashrams were not entirely like that; the boys and young men who were brought up in them were trained in many things belonging to life; the son of Pururavas and Urvasi practised archery in the Ashram of a Rishi and became an expert bowman and Karna became the disciple of a great sage in order to acquire from him the use of powerful weapons. So there is no *a priori* ground why sports should be excluded from the life of an Ashram like ours when we are trying to equate life with the Spirit. Even table-tennis and football need not be rigorously excluded. But putting all persiflage aside, my point is that to play or not to play is a matter of choice and inclination and it would be absurd for the Mother to be displeased with you any more than with Amrita for not caring to be a sportsman. So you need not have any apprehension on this score; that the Mother should be displeased with you for that is quite impossible. So the idea that she wished to draw away from you for anything done or not done was a misinterpretation without any real foundation since you have given no ground for it and there was nothing farther from her mind. She has herself explained that it was just the contrary that has been in her

mind for some time past and it was an increasing kindness that was her feeling and intention. The only change she could expect from you was to grow in your psychic and spiritual endeavour and inner progress and in this you have not failed—quite the contrary. Apart from that, the notion that she could be displeased because you did not change according to this or that pattern is a wild idea; it would be most arbitrary and unreasonable.

“As for my going far away, your feeling is based on my slackness in giving answers to your letters, but this slackness had no such cause. My love and affection have remained always the same and it is regrettable if, by my slackness in answering your letters, I have produced the impression that I was moving farther and farther away from you. I think your recent letters have been mostly about persons recommended for *darshan* or applying for it or for accomodation, things which have to be settled by the Mother, and these were naturally most conveniently conveyed to you through Nirod’s oral answers. I suppose I must have unduly extended that method of answer to other matters. I must admit that for many reasons the impulse of letter-writing and literary productivity, generally, have dwindled in me almost to zero and that must have been the real cause of my slackness. Even *Savitri* is going slow, confined mainly to revision of what has already been written, and I am as yet unable to take up the completion of Parts II and III which are not finally revised and for which a considerable amount of new matter has to be written. It is no use going into all the thousand and one reasons for this state of things for that would explain and not justify the slackness. I know very well how much you depend on my writing in answer to your letters as the one physical contact left which helps you and I shall try in future to meet the need by writing as often as possible.”

This letter written in July, 1948 would have been of immense help to me if I had been in a mood to avail myself of its directive then and there. But as I was in no such mood I was only appeased for the time being without being aroused to correct my wrong view of it all. In Yoga, as I knew to my bitter cost, this constantly happens: taking up a wrong attitude in this arduous path of self-transformation entails consequences which grow, and become, with the passage of time, more and more difficult to liquidate. That is why they always advised me to nip the noxious sapling in the bud. But I had already let it grow into a veritable philosophical tree with all my reasonings in flower and, what was more serious still, had committed myself to champion a few others who were equally disgruntled. These had, in their turn, learned to look upon me as their spokesman and I saw that I could not very well withdraw all on a sudden and leave them in the lurch any more than I could forfeit the title to being their self-imposed advocate. I was uneasy about it, naturally, because in my heart of hearts I knew how foolish it was in the last resort, since I had come to the Ashram not to give a rational lead to this or that group but to follow in the footsteps of the Guru in genuine humility. This I did realise even when I was busy swelling the chorus of the opposition of those who had shoved me into the foreground. But to know something is not always to feel like profiting by the knowledge. The Old Adam in each of us does not let go of his hold without a bitter struggle. So I struggled on till I came to the last phase which for exigencies of space I shall describe as briefly as I can.

It so happened that labouring as I was under my fancied grievance, aggravated by a will to cling to my declared stand, I chose to forget this all-too-patent fact, which Vivekananda used to deplore so constantly and witheringly, that we, Indians, had not only grown exceedingly *tamasic* but too apt to take our *tamas* for *sattwa**. Nevertheless I could not help noting, not without amusement, that those of us who condemned the sports as too *rajasic* had never wanted to meditate with any perseverance when Mother used to hold daily collective meditation in the Ashram. Many used to be either in a fidget or feel drowsy, and some actually went off to sleep happily snoring if and when Mother happened to stay in *samadhi* for even twenty or thirty minutes, as often happened with her in her meditative moods. Not for nothing had Vivekananda said scathingly: “These *tamasic* people will pass their lives in wrong actions or sloth and then run helplessly to the Yogis in the expectation that these will redeem their misery with miracles of Yoga. They will persevere in nothing... nor undertake any serious *sadhana*. My campaign is against such miracle-mongering pseudo-spirituality.” I knew that in this Mother and Sri Aurobindo had been at one all along with the great Vedantin, having always been against our temperamental penchant for lolling in vital lethargy and mental somnolence masquerading as *sattwic* meditative spirituality. In point of fact this was one of the reasons why they held works undertaken in the right attitude as of the essence of Integral Yoga. Besides, without works not only must our nature remain untransformed, but no real acceptance of life can follow. And since sports came their way and helped us grow out of our lacklustre sloth, they decided to utilize them, as Mother wanted to show us how. Not that this was the whole story about the sports. By no means. For it was only too obvious that she could not possibly have changed overnight and taken to sports for sports’ sake: she was carrying on a new and an important experiment but though this was not altogether a mere conjecture on my part I would prefer not to speculate about it. Those who would have more light on this subject may con Sri Aurobindo’s two articles entitled “Perfection of the

* Roughly, *Tamas*—lethargy; *Sattwa*—qualities that make for serenity, light, peace; *Rajas*—energy, activity.

SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME —Continued from page 8

Body" and "Divine Body" in the second and third issues of the *Bulletin* in 1949, in which they will find, among other things, that to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo this body is not a mere conglomeration of irredeemable matter which serves only as a pitiful cage of the immortal soul, but a veritable "temple of the Divine". My mistake had been to equate their approval of the body with that of the West. For although they had all along aimed at complete harmony, a rich synthesis of cultures welded by the light of the spirit, they had never swerved an inch from the spiritual outlook which posits that mind, life and body must at every step canalise the Divine Purpose through the dynamis of the Spirit. "From within without" was Gurudev's mantra as he had once written to me in a letter. Thus to him body was valuable not for its own sake but because, to quote from his second message, "even it could become a revealing vessel of supreme beauty and bliss,—casting the beauty of the light of the spirit suffusing and radiating from it as a lamp reflects and diffuses the luminosity of its indwelling flame, carrying in itself the beatitude of the spirit, its joy of the seeing mind, its joy and life of spiritual happiness, the joy of Matter released into a spiritual consciousness and thrilled with a constant ecstasy." That was his vision of the place and function of the perfect body in a full and rich life guided by the spirit and surrendered to the Divine who informs that deep Resident in a mass of seemingly inert matter. For nothing less would have made him write in his message on the Perfection of the Body: "If our seeking is for a total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside, for the body is the material basis... *Shariram khalu dharmasadhanam*... the means of fulfilment of dharma, and dharma means every ideal which we propose to ourselves and the law of its working out and its action."

But though all this was not by any means unknown to me I stumbled grievously, I repeat, because of my attachment to a false pride and reluctance to reprimand my self-love. Otherwise, I claim, I would not have cut such a sorry figure at this late day—after having gone through so much all these years: and foolish, to boot, in that when I indicted so eloquently the boisterous lightheartedness imported by "a thoughtless crew of children and youngsters who were fit for nothing better than fun and frolics" I simply forgot how, in the good old days, I had protested as loudly against the sombre and laughter-killing atmosphere of the Ashram! Isn't the human mind too clever by half in wanting to direct the identical arguments to support diametrically opposite inferences?

But to think that I could have actually framed a charge against Gurudev himself who never stirred out of his flat for over twenty years! In reply he wrote a fairly long letter again on sports in which after assuring me once more that Mother did not "want anybody to take up sports" if he had "no inclination or natural bent for them" he added (4-3-49):

"I do not understand what you mean by my giving my time to sports! I am not giving any time to it except that, at the Mother's request, I have written an article for the first number of the *Bulletin* and another for the forthcoming number. It is the Mother who is doing all the rest of the work for the organization of the sports and that she must do, obviously, till it is sufficiently organised to go on of itself with only a general supervision from above and her actual presence once a day. I put out my force to support her as in all the other work of the Ashram, but otherwise I am not giving any of my time to sports. As to my silence, I do not think I have neglected anything you have asked for whenever you have written. Perhaps you mean your report of the interview you had with me which you want to publish in America? But this I have to consider carefully as to what parts can be published.* Of late I have been very much under pressure of work for the press which needed immediate attention and could not be postponed, mostly correction of manuscripts and proofs; but I hope to make an arrangement which will rid me of most of this tedious and uninteresting work so that I can turn my time to better purposes. I am conscious all the same that my remissness in writing has been excessive and that you have a just cause for your complaint; but I hope to remedy this remissness in future as it is not at all due to my indifference but to a visitation of indolence of the creative will which has extended even to the completion of the unfinished parts of *Savitri*. I hope soon to get rid of this inability, complete *Savitri* and satisfy your just demand for more alertness in my correspondence with you."

This letter startled me once more back into good sense, the more because I was unspeakably moved by his humility—which was borne home to me so vividly because of my signal lack of it—and was besides, stung by remorse that I should have presumed so much upon his tolerance of one so importunate as myself. I penned a letter asking him not to trouble to write to me when he was so busy and assured him that I would behave myself better in future. But alas, I could not keep my word: the loose talk of some enthusiastic sportsmen upset me directly afterwards and I had to seek clarification once again. For the idea was abroad that the Supramental Yoga had taken a new orientation and therefore could no longer be practised by anyone who did not join at once in the Ashram drill and sports. So I asked him anxiously if there was any truth in the contention of these alarmist reporters.

If I had stopped there I might have defended myself somehow. But once again, as I wrote away impulsively, my old pent grievance got the bet-

ter of me and I asked him whether Mother intended to coerce all of us into sports by encouraging such wild gossip. "For," I declaimed, "anything smelling of coercion is anathema to me and what they contend is that Mother may not actually 'command' anyone to join the sports but has her inscrutable ways and knows how to make dissidence toe the line. But I do not imagine," I railed, "that she would have to be so inscrutable as all that to achieve her end since she can so easily adopt a much simpler method—just refuse to smile on those who dislike sports. It has been effective enough in the past and I do not see how it can possibly be less so in the future. Only, Guru, it reminds me of what you once said, remember, when somebody enthused over Gandhiji's mantra of non-violence and dislike of coercion. You remarked: 'But can there possibly be a more effective way of coercing those who love you than to say that you will fast unto death unless and until they do what you believe to be right?' Now tell me, if Mother starts now by withholding her smile from those who are averse to sports, won't it amount to a similar coercion? I hope, however, that the croakers are wrong. But if so, will you kindly assure me in unambiguous terms that such statements are mischievous rumours? It is high time too that you complied, for you know human nature too well to deny that an allegation, however silly and incredible, is quickly accepted as gospel truth by the multitude if and when it is echoed often enough and categorically, enough in chorus. And shall I tell you something more? You, yourself, Guru, by writing about the Divine Body in the second issue of the *Bulletin* have definitely lent weight to such airy fantasies. For many have been asseverating of late that this Divine Body can be manufactured only in the foundry of collective drill and sports and athletics. I feel scared. What are things coming to?"

To that he wrote back once more in his unruffled vein, dealing with the counts of the indictment one by one in due sequence.

"Much less than half the Ashram, the majority of them boys and girls and children, have taken up sports; the rest have not been pressed to do so and there is no earthly reason why any pressure should be put upon you. The Mother has never intended to put any such pressure on you and if anybody has said that, there is no foundation whatever for what they have told you.

"It is also not a fact that either the Mother or I are turning away from yoga and intend to interest ourselves only in sport; we have no intention whatever of altering the fundamental character of the Ashram and replacing it by a sportive association. If we did that it would be a most idiotic act and if anybody should have told you anything like that, he must be off his head or in a temporary crisis or delirious enthusiasm or obsessed by a very upside-down idea. The Mother told you very clearly once through Nirod that what was being done in the playground was not meditation for yoga but only an ordinary concentration for the physical exercises alone. If she is busy with the organisation of these things—and it is not true that she is busy with that alone—it is in order to get finished with that as soon as possible after which it will go on of itself without her being at all engrossed or specially occupied by it, as is the case with other works of the Ashram. As for myself, it is surely absurd to think that I am neglecting my yoga and interested only in running, jumping and marching! There seems to have been strange misunderstandings about my second message in the *Bulletin*. In the first, I wrote about sports and their utility just as I have written on politics or social development or any other matter. In the second, I took up the question, incidentally, because people were expressing ignorance as to why the Ashram should concern itself with sports at all. I explained why it had been done and dealt with the more general question of how this and other human activities could be part of a search for a total perfection of all parts of the being including the body and what would be the nature of the perfection of the body. I indicated clearly that only by yoga could there come a supreme and total perfection of all the instruments of the spirit and the ascent of the whole being to the highest level and a divine life on earth and the assumption of a divine body. I made it clear that by human and physical means such as sports only a limited and precarious human perfection could come. In all this there is nothing to justify the idea that sports could be a means of jumping on the Supermind or that the Supermind was going to descend into the playground and nowhere else and only those who are there will receive it; that would be a bad look-out for me as I would have no chance!

"I write all this in the hope of clearing away all the strange misconceptions with which the air seems to have become thick and by some of which you may have been affected. I wish to assure you that my love and affection and the Mother's love and affection are constantly with you. We have nothing for you but love and affection and a full appreciation of all you have done for us, your work, your service, your labour to make people over there appreciate our Ashram and what it stands for and to turn men's minds favourably towards us and what we are trying to do. As for me, you should realise that the will to help you towards divine realisation is one of the things that has been constantly nearest to my heart and will always be there.

"This is not the letter I intended to write which must wait. It is not possible for me to write a whole answer now since it is already one o'clock, and I shall continue it tonight."

This did something to assuage my fears, but I wanted to press my advantage and be reassured still more.

To be continued

* He later gave me the necessary permission and so that interview, revised by him, was published in full in the American edition of my "Among the Great" (pp. 331-359).

THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

By RISHABHCHAND

THE TRIPLE AIM

The Conception of the Infinite and Eternal

Union with the Infinite and Eternal can be said to be the aim of all Yogas. But this is a general description which easily lends itself to various interpretations. The aim of the Sankhyayoga is the release of the immaculate Purusha from his false self-identification with the mechanical workings of Nature into the immobile peace and silence of his unfettered self-existence. Jnanayoga aims at a union with the Infinite and Eternal in its ineffable transcendence; Bhaktiyoga with the infinite and eternal Lord of Love and Bliss and Beauty; and Tantra, first with the infinite and eternal Mother of the universe as the supreme Shakti, and, as the culminating movement of its Yoga, the infinite and eternal Brahman beyond all names and forms. The difference in the conception of the Infinite and Eternal determines the difference in the conception of the methods of Yoga and their practice.

The one distinctive feature of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo is that its conception of the Infinite and Eternal is different from that of all the schools of Yoga in India, except of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita. The Infinite and Eternal to whom it claims to lead is the One without a second, the omnipresent Reality, the immanent and transcendent Purusha, who is every being, every thing, every happening, the Creator and Master of the whole universe, which is His phenomenal self-extension in Himself, and at the same time the inconceivable, unutterable, supracosmic Absolute. The organic unity of all these aspects and states of being constitutes the Purusha or Deva of the Vedas or the Purushottama of the Gita. This integrality of its conception of the infinite and eternal Brahman makes the philosophy of the Integral Yoga the most rational, perfect and comprehensive monism ever formulated by spiritual experience. Here there is no Maya or Karma or Satan to cut across or cast a shadow on the all-constituting and all-exceeding unity of Brahman. All is Brahman, the mutable as well as the Immutable, the finite as well as the Infinite, the many as well as the One.

"The Purusha has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet; encompassing the earth on all sides, He stands ten fingers' width above."
(*Shvetāshvatara*: 3, 14.)

"Divine, formless is the Purusha, He is without and He is within, unborn, breathless, mindless and luminously pure, He is higher than the highest Immutable.

"And of Him is born life and the mind and all the organs of sense, and of Him are Ether and Air and Light and Water and Earth that holdeth all."
(*Mundaka*: 2, 1.)

The Supreme Truth-Consciousness or Supermind

This all-embracing monism being the philosophical foundation of the Integral Yoga, the means and method of its practice and the way of its attainment must necessarily be comprehensive and all-inclusive, a synthetic and unifying movement progressing through the complexity of the human being towards the integral divine fulfilment. But what is the nature of this unifying movement of progress, and what is that plane of consciousness on which the final reconciliation between the One and the many, between Time and Eternity, silence and activity and Spirit and Matter can be effected? We are awake on the physical, vital and mental planes of consciousness, all of them planes of the separative ignorance, which makes us see and feel things, not in their essential unity, but as distinct units and divided fragments. This is a false seeing and a false feeling. We do not see the truth, because we do not see the whole, of things. The discords of the surface elements disturb or depress us, because we do not perceive the underlying harmony. And when we travel beyond the triple separative consciousness, we enter by trance into a state of absorbed immersion in the unconditioned Infinite, which excludes all awareness of the normal waking state and its movements. Both of these states are mutually exclusive, the *Kshara* and the *Akshara*, and a simultaneous possession of them has been held to be extremely difficult, if not impossible. But if God possesses them together in Himself, it stands to reason that a perfect union with Him must naturally make us participate in that simultaneous possession. What is the secret of God's possession of both?

The supreme Divine includes and transcends the *Kshara* and the *Akshara* at the same time, because He is greater than the universe of His own creation and "higher than the highest Immutable". He takes His stand upon the plane of the Truth-Consciousness, the *Rita-Chit* of the Vedic description, the plane of the Truth, the Right and the Vast, which is the

eternal home of unity and harmony. Basing this plane of the creative Truth-consciousness is His own being of Sat, Chit and Ananda, which is the ultimate definition of the utter and absolute Ineffable. Below are the worlds of His becoming, of flux and formation and manifold self-expression. It is this plane of the all-creating and all-governing Truth-consciousness, called the Supermind by Sri Aurobindo, that is the secret of the fusion and unity of all the aspects and attributes of Brahman and the final harmonisation of all universal opposites. It alone permits of a full realisation of the *Chatushpada* or integral Brahman without causing any exclusiveness of concentration on the part of our being or an abeyance of any layer of its consciousness or movement of its force. This all-comprehending Supermind is the principal target of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

The Ascent to the Supermind—The First Aim

The foremost aim of the Integral Yoga being the Supermind, it cannot rest satisfied with any realisation short of the very highest and widest which the Supermind alone can give. It accepts and profits by all important wayside experiences: the Sankhya experience of detached freedom, the silence of the Nirvana of Buddhism, the unfathomable peace of the immanent Immutable or the thrilled power of the universal Divine; but it proceeds beyond all these to the great goal of its difficult endeavour—the solar illumination and all-harmonising unity of the creative Supermind. It is not by trance or an exclusive awakening in the depths or on the heights of the being accompanied by a partial or complete sleep of the surface parts and a temporary suspension of their natural movements, that it ascends towards its goal; its process is rather one of inclusion and synthesis, and a raising of the integrated being of man into the glories of the Supermind. It insists on an increasing expansion of the human consciousness and its ascent beyond the mind, beyond even the spiritual ranges of the mind, to that plane where Sachchidananda stands as at once the transcendent Absolute and the timeless Creator of the universe. This ascent is a superhuman labour, impossible of achievement except by the Grace of the Divine, inasmuch as it involves an opening of the higher layers of our being and an awakening into all the states and ranges of our consciousness in which we are at present fast asleep. According to ancient knowledge the individual soul lives simultaneously in five sheaths or *koshas*, but in most human beings, it is awake only in the three lower sheaths—the material or the food sheath, the vital sheath and the mental; it has to awake in the supramental or Vijnana sheath and the sheath of Bliss (*Anandamaya Kosha*). This awakening, unaccompanied by any ataxy or catalepsy in any part of the lower being, is what is known as ascent in the Integral Yoga. Sri Aurobindo says that as man has risen from the life-mind of the animal, wrapped up in the chaotic cravings and appetites of the lower nature, into the comparative clarity and control of the mind of reason and reflection, so one day, by the force of the evolutionary *elan* of his soul, he will rise to the Truth-conscious Supermind and live in its all-revealing Light. It is not stray sallies into the Spirit-skies that are meant by the term "ascent" in its widest sense in the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. By ascent is meant, first, a climb to a higher plane of consciousness and then a more or less secure establishment in its characteristic principle and power. Every such ascent gives a new poise to the being and, opening up sealed horizons of vision, imparts a new rhythm to its movements. But the culminating evolutionary ascent is that to the Supermind in which the human consciousness undergoes a complete reversal and an unprecedented transformation. Instead of the mental ignorance, a plenary knowledge; instead of division, a perfect, manifold unity; instead of discord, an unassailable harmony, and instead of the besetting limitations of the human existence, an unwallled infinity, are the basis of the life in the Supermind. All that the human soul yearns for, all that the human nature is meant to incarnate and reveal and all that is the ultimate sense and destiny of the human birth are found in the *Ritam Jyotih* of the Supermind. If an ascent to a higher consciousness is a new birth, an ascent to the supramental consciousness is a birth into the Super-nature, *Para Prakriti*.

The ascent has two stages, initial and final. At the initial stage, the most developed part of the consciousness of the Yogi rises to the Higher Mind, which is "a luminous thought-mind, a mind of Spirit-born conceptual knowledge." "An all-awareness emerging from the original identity, carrying the truths the identity held in itself, conceiving swiftly, victoriously, multitudinously, formulating and by self-power of the Idea effectually realising its conceptions, is the character of this greater mind of knowledge."* From the Higher Mind it rises to the Illumined Mind, which is a mind not of Truth-thought, but of Truth-vision. "Here the clarity of the spiritual intelligence, its tranquil day-light, gives place or subordinates itself to an intense lustre, a splendour and illumination of the Spirit."**

* "The Life Divine" by Sri Aurobindo.

THE TRIPLE AIM

Continued from page 10

From the Illumined Mind it climbs to the Intuition, which is a "power of consciousness nearer and more intimate to the original knowledge by identity."* Its perception is "more than sight, more than conception: it is the result of a penetrating and revealing touch which carries in it sight and conception as part of itself or as its natural consequence."* The next step of the ascent takes the consciousness to the Overmind, which is "a principle of global knowledge." In it "intuition, illumined sight and thought enlarge themselves; their substance assumes a greater substantiality, mass, energy, their movement is more comprehensive, global, many-faceted, more wide and potent in its truth-force: the whole nature, knowledge, aesthesis, sympathy, feeling, dynamism become more catholic, all-understanding, all-embracing, cosmic, infinite."* This is the highest that the human consciousness can achieve, sustained and aided by the divine Force; but the next step beyond, the crucial step into the Truth, the Right, the Vast (*Satyam, Ritam, Brihat*) can only be a gift of the divine Grace, a crowning boon and blessing of the supreme Mother, and never an achievement of the will and force of man. The ascent to the Supermind is an ascent to the eternal home of the supernal Light and Force, the all-compromising and all-controlling status of Sachchidananda, the sun-realm of Purushottama.

This initial ascent is answered at every step by a descent of the characteristic power of the plane attained, which performs a dual work of liberation by purification and transformation on the one hand, and integration and sublimation on the other. The liberation meant here is not only the liberation of the soul, but also of the whole nature in all its parts. But it is only a partial and preliminary work of liberation and transformation that can be done by this initial ascent.

The final ascent implies an irrevocable transformation, integration and sublimation of the whole being of man, consequent upon a series of initial ascents and descents. It consummates the establishment of the entire consciousness of man upon the infinite pedestal of the Knowledge-Will of the Divine. It unites the human consciousness with the divine consciousness in a permanent, integral and dynamic identification. On the sun-bathed heights of the Supermind, the Yogi enjoys at once the invariable bliss of the transcendent Sachchidananda and the variable, multifarious delight of the cosmic existence. He walks in the steps of the supreme Truth and works by the Will of the supreme Force, and wears his humanity as a transparent vesture of the unveiled Divine.

This ascent to the Supermind or the Vijnana was attempted individually by some of the Vedic Rishis, but there is no record of a collective endeavour for such an ascent; nor was any systematic descent of the Supermind for the transformation of the earth-consciousness envisaged in their aim. But the most outstanding feature of the aim of the Integral Yoga is that it seeks to raise the collective human consciousness into the divine consciousness of the Supermind and bring the Light and Force of the latter for the transformation and divinisation of the whole nature of man, including even his surface physical nature and its movements. We shall consider the conditions of this ascent and its implications and results when we come to dwell upon the details of the Integral Yoga.

The Descent of the Supermind—The Second Aim

We have seen that the ascent to the Supermind has to be achieved by a progressive heightening and expansion of our being and its manifold consciousness, and not by the traditional method of trance. The difficulty of this kind of waking ascent loomed so large before some of the Upanishadic Rishis that they declared that one could not pass through the gates of the sun (meaning the Supermind or the supreme Gnosis) and yet retain the human body. But Sri Aurobindo asserts that all that is involved here in the Inconscience must necessarily evolve. As Matter, Life and Mind have evolved, so in due and inevitable course, the Supermind too must evolve and become the foundation and governing principle of the human consciousness. We shall live in the supramental consciousness and work with the supramental force, even as we live in the mental consciousness and work with the mental force. The revolutionary nature of the transition from the mind to the Supermind need not paralyse our aspiration with doubt or distrust, for the transitions from stones or minerals to plants and from plants to animals and from animals to our present humanity have not been any the less revolutionary.

But an ascent to the Supermind, however great an achievement it may be, cannot be the end of evolution, which is not only an emergence for ascension, but an emergence for manifestation. If the Superconscient has descended here and masked itself as the Inconscient, if the soul has come down into birth and assumed the nature of ignorance and limitation, it is only to bring down and reveal, in the triple term of the human consciousness, the infinite splendour of the Supreme. Here below the splendour is

evolving, there above it is ever unveiled; the evolutionary urge from below is aided and accelerated, first by an intermittent and indirect influence of the splendour above, and next by its direct and transforming descent below. The descent is an invasion of the finite by the Infinite, of the Ignorance by Knowledge and of darkness and death by Light and Immortality.

The descent of the Supermind into the human mind will transform the latter from a groping and stumbling seeker of knowledge into a crystalline channel of the divine Knowledge. Not by strenuous reasoning on the misleading data of the senses and the dubious output of imagination and inference, but by a direct intuitive vision and an intimate identity will the transformed mind know the truth and order its faculties in accordance with its rhythm. Its thoughts will be truth-thoughts, its ideas will be shining formations of truth, its discrimination an assured perception of the distinctions of things whose diversity is but a prismatic presentation of the essential unity and its imagination a true imaging of the various aspects of truth.

The descent of the Supermind into the human heart will transform all emotions into gleaming waves of bliss and all feelings into feelings of love and devotion for the Divine in all beings and all things. The relations of life will not be abolished, but become widened and illumined figures of our infinite relations with the Divine, the diverse ways of our meeting and embracing Him.

Similarly the descent of the Supermind into the human life will liberate it from all desire and craving and convert it into an instrument of unlimited force and enjoyment. Unhungering and unattached to anything, it will enjoy the delight of all its movements and all their results. And all its movements will be the unflinching movements of the divine Will fulfilling itself in the terms of human life.

The body too, transformed by the supramental force, will be released for ever from the obscure hold of the Subconscient and the Inconscient, and, based on Light, filled with Light and moved by Light, become a flexible means of divine action.

Manifestation of God in Matter—The Third Aim

The ascent to the Supermind and the descent of the Supermind lead inevitably to the third aim of the Integral Yoga—the full and unblemished manifestation of the Divine. Though we have called it the third aim, it is, in fact, the sole aim; but because by manifestation we mean the supramental manifestation and no other, we think we are justified in calling the ascent to the Supermind and the descent of the Supermind the first and the second aims respectively. But the three together in an indissoluble unity form the great aim of the Integral Yoga. Manifestation or the divine self-revelation is the key to the riddle of the world. A progressive manifestation starting from the creation of dumb Matter and culminating in a perfect Epiphany in man is the ultimate sense and significance of terrestrial existence. The soul's wandering from birth to birth and assumption of form after form is a long and complex preparation of its instrumental nature for the perfect manifestation of the Divine. Creation can have no other purpose, the aeonic travail of Nature can have no other goal. Delight? But it must be the varied delight of a harmonious self-expression, not the chaotic joy of an aimless drift. Knowledge? But it must be the all-seeing and all-revealing Knowledge which guides with its impeccable Will of Force the developing harmonies of the worlds. This supreme delight and this supreme Knowledge-Will, creative and consummative of the universal movements, are found only in the *Vijnana* or the Supermind, which is the eternal abode of the essential unity of existence embracing and deploying its eternal multiplicity. Therefore the supramental manifestation is the crown of terrestrial evolution and it is this that is the definite aim of the Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. The Creator self-revealed in His supernal splendour in transformed and perfected human individualities, is the formula of the supramental manifestation.

The foregoing elaboration of the triple aim must have made it clear that it is not any kind of contact or union with the Divine that is regarded by Sri Aurobindo as the ultimate objective of his Integral Yoga. He does not think that the realisation of the immobile, impersonal Brahman is the highest realisation. This impersonal Brahman is at once immanent and transcendent, and can be realised as either, separately or both together; but the highest and widest realisation, what Sri Aurobindo calls integral, is that of the supreme Purusha who unifies in Himself all poises and aspects of His ineffable existence and is higher than the Immutable, *Aksharā-dapichottamah*. A union with the integral Brahman or Purushottama is possible only on the supramental plane and can be made a constant experience of the whole human being by its integral supramental conversion; and this integral union is the secret of the perfect manifestation of the Divine in Matter. A definite integral aim and a definite integral path are offered to man for the fulfilment of his divine destiny upon earth.

* "The Life Divine" by Sri Aurobindo.

Be Mute...

Be mute, O heart,
Till thick dark o'er the limbs and lips
Seals the white skin impassioned whips
Have cut apart.

Before your word
May meet the winds and waters, come
To silent places where all dumb
Lone things are heard.

Let no tear flow:
Why should you try so very hard
To search and see if night is starred,
Or suffer so?

Lest you should tell
Your pain in tears or vacant eyes,
Take care, before the moon arise,
To cloak them well.

If aught reveal
In you the hatred and the sting,
Go down the dark, discovering
The pools which heal.

TEHMI

The Shadow on the Sunless Surf

You came,
A tongue of flame
From the heart of time...

And then I saw myself, and you were gone.

Years later in an omnibus
Beyond the dead, and altogether dubious
Dumb play I saw your smile: I knew your Face...

But when I called to you, O You were gone.

Since then along the moan
Of winter winds,
Across far fallow sun-struck sands
I've sown
My deep lament — flung "Love! O when? O when...?"

Or will you never never come again?"

Last night in some strange eagle-veering lift
And heightened stop, some steep and open shaft
To Time, of words now hopelessly bereft
Nude need and ache and the emptied query turned,
Through enigmatic Silence slowly burned:

When the shadow on the sunless surf is gone.

ELEANOR MONTGOMERY

BOOKS in the BALANCE

THIS EUROPE

By Girija Mookerjee

Published by Saraswati Library, College Street Market, Calcutta. Pp. 215. Rs. 7 or 10s. 6d.

There have been several books written on Europe during the war, but there is none that has recorded the trials of the period so clearly and frankly as Dr. Girija Mookerji's *This Europe* which is the first book of its kind to be written by an Indian. He experienced the tragedy of devastated Europe from the first "signs" of war to the termination of peace. Living as he did in comfort and peace in France, it broke his heart as well as the heart of the Parisians, to see values being destroyed overnight and clear roads being the haunt of the enemy whom they neither knew nor understood, but from whom they were fleeing because dreadful stories were told. Stark terror reflected itself on the faces of the young and the old and railway stations were crowded with people who knew not where they were going but who wanted to move somewhere rather than be bombed. An old woman takes another old woman in a pram and gives her a running commentary on the war situation. Paris, the hub of life, is desolate... The author goes with some friends, taking with him his rucksack and leaves behind his typewriter. Journalists are held suspect and the author burns his identity card and feels safe, but not for long. He has to experience the trials of a concentration camp in France, and is lucky enough to be under people not quite ruthless. The news of Subhas Bose trying to redeem India from foreign rule was heartening and we get an insight into the character and personality of the man and patriot in the chapter entitled "Subhas Bose"—an insight which, we must say, is not complete, for we are not made to see the twist in idealism, by which British Imperialism was put on a par with or even below the Nazi mind in international matters. But Europe is not safe and in spite of merry-making on Christmas and New Year Eve, 1942, "one had to go about very warily... and had to take care also of every word one uttered" because, as the chapter indicates, there was "Dancing on a Volcano!"

Much as the Germans thought of dominating the world the end of the Third Reich showed them in an extenuating light. They grumbled at nobody nor did they make gestures of failure. They observed a silence which seemed menacing, and one wonders if it was wise to subject them to hard conditions after the war. Many Germans fought doggedly because of the fear of the Gestapo as the account of the German officer taken prisoner will illustrate. "For how many years," he was saying, "have I not seen a lighted house! It seems ages and ages... For six long years I have never left these uniforms. I have been everywhere... everywhere. And in all these years I have seen my wife and children only four times." And Dr. Girija comments: "Then being unable to control himself he put his both hands over his eyes and cried... We were

the only witnesses of the mental agony of this officer who spoke in a cultured voice and appeared to have been moved to his depths by the sight of light on the shores of Switzerland. How many there were, I thought, like this man in Germany, who felt the futility of wars!"

We must not, however, forget that there is a strong strain of "race-superiority" in the German mind and this can be exploited so that it is not always compulsion which guides Germany to warlike adventures. What is called De-Nazification includes the removal of that strain from the national consciousness or at least a reduction of it to a normal national pride.

This Europe could only be written by one who, as an Indian, fought for his country's freedom and was imprisoned for his nationalist tendencies; who, as President of the Bengal Students' Association, fired the youths of the country with zeal that no bullets could unnerve; who, as a patriot won the affection of the revered C. F. Andrews, with whom he wrote a book on the rise and growth of the Congress; who, as a journalist in Europe, contributed to *The Hindustan Times* articles as war correspondent; and who, again, after twenty years' absence from his mother country, sees much that fascinates and disappoints him at home and abroad. A graduate from Calcutta University, the author studied in Europe and saw much there at an early age; and *This Europe* reflects that clearly and beautifully. It is a book that reads like a novel and in its pages one finds atmosphere, characterisation, plot, suspense to whet the appetite for the real and the true as opposed to downright fiction. Towards the beginning, i.e., in 1939, Paris is too gay and zestful to anticipate disaster: the passage about it—

The first bombardment of Paris! I felt a bit panicky as I thought that it would have been better to have gone to a shelter after all. Until now, all these alarms had always proved to be more or less fiascos, and although the march of events had been rather alarming lately, yet on this beautiful May afternoon, in Paris, war, bombardment and all such things seemed to be out of place—

could almost be the opening of a novel, with the conclusion of a wiser and sadder man, not devoid of humour:

I pace the floor of the cell number 48 partly because I cannot sleep and also because I can no longer remain still. I am now resigned to my fate but I cannot help asking myself again and again: What is wrong with me that since my youth I have had to see so many prisons and so many cells? I am a normal, timid and law-abiding citizen...

WILLIAM HOOKENS.