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"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

ALTERNATE SATURDAYS

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SRI AUROBINDO ON "SAVITRI"

2

Some of your criticisms* bring forward questions of the technique of mystic poetry about which I wanted to write in an introduction to *Savitri* when it is published, and I may as well say something about that here.

Rapid transitions from one image to another are a constant feature in *Savitri* as in most mystic poetry. I am not here† building a long sustained picture of the Dawn with a single continuous image or variations of the same image. I am describing a rapid series of transitions, piling one suggestion upon another. There is first a black quietude, then the persistent touch, then the first "beauty and wonder" leading to the magical gate and the "lucent corner." Then comes the failing of the darkness, the simile used ("a falling cloak") suggesting the rapidity of the change. Then as a result the change of what was once a rift into a wide luminous gap,—if you want to be logically consistent you can look at the rift as a slit in the "cloak" which becomes a big tear. Then all changes into a "brief perpetual sign", the iridescence, then the blaze and the magnificent aura. In such a race of rapid transitions you cannot bind me down to a logical chain of figures or a classical monotone. The mystic Muse is more of an inspired Bacchante of the Dionysian wine than an orderly housewife.

Your "barely", instead of the finer and more suggestive "hardly" in
*Then through the pallid rift that seemed at first
Hardly enough for a trickle from the suns
Outpoured the revelation and the flame,†*

falls flat upon my ear; one cannot substitute one word for another in this kind of poetry merely because it means intellectually the same thing; "hardly" is the *mot juste* in this context and, repetition or not, it must remain unless a word not only *juste* but inevitable comes to replace it.‡ I am not disposed either to change "suns" to "stars" in the line about the ignorant Force

*Whose moved creative slumber kindles the suns.***

"Stars" does not create the same impression and brings in a different tone in the rhythm and the sense. This line and that which follows it—

And carries our lives in its somnambulist whirl—

bring in a general subordinate idea stressing the paradoxical nature of the creation and the contrasts which it contains, the drowsed somnambulist as the mother of the light of the suns and the activities of life. It is not intended as a present feature in the darkness of the Night.

Again, do you seriously want me to give an accurate scientific description of the earth half in darkness and half in light so as to spoil my impressionist symbol** or else to revert to the conception of earth as a flat and immobile surface? I am not writing a scientific treatise. I am selecting certain ideas and impressions to form a symbol of a partial and temporary darkness of the soul and Nature which seems to a temporary feeling of that which is caught in the Night as if it were universal and

* The nature of these criticisms must not be misunderstood. Just as the merits of "Savitri" were appreciated to the utmost—and this meant whole-hearted appreciation of more than ninety-nine per cent of it—whatever seemed a shortcoming no matter how slight and negligible in the midst of the abundant excellence was pointedly remarked upon so that Sri Aurobindo might not overlook anything in his work towards what he called "perfect perfection" before the poem came under the scrutiny of non-Aurobindonian critics at the time of publication. The commentator was anxious that there should be no spots on "Savitri's" sun. The purpose was also to get important issues cleared up in relation to the sort of poetry Sri Aurobindo was writing and some of his disciples aspired to write. Knowing the spirit and aim of the criticisms Sri Aurobindo welcomed them, even asked for them. On many occasions—and these provide most of the matter collected here—he vigorously defended himself, but on several he willingly agreed to introduce small changes. Once he is reported to have smiled and said: "Is he satisfied now?" Unfortunately, the opportunity to discuss every part of the poem did not arise and we have, therefore, only a limited number of psychological and technical elucidations by him of his art.

† Vol. I, p. 5. † Ibid.

‡ Later Sri Aurobindo wrote: "On this point I may add that in certain contexts 'barely' would be the right word; as for instance, 'There is barely enough food for two or three meals,' where 'hardly' would be adequate but much less forceful. It is the other way about in this line."

** Vol. 1, p. 3. ** Ibid.

eternal. One who is lost in that Night does not think of the other half of the earth as full of light; to him all is Night and the earth a forsaken wanderer in an enduring darkness. If I sacrifice this impressionism and abandon the image of the earth wheeling through dark space I might as well abandon the symbol altogether, for this is a necessary part of it. As a matter of fact in the passage itself earth in its wheeling does come into the dawn and pass from darkness into the light. You must take the idea as a whole and in all its transitions and not press one detail with too literal an insistence. In this poem I present constantly one partial view of life or another temporarily as if it were the whole in order to give full value to the experience of those who are bound by that view, as for instance, the materialist conception and experience of life, but if any one charges me with philosophical inconsistency, then it only means that he does not understand the technique of the Overmind interpretation of life.

I come next to the passage about the Inconscient waking Ignorance. In the first place, the word "formless" is indeed defective, not so much because of any repetition but because it is not the right word or idea and I was not myself satisfied with it. I have changed the passage as follows:

*Then something in the inscrutable darkness stirred;
A nameless movement, an unthought Idea
Insistent, dissatisfied, without an aim,
Something that wished but knew not how to be,
Teased the Inconscient to wake Ignorance.**

But the teasing of the Inconscient remains and evidently you think that it is bad poetic taste to tease something so bodiless and unreal as the Inconscient. But here several fundamental issues arise. First of all, are words like Inconscient and Ignorance necessarily an abstract technical jargon? If so, do not words like "consciousness," "knowledge" etc. undergo the same ban? Is it meant that they are abstract philosophical terms and can have no real or concrete meaning, cannot represent things that one feels and senses or must often fight as one fights a visible foe? The Inconscient and the Ignorance may be mere empty abstractions and can be dismissed as irrelevant jargon if one has not come into collision with them or plunged into their dark and bottomless reality. But to me they are realities, concrete powers whose resistance is present everywhere and at all times in its tremendous and boundless mass. In fact, in writing this line I had no intention of teaching philosophy or forcing in an irrelevant metaphysical idea, although the idea may be there in implication. I was presenting a happening that was to me something sensible and, as one might say, psychologically and spiritually concrete. The Inconscient comes in persistently in the cantos of the First Book of *Savitri*: e.g.

*Opponent of the glory of escape,
The black Inconscient swung its dragon tail
Lashing a slumberous Infinite by its force
Into the deep obscurities of form.†*

There too a metaphysical idea might be read into or behind the thing seen. But does that make it technical jargon or the whole thing an illegitimate mixture? It is not so to my poetic sense. But you might say, "It is so to the non-mystical reader and it is that reader whom you have to satisfy, as it is for the general reader that you are writing and not for yourself alone." But if I had to write for the general reader I could not have written *Savitri* at all. It is in fact for myself that I have written it and for those who can lend themselves to the subject-matter, images, technique of mystic poetry.

This is the real stumbling block of mystic poetry and especially mystic poetry of this kind. The mystic feels real and present, even ever present to his experience, intimate to his being, truths which to the ordinary reader are intellectual abstractions or metaphysical speculations. He is writing of experiences that are foreign to the ordinary mentality. Either they are

* Vol. I, p. 4.

† Vol. I, p. 73.

Sri Aurobindo on "Savitri"—Continued from page 1

unintelligible to it and in meeting them it flounders about as if in an obscure abyss or it takes them as poetic fancies expressed in intellectually devised images. That was how a critic in a journal condemned such poems as *Nirvana* and *Transformation*. He said that they were mere intellectual conceptions and images and there was nothing of religious feeling or spiritual experience. Yet *Nirvana** was as close a transcription of a major experience as could be given in language coined by the human mind of a realisation in which the mind was entirely silent and into which no intellectual conception could at all enter. One has to use words and images in order to convey to the mind some perception, some figure of that which is beyond thought. The critic's non-understanding was made worse by such a line as:

*Only the illimitable Permanent
Is here.*

Evidently he took this as technical jargon, abstract philosophy. There was no such thing; I felt with an overpowering vividness the illimitability or at least something which could not be described by any other term and no other description except the 'Permanent' could be made of That which alone existed. To the mystic there is no such thing as an abstraction. Everything which to the intellectual mind is abstract has a concreteness, substantiality which is more real than the sensible form of an object or of a physical event. To me, for instance, consciousness is the very stuff of existence and I can feel it everywhere enveloping and penetrating the stone as much as man or the animal. A movement, a flow of consciousness is not to me an image but a fact. If I wrote, "His anger climbed against me in a stream", it would be to the general reader a mere image, not something that was felt by me in a sensible experience; yet I would only be describing in exact terms what actually happened once, a stream of anger, a sensible and violent current of it rising up from downstairs and rushing upon me as I sat in the veranda of the Guest-House, the truth of it being confirmed afterwards by the confession of the person who had the movement. This is only one instance, but all that is spiritual or psychological in *Savitri* is of that character. What is to be done under these circumstances? The mystical poet can only describe what he has felt, seen in himself or others or in the world just as he has felt or seen it or experienced through exact vision, close contact or identity and leave it to the general reader to understand or not understand or misunderstand according to his capacity. A new kind of poetry demands a new mentality in the recipient as well as in the writer.

Another question is the place of philosophy in poetry or whether it has any place at all. Some romanticists seem to believe that the poet has no right to think at all, only to see and feel. This accusation has been brought against me by many that I think too much and that when I try to write in verse, thought comes in and keeps out poetry. I hold, to the contrary, that philosophy has its place and can even take a leading place along with psychological experience as it does in the *Gita*.† All depends on how it is done, whether it is a dry or a living philosophy, an arid intellectual statement or the expression not only of the living truth of thought but of something of its beauty, its light or its power.

The theory which discourages the poet from thinking or at least from thinking for the sake of the thought proceeds from an extreme romanticist temper, it reaches its acme on one side in the question of the surrealist, "Why do you want poetry to mean anything?" and on the other in Housman's exaltation of pure poetry which he describes paradoxically as a sort of sublime nonsense which does not appeal at all to the mental intelligence but knocks at the solar plexus and awakes a vital and physical rather than intellectual sensation and response. It is, of course, not that really but a vividness of imagination and feeling which disregards the mind's positive view of things and its logical sequences; the centre or centres it knocks at are not the brain-mind, not even the poetic intelligence but the subtle physical, the nervous, the vital or the psychic centre. The poem he quotes from Blake is certainly not nonsense, but it has no positive and exact meaning for the intellect or the surface mind; it expresses certain things that are true and real, not nonsense but a deeper sense which we feel powerfully with a great stirring of some inner emotion, but any attempt at exact intellectual statement of them sterilises their sense and spoils their appeal. This is not the method of *Savitri*. Its expression aims at a certain force, directness and spiritual clarity and reality. When it is not understood, it is because the truths it expresses are unfamiliar to the ordinary mind or belong to an untrodden domain or domains or enter into a field of occult experience: it is not because there is any attempt at a

* All is abolished but the mute Alone.
The mind from thought released, the heart from grief
Grow inexistent now beyond belief;
There is no I, no Nature, known-unknown.
The city, a shadow picture without tone,
Floats, quivers unreal; forms without relief
Flow, a cinema's vacant shapes; like a reef
Foundering in shoreless gulfs the world is done.

Only the illimitable Permanent
Is here. A Peace stupendous, featureless, still
Replaces all,—what once was I, in It
A silent unnamed emptiness content
Either to fade in the Unknowable
Or thrill with the luminous seas of the Infinite.

† This dictum about the role of thought should not be taken as contradicting any implication of the sentence in an earlier letter: "Thinking is no longer in my line." What comes from "overhead" through the mystic's silent mind, as in Sri Aurobindo's later poetry, can very well assume a philosophical form. It is the presence of thought-form in poetry that is spoken of here, not the source from which it ultimately derives or the process by which it enters a poem.

dark or vague profundity or an escape from thought. The thinking is not intellectual but intuitive or more than intuitive, always expressing a vision, a spiritual contact or a knowledge which has come by entering into the thing itself, by identity.

It may be noted that the greater romantic poets did not shun thought; they thought abundantly, almost endlessly. They have their characteristic view of life, something that one might call their philosophy, their world-view, and they express it. Keats was the most romantic of poets, but he could write, "To philosophise I dare not yet"; he did not write, "I am too much of a poet to philosophise." To philosophise he regarded evidently as mounting on the admiral's flag-ship and flying an almost royal banner. The philosophy of *Savitri* is different but it is persistently there; it expresses or tries to express a total and many-sided vision and experience of all the planes of being and their action upon each other. Whatever language, whatever terms are necessary to convey this truth of vision and experience it uses without scruple or admitting any mental rule of what is or is not poetic. It does not hesitate to employ terms which might be considered as technical when these can be turned to express something direct, vivid and powerful. That need not be an introduction of technical jargon, that is to say, I suppose, special and artificial language, expressing in this case only abstract ideas and generalities without any living truth or reality in them. Such jargon cannot make good literature, much less good poetry. But there is a "poeticism" which establishes a sanitary cordon against words and ideas which it considers as prosaic but which properly used can strengthen poetry and extend its range. That limitation I do not admit as legitimate.

I have been insisting on these points in view of certain criticisms that have been made by reviewers and others, some of them very capable, suggesting or flatly stating that there was too much thought in my poems or that I am even in my poetry a philosopher rather than a poet. I am justifying a poet's right to think as well as to see and feel, his right to "dare to philosophise"; I agree with the modernists in their revolt against the romanticist's insistence on emotionalism and his objection to thinking and philosophical reflection in poetry. But the modernist went too far in his revolt. In trying to avoid what I may call poeticism he ceased to be poetic: wishing to escape from rhetorical writing, rhetorical pretension to greatness and beauty of style, he threw out true poetic greatness and beauty, turned from a deliberately poetic style to a colloquial tone and even to very flat writing; especially he turned away from poetic rhythm to a prose or half-prose rhythm or to no rhythm at all. Also he has weighed too much on thought and has lost the habit of intuitive sight; by turning emotion out of its intimate chamber in the house of Poetry, he has had to bring in to relieve the dryness of much thought too much exaggeration of the lower vital and sensational reactions untransformed or else transformed only by exaggeration. Nevertheless he has perhaps restored to the poet the freedom to think as well as to adopt a certain straightforwardness and directness of style.

Now I come to the law prohibiting repetition. This rule aims at a certain kind of intellectual elegance which comes into poetry when the poetic intelligence and the call for a refined and classical taste begin to predominate. It regards poetry as a cultural entertainment and amusement of the highly civilised mind, a sustained novelty of ideas, incidents, word and phrase. An unfailing variety or the outward appearance of it is one of the elegances of this art. But all poetry is not of this kind; its rule does not apply to poets like Homer or Valmiki or other early writers. The Veda might almost be described as a mass of repetitions; so might the work of Vaishnava poets and the poetic literature of devotion generally in India. Arnold has noted this distinction when speaking of Homer; he mentioned specially that there is nothing objectionable in the close repetition of the same word in the Homeric way of writing. In many things Homer seems to make a point of repeating himself. He has stock descriptions, epithets always reiterated, lines even which are constantly repeated again and again when the same incident returns in his narrative: e. g. the line,

Doupēsen de pesōm arabēse de teuche' ep' auto—

Down with a thud he fell and his armour clangoured upon him.

He does not hesitate also to repeat the bulk of a line with a variation at the end, e.g.

Bē de kat' oulompōio karēnōn chōōmenos ker—

*Down from the peaks of Olympus he came, wrath vexing his
heart-strings,*

and again,

Bē de kat' oulompōio karēnōn āixāsa—

*Down from the peaks of Olympus she came impetuously
darting.*

He begins another line elsewhere with the same word and a similar action and with the same nature of a human movement physical and psychological in a scene of Nature, here a man's silent sorrow listening to the roar of the ocean:

Bē d' akeōn para thina poluphlois boio thalassēs—

Silent he walked by the shore of the many-roumoured ocean.

In mystic poetry also repetition is not objectionable; it is resorted to by many poets, sometimes with insistence. I may cite as an example the constant repetition of the word *Ritam*, truth, sometimes eight or nine times in a short poem of nine or ten stanzas and often in the same line. This does

Continued on page 3

A MESSAGE

To The Society For The Spiritual And Cultural Renaissance Of Bharat

LET THE SPLENDOURS OF BHARAT'S PAST BE REBORN IN THE REALI-
SATIONS OF HER IMMINENT FUTURE WITH THE HELP AND BLESSINGS
OF HER LIVING SOUL

AUGUST 23, 1951

THE MOTHER

Aeroplane

Towards the visionary calm of night,
Like some pure liberator, soul of flight
To the immense unknown, the winged wonder
Kindled its aspiration, clove asunder
The lofty darkneses of heavenly space,
Swung out into the quiet blossoming blaze
Of far innumerable beauty. O
The vast relief, the thrilled escape from slow
Vain horizontal hours' monotony
Of gilded gloom amid the feverish cry
Of transient rapture, to the inviolate
Divine abysses of celestial fate!

How must all-potent peace regard poor earth?...
But look! what miracle has flamed to birth
Beneath our flight—a mute and limitless dark
Spangled with visionary spark on spark—
A silent sky of golden gleam below
Responding to the fathomless silver glow
Of sky above—a human infinite
Of trance with planetary joy alit—
Burning disclosure of earth's hidden soul
Tense with the secret of a godlike goal!

K. D. SETHNA

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

not weaken the poem, it gives it a singular power and beauty. The repetition of the same key ideas, key images and symbols, key words or phrases, key epithets, sometimes key lines or half lines is a constant feature. They give an atmosphere, a significant structure, a sort of psychological frame, an architecture. The object here is not to amuse or entertain but the self-expression of an inner truth, a seeing of things and ideas not familiar to the common mind, a bringing out of inner experience. It is the true more than the new that the poet is after. He uses *avritti*, repetition, as one of the most powerful means of carrying home what has been thought or seen and fixing it in the mind in an atmosphere of light and beauty. This kind of repetition I have used largely in *Savitri*. Moreover, the object is not only to present a secret truth in its true form and true vision but to drive it home by the finding of the true word, the true phrase, the *mot juste*, the true image or symbol, if possible the inevitable word; if that is there, nothing else, repetition included, matters much. This is natural when the repetition is intended, serves a purpose; but it can hold even when the repetition is not deliberate but comes in naturally in the stream of the inspiration. I see, therefore, no objection to the recurrence of the same or similar image such as sea and ocean, sky and heaven in one long passage provided each is the right thing and rightly worded in its place. The same rule applies to words, epithets, ideas. It is only if the repetition is clumsy or awkward, too burdensomely insistent, at once unneeded and inexpressive or amounts to a disagreeable and meaningless echo that it must be rejected.

I think there is none of your objections that did not occur to me as possible from a certain kind of criticism when I wrote or I re-read what I had written, but I brushed them aside as invalid or as irrelevant to the kind of poem I was writing. So you must not be surprised at my disregard of them as too slight and unimperative. (1946)

3

What you have written as the general theory of the matter seems to be correct and it does not differ substantially from what I wrote. But your phrase about unpurposeful repetition might carry a suggestion which I would not be able to accept; it might seem to indicate that the poet must have a "purpose" in whatever he writes and must be able to give a logical account of it to the critical intellect. That is surely not the way in which the poet or at least the mystic poet has to do his work. He does not himself deliberately choose or arrange word and rhythm but only sees it as it comes in the very act of inspiration. If there is any purpose of any kind, it also comes by and in the process of inspiration. He can criticise himself and the work; he can see whether it was a wrong or an inferior movement, he

does not set about correcting it by any intellectual method but waits for the true thing to come in its place. He cannot always account to the logical intellect for what he has done: he feels or intuits, and the reader or critic has to do the same.

Thus I cannot tell you for what purpose I admitted the repetition of the word "great" in the line about the "great unsatisfied godhead",* I only felt that it was the one thing to write in that line as "her greatness" was the only right thing in a preceding line; I also felt that they did not and could not clash and that was enough for me. Again, it might be suggested that the "high" "warm" subtle ether of love was not only the right expression but that repetition of these epithets after they had been used in describing the atmosphere of Savitri's nature was justified and had a reason and purpose because it pointed and brought out the identity of the ether of love with Savitri's atmosphere. But as a matter of fact I have no such reason or purpose. It was the identity which brought spontaneously and inevitably the use of the same epithets and not any conscious intention which deliberately used the repetition for a purpose.

Your contention that in the lines which I found to be inferior to their original form and altered back to that form, the inferiority was due to a repetition is not valid. In the line,

And found in her a vastness like his own,†

the word "wideness" which had accidentally replaced "vastness" would have been inferior even if there had been no "wide" or "wideness" anywhere within a hundred miles and I would still have altered it back to the original word. So too with "sealed depths" and so many others. These alterations were due to inadvertence and not intentional; repetition or non-repetition had nothing to do with the matter. It was the same with "Wisdom nursing Chance";‡ if "nursing" had been the right word and not a slip replacing the original phrase I would have kept it in spite of the word "nurse" occurring immediately afterwards: only perhaps I would have taken care to so arrange that the repetition of the figure would simply have constituted a two-headed instead of a one-headed evil. Yes, I have changed in several places where you objected to repetitions but mostly for other reasons: I have kept many where there was a repetition and changed others where there was no repetition at all. I have indeed made modifications or changes where repetition came at a short distance at the end of a line; that was because the place made it too conspicuous. Of course where the repetition amounts to a mistake, I would have no hesitation in making a change; for a mistake must always be acknowledged and corrected. (1946)

To be continued

* Vol. I, p. 16.

† Ibid.

‡ Vol. I, p. 39.

SRI AUROBINDO, THE LEADER OF THE EVOLUTION

PART II OF "THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA"

By "Synergist"

SECTION III : THE NEW WORLD-VIEW

(I) THE SPIRITUAL METAPHYSIC

(ii) KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINE REALITY

MIND AND SUPERMIND (III)

The gradual modification of the ordinary mind into an intuitivised mind was examined in the last essay; here its further transformation into a supramentalised mentality will be discussed.

When the influx of the higher light ceases to descend in the mind in intermittent flashes and gets canalised into a continuous stream, with a resulting transformation of the mental substance, the mind becomes intuitivised. It is only after the intuitive mentality* is properly formed and is able to dominate the various psychological activities of the total personality that a further step in the transformation becomes possible—the centre of vision and action can now be raised above the mind. As the consciousness gets poised over the head, the process of knowledge-apprehension naturally changes, for the communication between the Supramental light and the personal consciousness becomes more direct. It now becomes possible to possess a wider global vision and have knowledge of the working of universal forces. But this new centre of vision, even though it is in a more direct contact with the Supermind than the mind, is not the Gnosis itself and cannot be said to possess the highest knowledge. It is only when the Supermind takes up the mental action and transforms it that the higher knowledge comes within sight. As the individual begins to rise into the Supermind the nether control of his personality is weakened and he begins to dominate the lower stratas of his consciousness from above. His being is no longer conditioned by the subconscious and inconscient levels; their hold is loosened and their strength gradually diminished by the action of the spiritual force from above. When the Gnosis itself is reached and its irresistible power works on the personality the lower levels are firmly gripped and conditioned from above. In the following passage Sri Aurobindo sums up the process of mental-spiritual development: "The transition from mind to supermind is not only the substitution of a greater instrument of thought and knowledge, but a change and conversion of the whole consciousness. There is evolved not only a supramental thought, but a supramental will, sense, feeling, a supramental substitute for all the activities that are now accomplished by the mind. All these higher activities are first manifested in the mind itself as descents, irruptions, messages or revelations of a superior power. Mostly they are mixed up with the more ordinary action of the mind and not easily distinguishable from them in our first inexperience except by their superior light and force and joy, the more so as the mind heightened or excited by their frequent coming quickens its own action and imitates the external characteristics of the supramental activity: its own operation is made more swift, luminous, strong and positive and it arrives even at a kind of imitative and often false intuition that strives to be but is not really the luminous, direct and self-existent truth. The next step is the formation of a luminous mind of intuitive experience, thought, will, feeling, sense from which the intermixture of the lesser mind and the imitative intuition are progressively eliminated: this is a process of purification, *shuddhi*, necessary to the new formation and perfection, *siddhi*. At the same time there is the disclosure above the mind of the source of the intuitive action and a more and more organised functioning of a true supramental consciousness acting not in the mind but on its own higher plane. This draws up into itself in the end the intuitive mentality it has created as its representative and assumes the charge of the whole activity of the consciousness. The process is progressive and for a long time chequered by admixture and the necessity of a return upon the lower movements in order to correct and transform them. The higher and the lower powers act sometimes alternately,—the consciousness descending back from the heights it had attained to its former level but always with some change,—but sometimes together and with a sort of mutual reference. The mind eventually becomes wholly intuitivised and exists only as a passive channel for the supramental action; but this condition too is not ideal and presents, besides, still a certain obstacle, because the higher action has still to pass through a retarding and diminishing conscious substance,—that of the physical consciousness. The final stage of the change will come when the supermind occupies

and supramentalises the whole being and turns even the vital and physical sheaths into moulds of itself, responsive, subtle and instinct with its powers. Man then becomes wholly the superman. This is at least the natural and integral process."

Sri Aurobindo then proceeds to discuss the nature of consciousness on the Supramental level: "Here the one thing that is always and constantly present, that which one has grown to and in which one lives always, is infinite being and all that is seen, felt, known, existed in as only substance of the one being; it is infinite consciousness and all that is conscious and acts and moves is seen, felt, received, known, lived in as self-experience and energy of the one being; it is infinite Ananda and all that feels and is felt is seen and felt and known, received and lived in as forms of the one Ananda. Everything else is only manifestation and circumstance of this one truth of our existence. This is no longer merely the seeing or knowing, but the very condition of the self in all and all in the self, God in all and all in God and all seen as God, and that condition is now not a thing offered to the reflecting spiritualised mind but held and lived by an integral, always present, always active realisation in the supramental nature. There is thought here and will and sensation and everything that belongs to our nature, but it is transfigured and elevated into a higher consciousness. All thought is here seen and experienced as a luminous body of substance, a luminous movement of force, a luminous wave of Ananda of the being; it is not an idea in the void air of mind, but experienced in the reality and as the light of a reality of the infinite being. The will and impulsions are similarly experienced as a real power and substance of the Sat, the Chit, the Ananda of the Ishwara. All the spiritualised sensation and emotion are experienced as pure moulds of the consciousness and Ananda. The physical being itself is experienced as a conscious form and the vital being as an outpouring of the power and possession of the life of the spirit.

"The action of the supermind in the development is to manifest and organise this highest consciousness so as to exist and act no longer only in the infinite above with some limited or veiled or lower and deformed manifestations in the individual being and nature, but largely and totally in the individual as a conscious and self-knowing spiritual being and a living and acting power of the infinite and universal spirit..."

By this time the reader must have had a fairly good idea of the nature of cognition on the Supramental level. The gnostic powers which become natural to the consciousness as this level is reached will be discussed in the succeeding chapters. For the present it is enough to note here that in the field of cognition and will there is a triple action on the planes of the Supermind. "The spiritual reason is lifted and broadened into a greater representative action that formulates to us mainly the actualities of the existence of the self in and around us. There is then a higher interpretative action of the supramental knowledge, a greater scale less insistent on actualities, that opens out yet greater potentialities in time and space and beyond. And lastly there is a highest knowledge by identity that is a gate of entrance to the essential self-awareness and the omniscience and omnipotence of the Ishwara.

"It must not however be supposed that these super-imposed stages are shut off in experience from each other. I have placed them in what might be a regular order of ascending development for the better possibility of understanding in an intellectual statement..." "It is thus that the supermind acting as a representative, interpretative, revealingly imperative power of the spirit's knowledge by identity, turning the light of the infinite consciousness freely and illimitably into substance and form of real-idea, creating out of power of conscious being and power of real idea, stabilising a movement which obeys its own law but is still a supple and plastic movement of the infinite, uses its thought and knowledge and a will identical in substance and light with the knowledge to organise in each supramental being his own right manifestation of the one self and spirit."

* This should not be confused with the level of the Intuitive Mind—the plane of Intuition proper—which was discussed in the preceding essays.

SAVITRI By SRI AUROBINDO

BOOK VII: THE BOOK OF YOGA: Canto 4: The Triple Soul-Forces

Continued from previous issue

Ascending still her spirit's upward route
 She came into a high and happy space,
 A wide tower of vision whence all could be seen
 And all was centred in a single view
 As when by distance separate scenes grow one
 And a harmony is made of hues at war.
 The wind was still and fragrance packed the air.
 There was a carol of birds and murmur of bees,
 And all that is common and natural and sweet,
 Yet intimately divine to heart and soul.
 A nearness thrilled of the spirit to its source
 And deepest things seemed obvious, close and true.
 Here, living centre of that vision of peace,
 A Woman sat in clear and crystal light:
 Heaven had unveiled its lustre in her eyes,
 Her feet were moonbeams, her face was a bright sun,
 Her smile could persuade a dead lacerated heart
 To live again and feel the hands of calm.
 A low music heard became her floating voice:
 "O Savitri, I am thy secret soul.
 I have come down to the wounded desolate earth
 To heal her pangs and lull her heart to rest
 And lay her head upon the Mother's lap
 That she may dream of God and know his peace
 And draw the harmony of higher spheres
 Into the rhythm of earth's rude troubled days.
 I show to her the figures of bright Gods
 And bring strength and solace to her struggling life,
 High things that now are only words and forms
 I reveal to her in the body of their power.
 I am peace that steals into man's war-worn breast,
 Amid the reign of Hell his acts create
 A hostel where Heaven's messengers can lodge;
 I am charity with the kindly hands that bless;
 I am silence mid the noisy tramp of life;
 I am Knowledge poring on her cosmic map.
 In the anomalies of the human heart
 Where Good and Evil are close bed-fellows
 And Light is by Darkness dogged at every step,
 Where his largest knowledge is an ignorance,
 I am the Power that labours towards the best
 And works for God and looks up towards the heights.
 I make even sin and error stepping stones
 And all experience a long march towards Light.
 Out of the Inconscient I build consciousness
 And lead through death to reach immortal life.
 Many are God's forms by which he grows in man;
 They stamp his thoughts and deeds with divinity,
 Uplift the stature of the human clay
 Or slowly transmute it into heaven's gold.
 He is the Good for which men fight and die,
 He is the War of Right with Titan Wrong,
 He is Freedom rising deathless from her pyre,
 He is Valour guarding still the desperate pass
 Or lone and erect on the shattered barricade
 Or a sentinel in the dangerous echoing Night.
 He is the crown of the martyr burned in flame
 And the glad resignation of the saint
 And courage indifferent to the wounds of Time
 And the hero's might wrestling with death and Fate.
 He is Wisdom incarnate on a glorious throne
 And the calm autocracy of the sage's rule.
 He is the high and solitary Thought
 Aloof above the ignorant multitude:
 He is the prophet's voice, the sight of the seer.
 He is Beauty, nectar of the passionate soul,
 He is the Truth by which the spirit lives.
 He is the riches of the spiritual Vast
 Poured out in healing streams on indigent Life;
 He is Eternity lured from hour to hour,
 He is Infinity in a little space:
 He is Immortality in the arms of Death.
 These powers I am and at my call they come.
 Thus slowly I lift man's soul nearer the Light.
 But human mind clings to its ignorance,
 And to its littleness the human heart,
 And to its right to grief the earthly life.
 Only when Eternity takes Time by the hand,
 Only when infinity weds the finite's thought,
 Can man be free from himself and live with God.
 I bring meanwhile the gods upon the earth;

I bring back hope to the despairing heart;
 I give peace to the humble and the great
 And shed my grace on the foolish and the wise.
 I shall save earth, if earth consents to be saved.
 Then Love shall at last unwounded tread earth's soil;
 Man's mind shall admit the sovereignty of Truth
 And body bear the immense descent of God."
 She spoke and from the ignorant nether plane
 A cry, a warped echo naked and shuddering came.
 A voice of the sense-shackled human mind
 Carried its proud complaint of Godlike power
 Hedged by the limits of a mortal's thoughts
 Bound in the chains of earthly ignorance.
 Imprisoned in his body and his brain
 The mortal cannot see God's mighty whole
 Or share in his vast and deep identity
 Who stands unguessed within our ignorant hearts
 And knows all things because he is one with all.
 Man only sees the cosmic surfaces.
 Then wondering what may lie hid from the sense
 A little way he delves to depths below:
 But soon he stops, he cannot reach life's core
 Or commune with the throbbing heart of things.
 He sees the naked body of the Truth
 Though often baffled by her endless garbs,
 But cannot look upon her soul within.
 Then, furious for a knowledge absolute,
 He tears all details out and stabs and digs:
 Only the shape's contents he holds for use;
 The spirit escapes or dies beneath his knife,
 He sees as a blank stretch, a giant waste
 The crowding riches of infinity.
 The finite he has made his central field,
 Its plan dissects, masters its processes,
 That which moves all is hidden from his gaze,
 His poring eyes miss the unseen behind.
 He has the blind man's subtle unerring touch
 Or the slow traveller's sight of distant scenes;
 The soul's revealing contacts are not his.
 Yet is he visited by intuitive light
 And inspiration comes from the Unknown;
 But only reason and sense he feels as sure,
 They only are his trusted witnesses.
 Thus is he baulked, his splendid effort vain;
 His knowledge scans bright pebbles on the shore
 Of the huge ocean of his ignorance.
 Yet grandiose were the accents of that cry,
 A cosmic pathos trembled in its tone.
 "I am the mind of God's great ignorant world
 Ascending to knowledge by the steps he made,
 I am the all-discovering Thought of man.
 I am a god fettered by Matter and sense,
 An animal prisoned in a fence of thorns,
 A beast of labour asking for his food,
 A smith tied to his anvil and his forge.
 Yet have I loosened the cord, enlarged my room.
 I have mapped the heavens and analysed the stars,
 Described the orbits through the grooves of Space,
 Measured the miles that separate the suns,
 Computed their longevity in Time.
 I have delved into earth's bowels and torn out
 The riches guarded by her dull brown soil.
 I have classed the changes of her stony crust
 And of her biography discovered the dates,
 Rescued the pages of all Nature's plan.
 The tree of evolution I have sketched,
 Each branch and twig and leaf in its own place,
 In the embryo tracked the history of forms,
 And the genealogy framed of all that lives.
 I have detected plasm and cell and gene,
 The protozoa traced, man's ancestors,
 The humble originals from whom he rose;
 I know how he was born and how he dies;
 Only what end he serves I know not yet,
 Or if there is aim at all or any end
 Or push of rich creative purposeful joy
 In the wide works of the terrestrial power.
 I have caught her intricate processes, none is left:
 Her huge machinery is in my hands;
 I have seized the cosmic energies for my use.

Continued on next page

CHAPTER XIII
ASHRAM SPORTS

Continued

"Tell me, Guru," I importuned, "what exactly are you wanting us to achieve at this stage of our sadhana? Could it possibly be that you have lately had a new revelation which has induced you to scotch in a lump the older ones? In other words, do you now want to condemn unqualifiedly India's advocacy of *vairagya* and other-worldliness?—If so, are we to infer that it has to be replaced *in toto* by the Western outlook on life? It is not I alone who am at sea here but X also who told me the other day that in spite of his great reverence for you he finds it a little difficult to understand your stress on this-worldliness to the exclusion of other-worldliness. I have, as you know, believed so far that you aim at a new and richer synthesis, a harmonisation of seemingly contradictory elements of life so that human culture may achieve, at long last, its final 'unity in diversity'—to quote your own phrase or, to use a musical simile, a symphony wherein even dissonances will be resolved into concords of a deeper amplitude. And lastly, Guru, tell me once and for all, and frankly: do you really think that I may yet come to have a place in this your ultra-modern yoga? This doubt crosses my mind again with a redoubled force because I suspect that I have somehow turned out a misfit though, alas, rather late in the day. For if my surmise is really baseless why do such doubts go on recurring after so many years of struggle?"

After despatching the letter in hot-haste I rued my impulsiveness, because I feared that my provocative words had left him no alternative but to agree with me as to my flowering into an exemplary failure. In a word, I felt like a suicide who after digging his own grave stands aghast at the prospect of having to descend into it alive. So my exuberent joy may be imagined when, next morning, I received his reply lavish of tenderness. Patiently and laboriously as ever he had answered me once again:

"I continue my letter," he wrote calmly as though nothing had happened at all. "I hope I have been able to persuade you that all these ideas about sports and the Yoga are misconceptions and that those who suggest them are wholly mistaken. Certainly, we are not putting Yoga away into the background and turning to sport as substitute. I hope also that you will accept from me and the Mother our firm asseveration that our love and affection for you are undiminished and that there has been no coldness on the Mother's part and not the least diminution in my constant inner relation with you.

"In view of what I have written, you ought to be able to see that your idea of our insistence on you to take up sports or to like it or to accept it in any way has no foundation. I myself have never been a sportsman nor—apart from a spectator's interest in cricket in England or a non-player member of the Baroda Club—taken up any physical games or athletics except some exercises learnt from Madras wrestlers in Baroda such as *dand* or *baithak* and those I took up only to put some strength and vigour into a frail and weak though not unhealthy body, but I never attached any importance or significance to these things and dropped the exercises when I thought they were no longer necessary. Certainly, neither the abstinence from athletics and physical games nor the taking up of those physical exercises have for me any relevance to Yoga. Neither your aversion to sports nor the liking of others for it makes either you or them more fit or more unfit for sadhana. So there is absolutely no reason why you should vex your mind with the supposition that we want you to do it. You are surely quite free, as everybody is quite free, to take your own way in such matters.

"One thing I feel I must say in connection with your remark about the soul of India and X's observation about my 'stress on this-worldliness to the exclusion of other-worldliness.' I do not quite understand in what connection his remark was made or what he meant by 'this-worldliness,' but I feel it necessary to state my own position in the matter. My own life and my Yoga have always been since my coming to India both this-worldly and other-worldly without any exclusiveness on either side. All human interests are, I suppose, this-worldly and most of them have entered into my mental field and some, like politics, into my life, but at the same time,

SRI AUROBINDO

By DILIP KUMAR

since I set foot on the Indian soil on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay, I began to have spiritual experiences, but these were not divorced from this world but had an inner and infinite bearing on it, such as a feeling of the Infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies. At the same time I found myself entering supraphysical worlds and planes with influences and an effect from them upon the material plane, so I could make no sharp divorce or irreconcilable opposition between what I have called the two ends of existence and all that lies between them. For me all is Brahman and I find the Divine everywhere. Every one has the right to throw away this-worldliness and choose other-worldliness only, and if he finds peace by that choice he is greatly blessed. I, personally, have not found it necessary to do this in order to have peace. In my Yoga also I found myself moved to include both worlds in my view—of the spiritual and the material—and to try to establish the Divine Consciousness and the Divine Power in men's hearts and earthly life, not for a personal salvation only but for a Divine life here. This seems to me as spiritual an aim as any and the fact of this life taking up earthly pursuits and earthly things into its scope cannot, I believe, tarnish its spirituality or alter its Indian character. This at least has always been my view and experience of the reality and the nature of the world and things and the Divine: it seemed to me as nearly as possible the integral truth about them and I have therefore spoken of the pursuit of it as the Integral Yoga. Everyone is, of course, free to reject and disbelieve in this kind of integrality or to believe in the spiritual necessity of an entire other-worldliness altogether but that would make the exercise of my Yoga impossible.

"My Yoga can include indeed a full experience of the other worlds, the plane of the Supreme Spirit and the other planes in between and their possible effects upon our life and material world; but it will be quite possible to insist only on the realisation of the Supreme Being or Ishwara even in one aspect, Shiva, Krishna as Lord of the world and Master of ourselves and our works or else the Universal *Sachchidananda* and attain to the essential result of this Yoga and afterwards to proceed from them to the integral results if one accepted the ideal of the divine life and the material world conquered by the Spirit. It is this view and experience of things and of the truth of existence that enabled me to write *The Life Divine* and *Savitri*. The realisation of the Supreme, the Ishwara, is certainly the essential thing; but to approach Him with love and devotion and *bhakti*, to serve Him with one's works and to know Him, not necessarily by the intellectual cognition, but in a spiritual experience is also essential in the path of Integral Yoga. If you accept Krishnaprem's insistence that this and no other must be *your* path, that it is this you have to attain and realise, then any exclusive other-worldliness cannot be *your* way. I believe that you are quite capable of attaining this and realising the Divine and I have never been able to share your constantly recurring doubts about your incapacity and their persistent recurrence as a valid ground for believing that they can never be overcome. Such a persistent recurrence has been a feature in the sadhana of many who have finally emerged and reached the goal; even the sadhana of very great Yogis has not been exempt from such violent and constant recurrences, they have sometimes been the special objects of such persistent assaults, as I have indeed indicated in *Savitri* in more places than one, and that was indeed founded on my own experience. In the nature of these recurrences there is usually a constant return of the same adverse experiences, the same adverse resistance, thoughts destructive of all belief and faith and confidence in the future of the sadhana, frustrating doubts of what one has known as the truth, urgings to the abandonment of the Yoga or to other disastrous counsels of *déchéance*. The course taken by the attacks is not indeed the same for all but still they have a strong family resemblance. One can eventually

SAVITRI—Continued from previous page

I have pored on her infinitesimal elements
And her invisible atoms have unmasked:
All Matter is a book I have perused;
Only some pages now are left to read.
I have seen the ways of life, the paths of mind;
I have studied the methods of the ant and ape
And the behaviour learnt of man and worm.
If God is at work his secrets I have found.
But still the Cause of things is left in doubt,
Their truth flees from pursuit into a void;
When all has been explained nothing is known.
What chose the process, whence the Power sprung
I know not and perhaps shall never know.
A mystery is this mighty Nature's birth;
A mystery is the elusive stream of mind,
A mystery the protean freak of life.
What I have learnt, Chance leaps to contradict;
What I have built is seized and torn by Fate.
I can foresee the acts of Matter's force,
But not the march of the destiny of man:
He is driven upon paths he did not choose,

He falls trampled underneath the rolling wheels.
My great philosophies are a reasoned guess;
The mystic heavens that claim the human soul
Are a charlatanism of the imagining brain:
All is a speculation or a dream:
In the end the world itself becomes a doubt:
The infinitesimal's jest mocks mass and shape,
A laugh peals from the infinite's finite mask.
Perhaps the world is an error of our sight,
A trick repeated in each flash of sense,
An unreal mind hallucinates the soul
With a stress-vision of false reality,
Or a dance of Maya veils the Void unborn.
Even if a greater consciousness I could reach,
What profit is it then for Thought to win
A Real which is for ever ineffable
Or hunt to its lair the bodiless Self or make
The Unknowable the target of the soul?
Nay, let me work within my mortal bounds,
Not live beyond life nor think beyond the mind;
Our smallness saves us from the Infinite.

CAME TO ME

R ROY

overcome if one begins to realise the nature and source of these assaults and acquire the faculty of observing them, bearing them (without being involved or absorbed into their gulf), finally becoming the witness of their phenomena and understanding them and refusing the mind's sanction even when the vital is still tossed in the whirl or the most outward physical mind still reflects the adverse suggestions. In the end these attacks lose their power and fall away from nature; the recurrence becomes feeble or has no power to last: even, if the detachment is strong enough, they can be cut out very soon or at once. The strongest attitude to take is to regard these things as what they really are: incursions of dark forces from outside taking advantage of certain openings in the physical mind or vital part, but not a real part of oneself or spontaneous creation in one's own nature. To create a confusion and darkness in the physical mind and to throw into it or awaken in it mistaken ideas, dark thoughts, false impressions is a favourite method of these assailants, and if they can get the support of the mind from over-confidence in its own correctness or the natural rightness of its impressions and inferences, then they can have a field day until the true mind reasserts itself and blows the clouds away. Another device of theirs is to awake some hurt or rankling sense of grievance in the lower parts and keep them hurt or rankling as long as possible. In that case one has to discover these openings in one's nature and learn to close them permanently to such attacks or to throw out intruders at once or as soon as possible. The recurrence is no proof of a fundamental incapacity; if one takes the right inner attitude it can and will be overcome. One must have faith in the Master of our life and works, even if for a long time He conceals Himself, and then in His own right time He will reveal His Presence.

"You have always believed in Guruvada: I would ask you then to put your faith in the Guru and the guidance and rely on the Ishwara for fulfilment, to have faith in my abiding love and affection, in the affection and divine good will and loving kindness of the Mother, stand firm against all attacks and go forward perseveringly towards the spiritual goal and the all-fulfilling and all-satisfying touch of the All-blissful, the Ishwara."

This long and loving letter infused as it were a new life-blood of hope into my resigning heart. But although I could see that by giving me a long rope he was attempting to convert my discomfiture into success—as he had done with many another—I could not yet feel strong enough to "screw my courage to the sticking place." My ego was still very much alive and blustering. Otherwise I should have joined the sports then and there if only to pass the test to which I was now subjected—as all have to at every step. And my crisis made me realise as never before, that however honest and sincere one might feel in the abstract realm of aspiration, whenever it comes to the pinch one must accept the course which will lead to the change. In other words, the last test of sincerity is not breaking out into emotional fervour which goes by the name of *bhakti*—though this too helps—but to surrender one's self-will in every shape or form. The question was not sports (or this or that) but—as it must be every time and in the last analysis—doing the Guru's will. I felt, indeed, genuinely penitent, but could not bring myself yet to bend my self-will to the Guru's. In a word, I temporised: "Why hasten to join the sports now that Gurudev and Mother have both assured that it is unnecessary? Let's wait and see..."

I do not say that everybody has to join the sports to feel that he has crossed the Rubicon. My point is that since I realised that here I reacted violently against the Guru's will, I ought to have forced myself to bow to that will rather than pamper my own. But here again all sorts of sophistries cropped up and I stayed away from the sports and went on working harder than ever—hoping that work would soften the knot of the

ego till it could be cut without too much bleeding.

Just at this time—or rather a few months later—an avowed disciple of mine fell very ill. If I were free to write about her in detail, as I would like, I could have made this one of the most interesting chapters of my Ashram-life from the point of view of the general reader, but as she is utterly opposed to my presenting her spiritual experiences to the public I will confine myself to this that in my life of varied experiences I have seldom met a stranger personality who, at so young an age, seemed so astonishingly mature for the spiritual life.* I was deeply impressed by her sincerity, truthfulness, intelligence, power of sustained work, poetical gift, capacity for spiritual experience and, above all, her incredible purity of character. But being exceedingly sensitive she has suffered much which all but ruined her health. She fell very ill in November 1949 and her condition rapidly deteriorated till her life was despaired of. Advised by Gurudev and Mother, I went to her in December. She was totally bed-ridden and could not even turn over from one side to another without help. It was now a case of touch and go. She had been vomiting blood twice a day for some time past and though after I had written to Gurudev about it the vomiting stopped, she lay bed-ridden in the last stage of prostration. When I saw her in December, 1949, she was reduced to a shadow—a ghost of her once radiant and beautiful self. Her husband was effusive in his gratefulness to me. 'Now she would recover,' they said because I had come with Gurudev's force and Mother's blessings. But when I saw her my heart utterly misgave me, for though I knew that she had already been called and chosen, I did not see how her terrible convulsions were going to be stopped. Gurudev had, indeed, written to me that she had achieved "an advanced spiritual consciousness" and added: "I will try to the end; for my experience is that even a hopeless effort in the fields of the working of the spiritual force is often better than none and can bring in the intervention of the miracle." But having been temporarily somewhat shy of the word "miracle" I wrote to him:

"You remind me, Guru, of Shelley's characterisation of 'love' as a word 'too often profaned'. I have often felt that had he been born in Indian he would have substituted the word 'miracle' for love.

"No, Guru, I have never had a strong weakness for what we, Indians, so wistfully call 'faith in miracles'. So I can only hope, against hope, that its agency may come to our rescue not just too late. For I have gathered from the doctors that she has been suffering from chronic asthma, deep thrombosis, dilatation of the heart, osteo-arthritis, low blood-pressure, utter lack of appetite, anaemia and God knows what else, still undiagnosed. So I am afraid you will have to invoke a *major miracle* if you really mean business."

But the major miracle did happen!—at the eleventh hour: she recovered. This made a difference even to my sceptic mind in that I won here a *point d'appui* for my faith in Yogic powers achieving results which I can only describe as too incredible to be discredited. But I prefer to close this episode with a relevant letter which Gurudev wrote to me at this time in reply to some questions of mine which will be easily inferred from what follows.

"I might say a word about Sri Ramkrishna's attitude with regard to the body. He seems always to have regarded it as a misuse of spiritual force to utilise it for preserving the body or curing its ailments or taking care for it. Other Yogis—I do not speak of those who think it justifiable to develop Yogic *siddhis*—have not had this complete disregard of the body: they have taken care to maintain it in good health and condition as an instrument or a physical basis for their development in Yoga. I have always been in agreement with this view: moreover, I have never had any hesitation in the use of a spiritual force for all legitimate purposes including the maintenance of health and physical life in myself and in others—that is indeed why the Mother gives flowers not only as a blessing but as a help in illness. I put a value on the body first as an instrument, *dharma-sadhana*, or, more fully, as a centre of manifested personality in action, a basis of spiritual life and activity as of all life and activity upon

* Editor's Note: It has now been decided on higher advice to make public some of the spiritual experiences referred to. See page 10 of "Mother India."

SAVITRI—Continued from opposite page

In a frozen grandeur lone and desolate
Call me not to die the great eternal Death,
Left naked of my own humanity
In the chill vast of the spirit's boundlessness.
Each creature by its nature's limits lives,
And how can one evade his native fate?
Human I am, human let me remain
Till in the Inconscient I fall dumb and sleep.
A high insanity, a chimera is this,
To think that God lives hidden in the clay
And that eternal Truth can dwell in Time,
And call to her to save our self and world.
How can man grow immortal and divine
Transmuting the very stuff of which he is made?
This wizard Gods may dream, not thinking men."
And Savitri heard the voice, the warped answer heard
And turning to her being of light she spoke:
"Madonna of light, Mother of joy and peace,
Thou art a portion of my self put forth
To raise the spirit to its forgotten heights
And wake the soul by touches of the heavens.

Because thou art, the soul draws near to God;
Because thou art, love grows in spite of hate
And knowledge walks unslain in the pit of Night.
But not by showering heaven's golden rain
Upon the intellect's hard and rocky soil
Can the tree of Paradise flower on earthly ground
And the Bird of Paradise sit upon life's boughs
And the winds of Paradise visit mortal air.
Even if thou rain down intuition's rays,
The mind of man will think it earth's own gleam,
His spirit by spiritual ego sink,
Or his soul dream shut in sainthood's brilliant cell
Where only a bright shadow of God can come:
His hunger for the eternal thou must nurse
And fill his yearning heart with heaven's fire
And bring God down into his body and life.
One day I shall return, His hands in mine
And thou shalt see the face of the Absolute.
Then shall the holy marriage be achieved,
Then shall the divine family be born.
There shall be light and peace in all the worlds."

SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME —Continued from page 7

earth, but also because, for me, the body as well as the mind and life is a part of the Divine Whole, a form of the Spirit and therefore not to be disregarded or despised as something incurable, gross and incapable of spiritual realisation or of spiritual use. Matter itself is secretly a form of the Spirit and has to reveal itself as that, can be made to wake to consciousness and evolve and realise the Spirit, the Divine within it. In my view the body as well as the mind and life has to be spiritualised or, one may say divinised so as to be a fit instrument and receptacle for the realisation of the Divine. It has its part in the Divine *lila*, even according to the Vaishnava *sadhana* in the joy and beauty of Divine Love. That does not mean that the body has to be valued for its own separate sake or that the creation of a Divine body in a future evolution of the whole being has to be contemplated as an end and not as a means—that would be a serious error which would not be admissible."

I have a special purpose in quoting this letter. Paradoxical though it may sound, I have all along had a strong streak of the other-worldly *vairagya* in my composition which was not a little responsible for my protracted struggles in the Ashram. Yet when I saw my disciple in the throes of death I could not help but pray for her recovery, as much to save her life as to get rid of my own pain. And it was only when she recovered that I realised anew as it were that no Yoga could be held to be truly satisfying to us, moderns, which despised matter as incompatible with the spirit or belittled the place of the body in spiritual life. For although Sri Aurobindo does admit that "the body is the creation of the Inconscient," he declines to accept it at its face value because "what we call the Inconscient is an appearance, a dwelling place, an instrument of a secret Consciousness or a Superconscient which has created the miracle we call the universe. Matter is the field and the creation of the Inconscient and the perfection of the operations of inconscient Matter, their perfect adaptation of means to an aim and end, the wonders they perform and the marvels of beauty they create, testify, in spite of all ignorant denial we can oppose, to the presence and power of consciousness of this Superconscience in every part and movement of the material universe. It is there in the body and its emergence in our consciousness is the secret aim of evolution and the key to the mystery of existence."*

Today his messages such as these seem to win a new vibrancy of a far deeper significance. Why—since she had not even accepted him as her Guru—did he write to me when I felt like giving up: "so long as there is the slightest shadow of a hope we must fight to the end to save her"? And why did he enjoin on me at this time to act as her Guru when I felt I could not accept anybody at the present stage of my *sadhana*?

"You can help and have helped her and others," he wrote, "and drawn them to the spiritual path and you have made many turn towards us who of their own motion would not have thought of doing so. There is a power in you to draw others like that and it seems that not only nature but the Divine has put it in you for this service and that it is quite right that you should use it for Him as you have done. There can be no harm in using His gifts for Him when it is done in the right spirit."

But why did he write like that to me, a disciple who could not look upon even one so perfect as Himself in the right spirit nor understand his encouragements? I recall, sadly, how I was depressed once because he loomed so far—almost like a mythical figure. And yet he assured me:

"It is a strong and lasting personal relation that I have felt with you ever since we met and *even before* and it is only that that has been the base of all the outward support, consideration, care and constant helping endeavour which I have always extended towards you and which could not have arisen from any tepid impersonal feeling. On my side that relation is not likely to change ever.

"Even before I met you for the first time, I knew of you and felt at once the contact of one with whom I had that relation which declares itself constantly through many lives and followed your career (all that I could hear about it) with a close sympathy and interest. It is a feeling which is never mistaken and gives the impression of one not only close to one but a part of one's existence. The Mother had not heard of you before you came here for the first time, but even on that occasion on seeing you—though without any actual meeting—she had a sympathetic contact. The relation that is so indicated always turns out to be that of those who have been together in the past and were predestined to join again (though the past circumstances may not be known) drawn together by old ties. It was the same inward recognition (apart even from the deepest spiritual connection) that brought you here. If the outer consciousness does not fully realise, it is because of the crust always created by a new physical birth that prevents it. But the soul knows all the while."

But strange as it may seem, even such a letter as this only deepened my gloom at the time. For Him who was so far-seeing and flawless to write in that strain to one who was so flawed and blind as myself! How could he have loved me as he did, a disciple who was weighed so often and found worth dismissing? What indeed had I brought to him except worry and trouble? Not only on my own account but also on that of almost everyone I have cared for? I remember how lovingly he had tried once to save another pupil of mine Srimati Uma Bose, the "Nightingale of Bengal," who died at twenty-one and, when I felt bereaved, how compassionately he consoled me! I had asked him (in 1942):

"But why did such a lovely flower fade away prematurely before even blossoming—thus casting a gloom on all who knew her and loved her for her exquisite singing and snow-pure character? And then look at the lengthening shadows all over the world! I do believe in Grace but it acts, I take it, only under certain conditions which seem exceedingly unlikely to be fulfilled by recipients such as we. So why waste your precious time and energy on such a world where the divine guidance looks almost accidental and out of place to all intents and purposes?"

He was not writing at all in those days. In fact since 1938 he had all but stopped writing to us. Yet as soon as he received my sad query—in February, 1942—he answered and an answer of light it was to my groping soul.

"The question you have put raises one of the most difficult and complicated of all problems and to deal with it at all adequately would need an answer as long as the longest chapter of *The Life Divine*. I can only state my own knowledge founded not on reasoning but on an experience that there is such a guidance and that nothing is in vain in this universe.

"If we look only at the outward facts in their surface appearance or if we regard what we see happening around us as definitive, not as processes of a moment in a developing whole, the guidance is not apparent; at most we see interventions occasional or sometimes frequent. The guidance can become evident only if we go behind appearances and begin to understand the forces at work and the way of their working and their secret significance. After all, real knowledge—even scientific knowledge—comes by going behind the surface phenomena to their hidden process and causes. It is quite obvious that this world is full of suffering, and afflicted with transience to a degree that seems to justify the Gita's description of it as this 'unhappy and transient world,' *anityam asukham*. The question is whether it is a mere creation of Chance or governed by a mechanical inconscient Law or whether there is a meaning in it and something beyond its present appearance towards which we move. If there is a meaning and if there is something towards which things are evolving, then inevitably there must be a guidance—and that means that a supporting Consciousness and Will is there with which we can come into an inner contact. If there is such a Consciousness and Will, it is not likely that it would stultify itself by annulling the world's meaning or turning it into a perpetual or eventual failure.

"This world has a double aspect. It seems to be based on a material Inconscience; error and sorrow, death and suffering are the necessary consequence. But there is evidently too, a partially successful endeavour and an imperfect growth towards Light, Knowledge, Truth, Good, Happiness, Harmony, Beauty,—at least a partial flowering of these things. The meaning of this world must evidently lie in this opposition; it must be an evolution which is leading or struggling towards higher things out of a first darker appearance. Whatever guidance there is must be given under conditions of opposition and struggle and must be leading the individual certainly, and the world presumably, towards that higher state but through the double terms of knowledge and ignorance, light and darkness, death and life, pain and pleasure, happiness and suffering; none of the terms can be excluded until the higher status is reached and established. It is not and cannot be, ordinarily, a guidance which at once rejects the darker terms, still less a guidance which brings us solely and always nothing but happiness, success and good fortune. Its main concern is with the growth of our being and consciousness, the growth towards a higher self, towards the Divine, eventually towards a higher light, Truth and Bliss; the rest is secondary, sometimes a means, sometimes a result, not a primary purpose.

"The true sense of the guidance becomes clearer when we can go deep within and see from there more intimately the play of the forces and receive intimations of the Will behind them. The surface mind can get only an imperfect glimpse. When we are in contact with the Divine or in contact with an inner knowledge and vision, we begin to see all the circumstances of our life in a new light and can observe how they all tended without our knowing it towards the growth of our being and consciousness, towards the work we had to do, towards some development that had to be made,—not only what seemed good, fortunate or successful but the struggles, failures, difficulties, upheavals. But with each person the guidance works differently according to his nature, the conditions of his life, his cast of consciousness, his stage of development, his need of further experience. We are not automata but conscious beings and our mentality, our will and its decisions, our attitude to life and demand on it, our motives and movements help to determine our course; they may lead to much suffering and evil, but through it all the guidance makes use of them for our growth in experience and consequently the development of our being and consciousness. All advance by however devious ways, even in spite of what seems a going backwards or going astray, gathering whatever experience is necessary for the soul's destiny. When we are in close contact with the Divine, a protection can come which helps or directly guides or moves us: it does not throw aside all difficulties, sufferings or dangers, but it carries us through them and out of them—except where for a special purpose there is need of the opposite.

"It is the same thing though on a larger scale and in a more complex way with the guidance of the world movement. That seems to move according to the conditions and laws or forces of the moment through

* "Perfection of the Body" by Sri Aurobindo: "Bulletin of Physical Education", April, 1949.

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constant vicissitudes, but still there is something in it that drives towards the evolutionary purpose, although it is more difficult to see, understand and follow than in a smaller and more intimate field of the individual consciousness and life. What happens at a particular juncture of the world-action or the life of humanity, however catastrophic, is not ultimately determinative. Here too one has to see not only the outward play of forces in a particular time but also the inner and secret play, the far-off outcome, the event that lies beyond and the Will at work behind it all. Falsehood and Darkness are strong everywhere on the earth, and have always been so and at times they seem to dominate; but there have also been not only gleams but outbursts of the Light. In the mass of things and the long course of Time, whatever may be the appearance of this or that epoch or movement, the growth of Light is there and the struggle towards better things does not cease. At the present time Falsehood and Darkness have gathered their forces and are extremely powerful; but even if we reject the assertion of the mystics and prophets since early times that such a condition of things must precede the Manifestation and is even a sign of its approach, yet it does not necessarily indicate the decisive victory—even temporary—of the Falsehood. It merely means that the struggle between the forces is at its acme. The result may very well be the stronger emergence of the best that can be; for the world-movement often works in that way. I leave it at that and say nothing more.

"Hashi (Uma) had reached a stage of her development marked by a predominance of the *sattwic* nature, but not a strong vital (which works towards a successful or fortunate life) or the opening to a higher light—her mental upbringing and surroundings stood against that and she herself was not ready. The early death and much suffering may have been the result of past (prenatal) influences or they may have been chosen by her own psychic being as a passage towards a higher state for which she was not yet prepared but towards which she was moving. This and the non-fulfilment of her capacities could be a final tragedy if there were this life alone. As it is, she has passed towards the psychic sleep to prepare for her life to come."

Yes, he was always like that: so ready to comply whenever I invited him to help—no matter who it was. And it was with the same kind interest that he dealt with a genius or a multi-millionaire as with a pauper or an orphan. Also he did it so spontaneously—almost as if it were the least he could do—that it was sometimes, indeed, difficult to be grateful to him or even to recognise it for compassion. How often have I wondered whether this might not have been due to his *way* of giving: he made as though he simply had to come to people's help without criticizing them at all. I wrote to him once that his way of "reforming by love as against reprimand" did remind one of Vivekananda's famous dictum: "Every step that has been really gained in the world has been gained by love; criticizing can never do any good; it has been tried for thousands of years. Condemnation accomplishes nothing."^{*}

And yet what was this love which he or Vivekananda so vividly realised? Can we ever really know from our experience of love on the human level? What was the love which made him stake everything dear to mortals for something we do not even understand—the Supermind, whose "advent" he prophesied to be "inevitable"? Some of his critics charged him with an inordinate ambition. Once I had written to him that these poohpoohed him because he was lusting for greatness and wanting to achieve something which even Krishna did not succeed in establishing on earth. To that he wrote:

"It is not for personal greatness that I am seeking to bring down the Supermind. I care nothing for greatness or littleness in the human sense. I am seeking to bring some principle of inner Truth, Light, Harmony, Peace into the earth-consciousness; I see it above and know what it is—I feel it ever gleaming down on my consciousness from above and I am seeking to make it possible for it to take up the whole being into its own native power, instead of the nature of man continuing to remain in half-light, half-darkness. I believe the descent of this Truth opening the way to a development of divine consciousness here to be the final sense of the earth-evolution. If greater men than myself have not had this vision and this ideal before them, that is no reason why I should not follow my Truth-sense and Truth-vision. If human reason regards me as a fool for trying to do what Krishna did not try, I do not in the least care. There is no question of X or Y or anybody else in that. It is a question between the Divine and myself—whether it is the Divine Will or not, whether I am sent to bring that down or open the way for its descent or at least make it possible or not. Let all men jeer at me if they will or all Hell fall upon me if it will for my presumption, I go on till I conquer or perish. This is the spirit in which I seek the Supermind, no hunting for greatness for myself or others."

Unfortunately, human nature has a penchant for sectarianism which seems to be all but ineradicable. That is why even such a soul-stirring and unexceptionable letter was misinterpreted by some who accused him of belittling Krishna's greatness! But though by nature humble to the core, he would sweep everything aside ruthlessly if and when his vision demanded it: he would then cut away from his moorings however safe and sacrosanct, and count no price too great to pay for following the inner call of his Faith. Unfortunately, we who have learnt to swear by reason have grown a little too fond of regarding faith somewhat as a Don

Quixote who may, on occasions, be lovable enough, but a little too simple to be taken seriously. But when we choose thus to let reason deride faith we forget that two can play at that game, and Faith may retort that Reason too may sometimes behave as the knight of famous folly when it

Sits on a high horse-back of argument

To tilt for ever with a wordy lance

In a mock tournament where none can win.†

But though his faith appealed to us, moderns, because it originally emerged like fecund fire out of an impact between his heart's vision and mind's doubt, I must still confess to my shame that I myself have never found it easy to keep faith with faith, as will have been borne home to my reader. But after his passing away I began dimly to see something which I can only ask those to accept who knew him for what he was. It is nothing, I repeat, but a home-coming to simple faith. It began to dawn on me now after I had turned the full circle that man at the culmination of his vision must revert to the child: to wit, those who have grown old enough in wisdom must become like simple children once again who live and grow in faith alone. To put it differently, we who have seen the "wordy futility of reason" must now hark back to faith—not in rumour and hearsay, but in the bugle-call heard by the highest spirits in every age. To us who have heard his clarion, there can be no question of rating the light of anybody else as higher in our epoch. So our faith must stay loyal to him and the Mother whom he claimed as one with him in essence, and who is dedicated to consummate what he seems to have left unaccomplished. After his withdrawal one of the messages she gave was:

"The lack of receptivity of the earth and men is mostly responsible for the decision Sri Aurobindo has taken regarding his body. But one thing is certain: what has happened on the physical plane affects in no way the truth of his teaching. All that he has said is perfectly true and remains so. Time and the course of events will prove it abundantly."

As I pondered its import I felt a deep pang: how self-willed we, his disciples, had been—now recalcitrant and unhelpful—more or less! A remark of Dostoevsky's in *The Brothers Karamazov* recurred to me which I had once dismissed as too extravagant. The great pessimist said that each of us must be held partly responsible for the total misery and suffering of the world. It was not a pleasant thought and I still wanted to argue it away. But I failed now that I for one could no longer disclaim my responsibility for the "decision" which Gurudev had had to take. But since he has taken it, it would be, at best, idle to rue our past endeavours and delinquencies. For did he not himself bequeath to us the guiding mantra of his own life in one of his most moving letters?—

"As for faith, you write as if I never had a doubt or any difficulty. I have had worse than any mind can think of. It is not because I have ignored difficulties, but because I have seen them more clearly, experienced them on a larger scale than any one living now or before me that, having faced and measured them, I am sure of the results of my work. *But even if I still saw the chance that it might come to nothing (which is impossible) I would go on unperturbed, because I would still have done to the best of my power the work that I had to do and what is so done always counts in the economy of the universe.* But why should I feel that all this may come to nothing when I see each step and where it is leading and every week and day—once it was every year and month and hereafter it will be every day and hour—brings me nearer to my goal? In the way that one treads with the greater Light above, even every difficulty gives its help and has its value and Night itself carries in it the burden of the Light that has to be."

I do not say we can hope to emulate him. But we shall be utterly false to him if we now take an attitude of false humility and say that we cannot possibly count. For it is because each of us, however, small, does count that he counted no cost in working for us sleeplessly to show us his lead of light. To be called by him is to be chosen as instruments, however inconspicuous, for his divine work, the task for which he sacrificed everything—to which he dedicated all he had and was. I cannot claim that to me personally he is still living as he is to the Mother. But since I have fundamentally believed in her always, I must refuse to believe that he can be less than living now, as that would mean that he has partly failed. To believe that would be disbelieving him since he said *he could not possibly fail*. But not to disbelieve in him is not enough, we must do his will now as never before—that is the new call of the hour to be heard every moment now. In other words, we must live every moment as *he* would have had us live when he was there to show us how. But for that to be possible we must accept to change, each of us, and follow his lead in our inmost hearts which we can only accomplish by accepting the outer lead of one whom he considered his equal: the Divine Mother, his *Shakti*, who, "alone with her self and death and destiny," shall complete what he began, because, he prophesies:

Even if he seems to leave her to her lone strength,

Even though all falters and falls and sees an end

And the heart fails and only are death and night,

God-given her strength can battle against doom

Even on a brink when Death alone seems close

*And no human strength can hinder or can help.**

(Continued on page 11)

† "Savitri": Book II, Canto X.

* "Savitri": The Book of Fate. Here "he" refers to Satyavan who is to die and "she" refers to Savitri.

IS A LIVING CONTACT WITH MIRA BAI POSSIBLE EVEN TODAY?

By Dr. INDRASEN

This is a free rendering subsequently elaborated by the author—formerly a Professor of Philosophy in Delhi—from his own Hindi article printed in "Aditi," published from the Ashram, in August, 1950. It forms the Introduction to a book shortly to be published. Selections from that book will appear in "Mother India".

Human personality is a profound and complex phenomenon. Time and time again its behaviour comes as a challenge to all known and accepted criteria of life and we look at it with wide-eyed wonder if not incredulity. The Yoga-Ashram of Sri Aurobindo with all that it stands for, spiritually, is—even apart from its spiritual outlook—very different from the normal life-movements of the world. No wonder many things, which appear abnormal and therefore unbelievable outside, are felt as normal and natural here. But what we are going to describe was, even for such an Ashram atmosphere, exceptional: the phenomenon seemed to be almost phenomenal!

About three months ago a Punjabi lady came here to our Ashram. We shall call her by her Ashram name, Indira. She came first to the Ashram in February, 1949, and then again in July. When she returned to her home she started going into what is commonly called "trance". But as the word means different things in different contexts, we shall use the Indian word *samadhi*. (Sri Aurobindo wrote to Dilip Kumar Roy last year that "her *samadhi* was of the *savikalpa* kind.") This happened mostly when Dilip Kumar sang *bhajans*, but it happened at other times as well and lasted longest, I am told, after midnight when she would, often enough remain self-absorbed, sitting upright and immobile for hours. Once in Bombay, last November, Dilip Kumar as well as many others saw her thus sitting for more than eight hours at a stretch. When Dilip Kumar sings, the *samadhi* induced lasts for about an hour or two. An American visitor sent me last year an interesting description of this which I may well utilise here by way of introduction, the more as he has given a very graphic and faithful description of what happens at such times.

"The most interesting thing I saw at Sri Aurobindo Ashram," he wrote, "was a girl, not for the usual reason because this was not a usual girl. Indira was physically an exotic-looking creature. She is in her early thirties—slender, graceful and the daughter of a multi-millionaire. When I saw her around the Ashram I was interested, but one day soon I was to be fascinated. On that day I attended an Indian music programme given by the Ashram's famous musician and poet, Dilip Kumar Roy.

"When I entered the room where the programme was to be given, I took a seat on the man's-side. Just as the music started, Indira came in on the woman's-side and seated herself, inconspicuously, back to the wall. She sat comfortably with her hands clasped around her knees and eyes closed. When Dilip's music began to warm up (religious songs with a wonderful subtle rhythm) she began to sway gently with the music. After about fifteen minutes she slowly and naturally assumed a perfect cross-legged yogic position. The swaying stopped and she got a very peaceful look on her face. I looked at her very frequently for the next hour and a half that the music continued, but never saw her move once. She was absolutely motionless except for slight easy breathing.

"When the programme was over and the audience began to disperse, Indira sat motionlessly on. I lingered behind watching her until all the guests had left. Dilip came over to me and in response to my questions divulged a minimum of information. Indira had been going into trances like this for the past year, often indeed by music or meditation. While in them she was oblivious to the outside world. Sri Aurobindo knew about them and called them belonging to the category of *savikalpa samadhi*. Frequently in this state she had visions and usually, just before awakening, she would get a beautiful smile on her face. Uninvited, I sat down to watch and wait.

"In about half an hour she coughed once and began to move her head very slightly. Then she began to smile: almost imperceptibly at first, then slowly it grew into a full lovely smile with her eyes still closed. It was a smile no artist could paint, unperturbed and peaceful, it seemed to have an inward quality, yet an outwardness bright enough to fill the room.

"In the middle of my spellbound observation, Dilip came back in the room and asked me to leave. He virtually had to use force but he modified it by saying that Indira would be embarrassed if she awoke and found anyone watching her. Most reluctantly I went down the stairs only half bolstered up by an invitation to tea that afternoon with her.

"At tea, I found that Indira, like many Hindu girls, was a very bashful conversationalist. The situation was not helped by Dilip telling me, in her presence, how shy she was. We fumbled through cream-passing and biscuit-crunching till I finally hedged around to the solid subject of her background and today's trance.

"The first bit of information that surprised me was that Dilip was her Guru—by her choice and Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's consent who are Dilip's Gurus. About a year ago Indira was on her deathbed, doctors had given her up and she was actually gasping. Dilip went there and had written to Sri Aurobindo to save her. He wrote back that divine intervention was expected. She recovered and everybody concerned attributed it to Sri Aurobindo. During this illness she had an intuitive feeling of the death of a close friend which soon after proved correct.

"The friend who died was a very close girl friend of Indira's. When the deceased girl's husband informed Indira, he chose to do so by means of a letter to Dilip with a request to break the news gently. One phrase in the letter, which Dilip let me read, stands out in my mind. After requesting him to inform Indira with the utmost tenderness it said: 'You don't know what she is.'

"When I asked her about today's trance she replied after a long pause that she saw Sri Aurobindo come and put his hand on Dilip's head.

"After we had finished tea, Dilip had to leave to do some work. Indira then became a little more communicative. She told me about her eldest son of ten years of age who is quite remarkable and reads the Gita daily and performs *pūja*, prayer etc. and I told her about my father and mother.

"She was very modest about her own spiritual development. She said that no one in her family, except her son, showed any spiritual inclination. Further she modestly stated that it had all been a gift to her. She had not worked for it and even now meditated infrequently and then not for any desire for development but because it was difficult not to meditate. Now she meditates only ten or fifteen minutes about twice a day, usually with Dilip. She said that Mother, whom she saw twice daily, had helped her a lot.

"Her manner had a humble and childlike quality to it. When I asked what sort of Yoga she followed she said she did nothing but follow her Guru's advice and keep God uppermost in her thoughts. Though she is still far from well she eats practically nothing—only a few cups of tea and a bowl of soup per day.

"Her one complaint was that people would continually barge up and ask her questions about her spiritual experiences which she couldn't possibly answer. She said, and rightly, that such people never asked her about her love experiences with her husband and yet they expected her to talk freely about her spiritual experiences which were far more intimate. She also said that she felt friendly vibrations with some people.

"The last night I was in Pondicherry, Dilip gave another music programme. I went and was surprised, shortly after the programme started, to see Indira quietly get up and leave the room. When the music came to an end I again lingered behind. Dilip knew why I stayed on and without a word went into the next room and switched on the light. There, on the floor, against the wall, was Indira sitting perfectly erect in her Buddha-like yoga-position, peaceful and motionless, with her eyes closed. Such a saintly expression was on her face that it defies description—a feeling, no, a look, a blessing just to see. Om peace Om...."

During the time her trance lasted, while she would stay utterly lost to outer consciousness, she never became unconscious herself since, on coming to, she would give a full account of all that she had seen and experienced the while, not the least interesting feature of which was her vivid encounters with Mira Bai whom she saw—day after marvellous day and large and indubitable as life—now singing, now talking, now explaining to her spiritual mysteries in similes and images—in short, discussing things with her as a friend to friend, sometimes even defending her own viewpoint against hers. And last, though not the least, Indira gave a detailed description of Mira's garments, ornaments down to little dainty moles on her neck and palm and lovely dimples that showed when she smiled—almost like a fairy story! As days passed, this relationship between the two developed till something happened which was even more surprising: Mira actually started telling her beautiful parables which took many of us by storm as it were. But to come back to her songs.

There can be little doubt that the songs which have been heard by Indira are different in style from the rest which she has composed in her normal consciousness. And their distinction lies in this that the atmosphere, or rather the *Stimmung*, they conjure up is not modern and does seem

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consonant with the character and personality of Mira even when their metres and language sound a little different from the Mira-bhajans which are extant. In fact once Mira actually told Indira, somewhat cryptically, that the songs she sang to her were as much Indira's as her own. This seems to us to be more revealing than cryptic. For although it is true that something of Indira's own personality and way of feeling does get imported into these songs it is equally true that in most of these songs (sung by Mira and registered by Indira) something else too finds admission which can have nothing to do with her present self. One reason is this: time and again has she dictated to Dilip (who took them down after her *samadhi* when she could not possibly hold a pencil) whole songs without a pause and songs which contained, as often as not, a word or two here and there which she could not understand but which were perfectly correct in their place.

Everytime such a word occurred she would ask Dilip who told her when he happened to know and, when he did not, consulted Hindi dictionaries. To give a few examples:

On 9-6-50 Indira, in her *samadhi*, heard Mira singing a song which began with a Sanscrit word स्वति: Dilip told her its meaning: a star.

On 27-6-50 she heard Mira singing the song in which occurred the word कैंद: Dilip consulted the dictionary and told her that it was derived from the Sanscrit word कुमुदिना which word also she had never heard before.

On 19-12-50 she heard the word खेर Dilip told her the meaning of the word as it is in Bengali verse, meaning tears.

On 10-11-50 she heard a song in Bombay. Mira sang to her:

उस्तत निंदा सम कर जानो-दुख सुख दिविष खेड है मानो

Dilip told her that *dividha* must be *dwividha*, but he would not puzzle out the word *ustata*. No dictionary gave any clue till he came to Allahabad where a Hindi scholar told him that the word was perfectly correct being derived from the Sanscrit word स्तुति (high praise) which in old Hindi they used to pronounce as अस्तुत: such instances need not be multiplied. So let us pass on to another topic which is in a sense even more interesting as datum. It is that sometimes she dictated metres which she could not scan properly till Dilip explained to her their structures after which she mastered them quickly enough and transcribed song after song in the newly-learnt metre with perfect ease!

Such perplexities cropped up from time to time because her knowledge of Hindi is little better than what a Punjabi-speaking person ordinarily has. For it is Urdu she had studied since her childhood days at her school and College in Lahore where she took up Persian as her second language. The Persian metres which she had learnt to love in her adolescence came here very handy later on in that they inspired the metres of some of her Urdu songs. She had, indeed, been passionately fond of poetry (in Urdu, Persian and English) but had never once felt the urge to express herself in verse before she came to the Ashram; for it was only then that Mira came to her in her *samadhi* (on 28-3-50—in the Ashram, when Dilip Kumar was singing) and sowed the magic seed in her heart's soil which was to grow rapidly into a singing tree of endless moods. No wonder she went on composing song after song till she has already totalled, I understand, more than 170 songs in about a year and a half—she who had never composed a line before her initiation!

I shall refrain from touching on her spiritual seeking as she is unwilling to make public her spiritual conflicts and aspirations. (Dilip Kumar tells me that he has his work cut out to make her consent to the publication of Mira's songs and parables.) All I am concerned with here is to testify, if I can, to the authenticity of her contact with Mira which has been deepening from day to day ever since the memorable day she first came to sing to her a year and a half ago. That is why I have taken the pains to collate the data set forth here for which I had to approach Dilip Kumar as Indira never speaks of her "experiences" with anybody except him and the Mother.

I have just one more thing to add.

One day, as I was discussing with a friend Indira's daily intercourse with Mira Bai, he remarked. "Does it mean then that Mira has not taken up another body? I ask this because if you say she has, then surely she could not have been thus available to another to be contacted day after day in this way?" In a word, he found it somewhat mystifying, and no wonder, since every true spiritual quest must start with wonderment—even bewilderment, shall I say? So there can be nothing wrong about being puzzled to start with. What is to be deprecated is our unwillingness to be spurred by our surprise, which is responsible so often for our not pursuing the quest to the end. We seek comfort of the all-too-easy elucidation at the hands of known facts and banal reasons which may indeed help us in our life of day to day but seldom throw any substantial light when we bring them to bear on supraphysical phenomena such as these. To put it differently, one who is so tethered to one's inexpansive rational intellect must find such worlds of occult experience baffling for the simple reason that the categories and the terms of the common run of experience—belonging to this our world of sense-data—must find themselves utterly out of place here. But the seeker who has an opening to or even a flair for the deeper and wider ranges of consciousness will willingly observe, watch and welcome any new data of experience which the Infinite Reality has held in store for us from the dawn of time. But as only few are, here and now, receptive to mystic or occult truths, these had to be kept hidden so far by occultists in general. With evolution, however, things must change. Did not Christ himself prophesy: "There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known"? Mira has said the same thing to Indira again and again and promised to tell us more and more about the deeper spiritual verities. And she has kept her word, launching into parables with comments on their implications, so that a deeper insight may grow among those at least who thirst to plumb the depths of the Spirit—a prospect which all true seekers must acclaim. So I shall leave it at that and conclude with a few extracts from three letters which Sri Aurobindo wrote by way of commentary to Dilip Kumar last year when Indira's mystic experiences first began to crystallize.

"There is nothing impossible," he wrote in the first, "in Mira Bai manifesting in this way through the agency of Indira's trance, provided she (Mira) is still sufficiently in touch with this world to accompany Krishna where He manifests and in that case there would be no impossibility either in her taking the part she did in Indira's vision of her and her action. If Indira wrote in a Hindi with which she was not ordinarily familiar or in which she was not used to write and it was under the influence of Mira Bai, that would be a fairly strong evidence of the reality of Mira Bai's presence and influence on her." (7-5-50)

"It is evident," he explained in another letter, "that Indira is receiving inspiration for her Hindi songs from the Mira of her vision and that her consciousness and the consciousness of Mira are collaborating on some plane superconscious to the ordinary human mind: an occult plane; also this influence is not an illusion but a reality, otherwise the thing could not happen as it does in actual fact. Such things do happen on the occult plane, they are not new and unprecedented." (2-6-50)

"In any case," he added, "the poems Mira Bai has written through Indira — for that much seems to be clear — are beautiful and the whole phenomenon of Indira writing in a language she does not know well... is truly remarkable and very convincing of the genuineness of the whole thing. The Mother has sanctioned the publication of her poems in our Press and so that would be all right." (11-6-50)*

These words of Sri Aurobindo can give us a complete guidance. And naturally, we should look forward to some fresh additions to our experience in Indira's spiritual evolution, the more as the Mother herself has recently added her verdict to his, endorsing her supraphysical experiences as "genuine" and observed that she has a "remarkable power of true vision."

* The Mother read these extracts with the closing paragraph and put her final seal on them on 2-8-51.

SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME —Continued from page 9

A new faith burgeoned deep down in my core as the new vista opened when I beheld for the last time his radiant face lying in the repose of *Yoganidra* with a light on it which seemed reluctant to leave him.

Then I saw the Mother, "too unlike the world she came to help and save." She said to me: "Sri Aurobindo is here, with us, as living as ever."

I confess I did not quite know at the time how to take it, but this I was sure of—that she could never utter a vain platitude, far less bow to what was not flawlessly true. I felt near to her as never before. To do now what she wants has suddenly grown not only incumbent but a simple act of joy. But this time I was determined not to achieve what I had to in a half-hearted way, nor stay satisfied with a mere inner surrender to the Guru's will. The inner resolve has, at some time or other, to be tested by outer action. So I joined the sports.

To the general reader this may well sound almost like an anti-climax.

But those who have experienced how easily the easy becomes difficult in Yoga—because the ego, getting aggravated, will contest every inch of ground before yielding—will guess why I refer to it.

But nothing that is done in a true spirit of offering can seem trivial to the Divine Witness of all that we think, will or do. And though the Goal is still far and the path precipitous, in rare moments one does feel, even in this stifling world, a sense of liberation—acruing through a strange dispensation of a Wisdom too far to be hailed as kin and too real to be dismissed as the mere fantasy of a chance mood. And it can become more than a glimpse only if we aspire after it as steadfastly as we can. For then alone shall we break the bars of the cage against which the prisoned Bird of fire beats its wings: or shall I say the cage will be transformed into a temple of Love, claiming kinship with the skies of Light?

(THE END)

BOOKS in the BALANCE

THE ROMANCE OF INDIAN EMBROIDERY

By Kamala S. Dongerkery

(Thacker & Co., Bombay. Rs. 12/8)

Embroidery: a suggestive and fascinating word, almost onomatopoeic! Embroidery is to spinning and weaving what growing roses is to growing paddy and cabbages. It is of little use, but of immeasurable value. It is a child of the imagination, and its foster parents are a sense of beauty and infinite industry. Homo Sapiens celebrated most visibly his emergence from the Forest by the art of clothing. In this basic art, embroidery is India's distinctive contribution to civilized life. But Indian embroidery had long to wait for a laureate worthy of the theme. Now at last it has found one in Mrs. Kamala Dongerkery, whose book is meritorious and satisfying from almost every point of view.

Mrs. Dongerkery's qualifications for writing a memoir on Indian Embroidery are beyond cavil. She knows her subject thoroughly, she has at once seized it with her heart and studied it with her mind, she has allowed the theme to grow and gain life and form in the fulness of time, she has not spurned the labours of Mr. Dryasdust, and she has not spared herself in getting her material from a variety of sources and in seeking the advice of people entitled to speak with authority. Further, she is an artist herself, she paints and sings and writes poetry, she has long been actively associated with the Women's Movement in Bombay and in India, and she has already given proof of her taste and her editorial tact in her first book, *Juvenile Literature in India*. Embroidery is a peculiarly feminine art, and it is appropriate that Mrs. Dongerkery should be its historian and interpreter.

In his learned Introduction to the book, Dr. Ghurye has set Embroidery in its right relation with other fine arts, and Indian Embroidery in its proper place in world art. The House of Beauty is one, yet are there many distinctive Halls—and divers exhibits in each of them—making that sum. Indian Embroidery could be studied with reference to Time—a matter of 3000 or more years—or with reference to space, extending from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari, from Sind to Bengal. Change in fashion, and in taste, variety in subject-matter and rendering, these are obvious enough, and Mrs. Dongerkery duly notes them at the relevant places. But Indian Embroidery, "trailing clouds of glory from the Vedic past," has an underlying unity of its own, and this too is insinuated over and over again. And, casting her glance into the future, Mrs. Dongerkery wisely points out that "designs which have survived the vicissitudes of political change and withstood the ravages of time by virtue of their symbolic national character, such as the *gopuram*, the chariot, the swan, the lotus, the elephant, the peacock, the Chalukyan goose, the mango and the chenar leaf must be popularized and adapted to changing conditions without loss of their special characteristics."

Mrs. Dongerkery has singled out for special attention these significant varieties of Indian Embroidery, each of which claims a separate chapter: *Kasida* of Kashmir, *Phulkari* of the Punjab, *Kasuti* of Karnatak, and

Chikankari of Uttar Pradesh. A single paragraph, and the qualities that distinguish the different types are carefully differentiated:

"It has been pointed out that the embroidery of Kashmir represents the colourful and ravishing scenes of nature that abound in that paradise on earth, that the embroidery of Sind, Cutch and Kathiawar bespeaks the pomp and pageantry of a princely order that is fast disappearing, and that the *kasuti* of the Karnatak is a manifestation of the spiritual and religious yearnings of a sober people who have a strong disinclination to give up their domestic surroundings. The simple, yet beautiful, *chikankari* of the Gangetic plains too must have its own message for the people, no doubt. Would it be wide of the mark if a suggestion was made that the purity of the waters of the holy rivers is reflected in *chikankari*?"

The chapters on Gold and Silver Embroidery, and the miscellaneous types of embroidery current in Bengal, Travancore and elsewhere complete the survey. Andhra, Tamil Nad and Orissa do not figure in the picture; the author, however, consoles us by saying that "this zone is better known for its textiles, prints, and matting... Where the handloom thrives, embroidery recedes into the background."

Not the least valuable part of Mrs. Dongerkery's book is the fine bunch of illustrations—many of them in colour—which backs her argument and justifies her enthusiasm. Rapt minutes or whole hours may be spent in gazing at or studying these varied examples of Indian Embroidery—the Kashmiri floral borders, for instance, or the Kathiawar Toran, or the Hasina Kamala and similar *kasuti* miniatures, or the richly executed *kamdani* or *Kinkhab*, not to mention the magnificent *kasuti* pattern that adorns the jacket. Mrs. Dongerkery has chosen her exhibits with taste, and the printers have also made a good job of it and given us, not distortions, but fair semblances of the original glories in form and colour.

In the concluding chapter, Mrs. Dongerkery takes a guarded peep into the future of Indian Embroidery and offers many fruitful suggestions with a view to ensuring the continued good health of this fine indigenous art. Literature, it has been said, flourishes best when it is half a trade and half an art. It doesn't mean, however, that it is less an art for being half a trade; only, in our desire to live the good life we shouldn't scuttle life itself. The blight of indifference can effectively kill the first spring buds of art; and mechanization and mass-production, although they can give us toy nightingales in plenty, will drive the living nightingales into the jungle of oblivion. Dean Inge once declared that one of the cures for the soullessness that our industrial civilization has made universally current is a determined revival of handicrafts, the love of unique handmade goods, and the cultivation of personality. Quiet, patient, peasant workers, mostly women, who spend long hours in the creation

WE TWO TOGETHER

By James and Margaret Cousins

(Ganesh & Co. Ltd., Madras. Rs. 20 or 30s. or \$ 5)

Biographies and autobiographies are beginning to be common and personalities in the varied fields of arts, science and sports are making their influence felt in this delightful branch of literature. Osbert Sitwell, Neville Cardus, De Mauriers and James Agate are a few who have won thousands of readers. *We Two Together* by James and Margaret Cousins is of double autobiographical interest; it is a novel method of autobiography in which one tells the story where the other ends. With a beautiful concurrence of two styles, it reflects the versatile talents of two interesting social workers of Ireland who came to India during the first Great War and have gone through the vicissitudes that are the lot of all reformers, including imprisonment and slander, but they live zestfully and breathe the air of a Free India. For nearly half a century they have toiled together to remake the countries in which they travelled after their heart's desire, and they have more than succeeded during their sojourn in three continents where they did pioneering work in social, cultural and political spheres and met eminent persons of the East and West. Destined as they were to help pilot the ship of India through troublous waters, as Annie Besant and some others also were, Benjamin, Dr. James and Margaret Cousins will be remembered in the evening of their life as fit representatives of the Orient with a message of love and goodwill to all.

Dr. James Cousins played no small part in Ireland, England, America, Japan and India as poet and art critic, and his works are models of their kind. As a friend of James Joyce whom he knew intimately, he could speak authoritatively on this Irish stylist and pull to pieces those who spoke of him familiarly and disparagingly in America. As a playwright Dr. Cousins wrote successful dramas in Ireland and renewed his dramatic activity when he came to India. As one who staged dramas and played leading roles with William Yeats, he has a world of experience to relate... As a shorthand reporter, a novelty in those days, he was rewarded with two guineas for reporting one of Bernard Shaw's speeches in which he brought out his wit and humour that have since charmed the world. As a young man he had his ambitions and was no stranger to romance. When he met Margaret he proposed to her though she was not quite happy about it for a time. But she did not want to die an old maid and she loved poetry and James was a

poet. She married him. The life of Margaret was by no means an easy one. As a sponsor of women's rights in Ireland and England she had her share of sufferings. She had the satisfaction of composing liturgy for church service and preached at times in a church exclusively meant for women. When she came to India with her husband she continued the good work done for women abroad and alleviated the distress of Indian women and got herself into trouble. Though she was imprisoned for twelve long months she remained undaunted and did her work as social reformer there, teaching the inmates the principles of hygiene and service to humanity. She then went to America to learn about household science in addition to what she had learnt in Lady Irwin College, Delhi and her researches on vegetable and other diets in America made her an interesting and welcome figure in the Old and New Worlds. As a child, Margaret Cousins showed a precocity for music and she has continued to charm her hearers who comprise all classes of people. The first woman Magistrate of India, she wielded justice with an even hand and won respect of the senior judges. There is no sphere of life which she has not filled with credit; and with her husband she will win a niche in this glorious land which she has made her home. Tagore, Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu were the grateful admirers of them both.

After 35 years' service in India and a chequered past the two have dreams of a future that is unborn. As Dr. Cousins says in conclusion to his final chapter—"Descent And Thereafter":

And so it happens that, as the signal goes down some distance from terminus, short or long as the distance may be, we realise—one at 77, the other at 72—that the values of life have a way of arranging themselves in an order that alters, sometimes reverses, the two easily accepted categories of life, and one comes face to face with ultimate realities. For ourselves, we have long anticipated the realities by looking for light in darkness and for ends in beginnings...

And thus ends the autobiography—a beautiful summing up of two unselfish persons who dedicated themselves to the service of humanity and pulled together in spite of temperamental differences.

WILLIAM HOOKENS.

of new forms and grades of beauty need encouragement, and their work deserves to be recompensed in adequate measure. If in our purblindness we fail in this duty, Monotony Street will stretch endlessly before us, and beauty will for ever pass away from our midst. The Chinese King, in Anderson's immortal story, realized at long last that the living nightingale meant beauty and joy and life, while the toy nightingale, born of Science and Big Business, meant only progressive disillusionment and sure death. Like Embroidery, there are many other indigenous arts which are

languishing for lack of popular support; and it is time our cultural renaissance took a total view of our limitations and discontents and planned to set our house in order. Mrs. Dongerkery has done a great service to Indian Embroiderers, and indeed to Art in India. Having eyes we have long refused to see; it would be suicidal if we still persisted in our folly and refused to see Beauty, cherish it and take the measures necessary to make it one of the ruling principles of our national life.

K.R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR