

MOTHER INDIA

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"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

ALTERNATE SATURDAYS

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SRI AUROBINDO ON "SAVITRI"

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(Continued)

I have said that Overhead poetry is not necessarily greater or more perfect than any other kind of poetry. But perhaps a subtle qualification may be made to this statement. It is true that each kind of poetical writing can reach a highest or perfect perfection in its own line and in its own quality and what can be more perfect than a perfect perfection or can we say that one kind of absolute perfection is "greater" than another kind? What can be more absolute than the absolute? But then what do we mean by the perfection of poetry? There is the perfection of the language and there is the perfection of the word-music and the rhythm, beauty of speech and beauty of sound, but there is also the quality of the thing said which counts for something. If we consider only word and sound and what in themselves they evoke, we arrive at the application of the theory of art for art's sake to poetry. On that ground we might say that a lyric of Anacreon is as good poetry and as perfect poetry as anything in Aeschylus or Sophocles or Homer. The question of the elevation or depth or intrinsic beauty of the thing said cannot then enter into our consideration of poetry; and yet it does enter, with most of us at any rate, and is part of the aesthetic reaction even in the most "aesthetic" of critics and readers. From this point of view the elevation from which the inspiration comes may after all matter, provided the one who receives it is a fit and powerful instrument; for a great poet will do more with a lower level of the origin of inspiration than a smaller poet can do even when helped from the highest sources. In a certain sense all genius comes from Overhead; for genius is the entry or inrush of a greater consciousness into the mind or a possession of the mind by a greater power. Every operation of genius has at its back or infused within it an intuition, a revelation, an inspiration, an illumination or at the least a hint or touch or influx from some greater power or level of conscious being than those which men ordinarily possess or use. But this power has two ways of acting: in one it touches the ordinary modes of mind and deepens, heightens, intensifies or exquisitely refines their action but without changing its modes or transforming its normal character; in the other it brings down into these normal modes something of itself, something supernormal, something which one at once feels to be extraordinary and suggestive of a superhuman level. These two ways of action when working in poetry may produce things equally exquisite and beautiful, but the word "greater" may perhaps be applied, with the necessary qualifications, to the second way and its too rare poetic creation.

The greater bulk of the highest poetry belongs to the first of these two orders. In the second order there are again two or perhaps three levels; sometimes a felicitous turn or an unusual force of language or a deeper note of feeling brings in the Overhead touch. More often it is the power of the rhythm that lifts up language that is simple and common or a feeling or idea that has often been expressed and awakes something which is not ordinarily there. If one listens with the mind only or from the vital centre only, one may have a wondering admiration for the skill and beauty of woven word and sound or be struck by the happy way or the power with which the feeling or idea is expressed. But there is something more in it than that; it is this that a deeper, more inward strand of the consciousness has seen and is speaking, and if we listen more profoundly we can get something more than the admiration and delight of the mind or Housman's thrill of the solar plexus. We can feel perhaps the Spirit of the universe lending its own depth to our mortal speech or listening from behind to some expression itself, listening perhaps to its memories of

Old unhappy far-off things

And battles long ago

or feeling and hearing, it may be said, the vast oceanic stillness and the cry of the cuckoo

*Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides*

or it may enter again into Vyasa's

*A void and dreadful forest ringing with the crickets' cry
Vanam pratibhayam sūnyam jhīllikāgaṇaninādātam*

or remember its call to the soul of man,

Anityam asukham lokam imam prāpya bhajasva mām

*Thou who hast come to this transient and unhappy world,
love and worship Me.*

There is a second level on which the poetry draws into itself a fuller language of intuitive inspiration, illumination or the higher thinking and feeling. A very rich or great poetry may then emerge and many of the most powerful passages in Shakespeare, Virgil or Lucretius or the Mahabharata and Ramayana, not to speak of the Gita, the Upanishads or the Rig Veda have this inspiration. It is a poetry "thick inlaid with patines of bright gold" or welling up in a stream of passion, beauty and force. But sometimes there comes down a supreme voice, the Overmind voice and the Overmind music and it is to be observed that the lines and passages where that happens rank among the greatest and most admired in all poetic literature. It would be therefore too much to say that the Overhead inspiration cannot bring in a greatness into poetry which could surpass the other levels of inspiration, greater even from the purely aesthetic point of view and certainly greater in the power of its substance.

A conscious attempt to write overhead poetry with a mind aware of the planes from which this inspiration comes and seeking always to ascend to those levels or bring down something from them, would probably result in a partial success; at its lowest it might attain to what I have called the first order, ordinarily it would achieve the two lower levels of the second order and in its supreme moments it might in lines and in sustained passages achieve the supreme level, something of the highest summit of its potency. But its greatest work will be to express adequately and constantly what is now only occasionally and inadequately some kind of utterance of the things above, the things beyond, the things behind the apparent world and its external or superficial happenings and phenomena. It would not only bring in the occult in its larger and deeper ranges but the truths of the spiritual heights, the spiritual depths, the spiritual intimacies and vastnesses as also the truths of the inner mind, the inner life, an inner or subtle physical beauty and reality. It would bring in the concreteness, the authentic image, the inmost soul of identity and the heart of meaning of these things, so that it could never lack in beauty. If this could be achieved by one possessed, if not of a supreme, still of a sufficiently high and wide poetic genius, something new could be added to the domain of poetry and there would be no danger of the power of poetry beginning to fade, to fall into decadence, to fail us. It might even enter into the domain of the infinite and inexhaustible, catch some word of the Ineffable, show us revealing images which bring us near to the Reality that is secret in us and in all of which the Upanishad speaks,

*Anejad ekam manaso javiyo nainad devā āpnūvan pūrvām
arshat . . .*

Tad ejati tan naijati tad dāre tud u antike.

*The One unmoving is swifter than thought, the gods cannot
overtake It, for It travels ever in front; It moves and It moves
not, It is far away from us and It is very close.*

The gods of the Overhead planes can do much to bridge that distance and to bring out that closeness, even if they cannot altogether overtake the Reality that exceeds and transcends them. (1946)

Concluded

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA*

By SISIR KUMAR MITRA

Ancient Indian writers spoke of their country as a land abounding in all things that could be on earth, created by Nature and man. And this they said simply to express their feeling inspired by the stupendous size of their motherland, her immense natural wealth, her diverse physical features, the marvellous achievements of her creative genius, and above all, by the concept of the Mother in which India is hailed by her children as their beloved object of adoration, as an embodiment of a benevolent power of God sustaining her own millions and the world's by her inexhaustible resources, material and spiritual. Indeed, India possesses in herself everything that can beautify and enrich the body and soul of the earth. Travellers and pilgrims from other lands have marvelled at the vastness and variety of her form, the uniqueness and profundity of her thought.

Moreover, there is the other reason why through the ages India has been held to be a country which has a deep meaning for the future of all humanity. In the very dawn of her history came to her seers the vision that India was a Truth-Idea of exceptional significance. It is this vision which has been ever at work as the basic motivating force behind everything the race has done to express its soul through the manifold activities of its creative life.

'One of the oldest races and greatest civilisations on this earth,' in the words of Sri Aurobindo, 'the most indomitable in vitality, the most fecund in greatness, the deepest in life, the most wonderful in potentiality,' India is equally supreme in her epic quest for those eternal values whose discovery and devoted pursuit by her children have given its character to their mind and constitute India's outstanding contribution to the spiritual advancement of the human race. From this inward tendency of their mind Indians have derived much of their strength and genius as a race.

Here is a country which found its soul almost when its history began. Here is a people who even in those dim days strove by the light of its country's soul to illumine every form of its creation, every phase of its individual and collective life. It is this inwardness of India's evolution which is the true meaning of her history, the meaning also of her aims and aspirations. To grasp it we have to understand the truth of the many-sidedness of her racial life as also the truth of her varied physical configuration, since these are visioned by her seers as the many facets of the One, diverse manifestations of the basic integrity of her soul, which expressing itself in her life, culture, and even in her physical form, has shaped and sustained the historical development of India. Integrity thrives best on diversity which is Nature's way of progress.

Mystic Himalaya

The face of India reflects the lavishness and abandon with which Nature has showered her bounties upon her,—a fact not without its bearing on the evolution of India's history and culture. Her geographical divisions have each its own story to tell. And what a romance there is about every one of them! She has on her north the heaven-kissing Himalaya with ranges extending over a length of 1600 miles and an average width of 250, having spurs thrown southward at both ends. The most rugged region on the earth's surface, it has a large number of heights at least forty of which exceed 24000 feet, the topmost in the world—Mount Everest—being 29000. An outstanding characteristic of India's physiography, 'this mountain continent' stands in all its majestic splendour as her eternal sentinel, a silent and solemn witness to the chequered march of her history, a formidable natural barrier to any large-scale aggression from outside, though there are passes in it, not easy enough but nonetheless joining the country to its neighbours on the north-east and north-west. It is through these narrow defiles that foreign incursions from the Greeks to the Mongols disturbed the tranquillity of India quite a number of times. Maybe, they were intended by Nature to keep the country ever on the alert or to rouse it to activity when it lapsed into lethargy or, what was but too natural, got absorbed in spiritual contemplation, and neglected the secular obligations of life. A standing temptation to plunder and conquest, these passes made possible India's commercial and cultural intercourse with countries beyond her borders: and side by side with her commodities, travelled her ideas from very early times to various parts of Europe and Asia. These defiles therefore are sacred to the memory of those cultural ambassadors of India who hazarded the perilous journey across the rugged mountains in order to carry the torch of their country's lore to distant lands; sacred alike to the memory of the devout pilgrims from abroad who cheerfully underwent similar hardships to be able to visit the holy places of India and sit at the feet of her wise men for the invaluable knowledge, of which they were then the sole custodians.

From time immemorial the Himalaya has been the abode of those seekers who, when the call comes to them, shake off all worldly attractions

* By this is meant the India of the ages with her culture and civilisation and not the political India of the present day. The geographical names have been used in their original Sanskrit form.

and go into its secluded retreats in order to contemplate on the One, the Infinite and the Eternal. The mystic calm that pervades its atmosphere and dominates its peaks, valleys, woods and caverns has always its subtle touch on the soul of man in quest of the Supreme. Indians feel that the influence of this region pervades the whole country. The veneration in which the Himalaya is held by our people shows how deeply it has stamped itself on their consciousness. For its snowy expanses, vast lakes, lofty peaks, and numerous beauty spots that capture the imagination, the Himalaya is pictured in ancient Indian literature as the very heart of the universe, the home of gods and goddesses. According to the Vishnu Purana, Brahma, the creator, has in this region his throne which is shaped like the seed-vessel of a lotus. There is another legend in which the Himalaya is regarded as a god whose daughter Parvati practised severe penances in order to be accepted by Shiva as his spouse. The story describes how her wish was fulfilled.

A solemn spectacle of Nature in deep meditation—this is the Himalaya, even to the outer eye. In occult knowledge, it stands for the ascending hill of existence on the peak of which one can meet the Divine. The Rig Veda assigns to Mujavant—a peak of the Himalaya—the birthplace of Indra, the King of the gods of mind, who symbolises the spiritual mind in its upward quest that starts growing towards the Divine from this peak where it has had its first contact with Him. It is significant that the Rig Veda regards the same peak as the source of Soma, the symbol of divine bliss, attainable by man when he has risen to a higher level of consciousness.

The Himalaya is indeed a great force in the growth of India's spirituality and culture, for from this lofty home of countless seers, saints and seekers have flowed thought-currents of Truth, vision and experience, carrying with them into the atmosphere below something of the fire and serenity of their soul, inspiring, enriching and elevating the vast field of spiritual culture that India has been from end to end.

Even in the farthest corners of south India, the Hindu regards the Himalaya as a devotee views the temple of his deity. The Himalaya is the meeting-ground of all the monastic orders of India. To its far-famed but not easily accessible holy places flock, from all parts of India, devotees in their thousands, regardless of the risks and rigours of the journey. The Himalaya and its peaks are for man an irresistible lure of the unknown; its heights with their majestic calm and mystic solitudes are as much a call to the religious spirit in man as its peaks, the yet unconquered Gauri Shringa (Everest), in particular, are a challenge to his spirit of daring and adventure. This abode of snows—that is the literal sense of Himalaya's name—is no less a romance to the anthropologists many of whom have, on the basis of positive proofs, declared it as the cradle of man where he evolved into his 'modern' form,—a fact whose bearing on India's history is equally important.

The Himalaya has always been a perennial source of inspiration to the artists of India. The styles of India's architecture, particularly of the sacred type, the symbolic modes of her sculptural figuration, have, many of them, derived from the ideas in which this king of mountains is visualised. Mention may be made of the works of two master-painters of India. In one of his Himalayan studies, Nandalal Bose presents a snowy range with its peaks as the profile of a face which is of Shiva absorbed in meditation. Here the greatest artist of modern India pours out his heart's devotion in a worshipful vision of Girisha, the Lord of mountains, which is the title of the picture. A critic characterised this picture as the soul of the Himalaya. Into some of his typical sketches of the Himalaya Promodekumar Chattopadhyaya throws a suggestion of the mystic calm that lends a solemnity to its secluded regions. Something of the peace felt in the Himalaya is caught in his fine pictures by Nicholas Roerich, the famous Russian artist and explorer, who lived in the Himalaya and had wonderful experiences. In the course of describing them, he has also spoken of the strange phenomena of light which he often witnessed and for which obviously he called the Himalaya an 'abode of light', a fitting culmination, without doubt, of his consciousness which read in the Himalaya 'the symbol of ascent'. No less indebted is India's Muse to this holy mountain. There are few poets of classical India who were not moved by its unique grandeur, or by its various influences. Kalidasa, the greatest of them, struck by its stupendous size, called it 'earth's measuring rod'. To another poet it is Eternal Himalaya which rises, tier upon tier, to look, as it were, into the mysteries of heaven. The wonder, beauty and sublimity of the Himalaya have found their exquisite expression in the poetry of modern India's greatest poet in Bengali, Tagore. Thus does this wonderful mountain figure in the historic cultural development of India.

The climate of the country also is very considerably determined by the position and shape of the Himalaya. It shelters the country from the cold northern winds, rendering it warmer and more tropical than it might otherwise have been. The valuable forest and water-power resources of the Himalaya have much to do with India's material prosperity. The towering pines that cover wide stretches of its regions supply a valuable

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variety of wood whose by-products are equally important. And the waters that take their rise in it carry its rich elements to fertilize the plains turning them into a source of the proverbial wealth of the country. It is one of these rivers, the Sindhu (Indus), that has given India her modern name—India, Hindusthan or Hind.

In the western portion of the Himalayan range, there rise close to each other two principal rivers, the Sindhu and the Brahmaputra, the former with its tributaries turning southward through the Punjab, and the latter bursting through the main axis of the range at the north-eastern angle, and entering the provinces of Assam and Bengal. The system of the Sindhu along with the region watered by it is important for what it has contributed to the growth of India both historically and materially. Its frequent mention in the Rig Veda, the earliest spiritual literature of India and the world, and its association with the religious and cultural movements of the early Aryas are proof enough of its bearing on the progress and expansion of ancient India. Recent excavations have brought to light relics of several well-built cities more than five thousand years old, provided with the most modern amenities. They show to what a high degree of culture the Indians attained in those early days whose complete history has yet to be written. The valley of the Sindhu and its adjoining regions have, it is believed, considerably changed in their climate from the time when these cities flourished. They were certainly not as dry as they are today. Nevertheless, they are even now rich enough in their productivity of wheat which is their principal crop and one of the best varieties in the whole world. The Brahmaputra valley in Assam, though quite rich, has not developed to any appreciable extent. The river is rather abrupt in its course and there is often a waste marshy belt on its either side, but the near-by flat-lands are very fertile, and farther away are the gentle slopes of the hills where tea grows in plenty. It is not on this river that Assam depends for its water supply. Assam's rainfall is phenomenal; in Cherrapunji, it is as much as 500 inches per year. Ancient Sanskrit literature mentions Pragjyotish—the old name of Assam—as a powerful and civilised region, the centre of movements and events that led to racial and cultural intermingling of no small importance to Indian history. Famous all the world over, its silk is its most important cottage industry.

Creative Plains Of Plenty

But Assam and the Punjab are two extremities of the Sindhu-Ganga plain extending over a flat region about 2000 miles long and 300 miles broad, gradually narrowing down to 90 miles in its eastern extremity. The whole plain is watered by the river-systems of the Sindhu, the Ganga and the Brahmaputra. The Sindhu and the Brahmaputra run each a course of about 1700 miles, and the Ganga a little over 1500. The principal geological factor responsible for the wonderful fertility of this plain is that it had once been a sea-bed and when large-scale upheavals had pushed back the sea, there remained the basins of the great rivers which were silted up by the alluvium brought down during thousands of years.

These basins gradually formed into their present shape and became one of the most fertile regions of the earth producing in abundance what man needs for his food and clothing. And the surplus constitutes India's foreign trade—another source of her fabulous wealth in the past. This productivity is even more remarkable in the lower regions of the east where besides the rivers which water most of them, rainfall is the heaviest, and rice and jute grow in plenty. But the rainfall begins to decrease as we go westward till it becomes as scanty as not even three inches a year in the upper Sindhu, affecting, as a consequence, the climate which from a tolerably mild one in the east changes to the extreme heat and cold in the northwest, and to desert dryness in the west. The desert of Rajputana, though part of the sea-bed which formed the Sindhu-Ganga plain, remained arid and barren, no freshwater stream flowing through it. Yet, in later days it became the habitation of a sturdy warlike people who had a large share in the development of India's history.

Thus is set by Nature the stage on which has been enacted a great part of the drama of India's history. It is a tract which has a romance of its own, a meaning and a purpose which reveal themselves as scene after scene of human activity is unrolled in the unending scroll of Time. It is these activities, the great endeavours of the people inhabiting this plain, that give richness, colour and variety to their existence and help them to grow towards the fulfilment of their destiny as a nation in a future even greater than their glorious past. For, this is the deepest aim of evolutionary Nature in whatever man has done in history. In India she made this region so highly favourable to a life of peace and contentment that there might grow here a race with sufficient leisure and inclination to apply itself with vigour and intensity to the attainment of the higher ends of life through the development of their many-sided potentialities. And we know how this intention of Nature is fulfilled in that a large part of the Indian civilisation is the creation of people mothered by the rivers of this region, the rivers which are also the mothers of much of India's material prosperity. Men of this region have always lived a life of opulence and plenty. And from their continued creative efforts through the ages have resulted a rich output of cultural achievements that have enriched human progress

generally.

Here arose empires, kingdoms and republics administered by wise and benevolent rulers who built their states into ideal organisations of service of the people for their all-round advancement. Here were those famous centres of learning where pursuit of knowledge was exalted to or culminated in a devoted quest for the supreme values of life in the Spirit. This is the land hallowed by the lives and teachings of those Incarnations of God, of God-men and God-lovers, of saints and sages, who gave away without stint the priceless treasures of heaven they brought down for the spiritual uplift of mankind. Here lived seers who have revealed their vision of the Truth in the greatest and oldest mystic poetry of the world; epic and classic poets who have shed eternal lustre on India's literature; thinkers and philosophers who founded famous schools of thought which have ever remained master-creations of the Indian mind; makers of law who formulated religious and social systems which for millenniums have been governing the life of the Indian people; political idealists who envisaged a perfect state of corporate life. And what these masters produced are those monumental works in Sanskrit and its many derivatives,—indisputably the largest imaginable literature for a single country in the world. They are an everlasting tribute to the amazing creative genius of those masters, the stream of whose activities flowed freely over a long stretch of more than four thousand years. And does not every work of theirs testify to their robust spirituality and virile mind?

Here, in this plain, stand even to this day the capital cities of ancient India which, along with towns and cities on the banks of the Sindhu and the Ganga and their tributaries, trace their origin far back to a hoary past, cities which may not now retain their pristine grandeur, but which still bear unmistakable signs and suggestions of their magnificent past. Here as we move east, west or north-west, we come across monuments, relics and antiquities—only a very small part of what would have been there, had proper excavations been done in all the sites—temples and monasteries, stupas and pillars, sculptures and paintings—all reminiscent of the unbelievably intense and stupendous artistic efforts of the people inspired by the religious fervour of their soul. Here have met and mingled races, clans and tribes in an ocean-oneness of humanity to make up the homogeneous whole of a common nation which India is today. Here has taken place the grand synthesis of ideas and cultures under the dynamic influence of India's soul. It is in this region that battles were fought and old regimes changed, giving place to new. It was here again that after more than four millenniums of continual cultural activity India became exhausted and, cut off from her primal life-current, fell a prey to foreign aggressors who ruled over her political destiny for more than six hundred years: yet, this decline in her collective life did not appreciably affect her creative genius which has ever gone on expressing itself in newer forms and we find it today perhaps no less active than in her great past.

The Sindhu-Ganga plain is the most populous region of India. In ancient inscriptions and literature parts of it are called by various names of which *Brahmaputra*, *Aryavarta* and *Uttarpatha* are more prominent. Each of these significant names has a history behind it. The first is derived from the belief of the ancients that the gods used to be present there at the sacrifices offered in their honour. The second refers to the existence in it of the Aryas who made it the base of their operations in their campaigns to bring the whole of northern India under the unifying discipline of Aryan culture. The third implies the northern path of the Aryas. In fact, all the three and a few others indicate the regions which, one after another, became the seats of the Aryas in their eastward march. The Sindhu-Ganga plain is the natural nursery of Indian history. Where in the whole world is there such a vast area of 300,000 sq. miles, so rich and so culturally creative almost in every part of it, and maintaining that creativity for so many thousands of years?

The most important river in this plain is the Ganga which figures so prominently in the religious consciousness of Hindu India. *The Imperial Gazetteer of India* has some very weighty words to say about this holy river. No river on the surface of the globe can compare with the Ganga in sanctity. And there is not a river in the world which has influenced humanity or contributed to the growth of material civilisation or of social ethics to such an extent as the Ganga. The wealth of India has accumulated in her valley; and profound ideas of spiritual philosophy, conceived on its shady banks, have winged their way far and wide for the guidance of the world. It may be mentioned that for its aseptic property the water of the Ganga can be and is preserved for a long time for drinking purposes as well as for religious ceremonies in places far away from the river itself. Other medicinal qualities are also attributed to this water. These may be among the reasons why the Hindus look upon the Ganga with so much veneration. Legends trace its origin to heaven from where, according to a symbolic interpretation, it was brought down as a purifying stream of Knowledge for the liberation of man from his impure life in ignorance. The Ganga and also many other rivers of India are associated with the myths and legends of the regions in which they are regarded as gods and goddesses, maybe because of the immense benefit they confer on man. If Egypt is the gift of the Nile, North India is the gift of the Ganga.

To be continued

THE WRITER IN AMERICA: A NOVELIST'S REPORT

By EUGENE LOHRKE

Mr. Lohrke is the author of a score of novels, including "Overshadowed" (1929), "Deep Evening" (1931), and "The Long Exile" (1936). In 1930 he edited "Armageddon: The World War in Literature." Mr. Lohrke and his wife, Arline Cone Lohrke, lived in England for about four years before World War II and as a result of this experience they collaborated on two novels, "Night Over England" (1939) and "The Long Watch in England" (1940).

I am an American author and journalist. I was born in a suburb of New York City 54 years ago. My father was a German who had made a business success in England and came to this country in middle life to start a home and carry on his business in the eastern part of the United States. My mother was born in New York City. I had a private school education. Afterwards I went to a small college in the state of Massachusetts. Before I graduated, the First World War came on, and I enlisted and was sent over to France and the front.

After the Armistice in 1918, I went on with the Army of Occupation into Germany and spent almost a year in the vicinity of Coblenz. I suppose it was this experience of war and its aftermath that made me, like so many others, start to think about the world in which we live and the people in it. For I remember that the Treaty of Versailles, when it was published and signed in the spring of 1919, gave me a huge shock of disillusion. It was, I thought, a cynical document. It had too much to do with the old ways and instruments of revenge diplomacy and too little to do with the Fourteen Points of President Wilson. If there was ever a time when the world needed magnanimity to heal its wounds it was then. It made me think of what I wanted to become; what I wanted to do with a life that had been given every comfort and advantage hitherto.

It seemed to me in those days that what I had seen, the slaughter, the bloodshed, the ruin, was simply a colossal example of that kind of human misunderstanding that went on everywhere in the world, from small things to great. War was simply a huge outburst of all the added sums of everyday frustration, misunderstanding and intolerance. Men simply did not understand that they all shared a common fate—a fate composed from birth to death of happiness, unhappiness, joy and misery, success and failure. They did not understand—although all their great religions had taught this—that a man in any part of the earth was the common denominator of mankind everywhere. They did not realise that their surface difference, in race, colour, nationality and creed, was not a cause for quarreling, but simply an added factor in the pleasures of deep understanding.

I thought that it was good that there were practical, business-like people in the world to build the railroads, lay down the laws of economics, run the ships and planes, chart the routes of commerce. But again, I thought, coming back to my own case, that it would be quite bad if there were nothing else, if there were no teachers, painters, thinkers, musicians, writers, to balance the hands busy at other tasks. For if it was practical to build and get and earn, still one of the most deeply practical and abiding truths that had ever been uttered was that men do not live by bread alone.

All this sort of thinking could not be less than an enormous challenge, for if a person sets himself to discover truth and write about his discoveries, he certainly needs to be very humble about his ability and his strength. But one could certainly take courage from what others had done in those fields which have such an enormous, mysterious influence on men's thoughts and actions. As to success and failure, it seemed to me that if a man is going to fail or fall, he'd get much more out of it and travel a longer distance falling from a mountain peak than rolling off a log.

So that is the reason I started to write. I first wrote for newspapers in New York City. Then I wrote articles and book reviews and once I travelled abroad for a newspaper. All this time I read, and all the time I travelled when I had money enough. And when I thought the world had expanded enough for me, I began to write short stories and novels. They were not great short stories or great novels. But they helped me to understand the greatness of the task that confronts any writer worth his salt, and they helped me to understand my great shortcomings, and I could take courage that they were published, and that some found a quiet place for themselves.

And there were enough failures to teach me that if the old saying is true—that all of us must swallow a peck of dirt in a lifetime—then it was doubly true of anyone, a writer, an architect, a painter, who aspired, however dimly, to do something of permanent value. He must learn, sooner or later, how to swallow an extra peck and grow on it.

Now I am not saying all this simply as a personal reminiscence—but because it is true of all writers, painters, musicians, here in America, as elsewhere in the world. Our paths here in America are not paved with goldbricks—fortunately, for many goldbricks are only brickbats in disguise equally for the equilibrium and the head. Nor do we all bury ourselves alive in Hollywood and exchange our aims in life for a high-powered car or two and an imitation renaissance villa in stucco on Beverly Hills, complete with solid gold bathtub taps.

As a matter of fact not all American writers of solid talent who go to Hollywood are swallowed alive. I would name Dudley Nichols, whose famous adaptation "The Informer," is still a high water mark in the motion picture field. I might mention William Faulkner, the recent winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, who gave Hollywood up after a few months and returned to his quiet backwater in Oxford, Mississippi. I am saying this

simply because I feel that one of the idlest charges ever levelled at the United States today is that we are a nation of materialists, worshipping nothing but the almighty dollar.

You might just as well say that because a leopard has spots all animals that have spots are leopards, or that because a Frenchman drinks wine all people who drink wine are French. There are people who do insist on reasoning this way, even outside the walls of the Kremlin. But for one thing, American literature today—the best of it—has joined the stream of world literature. In parts of Europe and England where people still regard literature as one of the necessary experiences and enjoyments of life, I think it is quite fair to say that the names of American writers like Hemingway, Faulkner, Steinbeck and Thomas Wolfe are as well known as Sartre, Giraudoux, Valéry, St. Exupéry, Graham Greene, Rebecca West, William Sansom, and the Sitwells.

Most of the writers of my generation who professed to see a Heaven in Europe in the 20's and a kind of materialist purgatory here in America have returned long since to view their own scene from a wider perspective. Europe had and has much to teach Americans. But having lived for a good third of my mature life in France, Italy, Germany and England, I also see that America has some things to teach Europe. When I lived in England and wrote about England during the Munich crisis, I saw that the truth about our two democracies lay somewhere in between. The blessed isles, if there ever are any, must lie somewhere between the New World and the Old.

When I was in Africa during the Second World War, I saw that Americans had as much to learn from, as to teach, the peoples of the hills and deserts. The same thing would certainly apply to the Far East, to China, India, Burma, Thailand, Pakistan.

And this brings us to another thought about materialism and American writers. Since the time of Theodore Dreiser, at the turn of the century, on through Sinclair Lewis in the 20's and 30's to Thomas Wolfe, who died in 1940, and right up to the contemporary James Jones and Alfred Hayes, it has been largely a literature of protest and criticism, hard-hitting or simply melancholy. If Europeans are greatly critical of us and our so-called materialism, it would seem that we have somewhat beaten them to the gun through our own self-criticism.

A great deal of our materialism—and there is plenty of it in America or elsewhere—is simply a hangover from our pioneer days. You don't tackle a forest, swamp or prairie with a poem, symphony, or idea. You do it with an axe, a plough, or a shovel. It was not until the frontiers of America were filled, the railroads built, that America could pause to cultivate those arts that spring from contemplation and some necessary leisure and that the writers of America could stand in the front ranks to attack our materialism.

We can't, even today, afford in our system too many ivory towers for our artists, and that has its good side as well as its bad. Most of the best of our writers participate more or less actively in the scene around them—they are part and parcel of our way of living. They do not cherish any illusions of superiority—any person whether he is a bridge builder, a musician, an artist, a cabinet maker, must know how little he knows, how much he has to learn, at any age of life, if he is any good at all. No one can ever rest on his laurels—they are too likely to become the creepers around his headstone. Conversely, no sensible person can do anything but learn from his failures.

This is a credo, I think, that unites all artists and writers wherever in the world they live. In America, if we can't earn enough by our chosen form of writing—though many can and do—we can support our aspirations in other ways. We can teach, as Thornton Wilder is now doing in Harvard University, or, like James Truslow Adams, one of our great historians, we can retire early from a successful business career. The point is not that such ways are not beset with difficulties; the point is rather that there are ways and means and that any man who has chosen a high aim fails not through his outward showing but more simply through his character, his failure to grow.

So it is with writers in America today; so it has always been, sometimes for better, sometimes for worse, in the world. I think that the measure of our growth shows in our achievement. We don't think of ourselves as perfect. When we think deeply, as the best of our writers do, we think of the world around us, how much it has given us, how much we still have to learn.

And perhaps the clearest thing of all to sum it up—all that affects us most as writers here in America—lies in a quotation from Epictetus, the Greek philosopher. I am sorry that I know little or nothing about him, but I came across that quotation a long time ago, and it has come back from time to time to me since. This is the quotation: "Act the role that is given

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SRI AUROBINDO, THE LEADER OF THE EVOLUTION

PART II OF "THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA"

By "Synergist"

SECTION III : THE NEW WORLD-VIEW

(a) THE SPIRITUAL METAPHYSIC

(ii) KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINE REALITY

POWERS OF MIND AND SUPERMIND

In our ascent from mind to Supermind all the divergent elements of our existence which seemed discordant on our human mental level are seen to fall into a harmony and move towards a unity. This is true not only of ideas, as we saw in the last essay, but also of all forces of will, feeling, and sensation; our sensational, emotional, volitional and intellectual activities become on the heights of the Supermind a single, unified, luminous movement of the One Existence.

In a general survey of cognition, ranging from the mental to the Supramental, carried out in the previous essays, the subject of the powers and faculties of the intellectual as well as intuitive mentality receiving a corresponding gnostic action on the Supermind level was briefly discussed. For a complete formulation of the epistemological side of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, it is necessary to take up this subject again here and treat it in greater detail. It can be said at the outset that regarding the apprehension of Reality in all its modes and manifestations through the development of higher cognitive faculties, Sri Aurobindo's basic metaphysical position is this, that all possible knowledge is knowledge within the power of man—for all ontological and cosmic realities there exist corresponding epistemic and gnostic powers which can know them. God and the universe, therefore, need not always remain for man a closed book; at a certain stage in his evolutionary growth, when he becomes capable of evolving consciously by practising a psychological and spiritual discipline, he is in a position to develop powers for acquiring knowledge of higher realities—a growth into a spiritual and then a Supramental consciousness enables him to have direct and immediate knowledge of truths beyond the grasp of the mere rational mind. Apropos of a sloka in the Kena Upanishad, Sri Aurobindo writes in *The Life Divine*: "The Unknown is not the Unknowable; it need not remain the unknown for us, unless we choose ignorance or persist in our first limitations. For to all things that are not unknowable, all things in the universe, there correspond in that universe faculties which can take cognisance of them, and in man, the microcosm, these faculties are always existent and at a certain stage capable of development. We may choose not to develop them; where they are partially developed, we may discourage and impose on them a kind of atrophy. But, fundamentally, all possible knowledge is knowledge within the power of humanity. And since in man there is the inalienable impulse of nature towards self-realisation, no struggle of the intellect to limit the action of our capacities within a determined area can forever prevail."

Therefore, it seems that Bacon's famous dictum needs a little modification; it should read: "Man, as the minister and interpreter of nature, does and understands as much as his observations on the order of nature, either with regard to things or the mind, permit him, and neither knows nor is capable of more," provided he does not evolve psychologically as he has evolved anatomically and physiologically, provided he does not grow in consciousness and there is, consequently, no change in the psycho-epistemic basis of his knowledge-apprehension; but if there is such a change and he is able to have instead of separative knowledge direct and immediate knowledge and ultimately knowledge by identity, in essence as well as in dynamism and function, he can possess knowledge beyond the ken of the mere rational and scientific mind, which at present observes and passes judgments "on the order of nature with regard to things and the mind." Then the levels of Being and ranges of Nature other than those which come under his normal observation become accessible to him.

The knowledge of the Ultimate and of the Universe becomes possible for man because of his secret identity with them. Man is not a separate self-existing entity detached from his natural environment, one who must always look upon it as a huge "not-self". It is because his consciousness is one-pointedly focussed in his outer personality and his awareness is consequently restricted that he cannot have a wider cosmic vision and look upon the universal manifestation as a single totality. Owing to this limitation in his consciousness, his vision is narrowed down—instead of a whole-vision he can only have his usual analytical rational view of things and men; also, as the poise of his consciousness is egocentric and not universal, he is unable to see his inherent relation with the world around him, and looks upon himself as "self" and upon the world as "not-self". Emerson's aphorism: "The field cannot be well seen from within the field" is literally true; as we saw in the essay, *Consciousness, the True Determinant in The World Crisis and India*, the observer is part of the field he is observing, being connected with it by a net-work of forces, and there is a constant interaction between the object of knowledge and the observer. This becomes quite apparent in a larger cosmic vision where the relation of the observer to the field, of the part to the whole, is correctly understood.

In the analytical rational apprehension of the external world, the whole is lost sight of owing to a pre-occupation with the part; and even when the synthesising faculty steps in to correct the deficiency of the analytical, the mind is able to construct only a superficial and imperfect unity, for both the essential and functional inter-relatedness of parts to one another and to the whole elude its grasp—except where this constructing deals with surface phenomena and attempts to understand their formal and functional relations; the synthesising faculty is unable to achieve much—except when there is an influx of a higher light in the mind to aid it—because the psycho-epistemic basis of knowledge-apprehension remains what it was when only the analytical was functioning; unless this basis is changed it is not possible to have a whole-knowledge. But a whole-knowledge pre-supposes a whole-vision, and such a vision cannot be possessed without a direct contact with the gnostic-spiritual levels of consciousness, and the Universal Force, not only in its lower workings, but at its source on the summit of Being.

The Universal process, which works automatically as if in a sub-mental trance in the material and vital fields, awakens and becomes self-conscious in man and attains articulation through him. The individual is a centre of concentration of the Universal; he is, as we have seen, on the one hand a formation of Universal Nature—Mind-Nature, Life-Nature, Material Nature,—and on the other, a soul-being, whose direct source is the supracosmic Transcendent; the soul-being centrally supports the nature-personality and uses mind, life and body as its instruments of self-expression. Individuals, as far as they can be regarded as nature organisms, are like all other natural forms, centres of concentration of the one Cosmic Force through which it unfolds its innumerable possibilities. Man, owing to the fact that he has risen to the Mind level, is able to become a self-conscious centre of the Universal Consciousness-Force through whom it attains greater self-expression than in any of its other forms. Therefore, it is possible for the individual to become conscious of the Universal process as it works in him and through him; naturally he is unable to do so to an appreciable extent at present, because in the stage of evolution in which he is, he lives in his outer self and is consequently aware of only the superficial surface play of world-energies in himself and around him. But, he can trace through his own being the Universal Force to its source and become aware of its world-action if he can ascend to his Supramental heights. Therefore, it can be summed up that the nature and extent of the knowledge of the Universal process depends upon the degree of awareness of it in the individual centre it has created, as it effectuates itself in him and around him.

This brings us back to our central thesis from which we started in *The World Crisis and India*, that according to the level and range of the consciousness will be the nature of the knowledge acquired of God, man and the universe—the wider, higher and more luminous the consciousness, the greater the grasp of Reality, and as a result, more accurate and profound the knowledge.

We see then that there is an underlying identity between the individual and the universe through his nature-personality, and with the Transcendent Supreme beyond Time, Space and Casuality through his inner soul-being, His direct emanation in terrestrial life—the immortal and divine element in mortal man. Sri Aurobindo explains the relation of the individual to the universe in *The Life Divine*: "The universe and the individual are necessary to each other in their ascent. Always indeed they exist for each other and profit by each other. Universe is a diffusion of the divine All in infinite Space and Time. Universe seeks in infinite extension the divine totality it feels itself to be but cannot entirely realise; for in extension existence drives at a pluralistic sum of itself which can neither be the primal nor the final unit, but only a recurring decimal without end or beginning. Therefore it creates in itself a self-conscious concentration of the All through which it can aspire."

Not only is there this secret identity between the individual, the universe and the Transcendent Supreme,* but there is also a veiled identity between the principles of Being manifested in earth-creation and their source principles beyond the cosmos; Matter, Life, Soul and Mind are the delegatory powers of Existence, Consciousness-Force, Bliss and Supermind. Mind being a subordinate principle of Supermind, as soon as man attains to a certain degree of mental awareness he is ready to

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* As we have seen, the universe itself is an emanatory manifestation of the Transcendent, and the individual in his nature-personality a centre of concentration of the universe; this establishes a dual identity of the individual with the Transcendent Supreme, one direct through the soul-being and the other through the universal manifestation.

THE POETIC INSPIRATION

A REJOINDER TO A

By K. D. S.

Mr. P. Lal has issued "A Testament for Our Poets." He has some pointed and pertinent things to say, but he spoils their effect by falling foul rather violently of one about whom Francis Watson, in a broadcast last year on English Poetry from India, said that he was the one Indian poet whom Yeats had singled out as writing creatively in English. Yeats is well-known for his somewhat supercilious manner towards Indo-English poets: hence a comment like this from him has a rare value—particularly as he was himself one of the greatest contemporary poets in the English language. Mr. Lal seems to have been exceptionally unfortunate in his choice of Sri Aurobindo as a whipping post.

His own personal preference is for "realistic poetry reflecting... the din and hubbub, the confusion and indecision, the flashes of goodness and beauty of our age." There is nothing intrinsically objectionable in this penchant, provided it does not deprive one of sensitiveness to other kinds of poetry. But there must be no particular philosophical shade attached to the word "realistic" as if poetry that is not a product of so-called "realism" were a dressing up of unreality. Art is out of touch with reality only when its expression is abstract or imprecise instead of in concrete and vivid terms. Reality, for art, is simply that which is real to the artist and which he can best seize in perfect form with concreteness and vividness.

Wrong Approach

Such a position is not altogether repudiated by Mr. Lal—in broad theory. But he has grave limitations of perception and sympathy, rendering his theory itself a little hazy, and he cannot help bringing into it his temperamental preferences. He reacts against romanticism on the one hand and "criticism of life" on the other. In condemning Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri* and warning Indian poets to keep away from the Aurobindonian brand of verse if they wish to do anything worth while, he also betrays a most serious lack of response to spiritual poetry.

He, of course, protests that he cannot be considered totally unsympathetic to poetry of a spiritual order. "I can read," he says, "the *Divine Comedy* with pleasure, St. John of the Cross is a marvellous poet, poems of Kabir and Chandidas are exquisite, T. S. Eliot's *Ash-Wednesday* is an excellent poem of spiritual tension, confusion and resolution which I can read with great enjoyment and recall with surprising accuracy and detail." Well, the protest is far from convincing. Dante was a first-rate religious poet, not a spiritual or mystic one: he was well-versed in theology, perfectly conversant with the living symbols of the Catholic creed, his imagination was finely and powerfully touched by religious fervour, but there never was any invasion of his consciousness by the superconscious and he had not the temperament or the experience of the Saints who figure in his *Paradiso*. By the way, apart from certain later portions, the *Divine Comedy* is not even directly religious poetry: only its setting is in terms of religion. T. S. Eliot also is in part an effective poet of religious feeling and idea: the tension, confusion and resolution in *Ash-Wednesday* are not spiritual in the true sense and they are more misty than mystic. Not that a state of mind is not infused into us by them, but they give us neither the concreteness nor the intensity of spiritual vision and mystic experience. Mr. Lal's ignorance of this fact proves that he has no clear idea of spiritual poetry.

St. John of the Cross is a real mystic and in his poems there is the immediacy of inner contact with the Eternal. But they are spiritual and mystic in a certain way—a highly personal devotion-coloured lyricism, deeply intense yet not charged with the powerful amplitude of vision and vibration such as we find in verses of the Upanishads, verses which seem to be the Infinite's own large and luminous language. Kabir and Chandidas are somewhat in the same category, though with a difference of tone and temper. They are indeed, as Mr. Lal says, exquisite and they are authentically spiritual, but again more intense than immense and the masterful mantric expression is not theirs. If Mr. Lal responds to St. John of the Cross and to those two Indian singers he is not without all spiritual sympathy: still, he cannot be said to show any sensitiveness to the kind of inspiration that is *Savitri*. We are not surprised that he fails to appreciate it.

Poetic Communication

Here we are likely to have a couple of paragraphs from his own article thrown at our heads by him. He has written: "The job of all poetry is to convey an experience which the reader has not himself experienced but to which he is made sympathetic by the rhythm, linguistic precision and incantation of the poem he is reading... The good poem must be able to communicate an emotion to me even when I have only the faintest intellectual, and no emotional, idea of what that emotion is."

But surely there must be something in the reader to serve as a *point d'appui* for the poet's effort at communication. Else we shall be obliged to reject *Lycidas* as no poetry because Dr. Johnson found it crude and unmelodious, Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* as sheer prose because Jeffreys remarked, "This will never do," Shelley's work as valueless

Recently in "The Sunday Standard" of Bombay on Sri Aurobindo's "Savitri". A short reply suited certain difficulties it could not get published. So adaptation is offered by "Mother India" to lovers of and truth.

because Matthew Arnold shook his head about it, Swinburne's early lyrics as meretricious stuff because Morley castigated them ruthlessly. And, mind you, these were no small and narrow critics on the whole. If they could have a blind spot on their critical retina and prove unreliable on occasion, Mr. Lal who is obviously restricted in his general sympathies and semi-perceptive of the spiritual light in poetry can hardly hope to impress us by his statement: "When I read any passage from Sri Aurobindo's 'epics', a sick-as-stale-lemonade shiver gallops up and down my spine at a rate impossible to compute"—or by his description of *Savitri*-like verse as being "greasy, weak-spined and purple-adjec-tived poetry," "a loose expression of a loose emotion"—or by his warning that unless poets like him band together and produce a Manifesto "there is every likelihood that the blurred, rubbery and airy sentiments of a Sri Aurobindo will slowly clog our own poetry."

Spiritual Vision And Philosophy

One point we may grant the preposterous Mr. Lal. If poets like him tried to write in Sri Aurobindo's vein without any of the Aurobindonian discipline of consciousness and mystical drive of the inner being, they might very well turn out in verse a painted anaemia of pseudo-spirituality. Spiritual poetry cannot be written on the cheap, but that does not mean that what Sri Aurobindo writes answers to Mr. Lal's designation of *Savitri*. *Prima facie*, a master of spiritual experience, with a consummate knowledge of the English language (Sri Aurobindo was educated from his seventh to his twenty-first year in England), is not likely to pen feverishly feeble inanities and pass them off as mysticism. If he is in addition an intellectual and a philosopher of giant proportions, all the less probable is it that his mystical expression should be greasy and weak-spined and purple-adjec-tived. At his worst he might be in danger of seeming elusive and esoteric or else remote and recondite. Mr. Lal's terms are absolutely irrelevant and incorrect.

One cannot tax with either gaudiness or prettification Sri Aurobindo's revelatory glimpse of Super-nature through a magical phase of early dawn:

*A wandering hand of pale enchanted light
That glowed along a fading moment's brink
Fixed with gold panel and opalescent hinge
A gate of dreams ajar on mystery's verge.*

Nor can one accuse of empty effusiveness his profound symbolic depiction of spiritual personality:

*As in a mystic and dynamic dance
A priestess of immaculate ecstasies
Inspired and ruled from Truth's revealing vault
Moves in some prophet cavern of the gods,
A heart of silence in the hands of joy
Inhabited with rich creative beats.
A body like a parable of dawn
That seemed a niche for veiled divinity
Or golden temple door to things beyond.*

Nor is there any pompous vacuity in his suggestive conjuration of some occult sacrifice on a cosmic scale:

*The dubious godhead with his torch of pain
Lit up the chasm of the unfinished world
And called her to fill with her vast self the abyss.*

All this is pure spiritual vision which seems to have made little impression on Mr. Lal during his reading of *Savitri*. But *Savitri* is spiritual philosophy as well as spiritual vision, and Mr. Lal is equally at sea with a poetry that fuses the philosophical mind with mystic symbolism and revelation. Else how could he miss the concreteness and vividness of a large-idea'd utterance like:

*Thought lay down in a mighty voicelessness;
The toiling thinker widened and grew still,
Wisdom transcendent touched his quivering heart:
His soul could sail beyond thought's luminous bar;
Mind screened no more the shoreless Infinite.
Across a void retreating sky he glimpsed
Through a last glimmer and drift of vanishing stars
The superconscious realms of motionless peace
Where judgment ceases and the word is mute
And the Unconceived lies pathless and alone.*

ON OF SRI AUROBINDO

RECENT CRITICISM

ETHNA

an attack was made by an Indo-English poet for that weekly was sent. But owing to now the full text of which that article was an literature who have the cause of both beauty heart.

Or take the following philosophically spiritual lines:

*Immense realities took on a shape:
There looked out from the shadow of the Unknown
The bodiless Namelessness that saw God born
And tries to gain from the mortal's mind and soul
A deathless body and a divine name.
The immobile lips, the great surreal wings,
The visage marked by Superconscient Sleep,
The eyes with their closed lids that see all things,
Appeared of the Architect who builds in trance.*

Or consider a passage like this—an example of something that occurs very frequently in *Savitri*—about earth's aspiration and her future fulfilment:

*An inarticulate whisper drives her steps
Of which she feels the force but not the sense;
A few rare intimations come as guides,
Immense divining flashes cleave her brain...
A vision meets her of supernal Powers
That draw her as if mighty kinsmen lost
Approaching with estranged great luminous gaze...
Outstretching arms to the unconscious Void,
Passionate she prays to invisible forms of Gods,
Soliciting from dumb Fate and toiling Time
What most she needs, what most exceeds her scope,
A Mind unvisited by illusion's gleams,
A Will expressive of soul's deity,
A Strength not forced to stumble by its speed,
A Joy that drags not sorrow for its shade.
For these she yearns and feels them destined hers:
Heaven's privilege she claims as her own right.
Just is her claim the all-witnessing Gods approve,
Clear in a greater light than reason owns:
Our intuitions are its title-deeds;
Our souls accept what our blind thoughts refuse.
Earth's winged chimeras are Truth's steeds in Heaven,
The impossible God's sign of things to be.*

It would really be a critical apocalypse if one could learn from Mr. Lal where in any of these magnificent excerpts is a stale-lemónade quality or a riot of blurred, airy and rubbery sentiments. One might as well look for an orgy of purple adjectives, or weak-spined greasiness, or loose emotion loosely expressed, in the profound-sighted and high-thoughted *slokas* of the Gita. Transposed to the plane of spiritual vision and spiritual philosophy, illumined and enlarged in the consciousness of a seer-sage, all that Mr. Lal demands of a true poem is here in abundance: "a choreographical pattern within a state of tension produced in a refined sensibility"—"language used precisely, nobly and with a sense of purpose."

Unjust Criticism

To be sure, the whole of *Savitri* is not uniformly inspired, but that is natural. In a long epic narrative in which a story is unfolded or a sequence of experiences developed, inspiration has to build sober bridges, so to speak, between the glories of its dramatic moments. Even Dante who is more uniformly inspired in his *Divine Comedy* than most of the other great epic poets has his slightly relaxed periods. And as for Homer in the *Iliad* and Milton in *Paradise Lost*, they either nod or plod on occasion and still remain mighty names in the roll of poetry.

Even when the verse is not a sober bridge between the glories of dramatic moments, there is bound to be in a poem of considerable length and ample range of subject an inequality in the expression. What we have to appreciate in *Savitri* is the rareness of the inequality and the presence of some authentic minimum of inspiration in the passages where the afflatus tends to sink. According to Mr. Lal, there is no authentic inspiration of any kind in the following:

*All there was soul or made of sheer soul-stuff:
A sky of soul covered a deep soul-ground.
All here was known by a spiritual sense:
Thought was not there but a knowledge near and one
Seized on all things by a moved identity...
Life was not there but an impassioned force,
Finer than fineness, deeper than the deeps,
Felt as a subtle and spiritual power,
A quivering out from soul to answering soul,
A mystic movement, a close influence,*

*A free and happy and intense approach
Of being to being with no screen or check,
Without which life and love could never have been.
Body was not there, for bodies were needed not,
The soul itself was its own deathless form
And met at once the touch of other souls,
Close, blissful, concrete, wonderfully true...*

Well, can we say to Mr. Lal: "You are right for at least once"?

I am sorry that even this concession is out of the question. Read without prejudice, the passage for all its comparative inferiority has nothing to sicken us. There is a balanced systematic development of the theme of soul-stuff being all, and the lines—

*Thought was not there but a knowledge near and one
Seized on all things by a moved identity—*

cannot be bettered for accurate expression in a certain style, the phrase "near and one" is particularly pregnant for any alert intellect and the word "seized" is concrete and vivid as is also the word "moved": a suggestive picture comes before the inner sense. The lines that provoke Mr. Lal to the utmost sarcasm are—

*Life was not there but an impassioned force,
Finer than fineness, deeper than the deeps.*

The second line is an echo of a turn we find at times in some Upanishads, it is a sort of paradoxical pointing of extremes and is not devoid of attractiveness or effectiveness: here it is particularly apt because the soul, in Yogic realisation, is the inmost entity of the inner world and the subtlest of all subtle forces. The first line is deemed by Mr. Lal an attempt at Miltonese which succeeds in being mere wind. He is mistaken in both respects. Miltonese is more grandiose in language and less direct in suggestion. This is a straightforward style and statement expressing the truth that on the occult "plane" where Soul is the determining principle there is a pure essence of vitality in both its ardent and its dynamic aspects, rather than what we know as Life Force. Of course, these lines and all the rest of the passage would hardly make an impact on a reader who has allowed the glib use of the word "soul" by wishy-washy and vacuous sentimentalists or by pseudo-mystics to spoil his stomach for it. Still less would an impact occur if a reader has from the very beginning no feel of what the soul could be like and looks upon every mention of it as a gaseous falsehood. Mr. Lal labours under a serious deficiency of soul-sense. Most non-mystic readers are somewhat in the same case, but not all lack so completely a sympathetic instinct for something which to the mystic is more "close, blissful, concrete, wonderfully true" (a phrase, by the way, very felicitously worded and rhythmized) than even his bodily existence. Mr. Lal himself says *vis-à-vis* the passage: "I see nothing; there is nothing I can hang on to." This could just as well be because of his own superficiality as because of the supposed lack of poetry in the lines.

Not that Sri Aurobindo is here at his best. But if we admit that Sri Aurobindo is perhaps here at his worst we still pay him a tremendous compliment. For the lines, by their harmonious significance and word and rhythm, remain poetry for all their falling below such bursts of inspiration as we quoted earlier—and even those examples cannot provide a really adequate notion of the sustained splendours *Savitri* has to offer nor of the huge variety of poetic merit in it, passages of a spiritualised "natural magic" and mysticised "human interest" as well as Yogicised philosophy and direct occult insight into the individual and the cosmos. Yes, the lines remain poetry and become more poetic when taken in their proper context as part of a fuller record in which is set alive before us an actual experience of the plane of the World-Soul. Terms like "soul-stuff" and "sky of soul" and "deep soul-ground" acquire a degree of concrete meaning that cannot arise when the passage is torn from what goes before and comes after and when no indication is supplied of the totality of which it is an integral and almost inseparable portion.

Mr. Lal does injustice to the passage by the way he has presented it and the attitude he adopts towards it. But the worst crime he commits against the critic's office is to choose from Sri Aurobindo a passage that is not plenary Aurobindonian, and declare it to be all that Sri Aurobindo is capable of throughout the nearly thirteen thousand lines published in Volume I of *Savitri*. This is an act of *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi*, proving Mr. Lal to be suffering from not only a literary but also a moral "kink". No doubt, *Savitri* is not always easy to appreciate, it is mostly a new kind of poetry with a vision and language caught as if directly from hidden heights and depths and breadths of a more than human consciousness. Sri Aurobindo himself felt that it would take time to obtain wide recognition. But for an unprejudiced reader of quick, supple and penetrating imagination there is enough in it of recognisable excellence to win for its author the richest laurels—especially among his countrymen who may be expected to respond more readily to a sovereign spiritual utterance.

If, however, every Indian reader turns out to be like Mr. Lal, I can only sigh and quote two lines—"a state of tension produced in a refined sensibility" and "language used precisely, nobly and with a sense of purpose", I suppose—from one of Mr. Lal's own recent and definitely non-Aurobindonian poems:

*Here in dejection
I don't know what to do.*

SRI AUROBINDO AND MAN'S SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

By C. C. DUTT

Continued from previous issue

We have seen how nation-building has proceeded in the past. If the unity of the race is to be achieved in a like fashion, it will follow the same course; that is, it will start from a loose mass and a more or less amorphous jumble of forces, and thereafter pass through a stringent process of organisation and consolidation. These chapters were written in 1916 when the first World War had entered a most critical phase, and humanity was being swayed by violent and brutal passion. There was no sign, as yet, of a "total change of the basis of our life or the establishment of a complete or a real unity." Even an external unity was not possible, far less a psychological oneness. All that had come was a vague feeling that there might be some sense in what the faddist and the pacifist preach about the iniquities of war. But that our fierce mass-egoism must be scrapped and a new basis found for our group life had not yet appeared in the mind as something desirable. On the contrary, the war was turning men's minds towards collectivism, it was bringing man much nearer to the possibility of a State Socialism. There had been, says Sri Aurobindo, "no such favourable preconditions for a strong movement of international unity",—at least no visible signs thereof. Such being the case the thinkers of the world were not likely to obtain a hearing if they proposed to "replan the whole status of international life. The general mass of people, governed by its interests and passions, is not likely to listen to any talk of high principles. The political mind is chary about launching out into the uncertain and the unknown. Even after a world-wide convulsion it would be satisfied with a programme of mending and tinkering and adjustments." Still since men's minds have been severely shaken, since there is a wide-spread belief that the old order is no longer tolerable, and that world-peace should never depend on the pride and passion of national egoism, it was expected that "some serious attempt towards the bringing of a new order should be the result of the moral collapse of the old." In a new footnote Sri Aurobindo has added, "the growing insecurity, confusion and disaster have made the creation of some international system more and more imperative if modern civilisation is not to collapse in bloodshed and chaos. The result of this necessity has been first the creation of the League of Nations and afterwards the U.N.O.; neither has proved very satisfactory from the political point of view, but henceforward the existence of some such arranged centre of order has become very evidently indispensable."

Some kind of international control, is, no doubt, being attempted. In 1916, Sri Aurobindo said that it would be vain to hope that the control will be effective and prevent farther conflict. It did not, we know, prevent the second, and a bigger, catastrophe. Now, today, the U.N.O. seems to be trying its best to avert a third big conflagration. Thirty years ago, Sri Aurobindo warned the world that mere adjustments and tinkering was not enough. "The awakening must go much deeper, lay hold upon much purer roots of action before the psychology of nations will be transmuted into that something 'wondrous, rich and strange' which will eliminate war and international collisions from our distressed and stumbling human life." As long as national egoism remains, as long as nations are fully armed, an excuse for a scrap will never be lacking. The first Great War came because all the leading nations—all but the U.S.A.—deliberately brought it on. Serajevo and Belgium were only excuses. We like to put the second War down to the inordinate ambition of Germany; but is that

the whole truth? In fact, if there had been no Germany, still the conflagration would have been brought on by somebody else. Sri Aurobindo's words are definite, "New causes for strife must necessarily develop when the spirit of national egoism and cupidity seeks for satisfaction; and so long as it lives, satisfaction it must seek and repletion can never permanently satisfy it." Limitation of armaments for preventing strife would be futile. How is there going to be an effective means of control? Any arrangement made will break down as soon as war actually starts.

Can a stringent International Law do any good? Within the nation Law prevents strife because the state can put it down by force. It has got sufficiently potent instruments ready to hand for the purpose. In matters international such a method is not going to be effective for a long long time. Sri Aurobindo says, "Perhaps in the end". The authority of Law in a nation state depends on the implied sanction of the majority of the people behind it and also on the power to enforce it. In international affairs, there can be no true sword of justice nor can there be the implied sanction of the majority behind it. In practice, the authority will constantly break down. There can be no reliable standing army or a police force because it would fall apart at every critical moment. The allegiance of the soldiers will belong to their own country and not to the nebulous authority of an International body. It is obvious that no loose formation without a strong central control can be effective and enduring. The International body, therefore, must go through the same process of stringent and rigid organisation that the Nation-unit has passed through. But what force or method out of so many will bring about even an external unification of mankind can only be a subject of speculation, and no more. In the present conditions an association of free nationalities is impossible to bring about. The mentality of man is such, today, that a harmonising of the international ideal with the national is not practicable. Still, if we accept a free association of free nations as an ideal, we have made a start and can move slowly towards a reasonable solution. We have seen that in building up a nation man has had to face not only the clash of individual egoism and the national egoism, but also the constant clash of minor group interests; so also here we have before us not only the egoism of nations but also the interests of various races, various religions, various cultures and various in-between leagues and confederations, not to speak of that monster: imperialistic tendencies. This huge mass of obstacles cannot be written off by a stroke of the pen. A future religion of humanity will probably produce its line of martyrs, whose blood-flow will carry forward the ideal of humanity a long way. But generally speaking the ideal has to be pushed along gently and imperceptibly—sometimes by agreement with adverse powers, sometimes by bribing or cajoling them. This is the only possible method till man develops into a high intellectual or moral or spiritual being. Sri Aurobindo put it practically, "The unrealised international idea will have for some time at least to work by this secondary method and through such accommodations with the realised forces of nationalism and imperialism."

It may be asked whether through the efforts of the world's thinkers, the idea of a just internationalism will not, when things are ready, be willingly accepted by the existing states. Sri Aurobindo gives a clear reply, "States and Governments yield usually to a moral pressure only so far as

POWERS OF MIND AND SUPERMIND

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take the spiritual turn and rise above the mind to its source, the Supermind; of course, he does not rise directly from the one to the other—there are intermediate stages through which he has to pass; these have already been described in detail. Sri Aurobindo here explains this inherent identity of mind and Supermind: "This is the fundamental relation that all the action of the mind is a derivation from the secret supermind, although we do not know this until we come to know our higher self, and draws from that source all it has of truth and value. All our thoughts, willings, feelings, sense representations have in them or at their roots an element of truth, which originates and sustains their existence, however in the actuality they may be perverted or false, and behind them a greater ungrasped truth, which if they could grasp it, would make them soon unified, harmonious and at least relatively complete. Actually, however, such truth as they have is diminished in scope, degraded in a lower movement, divided and falsified by fragmentation, afflicted with incompleteness, marred by perversion. Mental knowledge is not an integral but always a partial knowledge..."

All this clearly indicates why the attainment of the knowledge of Reality becomes possible for man, and shows the utter shallowness of Agnosticism. The Unknowable remains the unknowable only if it is entirely other than myself and I do not possess any means by which I can apprehend it, except indirectly; not if in essence it is the same as I, and I have the power to realise this oneness.

To be continued

THE WRITER IN AMERICA

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you and act it well. The choice of the cast is Another's."

He was, of course, comparing life to the theatre, the drama, and I think that what he meant to say was this: We do not create ourselves entirely. Much of whatever power we have is born in us. It can be affected, for good or evil, by our education and environment. But our business is still to find what is best in ourselves—that thing that we can do with the fullest measure of heart and soul, in the great work of the world. And having found it, through failure or success, give our best to it.

And that, I think, can only be done in a democracy. It is a much misunderstood word, much abused even by those of us who enjoy it and do not always understand its privileges. No system in the world is perfect, since it springs from men and men are not perfect. But the system that gives a man—a writer, an artisan, a carpenter, a shipbuilder—the best chance to make the best of himself, that leaves him free in his choice of work, that gives him the greatest opportunity to earn his bread and still recognises that men do not live by bread alone, is the best system. We accept it without thinking enough about it in normal times, and, perhaps, that is too bad, for nothing that man has gained can ever be taken for granted. Many had to suffer and die to achieve it. Many are suffering and dying today to maintain it, nor do we always pay them their due. It is only when that system, that way of life, is closely challenged, as it is today, that we are brought to see clearly what it is and how it has come to us. And then we look again from the plains of our daily lives to the hills.

(Special Feature from USIS)

SRI AUROBINDO AND MAN'S SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT—Continued from previous page.

it does not compel them to sacrifice their vital interests." France helped Garibaldi's Italy to be free; France sent men and money to the American colonists when they fought for freedom; England and France rendered valuable aid to Greece in the nineteenth century when she fought for independence. Did England and France help these subject nations to be free on high principle, out of any altruistic motives? The evidence of history is to the contrary. Napoleon III helped Italy principally to spite Austria, but he also received Savoy as remuneration. Bourbon France helped Washington not because it sympathised with his political aspiration but because it wanted to deal a blow to Georgian England. England and France helped Greece against Turkey to spite the latter when it suited their books to do so; yet only four decades later these same powers helped Turkey against Czarist Russia. There was nothing to choose between Turkey and Russia as far as the cause of freedom was concerned. As a rule, there are no high principles involved in these things, though on particular occasions certain states may act on a noble impulse. So, as Sri Aurobindo remarks, "national liberty as an absolute ideal has no longer the old general acceptance. Nations struggling for liberty have to depend on their own strength." There is a strong possibility that the world may get rearranged in a system of large imperial combines, with small nations having a subordinate autonomy instead of complete independence. Some such thing would have come about if the Axis powers had won the last War, says Sri Aurobindo in a short footnote. Perhaps the danger has not yet been warded off. At least the nations that have their lots thrown in with a totalitarian power cannot but find their position much like that of the petty barons in the Middle Ages, a position rather of vassals than of equals. Even their opposites that side with great Democracies may, by force of circumstance, not be able to achieve the ideal independence, though theirs cannot ever be the sort of slavery to which the satellites of totalitarianisms will be reduced. As things stand, the huge states are bound to count most in the international scale. With man as he is, any international council that may be established is bound to be controlled by a few central Powers; or there may be groups calling themselves democratic, socialistic, communistic, or groups which are struggling against one another in the name of continental blocs. Out of this unsatisfactory state of affairs some accommodation may emerge. But nothing great or lasting can be born, as long as nations are ego-ridden and narrow-minded. Some spiritual leaven must enter into their composition before they realise the great Truth underlying man's life. A military conquest of the world by any one nation is an impossibility, but a development like the British Commonwealth of Nations, under certain conditions, "might conceivably become the arbiter of the nations and the effective centre of an international government"—it could become under new circumstances a realisable possibility of the future. Another possibility is indicated thus—"the task might be undertaken not by a single empire, but by two or three great imperial Powers sufficiently near in interest and united in idea to sink possible differences and jealousies and strong enough to dominate or crush all resistance and enforce some sort of effective international law and government." About the future, Sri Aurobindo says, in a new footnote, that the future may "belong to a struggle between Communism and a surviving capitalistic industrialism in the New World or even between Communism and a more moderate system of social democracy in the two continents of the Old World."

We have, so far, arrived at this that the solution of the problem before us is not likely, till a later period of evolution, to take "the form of a federation of free and equal nations or adopt as its motive a perfect harmony between the contending principles of nationalism and internationalism." It has been seen already that the process of unification begins with a loose formation which is, bit by bit, organised rigidly and stringently in the next stage. Looking at what has happened before, we can safely predict that here, in the international unification too, the second stage is likely to affect adversely the liberty of the individual. If the unification proceeded according to the Germanic idea of world-domination by a race or an empire especially favoured of the Lord—and from this hallucination of being the selected instrument of the Divine, God's scourge, many have suffered, from Attila of old down to "God's own people" of today—then the suppression of the principle of liberty would be inevitable. Even if this domination was not of a single all-powerful nation

but of a closely organised European combine, the result would be the same for all other races,—tutelage of the coloured peoples for an indefinite period. But a large majority of these are no longer prepared to submit to the process of Europeanisation and, incidentally, of exploitation. Sri Aurobindo in a new footnote says, "Asia is now for the most part free or in the process of liberation, the idea of a dominant West or a dominant Europe has no longer any force and has indeed receded out of men's minds and practically out of existence." By their very nature, the regimes of rigid organisation would be debarred from employing any true corrective, for they would have to proceed largely by the compulsion of reluctant material. The repression and diminution of all forms of liberty would undoubtedly be necessary. All elements of natural freedom will be destroyed, first by violence, and then by legal suppression. If, however, the unification of the race is brought about by a combination of free nations, if these units are psychological realities, the danger to freedom will be greatly minimised.

The principle of liberty naturally retards the growth of uniformity. Liberty can be reconciled with an old order but it offers steady resistance to a new order, and as the friction increases the self-assertion of liberty tends to grow more violent. This is what has happened in the past and we see no signs of a more reasonable attitude in the near future. Man is rational enough, but usually he employs his reason to justify his egoism, not to promote harmony. His mind is ruled largely by his vital passions. The principle of authority and the principle of liberty will in all probability go on struggling as before. But if within the nation individual liberty still remains unimpaired, the tendency will be to keep up the spirit in the larger unit. Unfortunately, however, individual liberty is being eliminated fast in the modern mechanical state-organisation. Unless some new spiritual and intellectual movement appears to check this tendency, individual freedom will no longer remain a basis of group life. All this we have to decide from an abstract point of view, says Sri Aurobindo, because the present does not provide us with a clear light. We can only speculate. Let us take the two extreme possibilities. The nation is a well-established group-unit; the other units are, more or less, subordinate to it. Even the imperial is a development of the national and exists largely as an instrument for the satisfaction of the various hungers of a people. Still the nation is not a permanent group-unit. It may vanish altogether. Meanwhile we have to go ahead with our outward unification, such as seems to be favoured by the political method. Then we have to see what place the nation-units are going to occupy in the larger existence. We have also to consider if uniformity is good for the race, necessary for its unity. The idea of the citizen of the world had already appeared before the first War, though for the time being violent national passions have driven it to the background. On the other hand, the nation-idea may persist in full vigour within the larger group. It may also be that it will persist, but with a diminished vitality, as an administrative convenience—but preserving "just sufficient mechanical distinctness to give a starting point for that subsequent dissolution of human unity," which will come about under certain conditions.

Uniformity is an attractive ideal to a certain type of mind. It is not a thing impossible to achieve, though not practicable in the near future. There has undoubtedly been a powerful drive towards uniformity in many human activities which, by persistence, will naturally lead towards uniformity of culture. But there is certainly difference of language in the world which is likely to react against unification. It is, however, conceivable that uniformity of culture and close association will nullify this adverse force and slowly lead to the creation or adoption of a common language. But it is also possible that the uniformity attained will leave ample room for free variations—variations that will be vital enough to start "the dissolution of uniformity into a new cycle of various progress." Likewise the organisation of the international groups may be of various kinds. The idea of the highly efficient mechanical State may permeate the larger unit. Or, after a period of violent struggle between the ideals of extreme centralisation and that of individual freedom, philosophic anarchism may intervene. It is impossible to do anything here "beyond throwing out a few ideas which may guide us."

To be continued

The Eternal Hour

An emerald-soul of peaks within
Travels from height to height unseen.

The shadow of the Infinite falls on earth's pain,
A golden desire, a heavenly rain.

Transcendent of Time's moments' power
Comes encircling the eternal hour.

The sun above, the moon below,
Unheard foot-falls come soft and slow.

A bell rings from Eternity:
Whirling the Almighty's power, She

Creates a land of blue and white
Within the smoke and doze of night;

She comes in her golden robe of fire
To release God-music from earth's lyre.

SAHANA

BOOKS in the BALANCE

THE LONELY TOWER: STUDIES IN THE POETRY OF YEATS

By T. R. HENN

(Methuen, London. Price: 12s.)

Yeats's reputation had increased since the beginning of the century when in 1923 he was awarded the Nobel Prize. His death has left the world the poorer today, for he combined in him the best of mediaevalism with the best of modernism. Judged by the range of subjects and the treatment that he brought to them there is nothing to class him as a modern poet unless we call him modern and think of other poets who are also modern, Hardy and de la Mare for example. He brought to poetry a vision only possible with the mystics and his interest in séances, magic and astrology makes him a poet different from the rational poets of today who only occasionally bring to their verse-compositions the semblance of poetry. Living as Yeats did in a world of his own, cloistered in a tower far removed from the bustle of the crowd, he composed much that will not easily be forgotten. He reminds one of the Romantic poets like whom he took an intense delight in Nature and Man. The friendship and love of women brought out the best in his poetry which is described as having "fragile and fluid loveliness". The paragraphic strength of his poetry he owes to the reading of the *Gitanjali* for which he wrote his memorable and beautiful introduction. He was enamoured of the East. India will remember his services to Rabindranath Tagore and the world will chant his poems when a better day dawns.

Born in June 1856, William Butler Yeats came under the influence of his father and brother, both of whom were painters. He took to painting and though he discontinued it after three years when he was about 16, the influence of painting left its impress on his poetry as marked as the study of sculpture gave to Hardy's novels architectural symmetry. His dreamy nature and absorption in books in the library made him interested in literature which he finally decided on as his career when he came of age. His initial poetical ventures found their way into *The Dublin University Review* and *The Irish Monthly*. The publication of his first poem "The Island of Promise" showed him as a new poet and he contributed occasionally in prose and verse to the two journals. His dramatic poem, *Mosada* (1886) made him feel confident as a man of letters and he went to London the following year and worked as a journalist for some years, compiling folk-lore and fairy tales. *The Wandering of Oisín* (1889) established him as a lyricist at 24 and some poets came under his influence. His early works bore the impress of Hinduism and Celticism. As a poet he experienced difficulty in composing poetry and he often produced as little as nine lines a day.

In *The Countess of Kathleen* (1892), a drama, Yeats showed a noble woman selling her soul to save her people from starvation and despite the cat-calling of some Puritans and the obstacles put by others, the drama was a success and established Yeats as a dramatist. *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894) was a one act drama of a dreamy bride who was called away by the fairies on May eve. Of this play the poet thought later, in spite of its beautiful lyrics, that it was exaggerated in sentiment and sentimental beauty. Yeats's intense interest in fairies made him the butt of ridicule and uproarious fun and accounted for some of the jeering he met with when he visited America. His identification with the Decadent Poets (Symons, Henley, Dowson) made him deeply concerned over the growth of the literary development of his native country and when he was 35 he took to the theatre with a view to giving Ireland a characteristic literature of her very own. The interest of the people in the plays of Sean O'Casey and the naturalistic turn of the drama made him take to poetry once more as the symbol of Ireland's greatness, seeing in Irish poetry a future that would "some day be great enough to lead a world

sick with theories to those sweet well-waters of primeval poetry, upon whose edge still linger the brotherhoods of wisdom, the immortal moods."

A Packet for Ezra Pound (1929) revealed to the world Yeats's love for séances and showed his wife as a medium leading him to the theories about the spiritual unfoldment of life, which he set forth in *A Vision* in 1926. His wife's automatic writing, hallucinations and trances made him a believer in them and he continued to believe in them till death. He surprised the world by his belief in fairies. In *The White Birds* he sings:

*I am haunted by numberless islands, and many a Danaan-shore,
Where Time would surely forget us, and Sorrow come near
us no more;*

*Soon far from the rose and the lily and fret of the flames
would we be,*

*Were we only white birds, my beloved, buoyed out on the
foam of the sea!*

Burton Roscoe describes Yeats as a "tall, stooped, very poetical (and professorial) looking man with his black hair streaked white" and wearing beribboned glasses. William Rothenstein thought his manner rather "artificial" when he was surrounded by female admirers. George Moore's first impression of him was that of a man with "a long black cloak drooping from his shoulders, a soft black sombrero on his head, a voluminous black silk tie flowing from his collar, loose black trousers dragging untidily over his long, heavy feet." Moore later changed his opinion and spoke of his "solemn height and hieratic appearance" and even called him "a sort of monk in literature." Yet Yeats's laugh was "the most melancholy thing in the world." His tendency towards absent-mindedness bordered on the ridiculous and was well-known to his friends and more so when he attended a dinner given in his honour in Chicago. There he was heard to chant his own verses so loudly as to forget himself and the company he was in and particularly the fellow poet was forgotten who was paying him eloquent and thoughtful compliments. The one desire of Yeats was to devote the rest of his life to the revision of his collected works in prose and verse and, judged by the revisions made in the latter, he was not always successful in improving on the originals. Yet he has to his credit some of the finest poems in world literature and he is one of the major poets of today combining in him the old and the new.

The Lonely Tower is a scholarly work named after one of Yeats's poems, entitled *The Tower*, and it reveals to the world the contribution made by the Irish poet in the realm of literature. Irish writers have influenced world literature, and T. R. Henn the Irish critic and Brigadier shows the lasting appeal of his countryman and friend Yeats. He considers the poet from three aspects: the influence of the years 1916-20 on the man and poet; the significance of that most difficult and obscure work *A Vision* in both its versions; and his debt to painters. In the chapter "Choice and Chance" Henn recapitulates all the available sources for the poet's life and the chapter "Myth and Magic" shows the esoteric background of the poet and the influence of Blake and Calvert and the Rosicrucians on him. Yeats's poetry does not "summarise life," moulded as it is in many stages of consciousness. The analyses of individual poems as a result of the study of the poet's letters and diaries give new meaning to the poems and show the connexion between poetry and life. *The Lonely Tower* will interest the specialist and the Yeatsian scholar in particular.

WILLIAM HOOKENS

IMMERSION—A STORY: by MANJERI S. ISWARAN

(S. Viswanathan & Co., 11 McNichol Road, Chetpur, Madras. Price: Rs. 2)

When a poet takes to writing a story there is always the poetic strain in him which he can no more help than his being sensitive to life. This is the case with *Immersion* which is a long-short of its kind. Manjeri Iswaran not only charms his readers by his language and poetic treatment of a subject which in inferior hands would degenerate into the sexy and the sordid, but elevates the mind to nobler flights. In reading *Immersion* one must, however, be oblivious to language as he knows it and as it is used in prose and glide in the language of the story-writer who goes a-meandering with the joy of colour and harmony as accompaniments to his technique. *Immersion* is, in short, a labyrinth of thought-feelingness and a macabre philosophy. There is the unfoldment of the traditional Hindu mind, with its love for the simple, beautiful and mysterious; and as his first experiment in the long-short in English, *Immersion* is the beginning of the long-short in India and augurs well for the future.

The long-short, as an intermediary between the short story and the novel, has won popularity by its ingredients of plot, character and atmosphere; and on the Continent its appeal lies in the character-sketch method as used by the Russians. In India its survival will depend a good

deal on its adaptation to home conditions, as is done by Indian writers who compose long-shorts in their own language. Tradition has not only interest but also respect and more so in these days of loose plots and common characters. Traditional themes if modernised would, therefore, serve the public well, provided the language and treatment are above average. This is no more than saying that Indian writers need depth to their stories, particularly if they are to give beautiful twists to sex and other problems.

Immersion as a long-short borders on poetry and is to be judged as a lyric. For apart from the story which is based on a slight incident there is nothing to call it a long-short at all. It is the story of Akhileswaran and his wife Jagada who go on a three-day journey to Benares for the immersion ceremony of his father and find the pot of ashes missing. Akhileswaran goes a-seeking and leaves his wife with the cartman and by the time he comes back Jagada is a victim to the man. Akhileswaran returns with the pot intact and attributes it to God's intercession. They continue their journey. The incident reaches a climax in the Holy City when he and his wife Jagada are burying the ashes and he sees her slip

“THE UPWARD SPIRAL”

BY JOYCE CHADWICK

This note by the late Joyce Chadwick, poet of rare insight, was written quite a time ago, but it is still of interest, as is also the fine novel which occasioned it: **THE UPWARD SPIRAL** by Dilip Kumar Roy (Jaico Publishing House, New York, Calcutta, Bombay), Rs. 8-4.

It was lately the privilege of two women—a painter and a writer—on holiday in the crystalline beauty of a warm April in Southern England, to read three books: two on the recommendation of an article in *Mother India*. These were Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory* and Lloyd Douglas's *The Robe*. The third, a present from its Indian author, Sri Dilip Kumar Roy. These three books will probably always be bound together in at least one reader's mind as a picture of three flames making with varying intensity one pillar of fire. Are they not three burningly sincere responses—Indian, American and British—to the cry of ripening Time: “Let there be light”? Light not only increasingly visible and feelable in “its own place” and, at one remove, haloing the saints and the sages, but visibly and feelably active as never before among the trivial and the dark: breaking up triviality, pouring and sparking itself into the whole body of darkness till it is no longer so dark but already full of spangles urgently agitating towards the moment of coming together to make brilliance.

These two women read *The Upward Spiral* in turns, and when neither was reading it, they discussed it—or, sometimes, broke in at once upon each other's reading of different books with an impulse to share immediately particular admirations: the lovely economy of the Sanscrit word *upadhi*;* the touching picture of the little dancer's recognition, from the youngest age, of her vocation; Raka's question to Gurudev at their first meeting: “When are you going to throw off your mask”? and its tremendous answer: “When you throw away your blinkers.”

**“Our philosophy has a beautiful word,” Asit went on, “Upadhi. It is very rich in import: a wealth of associations have crystallized round it through centuries of mysticism... For instance, a crystal, held near a red flower, acquires its neighbour's upadhi of redness. So it was with Pisima: she had constant truck with lawyers and money-makers; the result she became infected with their upadhi—of wordliness”. (“The Upward Spiral” p. 13).

The pictures of contemporary Indian life were of interest to both minds; so were the fleeting pictures of life in the Ashram. Sometimes these puzzled. Must Asit and Raka be so often and so small “hurt” when the beloved Mala appears to favour the one above the other? Well, perhaps they must. How but through such manifestations of ever-resilient Ego could the whole depth of patience, understanding and gentleness possessed by the complete Knower be demonstrated? In a slightly different connection, but still amplifying this aspect of wisdom, the scene between Gurudev and Raka when she is lifted out of her tantrum on page 436 seemed to one reader of the most piercing importance.

On page 536 our troubled age is given this great lantern to swing before it: the melancholy Prabal has been making a common complaint; he finds the Demons and Titans within him quite enough “without their rampaging all over the place.”

“But there you are wrong again,” said Gurudev. “For nothing can happen outside that is not a projection of what is inside us. Tyrants and dictators would have died in their cradles had we not hailed and nursed them with all the ardour of a born devotee.”

“Receive the truth,” said John Keats, “and let it be your balm.” This truth received, here is one at least of the white blazes of light its lantern leads to:

“And since this is at last open to you, the way of Light, why make for the marsh of phantoms? Why fume and fret when you can love and pray—gladly participating in His miracle Play where not an atom whirls or nebula wheels but that He—the Primal Teacher of the Cosmic Dance, the *Akhila-kala-adiguru*—informs its movements... Yes, if you can pray for that, you will care no more for anything else—not even salvation.” (p. 575).

BOOKS in the BALANCE—Continued from previous page.

into the water. He is helpless. All who look on her see her as sanctified in the bosom of the Ganges and the priest sees in her a *sumangli*. Akhileswaran is inconsolable and in a distraught state of mind blurts out something which makes the priest curious and he accompanies Akhileswaran home. At the identical spot (where the cart had stopped and Akhileswaran had gone in search of the pot) the cartman begins to rave and, getting thrown by the bullocks he cannot control, meets with his death. The priest has a clue to the woman's suicide but Akhileswaran is so simple that he cannot account either for his wife's death or the unexpected death of the cartman and he recalls the scene beautifully and clearly:

There, at a distance, stood the heap of macadam on which the cartman had sat smoking, and there again was the tree against which his wife had leaned. He saw her distinctly, her big eyes veiled by long lashes, eyes through which the soul could only have looked at the beauty and benignity of the world; and through all the various expressions he had known her countenance assume, simple, dignified, remote, proud, tender, passionate... Why had she not spoken to him? What had she felt that she couldn't express? A tear trickled down his cheek.

We see him silent for a while and then speaking almost to himself:

“In Benares my wife died, drowned accidentally,” he said in an

undertone, “and here the cartman has met with his end, accidentally thrown by restive bullocks. The omens must have been bad when we set out on the journey.”

“Really bad,” concurred the priest.

They looked at one another, sarcasm defeated by a simple heart untutored in the guiles of the world.

In *Immersion* we are conscious of the change and development in the Indian mind side by side with traditionalism or orthodoxy. There is the cartman who is no more a villain than his prototypes to be encountered in life. There is the woman, beautiful and weak in the hands of man; the man Akhileswaran who belongs to an age that is no more; and the worldly-wise priest who acts as a *balance* between the simplicity of Akhileswaran and Jagada on the one hand and the wily cartman on the other... The woman's suicide in the Ganges, much as it seems to go against commonsense and her duty towards her child whom she has left at home, will appease the orthodox Indian mind that will have nothing short of death to a woman who has been a victim to man on a journey meant for religion. A slight incident, delicately elaborated, *Immersion* brings out the poet and philosopher in Manjeri and it reads like a closet drama. It hints the potential wealth of the East—simplicity and spirituality.

WILLIAM HOOKENS

LOTUS-FLAME—Continued from page 12

No detail speck shall elude his ageless sight;
Nothing be too insignificant or small
For his attempt to rouse the godhead in man;
Nothing shall weary his giant heart of fire;
Nothing shall stop his wide passage divine;
No barrier stand too high or deep to be crossed,
To be fought or destroyed or mastered or changed or spanned
In his celestial-sure and high endeavour—
To make man wear the heavenly diadem.
Even the dire invincible Apolyon
Of death shall not check his white luminous course;
Even the terrible puissance of old Night
And godless gloom's chaotic immensity
Shall not frighten his spirit deathless and free.
No might would be stronger than his soul of light,
No power more potent than his sun-being.
His shall be the omnipuissant mind-flame
Daring all hazards of inconscience and sleep,

Breasting all the obscure attacks from below,
He shall force his path into the cryptic womb
Of spaceless extinction and of total Night
To conquer the hell-queen in her serpent-base
Who rules the globe with her titan sons of gloom
And free the earth from her dumb fatal yoke
To receive the benediction of the Peak
On its unburdened head and yearning soul.
His unfatigued heart shall not be appeased
Till the iridescent crest of Self is reached;
Till the super-puissance and the limitless fire
Consume the earth in its diamond widennesses,
Merged in its wide breast unimaginable;
Till the godhead's one unmitigated blaze
Envelops the sod with its thunder and its light;
Till all nescience be annulled and blotted out
And man be one with his own Infinity.

To be continued

LOTUS-FLAME

PART IV: THE SELF-KNOWLEDGE

By ROMEN

Continued from the issue of October 13

This was the measureless end to be attained,
 This was the goal, unhorizoned and remote.
 To be an endless channel of the Supreme
 Was his fallen self's ideal and mission and close.
 Alone he must strive on, unaided, sole
 Till he discovered his very vastness-core.
 His toil was to be limitless like the stars,
 His labour was to clasp the universe.
 His brain was to seize the unattainable signs
 Of the mysteries that were this global whole.
 He must be unfatigued like tireless heaven;
 Untremored like the witness-spirit behind,
 Colossal and unassailable like the sky.
 He must build the bright citadel of his being
 Into one massive harmony like the sea;
 A vast, luminous monolith to climb
 The azure altitudes of the apex-noon
 Or an immense mansion of crystal poise.
 His spirit of flame must a grand fortress be,
 Whose base and top were undivided and whole,
 A white burning structure unnameable, unique.
 Rooted on earth his head must touch the peak,
 Rooted in the heights his base must touch the dust.
 A god must he be and the hour's puny man,
 Infinite must he be and a finite soul.
 Being a radiant theophany in clay,
 He must be the formless void of the Unnamed,
 Unseizable to human heart, his form august
 Must be the mire's play-mate perpetual.
 In the dim spaces of creation, he
 Must be an unparalleled stature fire-born
 Whose manhood was to be the summit of earth
 And whose mind a far pinnacle of sun-gold.
 Between his dual self's extremes unfathomable,
 Of kinetic power and of potent sleep,
 His measureless being's universe would hold
 The million worlds, the countless energies
 And the unnumbered realms that stand behind
 And above and below the earth's atomic point,
 The Viewless and the Inscrutable and the Inane.
 Standing behind all actions and all plans,
 He would preside over the destiny
 Of earth and man's heavenward ascending march.
 Remaining in the flux of mortality,
 He would be above death and time and change.
 His would be the sheer ubiquitous mind-space;
 His would be the great deathless heart of the spheres;
 His would be the wide soul of compassion and bliss,
 A radiant fount of ceaseless beatitude
 And his golden frame of dust would be the tread
 Of the eternal in the mire's soulless home.
 His life and flesh would an embodiment be
 Of superconscious hush and power and will,
 A lustrous body whose awakened cells would be
 The bright multitudinous beehives of God.
 Not an ungrasped hazy ideal's star-gleam
 But a flaming diamond omnipotence,
 A dawn of the future suns his steps would be
 And his vision would create the worlds anew
 And his benediction immortality.
 One in whom the gods would find their vast abode;
 One who housed the trance of the Ilimitable;
 In whose large breast nestled the topless fire.
 His descent would be the outbreak glorious
 Of light and peace and power unnameable;
 Soul of all souls he would be, heart of the earth;
 The very essence of all sight and Being.
 His name would clasp an iridescent night,
 An amazing seed to rouse the Infinite,
 A nameless wonder on the bosom of the hour.
 Sleepless would be his gaze upon the globe
 And his help eternal and without an end.
 For one yearning to climb the celestial fount,
 For mortality craving to reach god-close,
 All the wealth of his high godhead's effulgences
 Shall be focussed on the dim screen of the clod
 To throw the image of the Ever-beautiful
 From the ageless projector-machine of his hidden soul

And reveal to earth the mysteries occult
 That brood behind its somnolent domains
 And the drama of the gods' descent on dust.
 His life shall be a splendid path to the peak,
 A living index of the ascent of man
 From his sleep of sod to his waking firmament,
 From his abyss to his height's toplessness.
 It was he who would impose the law divine
 On ignorance and the half-illuminated soul
 And enlarge its blind meaningless cyclic whirl
 Into the spaceless zodiac of the sun
 To revolve around a limitless, deathless orb,
 Not around its nucleus of somnolence.
 Casting the robe of matter and dire gloom,
 He would rescue the light-child lost in the night,
 The unborn effulgence drowned below the shroud
 Of inconscience and ever-puissant death.
 The awaking of a vast bourneless sun-sea
 From the womb-hold of a subterrenal world
 Shall change the visage of the universe.
 From the remote twilight-aphelion
 His power shall force the unconscious dusty speck
 To the perihelion of spirit-noon,
 From its soulless midnight to its zenith-peak
 Of perfection's topless immortality.
 Amid darkness and insurgent nights without eye
 His toil shall be to kindle the radiance
 Of the deathless and celestial soul-lamp
 Making man conscious of his inborn bliss
 And infinity and light immaculate,
 A true icon of the august blaze above,
 Leading his steps from the lunate glimmerings
 Of his errant mind and making the mighty path
 Of the cerulean empire's huge descent
 On soil a burning inevitable step.
 It was he who must labour on the heights
 With his sleeplessness calling the Unknowable
 Into the mute gulf of humanhood's caves;
 It was he who must prepare the unseen worlds,
 Kingdoms and dominions for the thunder-falls
 Of the giant lightning-oceans of the Self
 And mortality to receive the cataract
 Of the unbounded flame of the Absolute.
 His work shall be unseen, latent like the stars
 That gleam behind the brilliant blaze of noon,
 A viewless presence of force and will divine
 To reshape the argil mould of finite fate
 And change the base of sombre oblivion
 Into a white faultless calm-sea to hold
 The Infinite. Hewing by his mighty hands
 Out of the shapeless matter's unsouled night-hills
 With his levin-chisel of celestial force,
 He shall sculpture the face of the Invisible.
 He shall hold the reigns of cosmic puissances
 Standing above all rush of mutable forms,
 Behind all the forces that take birth and die,
 Behind the destiny that leads our earth.
 His puissance shall be incommensurable.
 Aloof, alone holding communion
 With his vast super-self inaccessible,
 He shall be the multipresence and wide gaze,
 A golden miracle without term or name,
 A wonder none has imagined or conceived
 Upon this obscure globe of nescient eve.
 Aboding the human frame of the dying hour,
 He shall attempt all moods and modes and paths;
 All routes and countless possibilities
 Shall come under the broad horizonless field.
 Of his work tireless, labour ceaseless and calm;
 All the topless, wayless summits he shall climb;
 All the unchartered depths of Styx descend;
 All the large, unbarred universal space
 Shall be the bright easel to hold the frame
 Of his vast work's limitless masterpiece.
 His enormous brush-strokes firm and infallible
 Shall paint the world with the sky's fiery hues,
 The blazing hues of his advent's dawn-gold.

Continued on page 11