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"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

ALTERNATE SATURDAYS

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CONTENTS

THE LAST LIVING "DARSHAN"	1	"SAVITRI", AN EPIC by A. B. Purani	8
SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS LITERARY VALUES AND SOME PERSONAL POINTS	2	SRI AUROBINDO AND MAN'S SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT by C. C. Dutt	10
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA by Sisirkumar Mitra	5	THE DANGEROUS DISEASE THAT IS FEAR THE LATEST FINDINGS OF SCIENTIFIC TESTS	
THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO CHAPTER VII: THE INTEGRAL SURRENDER by Rishabhchand	6	by John E. Gibson	12

THE LAST LIVING "DARSHAN"

November 24 has come again—one of the *darshan* days on which Sri Aurobindo used to appear before a pilgrim-public of hundreds passing in turn and receiving the benediction of his calm yet piercing gaze. Last year it was the final occasion on which, side by side with the Mother, he was seen in the body. After that, the public saw him only as he lay in state eleven days later, with his imperial eyes shut upon the world to which he had brought the vision of a new life victorious over the age-long ills of humanity.

The final living *darshan* is etched unforgettably on the minds of all disciples. For it was a sovereign act of grace. Sri Aurobindo was known by many to have been seriously affected on a sudden with some bodily disorder. The disease was, of course, symbolic of a process to which he had given his sanction as part of the spiritual fight waged by him against the powers that had held physical man under their sway. But it was no mock difficulty assumed in the course of a demonstration of divine power. When a spiritual genius is bent on transforming completely the condition of man on earth, he does not play-act: he takes up in dead earnest and in concrete actuality the whole range of human problems—mental, vital, physical. So the renal disorder accepted and suffered by Sri Aurobindo was genuinely acute and fraught with the most dangerous possibilities. To deal with them perfect rest was required. But Sri Aurobindo, both in order to answer the need of his followers and in order to dispel whatever defeatism might invade those who did not know what was happening behind the scenes, sat as on every *darshan* day—tranquil and august, with the Mother radiantly smiling beside him.

No sign did he show of the grave trouble through which he was passing. But there was one difference on this day from the usual *darshans*. As time went on, word travelled round that people should hurry. They were requested not to linger at all in the Master's presence. They had to move fast before him, have but a brief instant of his regard so as not to prolong the period of his continuous sitting posture. Two or three times the doors of the *darshan* room were closed for a short interval. There was, however, no shirking of the task of letting every disciple and visitor meet those benedictory eyes.

Those who went in early for the *darshan* were lucky enough to have the customary standing-time. The present writer cannot be sufficiently grateful for the good fortune of having been among them. As he slowly went up the stairs in a queue, breathing the holy atmosphere that is especially intense during the *darshan* days and feeling with every step upward an increasing sense of what he can only call the luminous universality of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the all-embracing power and love of a limitless spiritual Being that had put forth two individual focuses, as it were, of Its eternal Truth-Consciousness, he could not remember that for a week or so before this occasion Sri Aurobindo had been rumoured to be going through a severe physical crisis. And as he reached the top of the stairway and, from the outer end of the *darshan*-hall, caught sight of

the Mother and the Master seated as if in a timeless sculpture of serene compassion, the day joined all those wonderful days in the past when he had stood or knelt before his spiritual parents and had realised in concentrated richness the new-birth they had given him from the moment when, twenty-three years ago, he had been accepted in the Ashram. The normality, so to speak, of the super-normal seemed all the more unbroken.

There, as ever, was Sri Aurobindo, with his majestic countenance the colour of pale gold, his thin silvery beard and his mane of long white hair. One elbow resting on the arm of his seat, one hand placed upon his thigh, the whole body a picture of powerful ease, he sat gazing out as if towards glorious horizons for humanity that humanity itself could not yet vision from its grope at the foot of the Aurobindonian Himalaya. Imperturbable he looked, while the Mother was, as usual, most graciously attentive to every shade of the passing moment. With her expression of sweet intimacy she was taking away whatever strain the in-coming people might feel on approaching the Master on such rare occasions in the year.

Even as the writer drew near, nothing uncommon was visible to hint in any distressing way the strange event that was to occur in less than a fortnight. But one uncommonness marked the occasion to render peculiarly blissful this last *darshan*. The Mother leaned towards Sri Aurobindo and softly mentioned the name of him who was offering his salutation. Immediately Sri Aurobindo began to smile. It was a smile of supreme kindness, whose meaning was understood only later when he had left his body. On a back-look it seemed to have held a royal appreciation of all the little toils done with the pen in his dear name and also a vast beneficence assuring help for all future to one who had been in the habit of depending almost helplessly on him for inspiration.

The inner assistance has not ceased to be felt. Always the touch from within is ready as before and a wide store of thought and word is inwardly perceived to be waiting above the mind as if in Sri Aurobindo's masterful hands, to come down at his sanction as in the years when the call used to go to his embodied Light in a room in the Ashram. That smile shines out through the veil of so-called death. And like it the whole Aurobindonian power is at work, and today's *darshan* will be charged with it as on the day we last saw him beside the Mother.

November 24 is known as the Day of Victory, for, on it, Sri Aurobindo had the experience which promised complete fulfilment of his vision. It is significant that the last living *darshan* he granted was precisely on this day and in spite of grave obstacles. He declared through the occasion that his life was victorious, no matter what the appearance soon after. And the declaration was even verbal and explicit, for the sentence culled from his writings and published as a message on that day ran: "The Supramental is a truth, and its advent is, in the very nature of things, inevitable."

SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS

(THE QUESTIONS ARE PUT BEFORE THE ANSWERS)

LITERARY VALUES AND SOME PERSONAL POINTS

(AE has made a few interesting remarks on some of my poems—remarks curious in some places while finely perceptive in others. He warns against frequent use of words like "infinite", "eternal", "limitless". The difficulty about such words had struck me before—frequent use of them gives a not altogether agreeable Hugoesque flavour to mystic Indian poetry; but I wonder whether I have cheapened or misused them. At least you have never taken me to task on that score.)

As regards those two poems of mine which you have liked immensely, he notes with pleasure only one phrase in *Ne Plus Ultra*—"the song-impetuous mind"—and has nothing to say about *This Errant Life*. Isn't that strange?

By the way, the copy of your *Love and Death* is ready to go to England. I wonder how the critics will receive the poem. They should be enthusiastic. It is full of superb passages. Do you remember Ruru's going down to Patala, the underworld, I have commented on its inspiration in my essay *Sri Aurobindo—the Poet*. I can never stop thrilling to it. Here are the lines:

In a thin soft eve

*Ganges spread far her multitudinous waves,
A glimmering restlessness with voices large,
And from the forests of that half-seen bank
A boat came heaving over it, white-winged,
With a sole silent helmsman marble-pale.
Then Ruru by his side stepped in; they went
Down the mysterious river and beheld
The great banks widen out of sight. The world
Was water and the skies to water plunged.
All night with a dim motion gliding down
He felt the dark against his eyelids; felt,
As in a dream more real than daylight,
The helmsman with his dumb and marble face
Near him and moving wideness all around,
And that continual gliding dimly on,
As one who on a shoreless water sails
For ever to a port he shall not win.
But when the darkness paled, he heard a moan
Of mightier waves and had the wide great sense
Of ocean and the depths below our feet.
But the boat stopped; the pilot lifted on him
His marble gaze coeval with the stars.
Then in the white-winged boat the boy arose
And saw around him the vast sea all grey
And heaving in the pallid dawning light.
Loud Ruru cried across the murmur: "Hear me,
O inarticulate grey Ocean, hear.
If any cadence in thy infinite
Rumour was caught from lover's moan, O Sea,
Open thy abysses to my mortal tread.
For I would travel to the despairing shades,
The spheres of suffering where entangled dwell
Souls unreleased and the untimely dead
Who weep remembering. Thither, O guide me,
No despicable wayfarer, but Ruru,
But son of a great Rishi, from all men
On earth selected for peculiar pangs,
Special disaster. Lo, this petalled fire,
How freshly it blooms and lasts with my great pain!"
He held the flower out subtly glimmering.
And like a living thing the huge sea trembled,
Then rose, calling, and filled the sight with waves,
Converging all its giant crests; towards him
Innumerable waters loomed and heaven
Threatened. Horizon on horizon moved
Dreadfully swift; then with a prone wide sound
All Ocean hollowing drew him swiftly in,
Curving with monstrous menace over him.
He down the gulf where the loud waves collapsed
Descending, saw, with floating hair arise
The daughters of the sea in pale green light,
A million mystic breasts suddenly bare,
And came beneath the flood and stunned beheld
A mute stupendous march of waters race
To reach some viewless pit beneath the world.)*

"I did not object to your frequent use of 'infinite', 'eternal', 'limitless', because these are adjectives that I myself freely pepper over my poetry. When one writes about the Infinite, the Eternal and the Limitless or when one feels them constantly, what is one to do? AE who has not this consciousness but only that of the temporal and finite (natural or occult) can

avoid these words, but I can't. Besides, all poets have their favourite words and epithets which they constantly repeat. AE himself has been charged with a similar crime.

"If you send your poems to five different poets, you are likely to get five absolutely disparate and discordant estimates of them. A poet likes only the poetry that appeals to his own temperament or taste, the rest he condemns or ignores. Contemporary poetry, besides, seldom gets its right judgment from contemporary critics, even. You expect for instance *Love and Death* to make a sensation in England—I don't expect it in the least: I shall be agreeably surprised if it gets more than some qualified praise, and if it does not get even that, I shall be neither astonished nor discomfited. I know the limitations of the poem and its qualities and I know that the part about the descent into Hell can stand comparison with some of the best English poetry; but I don't expect any contemporaries to see it. If they do, it will be good luck or divine grace, that is all. Nothing can be more futile than for a poet to write in expectation of contemporary fame or praise, however agreeable that may be, if it comes: but it is not of much value; for very few poets have enjoyed a great contemporary fame and very great poets have been neglected in their time. A poet has to go on his way, trying to gather hints from what people say for or against, when their criticisms are things he can profit by, but not otherwise moved (if he can manage it)—seeking mainly to sharpen his own sense of self-criticism by the help of others. Differences of estimate need not surprise him at all." (2-2-32)

(The other day Arjava told me that he considered the long speech of the Love-God Kama or Madan about himself in *Love and Death* one of the peaks in that poem—he as good as compared it to the descent into Hell about which I have raved ever since I read the poem some years back. He added that the Mother too had been very much moved by it. Somehow I couldn't at the time wax extremely enthusiastic about it. I found it moving and excellent of its own kind, very powerful and displaying great psychological acumen; but, except for the opening eight or ten lines and some three or four in the middle, I couldn't regard it as astonishing poetry—at least not one of the peaks. What is your own private opinion? I need not, of course, quote it to anyone. Here is the passage, to refresh your memory:

*But with the thrilled eternal smile that makes
The spring, the lover of Rathi golden-limbed
Replied to Ruru, "Mortal, I am he;
I am that Madan who inform the stars
With lustre and on life's wide canvas fill
Pictures of light and shade, of joy and tears,
Make ordinary moments wonderful
And common speech a charm: knit life to life
With interfusions of opposing souls
And sudden meetings and slow sorceries:
Wing the boy bridegroom to that panting breast,
Smite Gods with mortal faces, dreadfully
Among great beautiful kings and watched by eyes
That burn, force on the virgin's fainting limbs
And drive her to the one face never seen,
The one breast meant eternally for her.
By me come wedded sweets, by me the wife's
Busy delight and passionate obedience,
And loving eager service never sated,
And happy lips, and worshipping soft eyes;
And mine the husband's hungry arms and use
Unwearying of old tender words and ways,
Joy of her hair and silent pleasure felt
Of nearness to one dear familiar shape.
Nor only these, but many affections bright
And soft glad things cluster around my name.
I plant fraternal tender yearnings, make
The sister's sweet attractiveness and leap
Of heart towards imperious kindred blood,
And the young mother's passionate deep look,
Earth's high similitude of One not earth,
Teach filial heart-beats strong. These are my gifts
For which men praise me, these my glories calm:
But fiercer shafts I can, wild storms blown down
Shaking fixed minds and melting marble natures,
Tears and dumb bitterness and pain unpitied,
Racked thirsting jealousy and kind hearts made stone:
And in undisciplined huge souls I sow
Dire vengeance and impossible cruelties,
Cold lusts that linger and fierce fickleness,
The loves close kin to hate, brute violences*

Sri Aurobindo's Letters—Continued from page 2

And mad insatiable longings pale,
And passion blind as death and deaf as swords.
O mortal, all deep-souled desires and all
Yearnings immense are mine, so much I can."

"My own private opinion agrees with Arjava's estimate rather than with yours. These lines may not be astonishing in the sense of an unusual effort of constructive imagination and vision like the descent into Hell; but I do not think I have, elsewhere, surpassed this speech in power of language, passion and truth of feeling and nobility and felicity of rhythm all fused together into a perfect whole. And I think I have succeeded in expressing the truth of the godhead of Kama, the godhead of vital love (I am not using 'vital' in the strict Yogic sense; I mean the love that draws lives passionately together or throws them into or upon each other) with a certain completeness of poetic sight and perfection of poetic power, which puts it on one of the peaks—even if not the highest possible peak—of achievement. That is my private opinion—but, of course, all do not need to see alike in these matters." (10-2-32)

(As *Love and Death* I have long since adopted as my poetic Bible owing to the consummate beauty of its inspiration and art, and as now I am just awaking to a capacity in myself for blank verse, I shall be really happy if you will tell me the way in which you created this poem—the first falling of the seed of the idea, the growth and maturing of it, the influences assimilated from other poets, the mood and atmosphere you used to find most congenial and productive, the experience and the frequency of the afflatus, the pace at which you composed, the evolution of that multifarious, many-echoed yet perfectly original style and of a blank verse whose art is the most unflinching and, except for one too close repetition of the mannerism of the double "but", the most unobtrusively conscious that I have seen. In my essay on your poetry I tried to show the white harmony, so to speak, of *Love and Death* in a kind of spectrum analysis, how colours from Latin, Italian, Sanscrit and English verse had fused here together with an absolutely original ultra-violet and infra-red not to be traced anywhere. Among English influences the most outstanding are, to my mind, Shakespeare, Milton, Keats and Stephen Phillips. In my essay I dwelt at length on the first two and on the magic way in which the passage about Ruru's sail along the Ganges and subsequent sea-plunge into Patala combines at the same time the early and later Milton and, with that, something of Shelley and Coleridge. Keats and Stephen Phillips I did not specially deal with. Keats seems to have added to the element of supple strength in your poem, while Phillips has tinged it with a certain poignant vividness and colourful delicacy. More fundamental, however, than effect of his manner was, I think, the spell cast by certain moods, as it were, of his *Marpessa*. . . . But all this is guess-work—correct maybe in some respects, but I should like very much to have your own illuminating account of the matter, as well as answer to the other points in my question at the beginning of this letter.)

"I cannot tell you much about it from that point of view; I did not draw consciously from any of the poets you mention except from Phillips. I read *Marpessa* and *Christ in Hades* before they were published and as I was just in the stage of formation then—at the age of 17—they made a powerful impression which lasted until it was worked out in *Love and Death*. I dare say some influence of most of the great English poets and of others also, not English, can be traced in my poetry—I can myself see that of Milton, sometimes of Wordsworth and Arnold; but it was of the automatic kind—they came in unnoticed. I am not aware of much influence of Shelley and Coleridge, but since I read Shelley a great deal and took an intense pleasure in some of Coleridge's poetry, they may have been there without my knowledge. The one work of Keats that influenced me was *Hyperion*—I dare say my blank verse got something of his stamp through that. The poem itself was written in a white heat of inspiration during 14 days of continuous writing—in the mornings, of course, for I had to attend office the rest of the day and saw friends in the evening. I never wrote anything with such ease and rapidity before or after. Your other questions I can't very well answer—I have lived ten lives since then and don't remember. I don't think there was any falling of the seed of the idea or growth and maturing of it; it just came,—from my reading about the story of Ruru in the *Mahabharata*; I thought, 'Well, here's a subject', and the rest burst out of itself. Mood and atmosphere? I never depended on these things that I know of—something wrote in me or didn't write, more often didn't, and that is all I know about it. Evolution of style and verse? Well, it evolved, I suppose—I assure you I didn't build it. I was not much of a critic in those days—the critic grew in me by Yoga like the philosopher, and as for self-criticism the only standard I had was whether I felt satisfied with what I wrote or not, and generally I felt it was very fine when I wrote it and found it was very bad after it had been written, but I could not at that time have given you a reason either for the self-eulogy or the self-condemnation. Nowadays it is different, of course; for I am conscious of what I do and how things are done. I am afraid this will not enlighten you much but it is all I can tell you." (3-7-33)

(Your reply is not only enlightening but most enkindling too. Who

can help being thrilled by the news that *Love and Death* was written in a white heat of inspiration during fourteen days of continuous writing in the mornings? The marvel grows and grows in one. I feel like flaming up in a passionately poetic panegyric or giving an effulgent echo to the fact of such inspiration on your part by a new blank verse ecstasy on mine!

Of course, most of the influences on your style and verse were unconscious. As I said in my essay, "Here is no slavish limitation or echo; rather, a versatile originality winning rapid access to the worlds of visions and voices to which only the masters have the key." That you had an intense admiration for *Marpessa* and *Christ in Hades*, more particularly for the former, is evident, but it would not be correct to declare that your rhythm or manner is all Stephen Phillips. Phillips's style, in my opinion, is a combination of two manners, only one of which finds some sort of reflection in yours, but in a richly strengthened and heightened form, because there are innumerable shades in your style, some of which may be compared to a few of Keats's. All comparison, however, touches only the outskirts of the matter. *Love and Death* remains most unquestionably, most admirably individual and original. But I am glad that it forms a kind of epitome also of the diverse exquisitenesses and magnificences of all past poetry, for it comes to me as a Book of books, a veritable Bible satisfying all my poetic needs, owing to its being a word-presence of a "*Pulchritudo antiqua et semper nova*", and I can say to it: "I love thee—at once

Because Infinity upon thee broods,
And thou art full of whispers and of shadows.

I love thee not only for

Thy freshness stealing on me like strange sleep,

but also because

Thy face remembered is from other worlds."

Now just a few questions before I close. Was *Love and Death* your first achievement in blank verse—a perfect Pallas sprung full-blown from the Zeus-head of your inspiration; or did a lot of trial and experiment precede it? Was your brilliant translation from Kalidasa its forerunner?

P.S. I should like to make clear one point in my letter. When I say that *Love and Death* is so dear to me not only because it is an original achievement but also because it is "full of whispers and of shadows", it must not be understood that this poem is teeming with direct reminiscence of past poetry. In two or three places there is more or less such a reminiscence, but "whispers and shadows" imply that, if all the verse of the world were to perish, one could regard *Love and Death* as a pointer to, or rather a quintessence of, almost the whole poetic wealth of the past. I say almost, because there is one *lacuna*—the accent of mystical meditation; but otherwise all the sweetness, sublimity, swiftness, "slow sorcery" of style one finds in Virgil, Dante, Kalidasa, Shakespeare, Milton, Keats one finds here: no beautiful effect of phrase or rhythm one can mark anywhere which is not, in some original way of your own, recreated by you here).

"There was no trial or experiment—as I wrote, I did not proceed like that,—I put down what came, changing afterwards; but there too only as it came. At that time I had no theories, no methods or process. But *Love and Death* was not my first blank verse poem—I had written one before in the first years of my stay in Baroda which was privately published, but afterwards I got disgusted with it and rejected it.* I made also some translations from the Sanskrit (in blank verse and heroic verse); but I don't remember to what you are referring as the translation of Kalidasa. Most of all that has disappeared into the unknown in the whirlpools and turmoil of my political career." (4-7-33)

(It is curious how you repeatedly forget that you have so wonderfully Englished Kalidasa's *Vikramorvasie* or *The Hero and the Nymph*. Once before also I had to remind you of it. Surely it cannot be that you want it to be rejected. By the way, you are supposed also to have translated Kalidasa's *Meghadut* or *The Cloud-Messenger*—in *terza rima*.)

"No, I do not reject *The Hero and the Nymph*. I had merely forgotten all about it. . . . I did translate the *Meghadut*, but it was lost by the man with whom I kept it." (5-7-33)

(I should like to know what exactly the meaning of the word "absolve" is in the following lines from your *Love and Death*. I have been puzzled because the ordinary dictionary meanings don't seem to fit in.

But if with price, ah God! what easier! Tears
Dreadful, innumerable I will absolve
Or pay with anguish through the centuries. . .

There is another passage a few pages later where the same word is used:

For late
I saw her mid those pale inhabitants
Whom bodily anguish visits not, but thoughts
Sorrowful and dumb memories absolve,
And martyrdom of scourged hearts quivering.)

* Editor's Note: The poem in question is "Urvasie", a long narrative which some critics are inclined to consider the best of Sri Aurobindo's early blank verses. The reaction in himself against it which Sri Aurobindo speaks of persisted for many years during which he had no opportunity to see the poem again. On 5-2-31 he wrote to me: "I don't think I have the 'Urvasie', neither am I very anxious to have the poem saved from oblivion." Later when a copy of the poem was secured he found it not at all a thing to be thrown away and allowed its inclusion in "Collected Poems and Plays."

Sri Aurobindo's Letters—Continued from page 3

"In the second passage it is used in its ordinary sense. 'Absolution' means release from sins or from debts—the sorrowful thoughts and memories are the penalty or payment which procures the release from the debt which has been accumulated by the sins and errors of human life.

"In the first passage 'absolve' is used in its Latin and not in its English sense, — 'to pay off a debt', but here the sense is stretched a little. Instead of saying 'I will pay off with tears', Ruru says: 'I will pay off tears' as the price of the absolution. This Latinisation and the inversion of syntactical connections are familiar licenses in English poetry—of course, it is incorrect, but a deliberate incorrectness, a violence purposely done to the language in order to produce a poetic effect. The English language, unlike the French and some others, likes, as Stephen Phillips used to say, to have liberties taken with it. But, of course, before one can take these liberties, one must be a master of the language—and, in this case, of the Latin also." (1931)

(How is it that one slips so easily into the iambic pentameter when one wants to say things of most significance? Have you also a penchant for it?)

"An inspiration which leans more on a sublimated or illumined thought than on some strong or subtle or very simple psychic or vital intensity and swiftness of feeling, seems to call naturally for the iambic pentameter, though it need not confine itself to that form. I myself have not yet found another metre which gives room enough along with an apposite movement—shorter metres are too cramped, the longer ones need a technical dexterity (if one is not to be either commonplace or clumsy) for which I have not leisure." (5-3-32)

(Could you say a few things about the new hexameter you have evolved? What is the reason why English poets in the past failed?)

"Former poets failed because they did not find the right basic line and measure; they forgot that stress and quantity must both be considered in English; even though in theory the stress alone makes the quantity, there is another kind of true quantity which must be given a subordinate but very necessary recognition; besides, even in stress there are two kinds, true and fictitious. In analysing the movement of an English line, you ought to have to make three independent scansions according to these three bases, and the combination gives the value of the rhythm. You can ignore all this in an established metre and go safe by the force of instinct and habit; but in making so difficult an innovation as the hexameter, these were not enough, a clear eye upon all these constituents was needed—and it was not there. Longfellow, even Clough went on the theory of stress-quantity alone and made a mess—producing verse that discredited the very idea of creating an English hexameter. Other poets made no strong or sustained endeavour. Arnold was interesting so long as he theorised about it, but his practical specimens were disastrous.

"I may explain more when sending you the first fifty lines of *Iliad*, but as I have not the books with me I don't know that I can make myself clearer." (23-7-32)

(There are other classical metres than the hexameter, in which also there has been very little success on the part of English poets. Your own experiments seem to me fine—achieving just what was lacking.)

"In the attempt to acclimatise the classical scansions in English, everything depends on whether they are acclimatised or not. That is to say, there must be a spontaneous, natural, seemingly native-born singing or flowing or subtly moving rhythm. The lines must glide or run or walk easily or, if you like, execute a complex dance, stately or light, but not stumble, not shamle and not walk like the Commander's statue suddenly endowed with life but stiff and stony in its march. Now the last is just what happens to classical metres in English when they are not acclimatised, naturalised, made to seem even naturally English although new. It is like cardboard cut into measures, there is no life or movement of life... It was inability to naturalise that marred the chances of the admission of classical metres in the attempts of earlier poets—we must avoid the mistake." (23-11-33)

(Here is an experiment of mine in a classical metre. I am not at all convinced that it is a success. But could you tell me why exactly I failed?)

"I think you failed because you had no unwritten rhythm behind your mind when you started writing and none came through by accident—or what seems one—as sometimes happens. There is an inspiration of language and there is an inspiration of rhythm and the two must fuse together for poetic perfection to come. As it is, you set out to manufacture your rhythm and piece together its parts—that must be the cause of this result. Your failure does not predestine you to eventual failure. Most people fail first when they try this kind of departure from the established norms—this rejuvenation of the old in the new. I do not remember my own previous attempts in the classical metres but I feel sure they were failures of the kind I stigmatise. If I succeed now, it will be by the grace of God, in other words the established Yoga consciousness, for in that consciousness things come through from behind the veil with ease,—so long as a veil exists at all. Of course with genius too in its moments of inspiration—surer than the layman imagines; but genius also is a kind of accidental Yoga, a contact, an opening into an occult Power." (25-11-33)

(I have begun a poem on Parvati in blank verse quatrains. Here are the first five stanzas. If at all you think I should continue, will not the closed stanza plan adopted so far prove monotonous?)

*Men dreamed of her strange hair and saw it fall
A cataract of nectar through their sleep,
Crushing the soul with sweetness—and woke a-dread,
In all their limbs a speechless heaven of pain!*

*Her voice reached to Creation's highest peak,
And though a music most delicate its rapture
Swept through the seven worlds and found the gods
Helpless like flames swaying in a huge wind!*

*A terror beautiful were those dark eddies,
Her fathomless vague-glimmering pure eyes,
Wherein the spirits that rashly plunged their love
Whirled through a lifetime of bewildered bliss!*

*But all in vain her voice and gaze and hair
Before the snowy calm immutable
Of Shiva's meditation, a frozen fire
Of omnipotence alone with its self-splendour!*

*Like an immortal death his far face glowed—
Inaudible disclosure of some white
Eternity of unperturbed dream-vast,
Behind the colour and passion of time's heart-beat!*

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

"In attempting the blank verse quatrain one has to avoid like poison all flatness of movement—a flat movement immediately creates a sense of void and sets the ear asking for the absent rhyme. The last line of each verse especially must be a powerful line acting as a strong close so that the rhyming close-cadence is missed no more. And, secondly, there must be a very careful building of the structure. A mixture of sculpture and architecture is indicated—there should be plenty of clear-cut single lines but they must be built into a quatrain that is itself a perfect structural whole. In your lines it is these qualities that are lacking, so that the poetic substance fails in its effect owing to rhythmic insufficiency. One closing line of yours will absolutely not do—that of the fourth stanza—its feminine ending is enough to damn it; you may have feminine endings but not in the last line of the quatrain, and its whole movement is an unfinished movement. The others would do, but they lose half their force by being continuations of clauses which look back to the previous line for their sense. They can do that sometimes, but only on condition of their still having a clear-cut wholeness in themselves and coming in with a decisive force. In the structure, you have attempted to combine the flow of the lyrical quatrain with the force of a single line blank verse system. I suppose it can be done, but here the single line has interfered with the flow and the flow has interfered with the single line force.

"In my version—

*Men dreamed of her strange hair; they saw it fall
A cataract of nectar through their sleep,
Crushing the soul with sweetness; they woke from dread,
With all their limbs a speechless heaven of pain!*

*Her voice soared to Creation's highest peak,
And that most delicate music with its rapture
Sweeping through seven worlds found out the gods
Helpless like flames swaying in a huge wind!*

*A beautiful terror were those dark conscious eddies,
Her pure vague-glimmering and fathomless eyes;
Therein the spirits that rashly plunged their love
Fell whirled through lifetimes of bewildering bliss!*

*But all in vain, her voice and gaze and hair
Before the snow-pale and immutable calm
Of Shiva's meditation, a frozen fire
Of lone omnipotence locked in self-light!*

*His far face glowed like an immortal death:
The inaudible disclosure of some white
Eternity, some unperturbed dream-vast,
It slew the colour and passion of time's heart-beat!—*

I have made only minor changes for the most part, but many of them in order to secure what I feel to be the missing elements. I have indicated in the places where my reasons for change were of another kind

Continued on opposite page

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA

By SISIRKUMAR MITRA

Continued from previous issue

Dry Yet Creative Peninsula

Peninsular India, which is as old as the earth-crust itself and has never been under the sea, is a three-sided table-land composed of cold, hard, crystalline rocks, sharply contrasting with the alluvial Sindhu-Ganga plain in the whole length and breadth of which, as is cryptically said, not a single pebble can be found. Its southern fringe is covered with a belt of dense jungles and low hills through which runs Vindhya consisting of a couple of parallel ranges that extend from the western extremity of Bengal to the gulf of Cambay. Vindhya has no height above 4000 feet. The two other sides of the peninsular part of India are known as the Western and the Eastern Ghats. The former—mentioned in Sanskrit literature as Malaya and Sahya in its southern and northern parts respectively—rise abruptly from the sea and has an average height of 3000 feet. They are replete with forest wealth, and their watersheds have made possible the development of huge hydro-electric stations which are largely responsible for the industrial development of the neighbouring areas. The Eastern Ghats—called Mahendra in Sanskrit—occupy a more inland position leaving broad level tracts between them and the shore. These tracts, like the comparatively narrow ones on the west, are rich in alluvium and are therefore agriculturally most important. The tableland itself abounds in mineral deposits which more than make up for its lack of general fertility.

The rivers of Peninsular India are not without their bearing on the life and history of its people. Some of them are natural frontiers of the regions watered by them. The Narmada and the Godavari are famous in Sanskrit literature for the hermitages of sages that stood on their banks. The Godavari, the Krishna and the Kaveri are responsible for some of the most fertile regions in India. The doab of the Krishna and the Tungabhadra has witnessed many a conflict between the powers of the Deccan and of south India. In her great past south India had many of her capital cities along the banks of these rivers.

The Indian monsoon starts from the southwest coast of the Peninsula early in May. It is caused by the rain-bearing winds from the Indian Ocean, which grow in density as they reach the Bay of Bengal, when they pour themselves in torrents in Burmah, Assam and Bengal. Thrown back by high Himalaya, they bring about rain in the whole of northern India—another gift of Himalaya to India. In September cold winds from the north-east cause some rain in south India. The Indian monsoon covers a period of about three months. There are droughts and dry months, rather trying for the people: it has to be seen if the total rainfall and the rivers in spate when properly controlled, can considerably obviate these difficulties. Hence the dam and the hydro-electric projects of today.

Most of Peninsular India is therefore a region of effort, where man has to exert himself to the utmost to produce whatever the soil can yield. Yet, in spite of its chronic water problem and other untoward conditions, the Deccan plateau has always been the habitation of men whose achievements have added much to India's glory. The beginnings of their material culture go back to a time of which history tries in vain to have any idea. Some evidence, however, is available from the palaeolithic and neolithic finds unearthed in various parts of this region which is also interspersed with early Iron Age sites—facts of very great importance to the study of early man in India. Archaeologists believe that systematic investigations are sure to throw much light on the primitive stages of man's individual and collective development in south India during those dim days of the past. Whatever of it we have so far had is enough to support the view that the South started progressing very early, if not earlier than the North and that it has never been less creative than its neighbour on the other side of Vindhya. Indeed the South has a greater claim to admiration since it has to work against odds which the North has rarely to face. In fact, the people of the South as well as of the drier parts of the North have proved all through their history that it is not always true that an enervating climate is a bar to cultural progress. In constant fight with an unrelenting Nature, they have to their credit a most glorious record of unbroken creative activity over the long period of their history. The character of their achievements does not very much differ from that of the North's. It is practically the same story over again.

The South too has its long roll of saints and sages, thinkers and philosophers, artists and scientists, builders of empires, makers of epochs, who all of them have added so many brilliant pages to the history of India. It is, however, the monuments of the South which strike the traveller most. The massive temples with their wide surroundings which in their great days were known as temple-towns accommodating in them colleges, hospitals, market-places, rest houses and other public institutions, are really a most impressive evidence of the amazing skill of the southerners in the art and science of architecture and town-planning. Indeed, what designs! What vastnesses of conception! What gigantic strength by which they erected these magnificent Houses of the Cosmic Spirit!

It is in the South that temples were for the first time cut out of rocks with no trace of them left on the site now except the temples that the visitor sees without realising that the ground he is treading was once the base of a hill. These sacred buildings, decorated with figures of gods and goddesses sculptured on their walls, enshrine beautiful images of deities that attract thousands of devotees from various parts of India even today. The South's mastery of the pictorial art is evident in the excellent frescoes, another marvel of India's aesthetic genius. The South is sanctified by a long line of saints who sang from the depths of their soul the holy Name of God and proclaimed Him to all irrespective of caste or creed. It is also the birthplace of those acknowledged exponents of Indian thought, the founders of new schools of religious idealism, whose contribution to the development of India's philosophical literature can never be overestimated. Besides, the South played a most prominent part in the dissemination of Indian ideas in the islands of south-west Asia.

All these are only a few of the glorious achievements of Peninsular India which, because of its being girt by the seas on the east and the west and by the Vindhya and the Satpura ranges on the north and because of its lack of the natural wealth and fertility of the North, was comparatively immune from foreign invasions, a fact which gave its people ample opportunity of cultivating the arts of peace, of developing their cultural life to the point of these creations of wonder and beauty. The diffusion of Aryan ideas by the early missionaries from the North where the Aryas had their first settlements is a movement of very great importance in the history of India. It is a movement whose story has yet to be told in its proper perspective. There is no doubt, however, that it started as early as the Vedic times and continued during the Ramayana age till we find in the Mahabharata marked evidences of a cultural and racial synthesis between the North and the South. South India did not take long to be fully imbued with the Vedic ideas and with the spirit of all the traditions that sprang from the ancient ideals. Its old name, Dakshinapatha, found in Sanskrit literature and meaning the southern path of the Aryas, indicates that it was within the ambit of Aryan influence in quite early times. In later days these links with the North were further strengthened when the wide, deep and resistless appeal of the Epics and the Puranas, particularly of the Bhagavata, inflamed and enthralled the mind and heart of the southerners and thus established for ever Aryan culture in the Peninsula which, however, preserved, as it does even to this day, many of its own customs, manners and institutions along with puissance of its mind which characterises its own version of the Epics, specially of the Ramayana. The famous Tamil classics, some of which are of an immense historical value, are another glowing example of the individuality and intellectual vigour of the South. Politically, almost all of it was included in the empire of Ashoka in the third century B.C. Thus the integration of the whole country, the North and the South, has ever remained a vivid fact in the national consciousness of the people of India and this vividness is made all the more so as we recall what Swami Vivekananda, that godlike son of the Mother, sitting on the last point of Bharatavarsha at Kanya Kumari (Cape Comorin) meditated upon. He visioned the Past, Present and Future of India, the whole country in a sublimated unity of purpose and life. "My India! My India!" rang out his heart in an impassioned voice. He thought of India as the heart and body of the Aryan soul, with Hinduism (i.e. spiritual consciousness) as the central principle of its being. He saw her as organically and synthetically one. And this vision was at the back of all he did for his motherland.

To be continued

Sri Aurobindo's Letters—Continued from page 4

what those reasons were;* the rest are dictated by the two considerations of rhythmic efficiency and quatrain structure. In the first verse this structure is secured by putting two pauses in the middle of lines, each clause taking up the sense from there and enlarging into amplitude and then bringing to a forceful close. In the second verse and in the fourth I have attempted a sweeping continuous quatrain movement but taken care to separate them by a different structure so as to avoid monotony. The third is made of two blank verse couplets, each complementary in sense to the other; the fifth is based on one-line monumental phrase worked out in sense by a three line development with a culminating close-line.

* Line 3: "A-dread" seems to me rather feeble."

Line 5: "Reached" is very weak."

Line 17: "Why this inversion? It spoils the power and directness of the line."

Lines 18 & 19: "The double 'of' is very awkward and spoils both force and flow."

The whole thing is not perhaps as perfect as it needs to be, but it is in the nature of a demonstration, to show on what principles the blank verse quatrain can be built if it has to be done at all—I have founded it on the rule of full but well-sculptured single lines and an architectural quatrain structure: others are possible, but I think would be more difficult to execute.

"I had half a mind to illustrate my thesis, by quotations from Savitri, but I resist the temptation, warned by the scowling forehead of Time—this will do.

"P.S.—I don't consider the proximity of the closing words 'light' and 'white' in the last stanzas an objection since the quatrains stand as separate entities—so I did not alter; of course in continuous blank verse an objection would be."

(18-7-33)

To be continued

The Background

The essential truth which informs the concept of the Integral surrender is a triple postulate: That the Divine is the omnipresent Reality, the sole all-constituting and all-transcending Being, whose progressive self-manifestation in Matter is the goal of the evolutionary terrestrial Nature; that it is the supreme Consciousness-Force of this Being, or rather the Being Himself as Consciousness-Force or Shakti, the *Magna Mater*, or the *Megale Dunamis* of the Gnostics, that has woven out of Himself this immense and intricate web of the worlds, and that is the omniscient Will of the Shakti, and not any Chance or caprice of an inconscient Force or Energy, that moves the entire universe of its own creation and acts in and through all creatures and things and happenings. Once we admit this triple truth, we are on the way to appreciating the significance of the integral surrender in the Integral Yoga. For, if there is one conscious Shakti, the transcendent and universal Mother, everywhere, in all Her self-formations, organic and inorganic, and if it is Her Will that, covertly or overtly, initiates, inspires and influences all action and works itself out through the tangled combinations and oppositions of a myriad elements; if it is She who, invisible to our mortal sight and unacknowledged by our mental ignorance, is the Soul of our soul (*Parāprakṛitirjēvabhātā*) and the Life of our life (*Prāṇasyēdam vasē sarvām* or *prāṇah prajānam*), then a glad and loving self-surrender to Her Power is the best way to realise our unity with the Divine and fulfil our destiny in the world. It is not merely the faith and emotion of our heart that induce this surrender, but our reason too, when it overcomes the witchery of the senses and the enslaving lure of the material objects and interests, dictates it as the sole means of the utmost fulfilment of our whole being.

An enlightened intelligence cannot remain tethered to the brute facts of the material world and impervious to the call of the Spirit. With his vision unbarred, his imagination unclamped and his sensibilities sharpened and subtilised, man, following the secret law of his evolution, which is a law of continuous self-transcendence, must look up beyond the boundaries of his mind and extend his exploration into the domains of the Spirit with as much faith and courage as he commands in his intrepid and untiring exploration of the fields of Matter. He must realise that his scientific scepticism is another name for the fanaticism of the materialist, a perverse refusal to see the subtler truths of existence and know the abiding law and essence of his being. A spiritual awakening will widen his consciousness, develop many faculties which lie dormant in him and advance him a step beyond Bergson, where he will perceive the one *Élan*, not only vital, but also physical, mental and spiritual,—the one, indivisible, conscious Force, deploying its manifoldness and diversity on the basis of its inalienable unity; and, realising that all-creating and all-constituting Force as the universal Mother, surrender himself to Her, so that undeflected by the fickle desires and unhampered by the preferences and hesitations of his ego, his being may blossom with the same spontaneity as the flower blossoms under the fostering love and care of Her all-pervading Presence. His surrender to the Mother would then be as natural a movement as the surrender of the wave to the sea,—the microcosm will participate in the freedom and sovereignty of the macrocosm. A further step will lead him from the universal to the transcendent Mother, in whose arms of unebbing Love he will find his eternal rest, even while, united with Her universal aspect, he lives an immortal's life on earth, fulfilling Her Will and manifesting the Divine. What appears utopian and impossible to his imprisoned ego will one day appear natural and inevitable to his liberated consciousness. To know that his atomic being is generated, sustained and led to its evolutionary perfection by the omnipresent plenum of the Mother's living Presence and to surrender all himself with an unstinted joy and generosity to Her Force, which is at once Light and Love, is man's deliverance and his first decisive step towards knowledge.

The Triple Surrender

Man is composed of body, life, soul and mind. Of these four components, the soul, which is made of the Love and Delight of the Supreme, is eternally surrendered to Him. Nothing can wean it from Him, nothing can seduce it into the devious ways of ignorance. It has no desire and no ego; and it does not react with pleasure or pain to the dualities of the world. It is only the triple nature of mind, life and body that, grouped round and manipulated by the ego, is wedded to the shifting surfaces of existence and self-insulated from the Spirit, its infinite source and sustenance. Unaware of his soul and the Divine dwelling within it, and identified with the mobile mechanism of his triple nature, man feels himself a separate being, set in the midst of other separate beings and forces, to carve out his own career as best he can by a series of clashes and compromises. He does not suspect that his egoistic individuality, asserting its separate existence and pluming itself upon its free will, is an ignorant tool of Nature, and that all its vaunted endowments of intelligence and independence of judgment, conscience and ethical instincts, are but instrumental gifts controlled and directed from behind and above by the one universal Shakti of whom it is only an expressive medium. This triple nature of mind, life and body has to be surrendered to the Mother to whom it really belongs, for it is only by surrender to the infinite, all-knowing Force of the Mother that it can be cured of its egoistic distortions and led to its highest possible perfection and fulfilment. Surrender will not diminish or impoverish it, rather it will enlarge and enrich it beyond any conceivable measure.

THE INTEGRAL YOGA

By RISHA

CHAPT

THE INTEGRA

The Surrender of the Mind

The secret sense of evolution being the full and perfect emergence of the Divine in the human individual, the motor means of achieving it is a progressive self-transcendence by the double power of aspiration and renunciation. The consciousness of the individual must aspire for the highest it can conceive and imagine, and, at the same time, always renounce its attachment to what it has already acquired. No self-transcendence is possible without a combined working of these two powers. If we do not stretch to infinity, we remain cribbed in the finite, and if we do not leave the plains, we cannot rise to the peaks. Aspiration without renunciation is an idle imagining, and renunciation without aspiration is a joyless self-denial. Therefore the two powers must be harnessed together to effect the utmost self-transcendence of our being.

Philosophers, scientists and thinkers in general attain to an intellectual eminence by the same double process of aspiration and renunciation. If they remained pre-occupied with physical interests, like the unenlightened portion of humanity, or lent themselves to the drive of vital desires and the ambition for vital success and satisfaction, their ascent to intellectual heights would be impossible. An increasing renunciation of the lower pleasures and pursuits and a steady uplook have crowned them with intellectual glory. But even the highest mental eminence is a dim plateau which commands no direct view of Truth. What we have arrived at by strenuous mental strivings is not knowledge, but, at best, some shadowy figures and fragments of knowledge, some aspects of Truth torn from their harmonious unity and fringed with the nimbus of our minds. There is no knowledge in the mind but is harassed by doubt and challenged by fresh discoveries—we seem to be moving from hypothesis to hypothesis, speculating, imagining, conjecturing, experimenting, but never getting at any assured, incontrovertible truth, any final solution of the problems of life.

What is the remedy? The same as we employed, though subconsciously, at the past crucial stages of our evolution—the renunciation of our attachment to what we possess and cherish and an aspiration for something higher and wider. If we are sincerely convinced of the inherent limitations of the human mind and its inability to lead us to Truth, we must cease to glorify it, and, renouncing our exclusive reliance on it and obsession with its pursuits, aspire for an ascent to the next higher plane of consciousness. A keenly felt discontent with mental limitations will open new windows upon the infinite and advance us a step further on our journey to Truth; for, surely it is incredible that after so much evolutionary progress and promise of perfection, we should have to stop short at a half-result and continue fumbling for ever in the twilight of the mind. But there is always a limit to the mind's own power of self-transcendence, which necessitates a surrender to the infinite divine Force of the Mother.

In the Integral Yoga the mind is not sought to be forcibly silenced or suppressed, as is done in some of the other Yogas, notably in Raja Yoga. The aim of the Integral Yoga being a dynamic union, not only of the soul but of every part of its terrestrial nature, with the Divine, and a resultant perfection and fulfilment of the whole being of man, neither mind, nor life, nor body is coerced or atrophied or left out in the cold shade of a righteous neglect. Each part, each fibre of our complex nature has a divine right to exist and grow, and an indispensable, legitimate use in the service of God in the world. The surrender of the mind, therefore, means, in the Integral Yoga, a surrender of all its faculties and functions into the hands of the divine Mother, so that She may, in Her inscrutable but infallible way, purify and transform them and render them potent instruments for the reception and transmission of knowledge.

The mind is derived from the Supermind, the dynamic Truth-Consciousness of the Infinite, but in the evolutionary ignorance of the human consciousness, it seems to be cut off from its source—though, in reality, it is not,—and works as a dividing and differentiating instrument. It commands no vision of the Infinite, no perception of an indivisible unity and totality. It deals with each object as if it were a separate entity, having relations, but no identity with the rest. Its characteristic action is to divide and depiece, to segregate and aggregate, to analyse and synthesise, but always on the basis of a separative ignorance; and it is, therefore, constitutionally incapable of arriving at the truth of existence, which is a truth of unity and totality. In life it is an agent of organisation and action, but a lame and limited agent, organising and acting in the shadow of its seeking ignorance, and not in the self-existent light of knowledge. We propose to go into greater details of the nature of the human mind and the transformation it has to undergo in the Integral Yoga in a subsequent part of this exposition. Suffice it to say here that, unless the mind surrenders and the human consciousness transcends it, there can

OF SRI AUROBINDO

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SURRENDER

be no attainment of knowledge and no satisfactory solution of the problems of life. Aspiration and renunciation must proceed hand in hand on the firm basis of a total surrender.

What is actually meant by the surrender of the mind? With an intense and constant aspiration, the mind must turn all its thoughts to the divine Mother, so that the loving intensity of the turning may bring about an automatic concentration of its energies and a consequent freedom from its wonted distraction and confusion. Concentration on the Divine will bring into it peace and serenity, silence and harmony—a state of intent and tranquil receptivity to the descending Light of the Mother. This aspiring concentration should be accompanied and fortified by a renunciation of the mind's attachments and a complete rejection of its "ideas, opinions, preferences, habits, constructions, so that the true knowledge may find free room in a silent mind."* Our thoughts, ideas, judgements, all depend upon the perspective and angle of vision we take in our regard of ourselves and others; and the angle of vision depends, in its turn, upon the poise of our consciousness. If the poise changes, as it not unoften does, our whole mental outlook and inlook change; our thoughts, ideas and opinions begin to assume a different complexion and run on different lines. This is a common enough experience, illustrated in the lives of many great men, such as St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assisi, Luther, and Kant (among the Westerners); and Valmiki, Tulsidas, Vivekananda, to name only a few, among the Indians. This proves that there is nothing permanent and sacrosanct about our mental structures, which are but ephemeral things, constructed out of a medley of passing physical and psychological elements. In the Integral Yoga, all such vamped-up structures have to be pulled down, the accumulated cobwebs to be swept away and the emptied mind, like an empty vessel, has to be held up for the Mother's Light to fill it. It is an extremely difficult work for the modern intellectual man to do, to cast away his cherished thoughts and ideas, his views and convictions, his predilections, prepossessions, his mental principles and rules, and become, as Sri Ramakrishna was, a simple child of the Mother, open only to Her inspiration and intuition.

But, if one could do that, the result would be what it has always been in the case of all sincere spiritual seekers—a marvellous shower of intuitive knowledge, untainted by personal bias and sparkingly spontaneous in its revelation and action. Knowledge sits enthroned beyond the leapings and circlings of the human intellect and manifests itself only to the mind that has surrendered to it with aspiration and renunciation. The knowledge that speaks in the Vedas and the Upanishads, in the Avesta and the Bible, and in the utterances of the mystics is a supra-intellectual knowledge, not born of reason and reflection, but self-revealed to the silent and surrendered mind, and it is this knowledge which is instinct with Truth, and not what we call knowledge in the pretentious ignorance of our struggling mind. In the Integral Yoga, the surrender of the mind as, indeed, of every other part of our nature, has to be dynamic, and not merely passive. It must be a surrender for sublimation, integration and a radical and total transformation, and not only for a stillness and passivity, through which the consciousness may pass out of the mind into some kind of trance or absorbed union with the Eternal. Each faculty of the mind—imagination, perception, reasoning, discrimination, penetration, judgment, must be directly intuitivised and finally linked to and worked by the Supramental Light. Mind, the alienated and diminished delegate of the Supermind must be transformed into a luminous and powerful vehicle of the supramental Truth-Consciousness and an efficient organiser and active agent for the establishment and consolidation of the Life Divine on earth.

The Surrender of the Vital (Prana)

The surrender of the vital or prana means, first and foremost, the surrender of all desires. At the very heart of life, the egoistic, separative life as is lived by man, there is a hard knot of desire, formed of many strands that are connected with each part of our being. Each motive, each impulse, each action of our life, if it is dispassionately scrutinised, will be found to be shot through with the threads of desire, whether it assumes physical forms, vital forms or mental. In the body it manifests as hunger and thirst, lust and greed which engross and enslave our physical consciousness; and in the vital, it manifests as turbulent lusts and passions, clamorous cravings and insatiate ambitions that toss and torment our being and goad us into all sorts of actions, most of which entail considerable struggle and suffering. This heady rajasic wine is not only useful, but indispensable, at a particular stage of evolution, when the being is enveloped in the *tamas* (inertia) of Matter and needs to be shaken up

and vitalised; but once that stage is passed and a decisive step forward is taken towards the relative equipoise of *Sattwa*, and, especially, when the being is awaking to its spiritual possibilities, the bondage of desire is the most hampering bondage possible. Because of it, life, which should be a tidal flow towards the deathless Light, drifts and dissipates itself or meanders in fruitless channels. Because of it, the universal Will, which is behind, and of which desire is a dark and distorted reflection, remains veiled, and man runs hungering after transient pleasures and finds himself overtaken by recurrent suffering. This vital being has to be completely surrendered and irrevocably consecrated and its desires persistently discouraged and repelled, so that they may ultimately fade away from the nature, leaving the one universal Will to fulfil itself in human life.

Here too, we must remember, the object is not the repression and killing of the vital (*prana*), but its purification and transformation. The vital being is the centre of force and an indispensable instrument for life-effectuation; without it nothing can be achieved in life, whatever may be the power and potentialities of the ideas and visions of the mind. It is the warrior, the executive agent, the intrepid adventurer; and it is also the enjoyer in man. It is made for possession and enjoyment. Its repression, mutilation or neglect—so common in ascetic spirituality—is a fatal folly, for it is nothing short of depriving God of the means of conquest and enjoyment in the material world. Purified of desire, the *prana* becomes a potent instrument in the hands of the Mother, and capable of universal enjoyment. But, let us repeat, it must be totally surrendered to the Mother, and the rejection of its ignorant movements must be uncompromising and unreserved. "Rejection of the vital nature's desires, demands, cravings, sensations, passions, selfishness, pride, arrogance, lust, greed, jealousy, envy, hostility to the Truth, so that the true power and joy may pour from above into a calm, large strong and consecrated vital being." If this constant harasser of man's God-ward endeavours is once conquered and converted, life becomes a triumphal march towards Light and Bliss and immortality, a march ringing with paeans to the self-fulfilling Will of the Divine.

The Surrender of the Body

The surrender of the body means a surrender of all its movements to the divine Mother. It will not do, in the Integral Yoga, to reduce the action of the body to a minimum and limit it only to the bare maintenance of the physical frame or to a social or humanitarian beneficence, or to the performance of some prescribed religious duties. Since the Integral Yoga accepts the whole of life, it accepts all its multitudinous action and play of energy, not for the personal profit or egoistic satisfaction of the individual, but for the fulfilment of the divine Will, which is a Will to endless creation for self-expression. To do action for the satisfaction of one's own desires, physical, vital or mental is to remain attached and fettered to action and perpetuate the life of ignorance and suffering. To renounce action is to non-co-operate with God in His self-manifestation. To do all action, first as an offering to the Mother without any hankering after its result,—selflessly and dispassionately—and then to renounce the egoism of the doer, even of the selfless doer, and let the Force of the Mother initiate and carry on all action, is the sovereign Yogic way. Each movement of the body,—walking, speaking, reading, eating, working, playing,—has to be severally offered, so that no energy of the physical being may remain entangled in the desires and preferences of the ego, but all are surrendered to and controlled by the Mother. "When you can thus gather all your movements into the One Life, then you have in you unity instead of division. No longer is one part of you given to the Divine, while the rest remains in its ordinary ways, engrossed in ordinary things; your entire life is taken up, an integral transformation is gradually realised in you."†

But along with this aspiring surrender of the body and its actions, there must go a thorough rejection of the "physical nature's stupidity, doubt, disbelief, obscurity, obstinacy, pettiness, laziness, unwillingness to change, *tamas*, so that the true stability of Light, Power, Ananda may establish itself in a body growing always more divine..." We shall see, when we come to consider the supramental transformation of the body, how, through surrender to the Mother's Power, it is changed from a dense and impeding clod into a transparent temple of the manifest Divine. Work which, in the beginning of the Yoga, is a prayer of the body to the Divine, becomes in the end the prism of His Victorious Power.

What the Integral Yoga aims to achieve, is not only the surrender of the being of man, but also of his entire temporal becoming; and that makes all the difference between this Yoga and all the others. In it, it is not enough that a man's actions should be altruistic and selfless—though, till the final transformation, there is always a subtle, undetected self (ego) even in what is deemed as selfless,—it must be definitely and authentically God-willed and God-directed. The soul of man belongs neither to any society, nor to any nation, nor to any country, nor even to humanity—it belongs solely and eternally to God; and to be dynamically united with God in life and be to Him "what his own hand is to man" is the purpose of its descent into mortal birth. And it is by an integral surrender of its whole terrestrial being to the Mother that it attains to the blissful and creative union, which is the fount and cradle of its divine becoming.

* "The Mother" by Sri Aurobindo.

† "The Words of the Mothers."

“SAVITRI”, AN EPIC

BY A. B. PURANI

This is the second instalment of Part II of the author's forthcoming book, SRI AUROBINDO'S "SAVITRI": AN APPROACH AND A STUDY. The first instalment appeared in the issue of August 15.

Savitri has unity of structure in a remarkable degree. The legend on which it is founded affords ample story element for such a unity. The opening canto with the Symbol Dawn brings us straight to the crisis of the story—the imminent death of Satyavan—and introduces the chief character Savitri in glowing and divine colours. It brings out at the same time the nature of the crisis, its cosmic significance and thereby raises the character of Savitri to that of “saviour” of men. The attention of the reader is gripped,—if he can enter into the Seer's vision—and he is anxious to know how Savitri is going to meet Yama, the god of Death. To show how Savitri came to be constituted as a “half-divine” being even in her external self the Seer rightly pursues the thread of her birth and explains to us how “a world's desire compelled her mortal birth”. This brings us to the character of Aswapathy, her father, who is no ordinary king but a “colonist from Eternity”. His attempts at self-perfection and his great spiritual attainments form a very natural background for the birth of so great a spiritual figure as Savitri. The “epic climb” of human soul really gains an epic grandeur in the vision of the Master and endows this earth with a tremendous significance. There are greater worlds than the earth, higher levels of consciousness than man's, but there is no more significant world than this our earth in the great divine destiny that it holds.

The canvas of *Savitri* is as wide as the cosmos and it takes into its purview worlds of being that are connected with humanity yet are not perceived by it because of its limitations of ignorance. Nevertheless, these levels do act upon human consciousness. They also include higher planes of consciousness which have not yet manifested here but which are pressing upon the earth-consciousness for manifestation. They contain beings, powers and presences that live on those planes of Light, Consciousness and Bliss, the worlds of Truth. The soul of aspiring humanity symbolised in Aswapathy, the Lord of manifested Life, first descends from his human consciousness into nether regions of unconsciousness and materiality, the regions of the lower vital, its heaven and its hell, as a conscious witness. He then ascends to the regions of the higher vital Heavens and then crosses over to the Heavens of the Mind. After flying into regions above Mind into the Heavens of the Ideal and Illumined Mind he passes beyond the borders of manifested creation to the centre from which creation proceeds. Through a great shaft of Light across a tunnel that leads to the centre, he comes face to face with the World-Soul, the Two-in-One. It is there that he experiences the presence of the Divine Mother who supports the cosmos. It is She, the Power of the Supreme, supporting the cosmos, who bestows on him the boon that saves mankind from the stark imprisonment of Ignorance and subjection to death. Being a power of the Truth-Consciousness Savitri not only liberates man but creates conditions here for the embodiment of the Light Supreme. She shows how man's life here can be fulfilled in a life divine.

This complex and rich yet clear cosmogony revealed in Aswapathy's voyage enriches the significance of the earth as a crucial centre of a divine experiment and enriches the life of man beyond his highest dreams. Incidentally it indicates the nature of the task awaiting Savitri and the tremendous odds against which she would have to contend. Aswapathy himself has advanced a great deal on the path to self-perfection. Throughout his vast journey through the various worlds

He travelled in his mute and single strength

*Bearing the burden of the world's desire.**

But he, a “protagonist of the mysterious play”, “a thinker and toiler in the ideal's air”, “one in the front of the immemorial quest”,—felt baffled when he considered the destiny of the race. When the Divine Mother commands him to continue his labours for man's perfection he invokes her help. A boon is given to him in answer to his prayer. Savitri's mortal birth was thus in answer to “a world's desire”. Even ordinary incidents in *Savitri* get endowed with cosmic significance. There is nothing that is not conscious—even the seasons are not a mere mechanical succession of external changes but conscious operations in the cosmic body.

Thus we see the problem and the difficult conditions for its solution.

The problem is of man's imperfection and his unquenchable thirst for perfection, of his Darkness of ignorance and his seeking for Light, of his mortality and his thirst for immortality. It can be solved by spiritual efforts alone—no external change, however well-meaning or seemingly successful, would really solve his problem. And even the highest spiritual effort of man cannot attain the goal unaided,—the task is impossible. It can be reached only if the supreme Divine can be persuaded to descend on earth and take up the burden of man. Such higher and divine sources of help are available to man. In fact, that is the claim and testimony of man's religion, mysticism, philosophy, and all his upward effort. *Savitri* lays down the conditions of the problem in the clearest manner. The story attains its cosmic significance and the fate of Satyavan rings with the

destiny of man. Man, the middle term between the Nescience and the Superconscience, sees the forces of the nether worlds and feels their impact upon his life. He sees also the possibilities of Higher Worlds and feels their action upon himself. He has to work out his destiny with the Divine help upon this terrestrial globe. This has been determined by a Supreme Wisdom and Power. All this we see while we share the Master's cosmic gaze turned towards the earth. The vision of the elements that help and those that hinder,—and by their very hindrance make the final victory possible,—the imprisoning limitations even of those that help, gives us some idea of the tangled web of human life with its baffling complexity and brings out the need of looking up beyond all mental and ethical idealism to something above all that man has attempted and attained up till now.

The Indian conception of the Avatar, the descent of the Divine in earth-consciousness, undergoes in the character of *Savitri* a profound change. Savitri, the Supreme Power of Grace descended into life, is the only feminine Avatar in the world. It is perhaps in the fitness of things that the Divine Mother in all her love, sympathy and deep understanding should descend to help her children on earth in the fight against the forces of inconscience and bring to birth a new race of men embodying here the higher Supramental Consciousness. But in the current Indian conception even though the Avatar is the Divine descended into the earth-consciousness he is not supposed to participate in human imperfections. He comes down generally to do a divine work to save humanity in a crisis or help it forward in its evolution. But he remains all the time and always Divine and to the Divine nothing could be impossible. When he labours at his task it is only to conform to the human law that he does so. In reality, his divinity does everything. An Avatar thus is in humanity but not of it; his experiences are not like those of other men. Sri Aurobindo for the first time has brought out clearly the necessity of complete identification in his nature part by the Avatar with the nature of man in order to save humanity. This identification, be it noted, is not an ignorant subjection on his part to nature or even an outcome of sympathy as ordinarily understood by man. It proceeds on the basis of knowledge,—it is an act of divine compassion, an act of grace.

The greatest saviours of men need not have to deal directly with outwardly great or critical events in the life of humanity. For, when properly understood, man's conflicts are within him and it is his inner conflict that projects itself into his outer life. Some of the great spiritual battles that are fought within man's soul stamp themselves on human history, as in the case of Christ and Buddha. The epic *Savitri* accomplishes two difficult tasks: it creates a personality, Savitri, a human-divine character and secondly, it succeeds in making all the inner spiritual experiences of man real, concrete and direct. It is well-known that the highest spiritual experiences tend to defy expression in language. But *Savitri* for the first time succeeds in such a thorough objectification of them in terms of images and symbols that the sensitive reader feels their concreteness. Out of many examples we shall just give one here as an illustration: it describes the work of the goddess of inspiration.

*In darkness' core she dug out wells of light,
On the undiscovered depths impressed a form,
Lent a vibrant cry to the unuttered vasts,
And through great shoreless, voiceless, starless breadths
Bore earthward fragments of revealing thought
Hewn from the silence of the Ineffable.**

One feels the concreteness of the silence of the Ineffable and the hewn fragments of revealing thought being borne slowly earthwards.

This was no result of a happy accident but a result of the conscious art of the Master. That he was conscious of it becomes clear from the following quotation taken from a letter in reply to a certain criticism of *Savitri*. He speaks about the plan of his poem:

“It has been planned not on the scale of *Lycidas* or *Comus* or some brief narrative poem, but of the larger epical narrative, almost a minor, though a very minor *Ramayana*; it aims not at the minimum but at an exhaustive exposition of its world-vision or world-interpretation. One artistic method is to select a limited subject and even on that to say what is indispensable, what is centrally suggestive and leave the rest to the imagination or understanding of the reader. Another method which I hold to be equally artistic or, if you like, architectural is to give a large and even a vast, a complete interpretation, omitting nothing that is necessary, fundamental to the completeness: that is the method I have chosen in *Savitri*.”

Savitri deals with a realm of experience that is not known to the common man and it is therefore likely that it may not meet with general appreciation or understanding at first. The creator of *Savitri* knew this very well and so he wrote: “*Savitri* is a record of a seeing, of an experience, which is not of the common kind, and it is often very far from what the gene-

* Book II, canto 1.

* Book I, canto 3, p. 39.

“SAVITRI”, AN EPIC —Continued from page 8

ral human mind sees or experiences.” But even the modernist poet cannot lay claim to a universal understanding and appreciation of his work. *Savitri* demands a certain minimum of capacity of vision in addition to a broad cosmopolitan enlightened outlook familiar with the latest advances in several branches of human knowledge. But that cannot be a bar to its high epic qualities. On the contrary, it opens out an altogether new and rich realm of experience to the reader and if he has to make an effort to enter into the spirit of it, he will find that his labours are more than amply rewarded.

* * * * *

We have brought to the notice of the reader that there is a spiritual affinity between the poetical expression of the Veda and that of *Savitri*. In a general sense it can even be asserted that the subject matter of *Savitri* has an affinity with the subject matter of the Veda. That is to say, not only in some parts does the manner of expression resemble the Vedic style but the vision of *Savitri* is surcharged with a constant play of the light of spiritual revelation from which the Vedic seers received their hymns. The Veda deals with the struggle between powers of the Light and the powers of the Darkness in terms of symbols. Of course, there is a basic difference between the symbolism of *Savitri* and that of the Veda. The occult system of symbolism which the Vedic seers used as a sort of spiritual algebra fell into disuse and was forgotten because of the conscious veil of secrecy used by them. In *Savitri* it is replaced by an open psychological and spiritual symbolism which interprets the legend, using it as a transparent veil for conveying its world of spiritual experience. In fact the legend lends itself easily to such an interpretation. It is full of incidents and characters into which the poet's inspiration has woven the whole question of the supreme silent Eternal and its manifestation in Time beginning with the dark Night of the Nescience and mounting step after step by evolution towards some superconscious expression of the Eternal in earth-consciousness. In that unfolding manifestation of the cosmic effort man appears as a transitional being between the Nescience and the Superconscious Divine. This vision alters entirely the value of man and his life and places before him the high destiny he is here to fulfil as an instrument. Throughout the poem this grand purpose dominates the atmosphere and wherever poetically necessary the Seer brings it to our view by apt repetition. Another important point of difference between symbolic Vedic poetry and *Savitri* is that the Vedic hymns are a creation of various seers with their natural temperamental characteristics of expression, while *Savitri* is the creation of a single genius.

The vast subject of it, compared with those of other epics that are extant, turns out to be vaster than any that has been sung by any epic poet. Dante speaks of Inferno, through which the human spirit has to pass to arrive at Purgatory to be purified of all its dross in order to reach the beatific vision. But the Beatitude is far in the heaven of the Divine and this earth is condemned to remain a vale of tears,—it is a place where the soul of man is tested in order to prove its worthiness to reach the kingdom of God away from the earth. Milton wanted “to justify the ways of God to man” but he did not succeed in his task because perhaps the inspiration of puritanic Christianity was not sufficient to fulfil that task. *Savitri* is a poem of hope and fulfilment on earth. It is a poem of knowledge in the sense that it weaves the conditions of man's highest fulfilment into its epic pattern.

Sri Aurobindo has said that his *Savitri* is planned like a *Ramayana* on a small scale, but it is full-bodied so far as the subject-matter is concerned. Therefore it is to be taken as a full-fledged epic. Though from the viewpoint of length *Savitri* overpasses all European epics, yet all earnest critics would agree with Abercrombie that length by itself is not enough to gain the stature of epic greatness for a poem. It is the sustained breath of inspiration, the high tone of poetical expression that are important.

Between the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* on the one hand and *Savitri* on the other there can be no real and direct comparison for obvious reasons. The spirit of the two languages Sanskrit and English would itself bring in many incommensurate elements. And yet it is possible to consider them as expressions of the Indian spirit in poetry separated by a period of at least one thousand years. The older epics give us the spiritual significance of individual and collective life from a strong and noble thought power of a mind that has high social, political and ethical ideals and is artistically delicate and refined. *Savitri* too offers a whole world of experience but it is altogether a new world in which the life of man,—in fact the whole of the cosmos—undergoes a great and radical change. In *Ramayana*, for instance, the ideal law of conduct, DHARMA, is seen triumphing over the forces of Titanic egoism that were trying to establish their reign. *Savitri* is not a rendering or a vision of the world in terms of the current laws of human evolution as seen by the ideal mind. It enunciates a new law, a new world of consciousness transcending and yet fulfilling at the same time the evolution attained by man up till now. And it renders it with such a rare power of inspiration and vision that it succeeds in making the rare experience concrete to our minds. The *Ramayana* hints at the supra-rational and openly speaks of the Divine as against the Asura and the Rakshasa—the Titanic force. But there it remains something mystical and therefore unknown. *Savitri* deals with the supra-rational but makes it a natural part of its vision of man and deals with it as one of the legitimate fields of consciousness to be attained by man. In spite of these differences one can say that there is similarity in the poignant pathos pervading the life of Rama, the Satwic hero, and

of *Savitri*,—the embodiment of Divine Grace descended to save mankind from the bondage of Ignorance and Inconscience. In *Ramayana* Dharma, the ideal law of life, as formulated by the religious seeking in man, and Rama, the man who embodies that law, seems to reign supreme or, rather, to pervade the whole atmosphere of the poem, while in *Savitri* not merely an ideal law of life, but the Divine and his Purpose reign and pervade the atmosphere. In *Ramayana* the Divine is brought face to face with a great crisis through his own formed satwic nature,—the highest human mould attained by Nature in her evolution up till now. The conflict there is with the exaggerated forces of egoism and ambition trying to dominate the world. In *Savitri* evolution reaches a higher rung than the mind, and *Savitri*, the Divine Grace incarnate, has to fight not with the hostile demoniac ego merely but with the original force of cosmic Ignorance, the Inconscient represented by its extreme form of death. In raising this basic problem of elimination of the Inconscient, the cause of man's subjection to his imperfection, suffering and evil, *Savitri* is unique, and goes deeper than other epics towards its solution. It calls out the Divine that is hidden at present in the human mould to deal directly with the problem of man's emancipation and of establishment of the divine kingdom on earth. To the vision of *Savitri*, to the vision of Truth seen by the Seer, the whole of life is the legitimate field for the Divine to manifest himself. It also sees with equal clearness the great and formidable obstacles in the path of the divine victory.

The *Mahabharata* is a vast store of story within story, a whole mass of mythology built like a vast national temple, “a humanity aggrandised and half uplifted to superhumanity yet always true to the human motive, idea and feeling”. Life of this world in the *Mahabharata* is amply portrayed but is subjected to constant influences and divine powers of worlds behind it and a consistent idea brings about a sort of complex unity in the epic. *Savitri* lifts the veil for man from over the worlds that are behind. In fact it is a world upon world full of beings and powers heaped upon one another and lays bare the interaction of these complex worlds and man's life upon earth. Here in *Savitri* is not the ethical and the religious soul of India embodying a national tradition only; the soul of man in the mould of the Indian spirit widening out into the vast Soul of Humanity is at work under the stress of an intense spiritual aspiration—ascending to the highest, turning its gaze upon the whole complex field of cosmogony and illuminating with its power of rare knowledge all the worlds that are the legitimate field for the spiritual adventure of man. It is said, “whatever is in India, is in the *Mahabharata*”. It can be said that all that man is and holds within himself, all that he is likely to be, is in *Savitri*. The poet of the *Mahabharata* perhaps saw with his prophetic vision the age of KALI, the Iron age, approaching and sang his song celestial of the triumph of righteousness against the apparently overwhelming array of the forces of unrighteousness by the play of the secret Divine managing the whole plot of the human drama from behind the veil. *Savitri* turns its grand vision to the Age of Gold that is coming, the reign of Truth that is in prospect, and envisages the supreme fulfilment of man by his ascent to the Divine and the open reign of the divinity over life to the most external aspect. It is a creative vision that calls upon the soul of man to rise to its highest. It synthesises all the spiritual gains of humanity in a living and organic unity. It is like a vast cosmic temple built for humanity. It unrolls or unfolds its structure of immense complex worlds through which the Master's vision shows us the voyaging soul of man traversing and ascending till it reaches at last its own Reality in the Divine and brings down the Divine Presence here on earth to transform the life of man. In the *Mahabharata*, with its different purpose, the outer story engulfs our attention. We get lost in the human and emerge after long intervals for a short while to see the spiritual significance of things or feel the play of hidden divine forces behind the surface. At times, character dominates. The *Mahabharata* enchants us by the play of the changing colours of life, the play of hazard, high mental ideals, the deep pathos of human life and fate. Kings and royal dynasties and their fate claim our willing attention and interest. In *Savitri* the basic issue of subjection of man to the darkness of ignorance—earth and love and doom—and the inevitability of death grips us from the first. The problem stands out clear and is never out of sight. Events and characters come but have significance in so far as they are conscious agents in the working out of the problem of man's destiny. *Savitri* lifts us out of the mundane and the ordinary rut of human life to a point of view from where we see the whole play of life, in fact the whole cosmos, with a cosmic vision of a divine Purpose trying to work itself out through the life of man. The ultimate significance of life as emanating from the *Mahabharata* is often ambiguous, depending upon interpretation of events, of motives of characters and of the ideals pursued. We often meet people drawing diametrically opposite conclusions about the significance of the *Mahabharata*. *Savitri* on the contrary is free from such possible ambiguity. In the *Mahabharata* man suffers, struggles, tries to win, sometimes succeeds or fails, fate intervenes in human life, and the relation between man and God is in a very great degree indirect. In *Savitri*, even as a struggling and a suffering being, man is raised to a higher status because man knows himself to be an episode between the Inconscient and the unattained Superconscious. All his action, indeed all life becomes a part in the working out of a higher purpose, a supreme will. In *Savitri* the relation between man and God is direct.

To be continued

SRI AUROBINDO AND MAN'S SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

By C. C. DUTT

Continued from previous issue

Sri Aurobindo starts the second part of *The Ideal of Human Unity* with the chapter called "Nature's Law in our progress." Man, of all creatures, has to know the laws of Nature, and especially, of his own nature. This Nature is a thing that is ever changing and evolving. Yet, in all this change there are certain unchanging truths within which our progress has to take place. Otherwise there would be a chaos instead of an ordered cosmos. The subhuman animals and plants are not called upon to know themselves and to direct their actions. Vital and physical struggles they have, but no mental conflict. Rational man is ever at war with himself and with others. He is capable of a constant, but gradual, rise to higher and higher types. Of man's evolution, Sri Aurobindo has written at length elsewhere. What he says here can be summed up in a short extract—"This evolution takes place at present by a conflict and progress of ideas applied to life . . . But from this elementary process there emerges a second and more advanced character of man's ideas about life; he passes beyond the mere mental translation and ready dynamic handling to a regulated valuation of the forces and tendencies that have emerged or are emerging in him and his environment. He studies their law and norm. He tries to determine the laws of his mind and life and body, the law and rule of his environment and determine the field and the mould of his action."

There are two kinds of law that effect us—the law of our actualities and the law of our potentialities. For man's intelligence the latter has taken the form of a fixed standard and a fixed set of principles. The evolution of Nature provides a deeper meaning to human evolution. All life is Nature fulfilling itself. Our actualities are the form to which our nature and life have attained. Our potentialities, on the other hand, point us to a new form with its new law and norm. Our intelligent mind, placed between the two, tends to mistake present law and form for the eternal. Only the utmost limit of our rise and fullness can be taken as the eternal ideal. The ideals of the stages in between are of transient value. Our mentality constitutes the consciousness of the movements of Nature in her progressive self-fulfilment. The Gita teaches us that, while Nature alone acts by her three modes, man deluded by his egoism thinks he is the doer. Our mind being half-lit, we can see only a part of Nature's intentions and processes. This is true as much of our collective mind as of our individual mentality. In this world, the individual, the community and the human race are mutually related. Each seeks its own satisfaction; the growth of social life is determined by the relationship *inter se* of the three terms. The human race has no consciously organised life and yet we are conscious of the demands of the whole race. None of the three terms of human existence can be ignored or eliminated, for Nature acts through them all. In the following passage, Sri Aurobindo makes a passing reference to man's social growth. "Therefore it would seem that the ideal or ultimate aim of Nature must be to develop the individual and all individuals to their full capacity, to develop the community and all communities . . . and to evolve the united life of mankind to its full capacity and satisfaction. . . This would seem the soundest way to increase the total riches of mankind and throw them into a fund of common possession and enjoyment."

The progress of mankind would thus occur by interchange between individual and individual, between community and community and between community and the whole race. This interchange is accompanied by a clash of ideas and strife. Now there is assertion of freedom by the individual, and anon there is suppression of the individual by the community. But, like diversity and unity, freedom and order are both necessary. Uniformity is a different thing. Unity we must attain, but not necessarily uniformity. In fact, perfect spiritual unity is consistent with richest diversity. It is only because of the limitation of the mind that uniformity is sought after, but the real aim of Nature is a true unity supporting a rich diversity. Till we arrive at spiritual perfection, the method of uniformity has to be applied—but very carefully. The question between law and liberty, too, stands on a similar footing. Both can be pushed too far. But perfection lies in the harmony between the two. "Human society progresses really and vitally in proportion as law becomes the child of freedom." These principles, based on Nature's constant tendencies, ought to guide us in our pursuit of human unity. It might be done in the manner of the ancient law-givers of the race, like Manu and Lycurgus. But, in reality, the pursuit will be made according to man's interests and desires led on by the half-light of the human reason. It may even be attempted by an autocratic world-conquerer pursuing his sordid ambitions. Still we must know the best, the ideal method even if we cannot employ it forthwith.

The ideal unification of man would, in principle, be a system in which mankind would form its groupings according to its natural divisions of race, culture etc. The present grouping has been done by military, political and

economic forces without regard to any moral principle. At the cost of much suffering and bloodshed it has fulfilled certain ends of Nature. It has satisfied itself biologically but not morally. But once the great task of unity has been undertaken, the present arrangement will no longer have a *raison d'être*. The artificial grouping can remain only as historical tradition. But many traditions and many accomplished facts will have to be scrapped before the great change can be effected. To provide a sound foundation for the world state to be, the component units must get rid of all internal discord and disharmony. World-unity cannot be based on any force or compulsion, any legalised injustice, any anomalies. We cannot erect an enduring edifice on transient foundations. To establish the supremacy of Europe over Asia and Africa, to establish an oligarchy of a few white races, cannot lead to any lasting settlement of the world. Yet, in 1916, this was all that was being contemplated. Things have undoubtedly marched ahead since then, except for a few crusty determined old die-hards. It has got to be realised that Asia and Africa are determined to make good. The recent development of the British Commonwealth of Nations shows that Britain has realised the futility of a narrow imperialistic outlook. As for America, many Asiatics think that the America which gave freedom to the Philippines is no more and that it is a different America that proposes to help France with men and weapons against the Indo-Chinese. But it is forgotten that America is fighting the spread of Communism which except in Tito's Yugoslavia is never a national force but is controlled and guided by Soviet Russia either directly or through her main ally, Mao's China. The complete submergence of the individual's mind and life in a totalitarian regime *à la* Stalin's is worse than any remnant of western imperialism which may be the sole bulwark against it when truly nationalistic forces are not strong enough. This does not, of course, mean that America is a spotless angel, but the complicated world-conditions must be taken into account and we must distinguish between real and apparent imperialisms. Russia's position in the eyes of the average Asiatic is mainly based on Stalin being an Asiatic by birth and Russia being largely an Asiatic power—a silly and most regrettable prejudice which greatly confuses the issue of Russia's ambition to dominate the world and blot out liberty.

"Some general legislative authority and means of change would have to be established by which the judgment and sentiment of mankind would be able to prevail over imperialistic egoism." This is what Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1916. At the end of the first World War the League of Nations was established. Regarding this League a new footnote has been added on page 190—"The League of Nations started with some dim ideal of this kind; but even its first halting attempts at opposing imperial egoism ended in secession and it avoided a civil war among its members only by drawing back from its own commitments. In fact, it was never more than an instrument subservient to the policy of a few great Powers." It is indeed not easy for the imperialist to shed his mentality. Yet, as we have just reminded our readers, Britain has definitely taken a new path. It may take some time for something definite to emerge everywhere in world-politics in this direction. But the realisation is slowly growing that no empire can last without being a truly psychological unit. Now, psychological unity can be assured only by the free assent of peoples who are considered to be subject to a dominant power. If no such free assent is possible, it will have to be free dissent and separation or use of force. The imperial heterogeneous unit has a value in evolution only as a step towards a greater unity. The major portion of humanity is not interested in power-proud empires. The ultimate end must be a free and natural grouping of peoples. Such free groups would be in a position to eliminate gradually all sordid self-seeking and to develop a sense of wide psychological unity. In Sri Aurobindo's words, "The free and natural nation-unit and perhaps the nation-group would be the just and living support of a sound and harmonious world-system. Racial and cultural bonds will remain, but they will gradually be delegated to a subordinate position."

Sri Aurobindo has given some instances of this kind of complexity. First and foremost is that of Helvetian nationalism. The strong national sentiment that inspires the Swiss people is well-known. Yet Switzerland is a country with well-marked divisions of race, religion and language. Another wonderful example is Alsace. In race, language and early history it is German, pure and simple. Germany has on the strength of this tried its best to detach this country from France, but never succeeded, so great are the sentiments and affinities that bind it to France. On the other hand, Austro-Hungary never could attract the allegiance of Latin and Slavonic subjects, who have moved steadily towards separation and largely achieved it in recent years. For this reason, a free grouping must be the basic principle of unification, and not any rule of historic tradition. At first sight it might seem that the unity of man could most conveniently be brought about on the foundation of national grouping along with certain sub-groups. But looking below the surface, we find that in spite of many

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

common traits, Mongolian China and Mongolian Japan are sharply divided—that Arabia, Turkey and Persia, all Islamic countries, cannot form a happy family—that the Scandinavian twins, Sweden and Norway, though there are many things that draw them together, cannot remain united for long; they have tried and given up. Of course, these Mongolian, Islamic or Scandinavian groups may act in unison under the stress of circumstances, but for how long? Still, the re-arrangement of the world on the basis of free natural groupings can no longer be considered an idle dream. There are, however, large obstacles on the way. Man will not easily give up his national sentiments, unless he sees a fairly easy way of getting something better. We quote a couple of lines from what Sri Aurobindo said in 1916 and his short footnote written recently: Under certain circumstances, "the settlement of the world on any such ideal principle must wait upon the evolution of new forces and the coming to a head both in Asia and Europe of yet unaccomplished spiritual, intellectual and material revolutions."

In discussing the drive towards uniformity and centralisation Sri Aurobindo asks what precisely the status would be of the nation units in the larger unity of mankind. The answer depends on whether there is going to be a single vast nation and centralised world-state with many provinces, parts of a huge machine, or an aggregation of free nationalities into a world-union under a loose, flexible system. If the former kind of unification comes about, there will be a single government which will impose on the world its uniform law and uniform administration, one educational and economic system, one civilisation and one culture, one social principle, perhaps one language and one religion. Such an arrangement seems a distant dream indeed, and by no means a beautiful one. Still, considering the speed at which things are moving ahead, it might become possible in three centuries or so. It would follow logically from the overwhelming predominance of one powerful empire or group of nations. It might come about, if there is already a loose basis of unity, by the prevalence of a political theory or the upsurge of a political party, which is out to establish its cult of absolute human equality. Such a system, by whatever means arrived at, would be based on the dictum that perfect unity is attainable only by uniformity. Sri Aurobindo says that uniformity increases as civilisation progresses. This is seen clearly in the history of the Turkish movement. The movement started with a lofty ideal of toleration for the various elements that made up the Ottoman empire, but, bit by bit, the Young Turk was carried away by an ardent zeal for a uniform Ottoman culture and nationality, which is the key-note of the Turkish State of today. The example of Germany is quoted to show how in spite of many component states the whole was moulded into the image of a larger Prussia. Even in federations like Switzerland, South Africa, Australia, the "spirit of uniformity prevails or tends to prevail." The craze for general uniformity starts from that of a highly centralised administration. At the beginning the lesser units claim and exercise certain sovereign rights, but the tendency is to concentrate more and more power in the Central Government. We see this trend even in the U.S.A. where the people are deeply attached to the original constitution. But things are changing fast. Sri Aurobindo says, "Once militarised, once cast into the vortex of old-world politics, as it at times threatens to be, nothing could long protect the States from the necessity of large changes in the direction of centralisation." Certain circumstances drive a state towards centralisation. These circumstances have, of late, acquired a compelling force. A new footnote appearing on p. 205 says, "Even as it is, the direction of the drive of forces tends to be evidently away from democracy towards a more rigid State control and regimentation." This trend towards a totalitarian system reached its acme in the Germany of Hitler. But the trend persists and the tendency is general. It is important for us to understand this, to study its why and wherefore, in connection with the evolution of a World-State.

But the executive, the administrative, is not the only aspect of organised life that we have to consider. There is also the legislative, the judicial, side of it, which is of equal importance. Life does not develop according to the law laid down by the self-conscious mind. This applies quite as well to the development of human society. Man started with a largely mechanical mentality, and he progressed at first in accordance with a largely mechanical law. Society, too, followed this same course, in the wake of the individual. Consciously laying down the rules of life was a later step. Later still, came the perfectly conscious organisation of group existence by means of the State—a comprehensive organisation of all branches thereof. The completeness of this method depends on how far state and society are synonymous. Modern democracy and modern socialism are only a first crude attempt at that achievement. Nazism and Fascism have tried to arrive at the requisite consciousness by violent regimentation, not freely.

In early society, there was no enactment of law as we know it. Law arose out of custom by natural development, and embraced all law—political, social and religious. There was no fixed legislative authority to determine them. Traditionally, all law was believed to have been framed by an original Moses or Manu or Lycurgus, but historic evidence points to the contrary. Manu, in fact, is a symbol only; the word means "the mental

being." He is the mental demi-god in humanity who fixes the terms upon which the race or people has to govern its evolution. Manu or Moses or Mahomed is only a prophet or message-carrier of the Divinity. All this receiving and transmitting of God's message belongs to a stage prior to the rational, when laws are framed for a people by a fixed legislative authority. The central authority established by the rational mind is at first political, but gradually becomes synonymous with social. Originally the king was a great warrior outside and a great chief in society. But, as time passed, he became the executive ruler as well as a social administrator. It was easier for the King to be an absolute ruler in foreign affairs than in internal administration. The people willingly left everything to him in peace and war, but in domestic matters he had to defer to the popular will. Sri Aurobindo says that this was the state of things in European governments, even at a much later period. For their own safety the people had to acquiesce in the monarch's actions in war and peace for a fairly long time. Parliamentary control of foreign affairs is a very recent thing. It is more difficult for the central authority to seize the internal functions, because of existing rights and privileges. But, in the end, it is bound to assume control of all administrative power,—financial, executive proper and official.

Financial control includes control of the public purse and expenditure of the money contributed by the community. The king has in the past tried to keep hold of the public funds because it was an important aspect of central authority. The public, too, perceived that it was an important part of their rights to see that their money was expended properly. What was the use of having a House of representatives if the King levied ship-money over its head? As early as the thirteenth century, the people of England put forward the maxim, "No taxation without representation." With the defeat of the Stuarts the monarchy in England had to give in on this point, and organic control of the State passed easily to the hands of the people—first the aristocracy, then the bourgeoisie. In France, the monarchy kept a tight hold on the public purse for a longer period and went on administering it inequitably, till the Revolution came in to rectify things. Still, the power has to go down yet to a much lower stratum. It may come about peacefully or it may not. The will of the whole society has to be given effect to, not only in the matter of taxation but in the whole organisation of economic life. These questions, says Sri Aurobindo, are preparing the revolutions of the future.

The uniformity of judicial administration completes the concentration of all powers in the hands of the sovereign. Judicial authority is a very important thing, for by its instrumentality the monarch can crush all revolt against himself and can stifle all criticism of his acts. It has two sides: the civil and the criminal. The former, dealing with laws relating to property and marriage, has a great control over social life. But the latter, which seeks to prevent crime, has a more direct connection with the process of substituting the State for the natural organic community in a position of power. All these laws were originally customary and were enforced by loose customary devices like the Panchayat in India and by similar bodies elsewhere. As the State idea developed, these local institutions began to lose their authority. In India, the King, whose principal function in the older Hindu polity was to coordinate the work of the village and town "republics" and to look after the business of war and peace, encroached more and more on the prerogatives of the local bodies. Large empires like the Maurya were established and the process of unification proceeded apace. Against this, there was always a mass of codes and customs and precedents, but they had ultimately to give way before the onward march of the Leviathan. A fixed uniform constitution, side by side with a uniform civil and criminal law, marks the advent of the new State. In time the rational spirit of man prepared a resistance to it on the basis of equality and called it Socialism.

But it should be remembered that no individual thinker, however wise, can determine the religious, social and cultural life of a people; no arbitrary ruler, however powerful, can fix the economic, administrative activities of his people for long. Although exceptional monarchs like Asoka, Augustus, Charlemagne and Akbar can indicate the way and inaugurate certain new institutions at a critical point of history, it is all a passing guidance. But divine personages—messengers and prophets of God—who are born once in a millennium can speak in the name of God and give a fresh turn to human evolution. Sometimes, however, a man urged entirely by mundane motives has claimed to speak for the Divine. Sri Aurobindo calls this kind of claim "one of the most amazing among the many follies of the human mind." Yet, false as they are, such attempts have had their use in human growth. For, after all, group life has to be moulded by reason, and the mass being unenlightened, it is the reason of the individual that has to do the shaping of the collective life. This is the whole rationale of autocracy and theocracy. The idea of the individual is itself no more than a half truth, but it has to take its course in evolution. The Man who dominates can control the mechanical part of life, but not the soul. Things, however, must go on as they are, till adequate powers arise in the course of evolution from the larger mind of the race to take up its guidance.

To be continued

THE DANGEROUS DISEASE THAT IS FEAR

THE LATEST FINDINGS OF SCIENTIFIC TESTS

By JOHN E. GIBSON

John Jones hummed a gay tune under his breath as he boarded the bus that took him to work. Exuding the serene confidence of the man without a care in the world, he took a seat behind a man whose face was shielded by a newspaper. Jones had no opportunity to see, therefore, that his fellow passenger looked fear-ridden and apprehensive. But presently Jones felt a vague uneasiness, a sense of being afraid without knowing why. And by the time he reached his office, he was gripped by a nameless anxiety which he found himself unable to analyse and powerless to control.

Science is now able to explain this situation. It has discovered by laboratory studies that fear is sometimes even more contagious than the most communicable disease. Tests show that just being near a fear-ridden person will cause another to be vaguely fearful without knowing why, and recent studies at the University of California on the Pacific Coast of the United States show that a person can be instantly affected merely by listening to the voice recordings of anxiety-ridden persons.

The university investigators made an interesting test, using 22 psychiatrists as experimental subjects. First, they made sound recordings of nervous patients discussing their fears and anxieties. Then the recordings were played back to the psychiatrists. The result was startling. Before the recordings were played, the psychiatrists were calm, impassive. As they listened, their composure slowly began to vanish. Many fidgeted, others glanced apprehensively at each other. Faces showed unmistakable signs of nervousness and anxiety. After the performance was over, most of the psychiatrists confessed that they felt as distraught as the patients to whose voices they had been listening.

Recent studies show that many of our fears do not originate with us at all but actually are generated in the mind of another person. Tracking down the origin of one of these "impostor" fears is like trying to find out from whom one caught a cold. That inexplicable case of nervous fear you had yesterday may have been contracted from your employer, who got it from some one he lunched with, who caught it from a fellow passenger on an airplane. Indeed, the unexplainable feeling of anxiety that gripped you this morning may have originated in the mind of a person thousands of miles away, of whom you have never even heard.

How long one of these "impostor" fears can travel around before it finally dies, and how many persons it can infect, are things no psychologist would even attempt to estimate. Investigators have found that virtually no one is immune to the contagion, and animals catch fear from human beings.

Psychiatrist George H. Preston points out how an infant in its mother's arms will begin to cry with fear when the mother is frightened. Incidentally, Dr. Preston finds that many of the difficulties in getting children to sleep at night "are directly due to an unreasonable fear on the part of the mother that something may happen to the child at night—a fear which is transmitted instantly to the child—and which makes sleeping alone in a darkened room a painful if not impossible procedure."

The effect of fear on the thinking processes is interesting, too. Recent tests show that fear can literally "scare the wits out of" a person. Mild anxiety merely hampers the mental processes. Extreme fear can paralyze them completely. In fact, as psychiatrist Edward Lodholtz points out, fear can render a person completely unconscious so far as his brain is concerned. In extreme stage fright, for instance, the mind goes completely blank. Fear also tends to paralyze the memory processes. If one is afraid he will forget something, he is likely to do just that. Under extreme stress a person may even forget his own name.

As for fear's physical effect, scientists of the New York Academy of Medicine have discovered that fear produces a mysterious chemical which is released into the blood, causing vital organs to contract, and evidence suggests that this strange chemical—which disappears from the blood as soon as the anxiety state has passed—may be largely responsible for many of the physical effects which fear produces. Medical researchers have now named chronic fear and anxiety as possible factors in a long list of physical ailments—heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, colitis, asthma and arthritis, among others.

The scientists have not as yet completely identified that strange chemical or determined all of its physical effects. Experiments have shown, however, that it interferes with the functioning of our internal organs, particularly those which belong to the gastro-intestinal tract. Indeed, fear and anxiety can produce plenty of physical havoc even in comparatively mild forms. And as they increase in intensity, they can become as deadly as the most lethal poison. First, there is a major spasm that contracts the blood vessels; then violent contraction of the heart; after this, complete paralysis and death.

Cases in which fear has produced instant death are more numerous than is properly believed. And evidence strongly suggests that a number of deaths attributed to heart failure and other causes have been produced

purely and simply by fear. One American psychiatrist, after careful investigation, finds that deaths produced solely by fear range from cases where the victim was bitten by a harmless snake to persons subjected to very frightening experiences not physically dangerous in themselves.

"In treating snake bite," he says, "it is of the utmost importance to determine whether the bite is due to a harmless or poisonous snake, since it is well known that a great many persons have died purely from fright after having been bitten by a non-lethal snake."

Just how intense fear has to be to kill depends on the individual; sometimes it delivers a blow that does not kill instantly, but has the delayed-action effect of a time bomb. There was the young American girl who had been sent to a store on an errand. She came home shaking; an automobile horn had frightened her badly as she was crossing the street. She complained of pains in her head and wanted to lie down. Two hours later, her father found her unconscious. She was taken to a hospital, where she died shortly afterwards. The autopsy revealed that in this case fear's delayed-action effect had involved a cerebral haemorrhage.

Recently, in Great Britain, an extremely frightening sequence had to be cut from a newsreel. Many spectators lost consciousness completely and had to be carried out of the motion picture theatre on stretchers. At a private showing one theatre manager suddenly gasped, stiffened in his seat, and succumbed soon after.

Until recently the question of whether intense fright actually could cause hair to whiten overnight was a highly controversial one. But now this phenomenon has been scientifically accredited by authorities ranging from Dr. Hamilton Montgomery of the famous American Mayo Clinic to Great Britain's noted dermatologist, Dr. Agnes Savill. According to one set of findings, there is a rapid formation of microscopic air bubbles in the hair, and they displace its natural pigment, making the hair look white or colourless.

A noted American eye specialist reports that in a great many cases bad showings made during eye examinations are due entirely to the patient's apprehension at the time. And tests at Columbia University in New York City have shown that in five cases out of ten, when a person is even slightly frightened, his ability to see is at once definitely impaired.

Science has found, incidentally, that the higher a person's I.Q. (intelligence quotient) the less he is subject to fear. In a study conducted at one college in the United States the fears of 1,000 students were carefully catalogued and evaluated. Then each of the subjects was given an intelligence test. It was found that there was a marked tendency for fears to decrease as intelligence increased.

"Undoubtedly," concludes the psychologist who directed the survey, "intelligence is not only a factor in the acquiring of a fear, but also plays an important part in determining whether the fear will be retained or eliminated. The less intelligent person—if he is at all emotional—acquires a multitude of fears, and because of his limited ability to analyse them, he usually finds it impossible to get rid of them." Other studies bear out this finding. And psychologists point out that the fears and phobias of primitive and unenlightened peoples are far more numerous and more intense than those of people more highly civilised.

Psychological tests have proved that virtually anyone of average intelligence can rid himself of most of his fears if he conscientiously applies himself. Here are some simple, tested rules:

1. Do not keep fears secret. They multiply and magnify when that is done. This does not mean that one should burden others with his troubles and anxieties, but he should have at least one close friend or confidant with whom he can discuss them. If fears are brought out into the light, many of them will seem groundless—even ridiculous. Sharing qualms with an understanding person helps to restore perspective.

2. Do the thing feared. Present-day psychologists concur with the nineteenth-century American essayist and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson's dictum: "Do the thing you fear, and the death of fear is certain." "The first thing to do when you are afraid," explains Professor Dollard, Yale University's famed specialist in the psychology of fear, "is to stop and think. Break the habit of running away from a dangerous situation. Analyse it instead. If you can see no reason for fear but are still afraid, there is only one way out: Do what you are afraid to do."

If it is a deep-seated phobia that is being fought, one should proceed gradually, and preferably under the guidance of a qualified specialist.

3. Whenever one finds himself brooding over fears and anxieties, he should go into action. Most fears are produced by mentally crossing bridges before they are reached. The best way in which to break this bothersome habit is to follow the rule of less fretting and worrying and more physical activity.

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