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"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

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SRI AUROBINDO: "I AM HERE, I AM HERE!"

By NIRODBARAN

When all over the world there was a growing eagerness to know more and more about Sri Aurobindo and the interest in his work was on the increase, he suddenly disappeared from the earth-scene. Superficially, this is a terrible irony of fate. But a study of his life suggests that more than once the utterly unexpected occurred as if by a choice on his own part. One may say that such an occurrence is almost a regular feature at each decisive turn of the upward spiral of his life. We see the rising curve bending down of a sudden when he threw away the I. C. S. career after a brilliant success and retired into an unpretentious State job in Baroda. There his sun was again in the ascendent, but as soon as he had captured the vision and admiration of the people, he left that peak of eminence. The sun then passed under a cloud; it worked behind the veil till it burst upon the political horizon with a dazzling lustre and when everybody's eyes were filled with wonder and joy, the light hid itself in the shadows of the prison cell where he had one of the sovereign spiritual experiences of his life. When he came out of the prison, his tremendous sacrifice and wise guidance awakened the nation and it waited at his door with the offer of All-India leadership. Again he disappeared one night and passed into oblivion for a large number of years in Pondicherry's unknown retreat. As if this was not enough, he entered into a greater oblivion when in 1926, after having achieved what we may call the first supreme victory in his sadhana, he, instead of hoisting the banner of the glory of the Spirit on the world's summit, withdrew himself for an indefinite period, to the utter surprise and disappointment of his close followers. Now at last has come as a logical conclusion the greatest oblivion in a most staggering manner and the shock had the intensity of a violent explosion. Always he has avoided the lime-light and all his great achievements have been prepared in the secret silence of his retirement, and with each emergence he has brought down a greater light, a higher range of illumination and a vaster kingdom of knowledge and power.

But why and for what purpose has he chosen to withdraw through the last painful gate of human existence when, like other Yogis, he could have discarded the mortal sheath by an act of will? For Sri Aurobindo to do anything without a purpose and ultimate advantage is in the last degree inconceivable. If he gave in at times to what he called the Adversary, that was because, to quote his own words, "retreat" (*palāyanam*) suited his purpose. One who had mastered the secrets of Life and the Spirit by his immense sadhana, who had been acclaimed as the Yogeshwara by those who had attained to the height of the Spirit, to him death could be neither a terror nor a mystery nor an inevitable necessity. Paying the full price of suffering he would pass through the "exit" of the common man, only if he felt that otherwise his life, his own Yoga would lack completeness and that to bear the human destiny on his God-like shoulders he must face, in its own den as it were, the dark Power that rules over this destiny and somehow wrest from it all its secrets. He would embrace the dire extremity not unless he found it to be the one way to emerge finally victorious and say, "O human race, from the citadel of the dark King I have issued forth and brought what I promised to you, the golden seed of Immortality."

This supreme sacrifice whose total significance will remain ungrasped by our limited intelligence, he accepted, as the Mother has said in unmistakable terms, for us alone. To enter into its history we have to go back two years in time when the first symptom of the malady that completed the sacrifice appeared. It was like a tiny cloud on the horizon; nobody attached any importance to it. But Sri Aurobindo wanted to know what it meant. His disciple, Dr. P. Sanyal, F.R.C.S. (Eng.), an eminent surgeon of Calcutta, who was consulted when he came for Darshan, recognised at once that it was a danger-signal and could not be neglected. He told Mother and Sri Aurobindo that it was a case of prostatic enlargement and frequency of micturition was the first symptom. He also explained at length its development and *sequelae*; he mentioned that as yet there was nothing to worry about, but warned us to watch the development carefully. It was

a great advantage to be forearmed with the precise knowledge of things at the very initial stage, as it would facilitate Sri Aurobindo's action on it. For as he has always maintained, knowledge of things and their processes in detail makes the action of the Yogic Force more effective. The fight would now take place in the open light: there would be no cover of ignorance under which the dark Force could take shelter and advance its attacks. We were never in doubt as to the issue of the fight, though the Mother told us once that they had cured any number of serious maladies in others but, as regards their own case, things were very different and very difficult indeed.

As we expected, after a couple of months or so, the symptoms cleared up altogether and when Dr. Sanyal came for the next Darshan, Sri Aurobindo told him emphatically, "It is no more troubling me; I have cured it." Our faith was confirmed.

The work on his epic poem *Savitri* went ahead with vigour and enthusiasm. Book after Book was being revised and released for publication. Some 400 to 500 lines he once dictated in succession, whose beauty and flow were a delight for their sweep of cosmic vision and their magical language. At this rate, *Savitri*, it seemed, would not take long to finish. On everybody's lips was the eager question, "How far *Savitri*?"

But *Savitri* was not his sole occupation. Side by side went on other multifarious and diverse activities all the facets of which he alone could deal with by his tremendous grasp of intuitive power. The world erroneously believes, or at least used to, that Sri Aurobindo had turned his whole life inwards and that, a recluse from life, he was now engaged in his own salvation and that of his disciples. How such a misunderstanding of a supreme dynamic person like him could have arisen is most surprising. Let us recall what his life had been, the major spiritual realisations he had attained in the course of his arduous political activities; let us recall what his Yoga stands for and the epoch-making books he has written during his Yogic career. Apart from *Savitri* which is a monument by itself, the daily reading of papers, the perusal of numerous journals, weeklies, fortnightly quarterlies edited by people connected with the Ashram and of articles written in four or five languages, poems, essays, letters, the dictating of replies to questions and, to crown all, the preparation of his own books and others', the attention to their manuscripts and proofs etc.—all these were his routine work. Add urgent demands from the Press, blessings implored for help and guidance in material distress—and the list should be enough to open a blind man's eyes. All this work had to be despatched within about two hours a day! Latterly a remarkable faculty developed in him or was noticed for the first time. When I started reading some article, he used to say "Have you not read it before?" "No." "Are you sure?" "How could I?", I replied, "I have received it today". "Very strange, I seem to have heard every word of it". That happened more than once. But though it must have made it easier for him to follow the article's thought, the tax on his attention for judgment of its presentation and of its style remained. This and the remainder of the regular labour any mortal sight can attest; but to the vast network of his cosmic activity as a Master Yogi what vision can have access? One can have a dim penetration into it through the unrolling verse of *Savitri* and through other books or when he chose to let out a little inkling of it. We have played with him like Gopas in Vrindavan, cracked many jokes like comrades, even quarrelled with him, discussed many subjects ranging from Art down to the attractive subject of the palate during the last few years of his companionship. The tender expressions that dropped from his lips, the pointed flashes of his quick humour, the silent unassuming distinction of his manner and, above all, his vigilant and subtle protection guarding us against all adverse forces—all these had been our heritage, but could we ever reflect in our passing mirror even the slightest shadow of his wide universal action? His detached greatness, disinterested largeness, limitless compassion and sweetness, as if Shiva had come down to earth to deliver the world from its roots of

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ignorance—where shall we see such a parallel? Even when his disease had advanced, he did not fail to respond to the call of the afflicted. To give an example: as he was engaged in the final drafting of the last two cantos of *Savitri*, there came an urgent call for help from a sadhika living outside. The lady was suffering from a mysterious disease; some doctors said it was coronary thrombosis, some diagnosed cervical rib and some others cancer and they all suggested different remedies. She, on the verge of death, took refuge at the Guru's feet and wired to him that she would rely on his force alone, even were she to die of it. News began to come in daily, by letters or wires. Suddenly no news at all for two or three days! Sri Aurobindo became worried and inquired again and again if any communication had arrived. At last he remarked, rather vexed, "How am I to save her if I don't get any news?" After this rude jerk news began to flow in and we are happy to find her settled in the Ashram in sound health. Those who have received this inner sweetness and solicitude, directly or indirectly, will ever treasure it in their hearts as the very grace of Heaven.

Even *Savitri* alone, which was the preoccupation nearest to his heart, will one day fire the world's imagination—by its sheer bulk and beauty of profound images, vivid words, felicitous and daring expressions, every detail of which he took sculptor-like pains to develop. The first Book itself went through ten revisions and had he been able to maintain the same god-like labour throughout or had he not been compelled to lean on the support of a weak and at times unwilling assistant required to keep pace with his divine energy, *Savitri* would have seen the light of day before his own life's light had withdrawn. But, alas, that was not to be. About the middle of the last year, the symptoms of the malady came back and along with it we noticed a change in his mood. He was no more expansive, the gems of his speech became fewer and fewer. Days passed at times without any exchange of words except what was needed for the work. However much we tried to draw him out of this shell, it was a "Yes", or a "No", or at most a smile that crowned our efforts and ruses. Naturally we began to speculate about the cause of this mysterious silence. Sometimes we thought it must be the grave world-situation that engaged his attention,—for at one time he remarked that the situation was very bad indeed,—sometimes other possibilities crossed our fertile brains. Or could it be the reappearance of the disease? That was another query. But all our efforts were baffled, we could not penetrate that armour of remoteness. He was so near, yet had gone far away!

That did not, however, affect his daily work. *Savitri* had slowed down its pace. We were engaged in the revision of the two big cantos; already 200 to 300 new lines had been added. What a revision! Every word must be the *mot juste*, every line perfect, even every sign of punctuation flawless. One preposition was changed five times; to change a punctuation-sign one had sometimes to read a whole section. All these opened a new sight in me, but for his scribe to carry that burden of perfection on poor mortal shoulders was a task too enormous to cope with in an entirely satisfactory manner. That is why perhaps the work had fallen at places from its height, missed its peak.

At this time the Press sent up a demand for a new book. *The Future Poetry*, a series that had appeared many years ago in his philosophical monthly, *Arya*, was given the preference and taken up for revision. A fresh chapter was actually written. But as some books on Modern Poetry needed to be consulted, it was shoved aside. He said, "Let us go back to *Savitri*." Again the same two cantos. The symptoms of the disease had not abated, though fortunately they had neither increased. There were temporary improvements now and then. But the course of the disease did not seem to disturb him at all in his work. His whole attention was now focussed on *Savitri* for which we could but spare about two hours at the most. So the progress had to be slow especially as he had to dictate and depend on another's sight to be guided in his movement. Now came the call from the *Bulletin* for an article. That over, the correspondence and miscellaneous writings swelled up to such an extent that he was at last obliged to remark, "I am finding no time for my real work." Then the path got fairly clear and I was wondering what would be the next choice when looking away he declared, "Take up *Savitri*. I want to finish it soon." The last phrase was a bombshell on my ear. "Finish it soon? What on earth...?" I asked myself. My bewildered glance met an impassive face. So again the labour with those two cantos began. What surprised me still more was that he seemed actually to hurry the pace, which was quite against his characteristic nature. Always habituated to slow and leisurely ways in his moods and dealings as if the whole of eternity were in his hand, he was the very embodiment of the Divine in his unparalleled patience and poise, in his conquests and withdrawals, in his diggings and in his soars. Every word he pronounced had a repose, every simple thing he ate was an offering, every step he took was a gentle touching of the earth with his hallowed feet. When his bureau was ransacked, it was found littered with copies and copies of *Savitri*, no less than 4 or 5 versions of some cantos! Here, there, in note books, in loose sheets, in small blocks, lines after lines written, scratched, new lines packed in between, almost over one another, the links and connections shooting with arrow-marks up and down the epic battle-field. A genius or a God in labour? Such being the mode of procedure, it could not but come as a surprise to hear from his mouth that he wanted to finish *Savitri* soon. Not only that. There seemed to be no longer that unflagging will for perfection, nor that *élan*. On the contrary, close repetitions of ideas and words sounded like obvious flaws in the compact intensity of this massive structure. Those who have carefully gone through

these two cantos have not failed to notice this apparent defect. "What has happened? What has gone wrong? Why has he lost his patience? Illness? Why is he also so grave?" were my brooding questions. At last after many detours and ups and downs in the far-flung journey, the goal was in sight. What veritable rock of resistance these two cantos proved to be! One who had poured strains upon strains packed with grandeur and beauty, emotion and fervour, thought and vision in the dictated cantos on such subjects as Nirvana, as if the very goddess Sarasawati had settled in his throat, was halted even by the pebbles of punctuation! As, at last, the cantos were wound up and the last full stop had been recorded, a smile of satisfaction burst upon his lips and he said, "Ah, it is finished?" How well I remember that smile, as if after a long strenuous journey in failing strength one had finally reached one's station! And yet it was not the station, there were still many milestones to cover! "What is left now?", was his second question. "The Book of Death and the Epilogue." "Ah, that? We shall see about that later on," he answered, in a calm and contented tone. But I was not contented at all, for the many repetitions at the end which he seemed to have hurriedly added jarred on my ear. But I decided that it was wiser to reserve judgment and wait for the revision to take place. Surely these flaws would not escape his eagle-vision. It was much later during the agonising moments of night-enveloped consciousness that what had struck me as flaws and repetitions came forcefully with a new significance:

*A day may come when she must stand unhelped
On a dangerous brink of the world's doom and hers.*

* * *

*In that tremendous silence lone and lost
Cry not to heaven, for she alone can help.
She only can save herself and save the world.*

Are these not his last message, his last injunction to us? ... The emptiness slowly melted away and in its place shone his Right Hand, the dauntless boon-giver the Mother.

The expected revision never took place; for, along with the close of these two cantos, came winter and there was a sudden increase in the symptoms; urination became more frequent; with it, discomfort. These symptoms had appeared from time to time, to be cleared up and he had never for an instant stopped his work in spite of all inconveniences. Many times I anticipated, almost hoped, that there would be a respite owing to such relapses, but physical trouble would not hinder him. Even if there was half an hour's time, he would utilise it. On many occasions when I told him, "There is not much time today" and almost expected a postponement of the work, he would come out, to my surprise, with "We will work a little". That passionate devotion to work had brought its final reward: *Savitri* was his last testament. As the disease progressed, we began to feel concerned, though we knew perfectly well that we were nothing more than mere spectators and whatever had to be done he must be doing. "How is it then the disease is progressing?" was my occasional self-questioning. We were dealing with a human body but not with a human patient; our means and standards of action did not apply any more than the laws of our earth might to the beings of other planets. We could only lay before his gaze the silent surreptitious approach of various under-currents that tried to assail and break down the physical substratum, and depend upon his own Yogic Power to repulse the attacks.

There were about ten days or so for the Darshan. A surgeon-friend Satyavrata Sen, F.R.C.S. (Eng.), had arrived for it. He was consulted; he corroborated the diagnosis given at the outset by Dr. Sanyal. Dr. Sen said that the gland had enlarged. Sri Aurobindo also remarked he had been feeling it for some time, though once it had completely disappeared. "What is the remedy?" he asked. There was only one radical cure, but Dr. Sen knew that it would gain neither Mother's nor Sri Aurobindo's approval. For Sri Aurobindo could not be subjected to the cruel and not always effective slashes with the knife. Even the mere use of a catheter was not favoured. Nor was it urgent at this stage. If any intervention were necessary, it could be done after the Darshan. So once more we followed the curve of the disease in a silent watchful attitude, ready to help, but never flagging in our faith that the curve would be checked. One night Sri Aurobindo suddenly sat up in bed and, finding that his urine had completely stopped, seemed to indicate that we should do something about it. I ran down to call Dr. Sen. In the meantime the urine started flowing. When Sri Aurobindo learned that I had gone to fetch the doctor, he remarked, "Why? Has he lost his head?" When we returned and heard his remark, I do not know what gave the greater thrill, his jest about my "madness" or the removal of the obstruction! He said, "Why have you unnecessarily troubled this poor fellow?" Then in an affectionate tone he continued, "You see, I had a dream; it seemed I was freely passing water and when I woke up I found this obstruction. Nothing more. Do you understand?" He added, smiling, "No cause to be nervous." Next day, when the Mother heard the story, she also made a similar remark. She said, "After having passed so many years with Sri Aurobindo, you still get frightened?"—"What to do, Mother?" I replied apologetically, "we are dealing with no other person than Sri Aurobindo."—"That is exactly why you should never get afraid. Do you not know that his mighty force is always with you and helping you? No, fear has no place at all, especially among you who are serving him." I felt ashamed but uplifted too.

The Darshan was now at our door. On the eve, a letter had arrived

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from an astrologer to the effect that Sri Aurobindo would be subject to a grave malady which may even threaten his life. We simply laughed out the idea, but he said, "Will you enquire what exactly he has written? I feel that he has caught some truth." "What nonsense!" was my immediate reaction. Sri Aurobindo had studied the subject of astrology and held that astrology could very well disclose correctly the past of a person, but he said that its reading of the future would not be inevitable, especially in case of Yogis who can change their own and others' destiny. He narrated the story of Narayan Jyotishi, a famous astrologer of Calcutta, whose predictions about Sri Aurobindo had all come true and who had said that death was fixed for Sri Aurobindo at the age of 63 but that if by yogic action Sri Aurobindo could overcome that danger he would live up to a ripe old age. "So, you see, I am still alive," he said smiling. He accepted nothing as predetermined and fixed in this world-field. Everything, in his view, is a play of possibilities and a Yogi can change these possibilities, even the destiny of others as well as his own. It being so, for astrology to determine Sri Aurobindo's life and action was, we thought, sheer folly. But his inquiry puzzled us. It was found, however, that the astrologer had only hinted at some trivial malady. We enjoyed the fun, as on a similar occasion mentioned by K. D. Sethna, in his article *The Passing of Sri Aurobindo*.

The Darshan was now on. A vast crowd streamed forth with their offerings. At one time the question was mooted if the Darshan should not be postponed, but considering the anxiety and disappointment it would cause in the hearts of the devotees, the call was responded to at the cost of discomfort and perhaps undue exertion. Everything went on well—the silence, the calm reigned in the atmosphere pervaded by the beatific Presence of the Mother and the Master. After about two hours, an uneasy stir seized the throng and the rumour ran that Sri Aurobindo was not well; people in rapid succession took their blessings and beyond the horizon of their outward sight saw the Master beside the Mother in an everlasting communion and kinship within. The restless thought was no more voiced forth. But soon after the Darshan, the symptoms broke down another barrier, as it were, and visibly marked a broad thrust in the advancement of the disease. The question of passing the catheter could no more be left aside. It was agreed; a wire was sent to Dr. Sanyal to come down at once. He had previously been warned to be ready to start, in case there was an urgent necessity.

The instrument immediately relieved the obstruction and we began to feel light-hearted. But our joy was short-lived. For in the wake of the intruding instrument came its long shadow, fever due to infection. A not uncommon feature, yet it gave us an unpleasant shiver. Dr. Sanyal's arrival at this juncture was like warm sunshine and he dissipated all our anxieties by his calm confidence. We apprised him of the whole clinical development since he had last seen Sri Aurobindo. He wondered how that small insignificant speck of cloud he had noticed in the early stage could, from the perimeter of Sri Aurobindo's consciousness, slowly, almost craftily, enlarge, envelope and take possession of the whole physical being. He asked himself, "How could this Adversary gain such an unbelievable dominance against the puissant action of Sri Aurobindo's force? He had cured himself once, what happened afterwards? Did he not take any step at all to prevent the course of the disease? Otherwise I do not see why it should develop to such an extent." To these questions no satisfactory answer could be given. What I observed was that while our main concern had been the patient development of the future glory of the human race in the language of the gods and in their symbols, the disease simultaneously advanced at a slow pace; Sri Aurobindo did not pay any particular heed to it, either because he had not sufficient time or because he did not care; but it had been a mystery all through. One would say that he had allowed it to advance, for reasons unknown to us, slowly and gradually till the completion of *Savitri*, after which he stopped all his work and withdrew his control of the disease. That is the only explanation after this stage.

Whatever it was, Dr. Sanyal was yet optimistic and so were we of the final result. Our vigil went on, but Sri Aurobindo seemed now to withdraw himself from his surroundings and the release from the obstruction helped him towards that end. Evidently, he found the deep plunge more useful for whatever purpose he had in view than caring about the afflictions of the body. He appeared to have allowed the body to have its own actions and reactions while he was engaged in a more inscrutable work of world-significance. The body he had assumed had served him well, and, as the Mother has said, it had suffered, endured, worked and achieved all for us. Now, if it served as an impediment to the god-like sweep of his movements, why should he not change it? As he did not allow the physical handicap to trouble him in his work and maintained throughout the same fire and passion, so, after the accomplishment of the work, he did not allow the body's distress to swerve him from his occult sublime purpose. Even of this dire disablement he took the amplest advantage. His was not a nature to be cowed by circumstances, however adverse they might be. If he had to give in on one front, he must gain full compensation on another. Even if he knew beforehand that defeat and failure would be the result, that would not stop his working and fighting up to the end. "Even if I knew that my mission would fail, I would go on working till the last moment" were his words in a letter. *Nishkama Karma* (disinterested work) of the Gita was his motto. An interesting example of which can be cited with regard to the Cripps Mission, now a

matter of history. When the Mission arrived in India, Sri Aurobindo, as everybody knows, went out of his way and entreated all the big leaders to accept its proposals and even approved of a disciple going to Delhi as his envoy. But after his departure, Sri Aurobindo told us frankly that nothing would come out of it. The Mission would fail. "Then", we said, "why have you taken all this trouble?" He answered, smiling, "I have done a bit of *nishkama karma*." That was his life, both occult and overt. That is why the Adversary was always surprised by his unexpected moves. Divine Diplomat that he was, we have yet to see what was the supreme object of this highest strategy. He could not have been blind to the approach of the dark-cowled Figure. He envisaged a fight, a grim struggle and that is why he followed the same method he had always practised in his life—to be prepared in advance for any eventuality. As he had always marched ahead of time, so he marked every step he took with a solid foreknowledge and divine strength which passed our immediate understanding. Now we realise the meaning of his cryptic phrases and casual remarks. Many people asked us if he had left any message, any advice as regards the work, sadhana etc., before he passed away. The answer is 'Yes' and 'No'. 'No' because, after he had withdrawn completely inwards, he did no work, he uttered no word except in relation to the disease. 'Yes', because before he passed into that stage, *Savitri*, as I have mentioned, was his last work, and the last seal and signature on its golden leaf were those lines which seemed to us repetitions. Repetitions they were, but now they come as the blazing revelation of the whole secret of his Yoga: Surrender to the Mother. Let us read again those prophetic lines and the sense will stand crystal clear:

*A dey may come when she must stand unhelped
On a dangerous brink of the world's doom and hers
Carrying the world's future on her lonely breast,
Carrying the human hope in a heart left sole
To conquer or fail on a last desperate verge.
Alone with death and close to extinction's edge
Her single greatness in that last dire scene,
She must cross alone a perilous bridge in Time
And reach an apex of world-destiny
Where all is won or all is lost for man.
In that tremendous silence lone and lost
Of a deciding hour in the world's fate,
In her soul's climbing beyond mortal time
When she stands sole with Death or sole with God
Apart upon a silent desperate brink,
Alone with her self and death and destiny
As on some verge between Time and Timelessness
When being must end or life rebuild its base,
Alone she must conquer or alone must fall.
No human aid can reach her in that hour,
No armoured God stand shining by her side.
Cry not to heaven, for she alone can save.
For this the silent Force came missioned down;
In her the conscious Will took human shape,
She only can save herself and save the world.*

He was not in a hurry to finish the Book of Death. His principal task had been completed and hence his calm and contented smile when he reached the end of it. What was of supreme importance he had been able to communicate and about what was not, he said in a leisurely fashion, "We shall see about it afterwards", knowing very well indeed what he meant. Now, that momentous message imparted, slowly his consciousness slipped inwards and he became more and more absorbed within. Medical experts will say, "It was a simple uraemic coma." Well, I shall quote Dr. Sanyal's own words: "A patient who comes out of that coma every one or two hours, asks for a drink, enquires about time, his must be a very strange type of coma. At least I have never come across such a type throughout my medical experience."

Whatever might have been the type, our problem became more difficult. We had solely relied on his Force, but the result had not uplifted our hopes. We could go ahead with our costly tablets and precious injections, but without the support of his spiritual Force, what effect would they produce? Human as we are, we can but think of our own resources: be they good or bad, we fall back on them in our need. But how to administer such strong and powerful drugs to one who had been unaccustomed to any medicine for more than half a century, was another question that vexed us. Any one who had seen Sri Aurobindo at close quarters could never forget this Divine Child with a body supple, radiant and pure. His half-bare body, when he used to sit before the table for writing, his shapely hands, his long delicate fingers, had nothing of the crude mortal flesh in them; they were suffused, as it were, with a white transparent light, "*une blancheur élatante*", that could like the X-ray make one see through and through. How often have I not seen this radiance, when he used to sit up writing or when he would rest in his chair, or when he was lying on the bed as if on the lap of the Divine Mother, with unclad shoulders and chest, the hands held together behind the head, the lips smiling in a wakeful dream? Every part of the body presented the picture of a god in human guise who could not be tampered with in the ordinary human way. Tampering would be nothing but a sacrilege. But, alas, human necessity knows no law, respects no person. And we subjected

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him to all our instruments of torture with his previous sanction obtained as a gracious gesture to satisfy our mortal ignorance. He knew that the catheter would be of no avail and he emphatically ruled it out, but as we had not the insight nor the proper appraisal of the value of words when they are clothed in the common language we are habituated to use, we insisted on the dangerous remedies in which we had faith and confidence. As the disease was taking a bad turn we repeatedly asked him to use his spiritual force to cure it, since we had been taught and made to experience that behind every malady, as behind everything else, there are forces that help and hinder. It is the proper adjustment of these forces that brings in success. Those who can consciously or unconsciously manipulate these forces achieve success in their career. We knew that without the effective help of his force all our medical measures would be palliatives of the surface manifestation of the deep-rooted trouble. But each time we questioned him, we met with an enigmatic silence. All the same, we had no positive reason to believe that he was indifferent to the course of the malady or that he was engaged in a far more serious struggle whose issue would have greater significance at that stage for the human race than his own cure. So, as the disease was following in its downward gravitation the typical picture, our duty pointed to us our own responsibility. The advent of every dark sign and symptom was a pressing finger on our perplexed mood. As a result, we adopted all the means of saving that were available to us. But the Decree was otherwise!

At last arrived the School Anniversary on the 1st and 2nd December, with its programme of athletics and dramatics. The whole Ashram, busy and bustling, had its attention diverted there and nobody ever suspected that another drama—a lofty tragedy—was being enacted in those hours of Fate in the closed chambers of Sri Aurobindo. His ailment had been veiled from the gaze of the disciples and the disease also was of such a nature as to admit of being kept a guarded secret. But now the veil was rent, for with the successful ending of the function, the symptoms took a very grave turn, as if the violent tide deliberately checked until this day was now allowed to break through. I say "as if", but there was no doubt that it was so, for when he was informed on the night of the 2nd that the function had terminated successfully, he remarked with a broad smile, "Ah, it is finished?" Then only he allowed the Adversary who had been held at bay to leap with fury and Sri Aurobindo plunged deeper within, snapping as it were, the last link of his physical being with the need of earth-matter.

It was the memorable 4th December, the date written for ever in letters of gold. Sri Aurobindo had totally emerged from the depths and expressed a desire to sit up. In spite of our objections, he insisted. We noticed after a while that all the distressing symptoms had magically vanished and he was once more a normal healthy person. Then he sat in the chair. The change was so sudden and unexpected that we looked at each other in sheer joy and amazement. "At last, our prayer has been heard!" This was the sentiment welling up in the silent heart of our devotion. It could not be believed! Now we ventured to repeat our question: "Are you not using your force to get rid of the disease?" "No!" came the shocking reply. We could not believe our ears and to get a confirmation of our disbelief we asked again. Now no ground was left to harbour the illusion. What we heard was as clear and sharp as a sabre-edge. Then we put forth the bold query: "Why not? If you don't use the force, how is the disease going to be cured?" To this he simply gave the cryptic reply: "Can't explain; you won't understand."

Here at last was the key to the mystery! That is why the disease had progressed step by step, marked by three clear stages in its downward path: the completion of *Savitri*, the Darshan and the School Anniversary, each stage followed by a deeper and deeper in-drawn condition. It was during one of the last days that the Mother remarked, "Whenever I was there, I used to see him pulling down the Supramental Light." It was

clear from this statement what Sri Aurobindo was busy with. He had shifted his gaze and concentration to something else which, to his view, must have been much more important than minding the afflictions of the body. But we had not the vision nor the comprehension; so we thought that the descent of the Light would fulfil our heart's desire. Though on the one hand his curt reply had taken the last plank away, this sudden transition instilled faith and hope—"the gleaming shoulder of some god-like hope" that had upbuoyed us all through. It was much later when the sun had crossed beyond our horizon that these extraordinary incidents showed their true significance.

After an hour he came back to his bed and along with his coming returned all the signs and symptoms with a vengeance. The short respite seemed to have given him time for a further grapple with the advancing Shadow that was trying to draw a premature veil upon his work. Half an hour before the fatal moment, he drank some water and bestowed on all a last glance of compassion and recognition for the service rendered and took the plunge ultimate. Even then we had not the slightest suspicion that

This was the day when Satyavan must die.²

The news spread around in the early hours of the morning. The reaction of the disciples can be better imagined than described. Through the hush of night one by one they came and mounted up the stairs of Heaven to see what nobody had seen before. It was not death they saw, not a resurrection, nor a withdrawal into Nirvana but a grand repose, a death that was pulsating with power, light and beauty in every limb as if death had become immortal in the body of the King of kings. A vivid rendering of the Truth into transmuted Matter, it was no longer the body, but the golden lid which half-covered, half-revealed that Truth. Those who had the inner sight witnessed the Truth and those who had the inner ear heard in the still cave of their heart the piercing cry, "I am here, I am here!"

In that awakened consciousness we are marching forward towards the Goal the Master set before us, for which he worked to the last breath and has promised to go on working till the Goal is attained. The Mother, supreme creatrix and realiser of that Goal, is our Guide and Goddess. Enriched with all his inexhaustible achievements, occult and spiritual, and with the supramental Light that has automatically passed on to her she is shaping us to the mould and figure visioned by him as the future type of humanity. Any one who has visited the Ashram after the great Event could not but have been impressed by the will to victory that his sacrifice has engendered in every breast. Out of his Samadhi a thousand flames seem to be mounting up and, lodged in our soul, burning in an ever rejuvenating fire, while his Presence enveloping and merging with and radiating from the Mother's being and body is pervading the whole atmosphere. One can see his Presence, hear his foot-falls, his rhythmic voice, ever vigilant, devoid of the encumbrance of the physical body. One day the sacrifice will bear fruit; what he has depicted in *Savitri* will come true. For, what is, after all, *Savitri* if not the inner life-episodes of the Mother and the Master? What he had pictured in the great epic has been faithfully enacted on the world-stage. The curtain has fallen on the first part of that wonderful Drama and the sequel is being played behind it. The Fight with the last supreme Adversary has not ceased; if it has ended on the earth's battlefield in an apparent failure, it is raging as fiercely in the occult planes. When at the close of the Duel, the curtain will be lifted, we shall hear the sonorous recital of the Book of Death, we shall see materialised the Epilogue on the earth-stage, and throughout the world will echo and re-echo the embodied passionate cry of Victory:

"I am here, I am here!"

1. "Savitri."
2. *ibid.*

A MESSAGE from THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ASIAN STUDIES San Francisco, California

To the Mind of Sri Aurobindo,
to the Mother
and to you, dear Editor of "Mother India"!

I am immensely elated by your invitation to the Convention celebrating the founding of the International University Centre. I would say: I feel honoured more than by any honorary degree, if I would not feel that I am speaking not for myself, but in the name of the American Academy of Asian Studies, which in a small way but with much enthusiasm seeks to help in the establishment of a higher consciousness on Earth.

I whole-heartedly and gratefully accept your invitation to be present at Pondicherry on the 24 and 25 of April, not only "in thought", but in a much deeper way. I know through

the amazing experience of the last 4 months that distance does not count at all to the living spirit and that man can become untiringly powerful if it be fed from the right source.

Glory to the International University Centre, which is certain to become the best school in the world. The Master will live in it, just as he has been the life-giving flame of our new school here.

I trust that you will always count me as one of yours.

Greetings to all!

(Sd.) FREDERIC SPIEGELBERG,
Ph.D., S.T.M.

Director of Indian and Tibetan Studies.

April 17, 1951.

SRI AUROBINDO, THE LEADER OF THE EVOLUTION

PART II OF "THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA"

By "Synergist"

SECTION III : THE NEW WORLD-VIEW

(a) THE SPIRITUAL METAPHYSIC

(ii) KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINE REALITY

THE OVERMIND LEVEL

The next level in the gnostic hierarchy is the Overmind. In the essay "Self-Realisation" and the Supermind, its power of cognition as well as its characteristic mode of action was briefly discussed. It was mentioned there that cosmic consciousness is intrinsic to this level, and that whilst in the Supermind—where the vision is integral—the dual aspects of the Divine Being like the Static Self and His Creative and Executive Force, the Divine Stasis and Dynamis, are fused together without any one aspect annulling its contraplete, in the Overmind—where the vision is global without being integral and unitarian—they are seen as co-existing real-statures of a biune Reality. Then it was pointed out that the Overmind "at once connects and divides the the supreme Knowledge and the cosmic Ignorance," and that the Overmind veil separating Supermind from Overmind "is a screen of dissimilar similarity." Regarding its typical mode of action and its relation to Supermind Sri Aurobindo writes: "Supermind transmits to Overmind all its realities, but leaves it to formulate them in a movement and according to an awareness of things which is still a vision of Truth and yet at the same time a first parent of the Ignorance. A line divides Supermind and Overmind which permits a free transmission, allows the lower Power to derive from the higher Power all it holds or sees, but automatically compels a transitional change in the passage. The integrality of the Supermind keeps always the essential truth of things, the total truth and the truth of its individual self-determinations clearly knit together; it maintains in them an inseparable unity and between them a close interpretation and a free and full consciousness of each other: but in Overmind this integrality is no longer there. And yet the Overmind is well aware of the essential Truth of things; it embraces the totality; it uses the individual self-determinations without being limited by them: but although it knows their oneness, can realise it in a spiritual cognition, yet its dynamic movement, even while relying on that for its security, is not directly determined by it. Overmind Energy proceeds through an illimitable capacity of separation and combination of the powers and aspects of the integral and indivisible all-comprehending Unity."

This means that the Overmind knows that the real Power behind itself is the Supermind, by whose action alone can the cosmic manifestation become possible; it knows that the multiplicity exists by the Oneness of the Supermind behind, and that the Many exist by the One and the One becomes the Many without itself ceasing to be the One, but it emphasises the multiplicity and gives each Idea, each Force, each Power, a separate direction and makes it extend itself to its utmost limit and realise itself as an individual existent. The Overmind sets into action a play of diversity and divergent possibilities but is always conscious of the unity behind itself which supports them; it allows contradictory elements and tendencies but compels them to become parts of the cosmic whole and contribute to its total movement.

The dividing action of the Overmind becomes sharper and acuter as the Mind level is reached and is, as we have seen, the factor which originates so many different philosophies and religions, aims and ideals, Gods and Goddesses, followed and worshipped by men. On the Overmind level, though each Idea or Force is given a separate action, it is founded upon a basis of underlying Oneness—the unitarian consciousness of the Supermind supports it from behind,—but on the Mind level the ideas and forces, having been estranged from their original source, become oblivious of their cosmic inter-relatedness and oppose one another as if they were irreconcilable contradictories.

As the Overmind cognition is global and capable of seeing the cosmic totality, it can hold innumerable truths, which seem conflicting to the mind, in a reconciling vision. Sri Aurobindo says: "The Overmind is a principle of cosmic Truth and a vast and endless catholicity is its very spirit; its energy is an all-dynamism as well as a principle of separate dynamisms: it is a sort of inferior Supermind,—although it is concerned predominantly not with absolutes, but with what might be called dynamic potentials or pragmatic truths of Reality, or with absolutes mainly for their power of generating pragmatic or creative values, although, too, its comprehension of things is more global than integral, since its totality is built up of global wholes or constituted by separate independent realities uniting or coalescing together, and although the essential unity is grasped by it and felt to be basic of things and pervasive in their manifestation, but no longer as in the Supermind their intimate and ever-present secret, their dominating continent, the overt constant builder of the harmonic whole of their activity and nature."

The close relation between the problems of Being and Becoming and those of Knowledge in Sri Aurobindo's metaphysic has all along been stressed in these series of essays; it has been pointed out that the knowledge a person has of the Ultimate Reality, man and the universe, depends upon the level and range of his being and consciousness, and that through an

ascent of his being and a widening and heightening of his consciousness he can apprehend greater knowledge. This fact is seen very clearly when one contacts the Overmind level, and its light and power descend into him and an overmentalisation of the consciousness takes place. Regarding this modification of the consciousness Sri Aurobindo writes in *The Life Divine*: "When the overmind descends, the predominance of the centralising ego-sense is entirely subordinated, lost in largeness of being and finally abolished; a wide cosmic perception and feeling of a boundless universal self and movement replaces it: many motions that were formerly ego-centric may still continue, but they occur as currents or ripples in the cosmic wide-ness. Thought, for the most part, no longer seems to originate individually in the body or the person but manifests from above or comes in upon the cosmic mind-waves: all inner individual sight or intelligence of things is now a revelation or illumination of what is seen or comprehended, but the source of the revelation is not in one's separate self but in the universal knowledge; the feelings, emotions, sensations are similarly felt as waves from the same cosmic immensity breaking upon the subtle and the gross body and responded to in kind by the individual centre of the universality; for the body is only a small support or even less, a point of relation, for the action of a vast cosmic instrumentation. In this boundless largeness, not only the separate ego but all sense of individuality, even of a subordinated or instrumental individuality, may entirely disappear; the cosmic existence, the cosmic consciousness, the cosmic delight, the play of cosmic forces are alone left: if the delight or the centre of Force is felt in what was the personal mind, life or body, it is not with a sense of personality but as a field of manifestation, and this sense of the delight or of the action of Force is not confined to the person or the body but can be felt at all points in an unlimited consciousness of unity which pervades everywhere.

"But there can be many formulations of overmind consciousness and experience; for the overmind has a great plasticity and is a field of multiple possibilities. In place of an uncentred and unplaced diffusion there may be the sense of the universe in oneself or as oneself: but there too this self is not the ego; it is an extension of a free and pure essential self-consciousness or it is an identification with the All,—the extension or the identification constituting a cosmic being, a universal individual. In one state of the cosmic consciousness there is an individual included in the cosmos but identifying himself with all in it, with the things and beings, with the thought and sense, the joy and grief of others; in another state there is an inclusion of beings in oneself and a reality of their life as part of one's own being. Often there is no rule or governance of the immense movement, but a free play of Universal Nature to which what was the personal being responds with a passive acceptance or a dynamic identity, while yet the spirit remains free and undisturbed by any bondage to the reactions of this passivity or this universal and impersonal identification and sympathy. But with a strong influence or full action of the overmind a very integral sense of governance, a complete supporting or overruling presence and direction of the cosmic Self or the Ishwara can come in and become normal; or a special centre may be revealed or created overtopping and dominating the physical instrument, individual in fact of existence, but impersonal in feeling and recognized by a free cognition as something instrumental to the action of a Transcendent and Universal Being. In the transition towards the supermind this centralising action tends towards the discovery of a true individual replacing the dead ego, a being who is in his essence one with the supreme Self, one with the universe in extension and yet a cosmic centre and circumference of the specialised action of the Infinite.

"These are the general first results and create the normal foundation of the overmind consciousness in the evolved spiritual being, but its varieties and developments are innumerable. The consciousness that thus acts is experienced as a consciousness of Light and Truth, a power, force, action full of Light and Truth, an aesthesis and sensation of beauty and delight universal and multitudinous in detail, an illumination in the whole and in all things, in the one movement and all movements, with a constant extension and play of possibilities which is infinite, even in its multitude of determinations endless and indeterminable. If the power of an ordering overmind gnosis intervenes, then there is a cosmic structure of the consciousness and action, but this is not like the rigid mental structures; it is plastic, organic, something that can grow and develop and stretch into the infinite. All spiritual experiences are taken up and become habitual and normal to the new nature; all essential experiences belonging to the mind, life, body are taken up and spiritualised, transmuted and felt as forms of the consciousness, delight, power of the infinite existence. Intuition, illumined sight and thought enlarge themselves; their substance assumes a greater substantiality, mass, energy, their movement is more comprehensive, global, many-faceted, more wide and potent in its truth-force; the whole nature,

Continued on next page

SRI AUROBINDO AND MAN'S SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

By C. C. DUTT

Continued from the issue of February 21

What, then, is the important condition to bring about for a decisive change in man's life? Sri Aurobindo indicates the prime importance of the readiness of the common mind, in these words: "Even if the condition of society and the principle and rule that govern society are opposed to the spiritual change... yet if the common human mind has begun to admit the ideas proper to the higher order... and the heart of man has begun to be stirred by the aspiration born of these ideas, then there is a hope of some advance in the not distant future. And the first essential sign must be the growth of the subjective idea of life." These ideas are likely to show themselves in philosophy and ethics and art. Science will probably make new discoveries and take up new lines of research. The wall between soul and matter will go on thinning and religion will draw fresh energy in the fountain of the spirit. All these things will indicate progress, but it is only when the hidden Truth has been discovered that life can be reshaped in its light. Meanwhile the work of necessary preparation has to go on. The Master is careful to warn us that a subjective turn is only a first condition, not the thing itself. A subjective age may, therefore, stop far short of spirituality. There is a subjectivity of the vital self which is highly perilous, for, "life-power is an instrument, not an aim; it is the first great subjective supra-physical instrument of the Spirit and the base of all action and endeavour." But when it does not seek to go beyond its demands and impulses, it will become like engine-power without a driver to control and direct it. Sri Aurobindo describes its state as measureless, unresting creation, appropriation, expansion which will end in something violent, huge and colossal foredoomed... to excess and ruin."

Beyond this vital subjectivism there may be a mental, even a psychic subjectivism. On the basis of the idea of the soul as life in action subjectivism may first appear as mental pragmatism and then rise to the higher idea of a man as a soul that develops itself in the life and body through an ever expanding mental existence. It may arrive at new psychic relations, at a more sovereign power of the idea to realise itself in the act. Yet all this falls short of the advent of a spiritual age, though they are possibly dawn-tints that herald the glorious sunrise. Sri Aurobindo compares the three kinds of subjectivism thus: "This mental and psychic subjectivism would have its dangers, greater dangers even than those that attend a vitalistic subjectivism, because its powers of action also would be greater, but it would have what vitalistic subjectivism has not and cannot easily have, the chance of a detecting discernment, strong safeguards and a powerful liberating light." This is a necessary stage on the path of evolution from Matter to Spirit. In the past attempts to spiritualise humanity failed because they thought to spiritualise material man at once miraculously. Such a climb can be neither effective nor lasting, because of the places in between having been left unmastered. If mankind is to be spiritualised then man in the mass must cease to be vital and become a mental or a psychic being.

It is thus a sign of great promise that the wheel of civilisation has been following its course over a series of realisations on different planes,—Matter as the Eternal, Life as the Eternal, Mind as the Eternal. It is in an age of mental subjectivism that mind discovers that it is merely a secondary power and that the spirit is the great eternal. Then only will the real decisive endeavour begin, and a spiritual age for mankind be possible. Spiritual human society will begin with a revelation of these essential truths—God, Freedom and Unity—which are now hidden behind nature. When man is able to see God and to possess Him, he will know real freedom and arrive at real unity, never otherwise. His ego-pivot will then go and his ego-hunt will come to an end. It is the same with spiritualised society, which, after its realisation, will never dwell in its group-ego but in the group-soul. God will be the aim of its activities. Its search of knowledge, its pursuit of art, its collective organisation—all will take a divine turn. And as man comes to know his self he escapes more and more from the outer law and lives by the law in his divine nature. "In that state each man will be not a law to himself, but the law, the divine Law, because he

will be a soul living in the Divine and not an ego living mainly if not entirely for its own interests and purpose." This will by no means imply the break-up of human society, for the third principle is Unity. "He who sees God in all will serve freely God in all with the service of love." He will live not for himself, not for his State, not for his individual or group-ego, but for God immanent in him and in the world.

If mankind is to get on to this higher spiritual level, it is not enough that a few favourable ideas should take hold of the general mind and permeate its thought and action. It is not enough that an idea of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth should become an ideal of life. It is not even enough that this lofty idea should become a governing preoccupation of man's mind. It would indeed be a great step forward, but more is needed, "there must be a dynamic recreating of individual manhood in the spiritual type". Usually when man gets hold of an ideal he is satisfied with accepting it as a partial influence. It is not allowed to shape his entire life, but only more or less to colour it. This will obviously not do for the spiritual ideal. Spirituality is a thing subjective; "it is nothing if it is not lived inwardly and if the outer life does not flow out of this inward living." Divine perfection is always there up in the heaven of the Spirit; but it is of no avail to man, down below, till he lives the divine life inwardly and outwardly. This spiritual change has to be accomplished in the individual. The collective soul is, as the Master has explained before, half inconscient and it can be given a new form only by the individual components taking that form. A society that lives by its institutions is a machine and not a living growth. The advent of a spiritual age must be preceded by the appearance of an increasing number of individual men who are no longer satisfied with the present mental vital life and aspire to a higher existence. Institutions alone cannot help us in this matter.

In the past, the coming of a new religion has often followed an access of spirituality in society. But it has never had any lasting effect. The goal of a true spiritual movement is a new birth, a new consciousness, the descent of the spirit into man's being while "a religious movement", says Sri Aurobindo, "brings usually a wave of spiritual excitement... a temporary uplifting and an effective formation—partly spiritual, partly ethical, partly dogmatic in its nature." But in a very few decades the wave subsides, only the formation remains. A residue may be left—a central influence, an inner discipline—which may start new waves, but ever feebler. Then, again, a religious belief is usually narrow, while the nature of the spirit is a wide inner freedom and a large unity. There can hardly be a harmony between the two. There is another well-marked defect in a credal religion. It lays great stress on the next world and takes but little interest in the uplift of earthly life. Thus, while religion can bring man morality, purity and piety, it cannot be relied on to bring him spirituality.

Those individuals, therefore, who believe in spiritual evolution as man's destiny will be most helpful in shaping his future. For, the rise of the rational man to the supra-rational spiritual plane must be our exclusive ideal and endeavour. And we must take all human life for our province. We must lay hold of life in all its phases and divinise it. Before this momentous change can be made, "our stumbling intellectual has to be converted into the precise and luminous intuitive," until that again can rise into higher ranges—the Overmind and the Supermind or Gnosis.

This endeavour, difficult enough for the individual, can be much more so for the race. It will have to be gradual. There will be no mass uplift by a miracle. "The spirit, who is here in man, now a concealed divinity, a developing light and power, will descend more fully... into the soul of mankind, and into the great individualities in whom the light and power are the strongest." The earthly evolution will then have effected its ascent into the wider and purer horizons above and accomplished that whose mere far-off hint was the birth of man from the animal.

(First Part Concluded)

THE OVERMIND LEVEL —Continued from page 5

knowledge, aesthesis, sympathy, feeling, dynamism become more catholic, all-understanding, all-embracing, cosmic, infinite.

"The overmind change is the final consummating movement of the dynamic spiritual transformation; it is the highest possible status-dynamism of the spirit in the spiritual-mind plane. It takes up all that is in the three steps below it and raises their characteristic workings to their highest and largest power, adding to them a universal wideness of consciousness and force, a harmonious concert of knowledge, a more manifold delight of being. But there are certain reasons arising from its own characteristic status and power that prevent it from being the final possibility of the spiritual evolution. It is a power, though the highest power, of the lower hemisphere; although its basis is a cosmic unity, its action is an action of division and interaction, an action taking its stand on the play of the multiplicity. Its play is, like that of all Mind, a play of the possibilities;

although it acts not in the Ignorance but with the knowledge of the truth of these possibilities, yet it works them out through their own independent evolution of their powers. It acts in each cosmic formula according to the fundamental meaning of that formula and is not a power for a dynamic transcendence. Here in earth-life it has to work upon a cosmic formula whose basis is the entire nescience which results from the separation of Mind, Life and Matter from their own source and supreme origin. Overmind can bridge that division up to the point at which separative Mind enters into Overmind and becomes a part of its action; it can unite individual mind with cosmic mind on its highest plane, equate individual self with cosmic self and give to the nature an action of universality; but it cannot lead Mind beyond itself, and in this world of original Inconscience it cannot dynamise the Transcendence; for it is the supermind alone that is the supreme self-determining truth-action and the direct power of manifestation of that Transcendence."

SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME

By DILIP KUMAR ROY

CHAPTER III

GURU THE TRANSFORMER

(Continued)

To emphasise the difficulty every Yogi has to face for a long time, let me venture a little further and say that the moment one gets along in Yoga, be it ever so little, the ego is confronted with new trials at every turn inasmuch that one often feels like throwing up the sponge in despair. At such crises it is only the Guru's direct help and sleepless guidance that can lift one out of the perilous slough of despond. But the trouble is that the Guru's help can hardly be fully effective without the co-operation of the disciple who is generally too apt to rely more on miracle than on *sadhana*. That is why in spite of the Guru's repeated warnings he is found so prone to mistake a *tamasic* passivity for the *sattwic* surrender. Another reason is that the fool's paradise, however ephemeral, is delectable so long as it lasts; in other words, it is delightful to be lulled to optimism with the illusion that since all is right with the Supervisor above, nothing can be really wrong with the workers below. Appropos, I remember clearly the bad jolt given me once by a co-disciple who said to me, with unctious, "If one has to make an effort all the time what is the point of having a Guru?" His whole psychological bent made him look up, first and last, to the miracle of "Sri Aurobindo's Force" as the one and only solvent of all our difficulties. I told him that Sri Aurobindo had written once clearly and categorically to Nirod on this very point. "The mistake is to think that it must be either a miraculous Force or none. There is no miraculous Force and I do not deal in miracles". And then: "What is Sri Aurobindo's Force? If it is not a personal property of this body of mine, it is a higher Force used by me or acting through me. Of course it is a Divine Force, for there is only one force acting in the world, but it acts according to the nature of the instrument".

But, as the psycho-analyst rightly says, human beings are incalculable. For as soon as I quoted this letter for my friend's eternal edification his eyes danced with joy. "I heartily agree," he cried triumphantly, "for that is just why I adore Gurudev: he will know how to act on me. Why then must I fall back upon individual effort when I can get things done more speedily by surrender? For since I have come to surrender, the Divine Force will surely act through Sri Aurobindo and transform me. "Feeling bewildered if not discomfited, I appealed again to Gurudev to tell us something definite to go upon and not leave us hanging in mid-air. Whereupon he wrote to me:

"In the early part of *sadhana*—and by early I do not mean a short part—effort is indispensable. Surrender of course, but surrender is not a thing that is done in a day. The mind has its ideas and it clings to them—no human vital but resists surrender, for what it calls surrender in the early stages is a self-giving with a demand in it—the physical consciousness is like a stone and what it calls surrender is often no more than inertia. It is only the psychic that knows how to surrender and the psychic is usually very much veiled in the beginning. When the psychic awakes, it can bring a sudden and true surrender of the whole being, for the difficulty of the rest is rapidly dealt with and disappears. But till then effort is indispensable. Or it is necessary till the Force comes flooding down in the being from above and takes up the *sadhana*, does it for one more and more and leaves less and less to individual effort—but even then, if not effort, at least aspiration and vigilance are needed till the possession of mind, will, life and body by the Divine Power is complete."

But one who has not practised Yoga will be unlikely to realise the point Gurudev wanted to make when he suggested that effort and surrender are interdependent. So I shall close the topic with the report of a talk which a rather cheerful believer had once with Gurudev on this very point.

"I have tried, sir," he said, "and tried hard, I assure you. But the more I tried, the more I felt it was no use trying till in the end I had a brain-wave and realised that *you alone could and must* take us out of the wood. So accept us—we are going with you".

Sri Aurobindo smiled and only said:

"I wish you did".

* * *

What Gurudev meant was simple enough. But what he implied was not quite so simple. It is not easy to tame our egos. And the task seems for a long time to go on deepening in difficulty as our egos, when scanned, reveal many spirals and kinks. That is why the act of surrender has remained all along at once the most simple and the most difficult of achievements. And that is also why one can never expect to achieve it by one's unaided effort. Either the Divine Grace has to intervene or—which is the same thing with those who have taken to a Guru—one has to open oneself more and more to the Guru's Force till the reversal of consciousness is finally accomplished. Yoga becomes difficult because, among other things, most of us find it far from easy to be simple in this age of deep sophistication brought about by the exorbitant demand of the mental part of us to dominate the show and complicate the issue. But, for good or for evil, being "sons of an intellectual age" as Gurudev put it, we have had to make the best of a bad bargain and endeavour to plod on. And I tried on my part even to cajole my intellect to indemnify me for the loss of my sim-

plicity which was so native to my ancestors. So while on the one hand I wanted to understand Gurudev by questioning him, on the other, I wanted to have the benefit of his ready help in spite of my deep mental reserve even though he, in his infinite compassion, assured me again and again that he was perfectly ready "to carry me all the way" if only I would let him. But precisely there was the rub: my mental reserve did *not* want to sign the blank cheque, as I called it, with the result that I had to trudge on as best I could, profiting indeed by his support but not leaning too much on it. Is it any wonder that I should have, in the circumstances, found my way so hard and rough in spite of the immense help I got from his tireless tolerance and specific directions? One could not both eat one's cake and have it. One could not very well decline the helping light and yet hope to dispel overnight the clinging darkness which caused me again and again to miss his smile of welcome as well as to misunderstand his simple enough injunctions, till once, surpassing myself in foolishness, I asked him rhetorically how I could possibly be expected to say that I wanted only to give myself to the Divine and not want Him, when I did want him with "every drop of my blood"! Could I afford to be dishonest? I wrote grandiloquently and patted myself for having been at once upright and clever if not original and brilliant!

Finally, to force the issue, I proposed to him to be allowed to do without food. I half meant it, I suppose, though I must have dreaded the prospect as I was, I still claim, an out and out normal man who never found a regime of fasting invigorating.

"Since I find, Guru," I advocated, "that do what I will I simply cannot accept the idea of surrendering my ego to your Lordship; since I find life meaningless without a deepening response from the Divine; and, lastly, since I find, I repeat, that I sincerely want you to give me the strength which I so badly need to be able to get round my pride—please let me know if you will now approve of my *prayopaveshana*.* I have read in the lives of some Yogis that they tried it in the last resort and succeeded, even though Christ tabooed it by saying that one must not 'tempt God'. Still if you approve I will try".

Which brought me one of his tenderest letters.

"Dilip", he wrote, "I wrote to you all that in answer to your statement about your former idea of the yoga that if one wanted the Divine, the Divine himself would take up the purifying of the heart and develop the *sadhana* and give the necessary experiences. I meant to say that it can and does happen in that way if one has trust and confidence in the Divine and the will to surrender. For such a taking up involves one's putting oneself in the hands of the Divine rather than trusting to one's own efforts alone and this implies one's putting one's trust and confidence in the Divine and a progressive self-giving. It is in fact the principle of *sadhana* that I myself followed and it is the central part of yoga as I envisage it. It is, I suppose, what Sri Ramkrishna meant by the method of the baby cat in his image. But all cannot follow that at once: it takes time for them to arrive at it—it grows most when the mind and vital fall quiet.

"What I meant by surrender was this inner surrender of the mind and vital. There is, of course, the outer surrender also: the giving up of all that is found to conflict with the spirit or need of the *sadhana*, the offering, the obedience to the guidance of the Divine, whether directly, if one has reached that stage, or through the psychic or to the guidance of the Guru. I may say that *prayopaveshana* has not anything to do with surrender: it is a form of *tapasya* of a very austere—and in my opinion, very excessive—kind, often dangerous. But I was speaking of the inner surrender.

"The core of this inner surrender is trust and confidence in the Divine. One takes the attitude 'I want the Divine and nothing else. (I do not know why you should think that you can be asked to give up that—if there is not that, then the yoga cannot be done). I want to give myself entirely to him and since my soul wants that, it cannot be but that I shall meet and realise him. I ask nothing but that and his action in me to bring me to him, his action secret or open, veiled or manifest. I do not insist on my own time and way: let him do all in his own time and way, I shall believe in him, accept his will, aspire steadily for his light and presence and joy, go through all difficulties and delays, relying on him and never giving up. Let my mind be quiet and turn to him alone and let him open to it his calm and joy. All for him and myself for him. Whatever happens I will keep to this aspiration and self-giving and go on in perfect reliance that it will be done.'

"That is the attitude into which one must grow: for certainly it cannot be made perfect at once—mental and vital movements cut across—but if one keeps the will to it, it will grow in the being. The rest is a matter of obedience to the guidance when it makes itself manifest—not allowing one's mental and vital movements to interfere.

"It was not my intention to say that this is the only way and *sadhana* cannot be done otherwise—there are so many others by which one can approach the Divine. But this is the only one I know by which the taking up of *sadhana* by the Divine becomes a sensible fact before the preparation of the nature is done. In other methods the Divine action may be felt from

(Continued on next page)

* Vowing oneself to death by fasting unless and until the boon demanded is granted.

SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME—Continued from previous page

time to time, but it remains mostly behind the veil till all is ready. In some *sadhana*s the Divine action is not recognised: all must be done by *tapasya*. In most there is a mixing of the two: the *tapasya* finally calling the direct help and intervention. The idea and experience of the Divine doing all belong to the yoga based on surrender.

"But whatever way is followed, the one thing to be done is to be faithful and go on to the end. You have so often taken that decision—stand by it, true to the inspiration of your soul.

"All can be done by the Divine: the heart and nature purified, the inner consciousness awakened, the veil removed—if one gives oneself to the Divine with trust and confidence and even if one cannot do so fully at once, yet the more one does so, the more the inner help and guidance comes and the contact and the experience of the Divine grows within. If the questioning mind becomes less active and humility and the will to surrender grow in you, this ought to be perfectly possible. No other strength and *tapasya* are then needed, but this alone".

But I must again pause here to state once more, even at the risk of repetition, that what he called the "inner surrender", though difficult enough in all conscience, did not *always* seem to us an unattainable ideal. What I mean will be perfectly intelligible to all who have trod this strait and thorny path spiralling up to self-perfection. For any sincere pilgrim on this path will have realised in his bright moods what a joy it is to want to surrender; he will ache to dedicate all he has and is to the Guide outside, whom he can and does equate in his moments of clear vision with the Guide within. But, thanks to motley forces, these bright moments often enough get blurred, assailed by clouds and storms and ambushed glooms and we are deflected from the Path. It is true that these, even when they attack us, cannot render us *hors de combat*, if we are fundamentally sincere and loyal, but it is equally true, alas, that the bulk of *sadhakas*, in every clime and age must be heirs to human weakness and therefore liable to discouragement. (Not for nothing did Shaw write in his *Back to Methuselah* that even his redoubtable "Ancients" could only die from two causes, one of which is discouragement.) That is why every aspirant who has followed this arduous path has had to learn, to his bitter cost, that he can never learn enough the lesson of loyalty to and reliance on the Guru's help without which one can never hope to fare far in his path. But even though our native egoism can make it at times all but impossible for us to be schooled in the safe and simple art of turning to the Guru for help it will be untrue to say that it is only difficulties one chafes against all the time. For no one who has sincerely and humbly prayed for help can say with truth that his prayer has never been heard. Had it been so, very few of us could have persisted in counting on light when the prospects seemed too dark for words. Also, let me add, through every experience of gloom one does win to something permanently and one of the richest rewards of wrestling with one's own ego is to gain an overwhelming experience, vivid and concrete, namely, an insight into one's own nature in all its complexity. As Gurudev wrote to me once: "Nobody can understand himself or human nature if he does not perceive the multi-personality of the human-being." I do not claim that nothing but Yoga can afford one this clue. Every man who has earnestly striven for self-perfection in life has had to face up to this staggering fact. Even as early as 1795 when Goethe was busy with his scientific studies, he wrote in his famous *Zur Morphology*: "Every living being is not a unity but a plurality. Even when it appears as an individual, it is the reunion of beings living and existing in themselves, identical in origin, but which may appear identical or similar, different or dissimilar.

"The more imperfect a being is the more do its individual parts resemble each other, and the more do these parts resemble the whole. The more perfect the being is the more dissimilar are its parts. In the former case the parts are more or less a repetition of the whole: in the latter case they are totally unlike the whole".

It is as a result of this eminently verifiable fact of life through personal experience that human beings have remained incalculable since the dawn of time. Not only that: with the passage of time this element, of unpredictableness, grows (even as a child grows in stature from day to day) till in adult consciousness every evolved being stands literally bewildered before the warring impulses in his own personality, some pulling him down, others making him soar, as Goethe expressed once with his rare power of imagery. "And when I think that I'm sitting on my hack and riding to the station I am in duty bound for, all of a sudden the mare under me will turn into a creature with uncontrollable desires and wings and run right away from me".

But few people can be as conscious as Goethe of "this multitudinousness in human personality", far less win any clue to the supreme art of harmonising the disparate strands of our nature.* Gurudev has explained this not only in his numerous letters but, what is infinitely more helpful, has placed

* I have related elsewhere an experience—which I need not therefore repeat—with a Maharani. I spoke to her of my faith in the spiritual reality when I was in the grip of gloomy doubts. I wrote to Gurudev asking whether I had been insincere. To which he replied: "Your experience with the Maharani. That happens to everybody: it is that part of the consciousness comes up which not only believes these things but knows them to be true: the other part which is depressed and open to doubt and denial takes then a back seat or goes underground. People do not know this multitudinousness in human personality, so they call it insincerity in themselves or in others. But it is nothing of the kind. There are certain beliefs and feelings which something in our nature holds on to with a firm grip and storms and despondencies only cover but cannot destroy them".

(See "Among the Great"—American edition—pp. 352-3).

within our reach the supreme talisman of his Yogic force without which we could at best curb to some extent our "uncontrollable desires" and incomprehensible impulses, but never find the way to changing their native movements. As, however, this is not a practical treatise on Yoga, I shall not expatiate on this theme any further, but conclude this chapter with just a personal instance if only to make clear what exactly I want to convey by emphasizing the role of the "transformer" as against that of the "censor".

When I came to be initiated in yoga I had no very clear idea of what "transformation of nature" meant. So I used to ask Gurudev again and again for clarification. Many of these letters have been published so that those who want more light can easily profit by these explanations. All I propose to do here is to give a brief account of what I experienced about the practical side of this transformation under Gurudev's concrete help and Mother's sleepless guidance.

I knew of course that every aspirant was expected to inhibit, or shall I say reject, the movements of his lower nature. One knows how to check impulses; but as to how I was to change them I had only the haziest notions. Once, in the thirties, I had a long talk with the late Upendranath Banerji, a quondam disciple of Gurudev. I remember his misgivings about the feasibility of transforming nature. He said to me that he had definitely "experienced" that Yoga could bring into play forces which not only made a difference but sometimes even bordered upon the miraculous. But for all that he had remained unconvinced, he added, about its ability to transform human nature. "Man remains at bottom what he is", he said, "and if changes are brought about they can only be initiated laboriously and consolidated slowly by life, not Yoga."

But he was wrong, I told him to his face as I gave him an account of my radically changed outlook on life. I talked about things that had appealed to me powerfully once but which appeared, after even a few years of Yoga, worse than pointless,—for instance, my career as a musician, my great delight in travelling, my immense zest in several intellectual pursuits, my interest in engrossing pastimes like chess or delightful games like tennis and so on. He gave me a very patient and sympathetic hearing and seemed genuinely interested in my change as I called it but he wanted something more convincing and concrete to go upon, like some lasting change in my life of instincts or long-standing attachments. I was silenced. For while on the one hand I could not tell all about my private life (and no one should—except to one's Guru), on the other I could not possibly make him see what I had seen for the simple reason that Yoga cannot be done by proxy any more than love-making can. Not only that; I knew him well; he was indeed a highly intelligent man; but his keen intelligence, like that of most intellectuals, demanded that spiritual truth be ultimately assayed by reason and that human intellect be convinced by data which belonged to a realm other than its own. Yet I showed him a letter which Gurudev had written to me in 1935:

"These things should not be spoken of but kept under a cover. Even in ordinary non-spiritual things the action of invisible or subjective forces is open to doubt and discussion in which there could be no material certitude—while the spiritual force is invisible in itself and also invisible in its action. So it is idle to try to prove that such and such a result was the effect of spiritual force. Each must form his own ideas about that—for if it is accepted it cannot be as a result of proof and argument, but only as a result of experience, of faith or of that insight in the heart or the deeper intelligence which looks behind appearances and sees what is behind them. The spiritual consciousness does not claim in that way, it can state the truth about itself but not fight for a personal acceptance. A general and impersonal statement about the spiritual force is another matter, but I doubt whether the time has come for it or whether it could be understood by the mere reasoning intelligence."

But as Gurudev permitted me last year to publish in America what he had told me about his occult experiences, I may, I think, venture to make public what I could not twelve years ago. For I know from personal experience that many people are tired today of this barren scepticism—as I was before my plunge for Yoga. Even one of the greatest of modern sceptics, Bertrand Russell, a thinker who once preached the gospel of "the will to doubt" says today in 1950: "But if philosophy is to serve a positive purpose, it must not teach mere scepticism, for, while the dogmatist is harmful, the sceptic is useless".

A welcome change indeed—in one who fought so hard against faith and so long! So I may perhaps make bold to relate what I have experienced personally about the effectivity of Gurudev's power functioning slowly but surely as that of a true alchemist. I shall try not to overstate what I went through.

When I had finally taken refuge in the Ashram, in 1928, I was far from realising the import of Gurudev's *sadhana* and aim, especially when he wrote: "I do not wish to disguise from you the difficulty of this great and tremendous change or the possibility that you may have a long and hard work before you" etc.† I did not even fully envisage what was implied by his wanting to change the stuff of our nature without which the higher Yogic consciousness could not, he stressed, possibly come to stay. I only knew of the rejection of the wrong impulses, which everybody knows as controlling or curbing.

But the more I curbed these the more it was borne home to me (little by

† I have quoted the whole letter in Chapter V while giving an account of the difficulties I had to encounter.

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little till I became fully alive to the magnitude of the task I was up against) that although one could act faultlessly up to a point—even nobly “scorning delights and living laborious days”—such Millonic feats of will, however difficult and praiseworthy, fell far short of the aim of Yoga, namely the total eradication of the impulses which bred the faults and their attendant disharmonies. To give an instance or two: I found that I could, generally speaking, restrain my temper but not help feeling irritated; or refuse tasty dishes but not do away with the greed for them.

The first defect I have yet to get rid of utterly. But it was the second, which I am going to write about, that gave me much more trouble—and how obstinately! I shall put it as briefly as I can.

When I came to the Ashram I had, naturally, to agree to the vegetarian diet, as Gurudev and Mother were both in favour of vegetarianism. I wanted, nevertheless, to eat fish and meat, especially fish which my Bengali palate simply “adored” like a gourmand. So I missed it as I hardly missed anything else. I was told by some that I would get used to the simple vegetarian diet. But I did not. With time my desire for fish only grew. I felt guilty, secretly, and struggled conscientiously against my greed. But in vain. I dreamed of fish—night after night. After eight years of Ashram life I went out for three months and found that my first love, fish, had not yet been supplanted by any other. (Upendranath Banerji’s doubt had something indeed to go upon!) I returned to the Ashram a sadder if a wiser man. To have practised Yoga under the aegis of the greatest Yogi of India and yet to have succumbed to my greed for such inferior pleasures the moment I went outside! But do what I would, I could not bring myself to decline whenever fish was offered to me in Calcutta and elsewhere. Again and again I took a silent vow never to touch fish any more but again and again I broke it as soon as my friends and relations pressed me to take fish. To cut a long story short, my remorse was brought to a head when, in 1938, I went on eating fish at the house of my friend and host, Rajarao Dharendra Narayan Roy. I felt more ill-at-ease in his royal palace since Dhiren was at the time a strict vegetarian under medical advice, so that I had no longer even the excuse of being tempted to eat fish in order to be social. But although my weakness made me depressed, yet I simply could not reform. I had had a high opinion of my will-power and sincerity and both now left me in the lurch with the consequent damage to my self-respect because I was telling others that it did not matter, even quoting scripture like the Prince of Darkness:

“I think the importance of *sattwik* food from the spiritual point of view has been exaggerated. Food is rather a question of hygiene etc.”*

It was eleven years ago and I cannot clearly recall what happened on that memorable night when, after having declined to eat fish for a few days, I again succumbed. All I can remember is that it was a banquet given in my honour by the Rajarao and that the famous caterers Firpo had been requisitioned to make the banquet worthy of my host and his literary guests. I must have been pressed by these to be convivial and so I capitulated once again to the irresistible lobsters and the peerless *hilsa* from the Ganges.

That unforgettable night! After the great *éclat* came the dark reaction and I felt simply ashamed of myself as never before. I tried to drown my qualms in sleep but failed. So I got up, lighted some incense-sticks and prayed at the foot of a portrait of Gurudev. As I thought of him, tears coursed freely down my cheeks.

I do not know how to convince my readers. Probably they will simply decline to be convinced and I can hardly blame them if they doubt my testimony, the less because when all is said, one is often led to exaggerate (even magnify a molehill into a mountain) when one feels, as I do, a deep gratitude to the benefactor one pays homage to. I must confess that I wish with all my heart that others might look at the greatness of Gurudev with my eyes even as I feel a real pity for those who cannot or, rather, will not. But even when I confess to all this I cannot possibly admit that I am consciously distorting the experience I have decided to relate as simply and truthfully as I can.

I saw that night the radiant figure of Gurudev—in my dream. He gave me his blessing and said: “From tomorrow you will be able to give up fish”.

He vanished. I woke up in a thrill of joy. From the next day I not only gave up fish but felt no longer any hankering for it. I have indeed taken fish a few times since but never with the same relish nor consciousness of being a bondslave to my palate. Perhaps once or twice in six months I have tasted fish but what is far more convincing to me, not to mention gratifying, is that since that momentous night I have never felt the least craving for fish. Also, shall I add that I have even last year during my protracted musical tour stayed with rich epicures and “gourmets” and sat at their tables day after day without touching fish once, even though pressed hard not to behave like a spoil-sport? And incidentally, I realised what Mother told me once: “If you can really conquer a desire for good you will experience that abstention gives you a far greater delight than yielding”.

Now that I have hazarded it I might as well hazard relating what happened to a dear friend of mine, since it is, to my mind, even more convincing. Briefly, it is like this:

He was a hard drinker, simply could not do without the bottle, day after day. It was a long-standing habit, of more than twenty years. He and his friends and relations tried strenuously but no influence could wean

him from his addiction, till he came under the influence of Gurudev and Mother. He became a disciple and was asked to pledge himself to be an abstainer from alcohol. He gave that pledge and he has not broken it since, not once, nor even felt tempted to drink again, which to me is far more convincing, knowing as I do about fish, and surely alcohol is a dictator more difficult to resist than fish.

But the Yogic Force (which produced such indubitable results and effected changes in the aspirant’s outer nature) being invisible to most of us when it is actually working as a leaven in our being and consciousness, we do often feel hard put to it to accept its functioning as “businesslike and practical”—as I often put it to Gurudev. Not that I did not want to believe—sometimes I actually longed to believe—and yet how tough a job I found it not to doubt what he asserted as hundred per cent authentic and verifiable! And with what an accent he exhorted me!—“It is this faith you need to develop,” he wrote once to me in the thirties, “a faith which is in accordance with reason and common sense,—that if the Divine exists and has called you to the path, as is evident, then there must be a Divine Guidance behind and that through and in spite of all difficulties you will arrive. Not to listen to the hostile voices that suggest failure or to the voices of that impatient vital that echo them, not to believe that because great difficulties are there, there can be no success or that because the Divine has not yet shown himself he will never show himself, but to take the position that every one takes when he fixes his mind on a great and difficult goal: ‘I will go on till I succeed and I will succeed—all difficulties notwithstanding’, to which the believer in the Divine adds: ‘The Divine exists, He is there, and since He exists, my following after the Divine cannot fail. I will go through everything till I find Him.’”

When he wrote this he knew of course that it was not so easy for impatient aspirants like us, with eyes glued to quick results, to have an unshakable faith in “an invisible force producing tangible results” as I phrased it. So he went on impinging on my non-experience with all the weight of his experience of which I must give one more instance before I draw this topic to a close.

After he wrote to me his famous letter on doubt (quoted in full in my *Among the Great*) I had a wordy tussle with some *sadhaka* in the Ashram. In this instance he seemed to have caught something but I thought he was expressing himself badly when he claimed that “Sri Aurobindo’s Force” could not be called “invisible” since it translated itself in “visible changes” even in the outer nature of many an aspirant. So I wrote to Gurudev requesting him to throw some light on this somewhat obscure point. After a lot of speculation I ended on my old note of helpless query: did the Force mean business? Were the changes stressed by my friend incontrovertible?—and so on, O folly!

To which he wrote back:

“The Invisible Force producing tangible results both inward and outward is the whole meaning of the Yogic consciousness. Your question about Yoga bringing merely a feeling of Power without any result was really very strange. Who would be satisfied with such a meaningless hallucination and call it Power? If we had not had thousands of experiences showing that the Power within could alter the mind, develop its powers, add new ones, bring in new ranges of knowledge, master the vital movements, change the character, influence men and things, control the conditions and functionings of the body, work as a concrete dynamic Force on other forces, modify events etc. etc. we would not speak of it as we do. Moreover, it is not only in its results but in its movements that the Force is tangible and concrete. When I speak of feeling Force or Power, I do not mean simply having a vague sense of it, but feeling it concretely and consequently being able to direct it, manipulate it, watch its movements, be conscious of its mass and intensity and in the same way of that of other opposing forces; all these things are possible and usual by the development of Yoga.”

And then in reply to my pointed question about my own capacity to achieve results he wrote in the end:

“It is not that you are incapable of it, for it was several times on the point of being done. But your external mind has interfered always—questioning, doubting, asking for something more external, not waiting for the movement to continue, for the inward to externalise itself and make itself concrete. That is why I object to this worship of doubt. It is not that I used not to have doubts myself more formidable than any you have ever thought of—but I did not allow them to interfere with the development of my experience. I let it continue until it had sufficient body for me to know what it was and what it could bring me.”

What he referred to here as “on the point of being done” in myself was an experience which used to recur constantly in those days: a deepening of consciousness would set in till I would be just on the point of crossing a line; I would then in my impatience want to expedite this with my active mind and instantly lose the experience. In other words, I strove a little too hard in my meditation which created a tension and thereby made me forfeit the legitimate fruit of my arduous endeavour because of my unyogic attitude of non-passivity. Mother told me pointedly that this created a tension in my consciousness and that was why I balked just on the threshold of experience. This made me so despondent that I wrote a long letter to Gurudev reproaching him for having kept me in the dark so long when I had been going on the wrong tack all through.

“But this is unfair, Guru,” I wrote in a rapid crescendo of despair, “since your Yoga, now offered to us, seems to be cultured for the use of avatars

* This letter written to a friend of mine in 1937 was printed subsequently in Vol. II of “Letters of Sri Aurobindo”, Section XI.

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like yourself or the Mother. But then how could it help us, feckless mortals, who must take only one of two attitudes: effort or inertia. So I strained, alas, only to be told that straining could not help. And yet when X wrote he wanted to do nothing you girded at his lethargy and Mother told me that God only helped those who helped themselves! You do remind one of Krishna who enjoyed driving Arjun mad by exhorting him to hunt with the hounds just after having counselled him to run with the hare."

He gave me a long reply to this which I need not quote in full as it has already been printed in part: I shall only quote a portion from it which was kept back at the time as being too personal.

He took, first, great pains to explain to me that it was not inertia which he advocated when he had discouraged tension; then he came pat to the point:

"Now as to the tension and stiffness, the Mother saw it this time in your meditation with her because she had to look for the impediment. You told her that in meditating with her you never felt conscious of anything—and yet it ought not to be so since your receptivity was beyond doubt and you yourself say that you have always found the personal contact helpful."

Next, after stressing once more the difference between a "vital straining and pulling and a spontaneous psychic openness" he wrote:

"It is not that pulling and straining and tension can do nothing; in the end they prevail for some result or another, but with difficulty, delay, struggle, strong upheavels of the Force breaking through in spite of all. Sri Ramakrishna himself began by pulling and straining and got his result but at a cost of a tremendous and perilous upsetting; afterwards he took the quite psychic way whenever he wanted a result and got it with ease and in a minimum time. You say that this way is too difficult for you or the likes of you and it is only 'avatars' like myself or the Mother that can do it. That is a strange misconception, for it is on the contrary the easiest and simplest and the most direct way, and anyone can do it, if he makes his mind and vital quiet; even those who have a tenth of your capacity can do it. It is the other way of tension and strain and hard endeavour that is difficult and needs a great force of *tapasya*. As for the Mother and myself, we have had to try all ways, follow all methods, to surmount mountains of difficulties, a far heavier burden to bear than you or anybody else in the Ashram or outside, far more difficult conditions, battles to fight, wounds to endure, ways to cleave through impenetrable morass and desert and forest, hostile masses to conquer, a work such as I am certain none else had to do before us. For the Leader of the way in a work like ours has not only to bring down and represent or embody the Divine, but to represent too the ascending element in humanity and to bear the burden of humanity to the full and experience not in a mere play or *lila* but in grim earnest all the obstruction, difficulty, opposition, baffled and hampered and only slowly-victorious labour which are possible on the Path."

And lastly with what solicitude and tender affection he consoled the recalcitrant!

"But it is not necessary nor tolerable that all that should be repeated again to the full in the experience of others. It is because we have the complete experience that we can show a straighter and easier road to others—if they will only consent to take it. It is because of our experience won at a tremendous price that we can urge upon you and others: "Take the psychic attitude; follow the straight sunlit path, with the Divine openly or secretly upbearing you—if secretly, he will show himself in good time—do not insist on the hard, hampered, roundabout and difficult journey'."

I do not know if any other Guru in the past ever wrote such language not only throbbing with sincerity but—in the words of Madame Gabriel Mistral in her tribute to Sri Aurobindo—"presenting the rare phenomenon of an exposition clear as a beautiful diamond without the danger of confounding the layman." And she cogently adds: "Six foreign languages have given the Master of Pondicherry a gift of co-ordination, a clarity free from gaudiness, and a charm that borders on the magical. . . . We have before

us a prose which approximates to that of the great Eckhart, German classicist and fountain-head of European mysticism." So she rejoices: "These are indeed 'glad tidings' that come to us: to know that there is a place in the world where culture has reached its tone of dignity by uniting in one man a supernatural life with a consummate literary style, thus making use of his beautifully austere and classical prose to serve as the handmaid of the spirit."

She has hit the nail on the head, for the Guru in Sri Aurobindo becomes so convincing to sceptics like myself because even when we stay opaque to his spiritual vision, he moves us, in spite of ourselves, to a partial psychic transparency by this irresistible "gift" of his crystalline experience and expression which "reaches us" at a time when we are besieged by "a petrifying materialism." *

As I read the above tribute after the passing away of Sri Aurobindo on the 5th December, last year (1950), a great sadness invaded me. Yes, I told myself, she is right. Perhaps it was this obstinate crust of scepticism even in his disciples, on whom he had showered so much love, that was partly responsible for this withdrawal! And what a love it was! It moved me to joy and melancholy when I read his burning aspiration to change the suffering earth by the light he had himself attained and yet could not fully bring down—just because we, his might-have-been beneficiaries, combated it with our deep, persistent denial and would not even wholly believe that he had indeed come to us:

To change the earthly life to life divi.

And yet we asked ourselves if he had really meant it when he said:

I keep my will to save the world and man;

Even the charm of thy alluring voice,

O blissful Godhead, cannot seize and snare.

I sacrifice not earth to happier worlds.

And he was loyal to earth because he had been persuaded that:

If thou and I are true, the world is true.

Although thou hide thyself behind thy works,

To be is not a senseless paradox;

Since God has made earth, earth must make in her God;

What hides within her breast she must reveal.

And last, though not least, when the Godhead even invited him to:

Be one with the infinity of my power. . . .

Pass back into the power from which thou cam'st,

he declined, because he wanted no selfish salvation for his own self while the earthlings suffered and prayed:

Thy embrace which rends the living knot of pain,

Thy joy, O Lord, in which all creatures breathe,

Thy magic flowing waters of deep love,

Thy sweetness give to me for earth and men.†

One is reminded of the great Prahlad's prayer to the Lord in the Bhagavat:

Often, O lord, the solitaires

in a silence live apart

Like aliens yearning only for

their own salvation's marvel art,

Oblivious to the anarchy of life,

unmindful of the vast

And varied pain wherewith the earth

is soaked from centre to the crust;

Who will redeem this suffering

if thy compassion stand aside?

I ache not for salvation if

the rest in misery abide.

* The citations in the last two paragraphs are from a tribute of the Nobel Laureate contributed to "Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual," 1950.
† Quoted from "Savitri"—Book XI, Canto I.

To be continued

Latest Publications of Sri Aurobindo Circle, Bombay

SRI AUROBINDO CIRCLE ANNUAL: Seventh Number

Pp. 268

Price: Rs. 8.

This Number contains several unpublished writings of Sri Aurobindo of great value and interest—a whole Book of "Savitri", twenty-nine letters to disciples, a story with an unusual theme entitled "The Phantom Hour" and an article on "The Political Story of Mahabharata". A contribution by the Mother called "Individualism" throws significant light on a question of central importance in Psychology. A number of other contributors, both Indian and foreign, have written on a variety of subjects of cultural interest with an authentic knowledge. Poems of rare mystical value by Eastern and Western poets also appear in this Annual.

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POETIC IMAGERY IN 'SAVITRI'

BY RAJANIKANT MODY

(Continued)

Our world's comparison to a gaol is beautifully given in the following lines:

*A gaol is this immense material world.
Across each road stands armed a stone-eyed law,
At every gate the huge dim sentinels pace.
A grey tribunal of the Ignorance,
An Inquisition of the priests of Night
In judgement sit on the adventurer soul,
And the dual tables and the Karmic norm
Restrain the Titan in us and the God.(150)*

The next image is applied to Life:

*Chance she has chosen and danger for playfellows;
Fate's dreadful swing she has taken for cradle and seat.(151)*

If fate becomes a cradle, mind becomes a nursery in which Nature and Soul carry on their play:

*A blindfold search and wrestle and fumbling clasp
Of a half-seen Nature and a hidden Soul,
A game of hide and seek in twilight rooms,
A play of love and hate and fear and hope
Continues in the nursery of mind
Its hard and heavy romp of self-born twins.(152)*

Nature and soul play on their game of hide and seek in the nursery of man's mind, but it is equally true that,

His life is a blind-man's-buff, a hide and seek.(153)

But is this play aimless or is there any purpose behind it? There may be and must be some purpose behind all these multitudinous events that happen in the universe, but as yet are

*... only seen foulness and force,
The secret crawl of consciousness to light
Through a fertile slime of lust and battenning sense,
Beneath the body's crust of thickened self
A tardy ferment working in the dark,
The turbid yeast of Nature's passionate change,
Ferment of the soul's creation out of mire.(154)*

Fate is taken by life not only for cradle but also for seat. But the seat of Aswapaty is very unique:

*In the unapproachable stillness of his soul,
Intense, one-pointed, monumental, lone
Patient he sat like an incarnate hope
Motionless on a pedestal of prayer.(155)*

There is a very fine image in the canto of Aswapaty's Descent into Night:—

*In rejected heaps by a monotonous road
The old simple delights were left to lie
On the wasteland of life's descent to Night.(156)*

In those 'menacing realms' of Night, 'guarded like termite cities from the sun',

*Assailed by thoughts that swarmed like spectral hordes,
A prey to the staring phantoms of the gloom
And terror approaching with its lethal mouth,
Driven by a strange will down ever down,
The sky above a communiqué of Doom,
He strove to shield his spirit from despair.(157)*

Before reaching the 'large lucent realms of Mind', Aswapaty

*... first met a silver-grey expanse,
Where Day and Night had wedded and were one:*

*...
A coalition of uncertainties
On a ground reserved for doubt and reasoned guess,
A rendezvous of Knowledge with Ignorance.(158)*

Quite different is the picture given of Aswapaty when he reaches the final part of his Sadhana and feels the presence of the Divine Mother.

*Intoxicated as with nectarous rain
His nature's passioning stretches flowed to her
Flashing with lightnings, mad with luminous wine.
All was a limitless sea that heaved to the moon.
A divinising stream possessed his veins,
His body's cells awoke to spirit sense,
Each nerve became a burning thread of joy.(159)*

But perhaps the most gorgeous description in the whole poem (so far published) is that in which Aswapaty describes to the Divine Mother what he saw. Figure after figure, image after image, 'come crowding down' with the splendour of the 'marvellous dawn' mentioned therein. Here is the description:

*I saw the Omnipotent's flaming pioneers
Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life
Come crowding down the amber stairs of birth;
Forerunners of a divine multitude,
Out of the paths of the morning star they came
Into the little room of mortal life.*

*I saw them cross the twilight of an age,
The sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn,
The great creators with wide brows of calm,
The massive barrier-breakers of the world
And wrestlers with destiny in her lists of will,
The labourers in the quarries of the gods,
The messengers of the Incommunicable,
The architects of immortality.
Into the fallen human sphere they came,
Faces that wore the Immortal's glory still,
Voices that communed still with the thoughts of God,
Bodies made beautiful by the spirit's light,
Carrying the magic word, the mystic fire,
Carrying the Dionysian cup of joy,
Approaching eyes of a diviner man,
Lips chanting an unknown anthem of the soul,
Feet echoing in the corridors of Time.
High priests of wisdom, sweetness, might and bliss,
Discoverers of beauty's sunlit ways
And swimmers of Love's laughing fiery floods
And dancers within raptures golden doors.(160)*

And here is a gorgeous imagery of Shiva applied to nature, reminding us of similar images of the poet Magha in his great Sanskrit poem:

*A matted forest-head invaded heaven
As if a blue-throated ascetic peered
From the stone fastness of his mountain cell
Regarding the brief gladness of the days.(161)*

And another image is:

The morning like a lustrous seer above. (162)

Which is followed closely by another exquisite image:

*As if a wicket-gate to joy were there
Ringed in with voiceless hint and magic sign,
Upon the margin of an unknown world
Reclined the curve of a sun-held recess.(163)*

And a little farther:

Life ran to gaze from every gate of sense.(164)

And a crowning one,

*... this celestial summary of delight,
Thy golden body.(165)*

Descriptions of nature in the forest are teeming with splendour-dripping images:

*I witnessed the virgin bridals of the dawn
Behind the glowing curtains of the sky,
Or vying in joy with bright morning steps
I paced along the slumberous coasts of morn,
Or the gold desert of the sunlight crossed
Traversing great wastes of splendour and of fire.*

*I have beheld the princes of the Sun
Burning in thousand-pillared homes of light.(166)*

And another equally lovely description is:

*Close is my father's creepered hermitage
Screened by the tall ranks of these silent kings,
Sung to by voices of the hue-robed choirs
Whose chants repeat transcribed in music's notes
The passionate coloured lettering of the boughs.(167)*

And the last one:

*Apparelled are the morns in gold and green,
Sunlight and shadow tapestry the walls
To make a resting chamber fit for thee.(168)*

And finally,

*As if Love's leathless moment had been found,
A pearl within eternity's white shell.(169)*

Here we end our perusal of Sri Aurobindo's imagery in 'Savitri'. These are only a few among the thousands of images which form

*A caravan of the inexhaustible
Formations of a boundless Thought and Force.(170)*

And we also feel that a waking has come to Sri Aurobindo,

*As if to a deeper country of the soul
Transposing the vivid imagery of earth,
Through an inner seeing and sense. (171)*

For Savitri is no composition of an ordinary poet, but that of a Poet and a Seer of the Supermind chosen by the Divine for the fulfilment of the next step in the evolution of mankind.

Concluded

(155) III. 3. P. 288. (156) II. 7. P.186-187. (157) Ibid. P. 198.
(158) II. 10. P. 218. (159) III. 4. P. 303.
(160) III. 4. P. 311-312. (161) V. 1. P. 3; cf. Magha's Shishupala-Vadha IV. 5. 7.
(162) V. 2. P. 4. (163) V. 2. P. 4. (164) Ibid. P. 7. (165) V. 3. P. 14. (166) Ibid.
P. 13. (167) Ibid. P. 14.
(168) V. 3. P. 14. (169) VII. 1. P. 8. (170) II. 6. P. 161. (171) V. 3. P. 10.

(150) I. P. 18. (151) II. 3. P. 108. (152) II. 4. P. 128. (153) III. 4. P. 306.
(154) II. 4. P. 125.

BOOKS in the BALANCE

INDIA AND THE DEMOCRATIC WORLD

FOR A DEMOCRATIC FOREIGN POLICY

(Publishers: Democratic Research Service.

Sole Distributors: The New Book Co. Ltd., Hornby Road, Bombay)

Price: Re. 1

This is the fifth publication of the Democratic Research Service, in pursuance of its object of studying and disseminating information on democracy. In the present convulsed time and the welter of changes happening under our noses the Communist threat to the whole democratic world calls for the utmost vigilance and preparedness, and all earnest efforts to parry the danger deserves encouragement from every corner. That the Democratic Research Service is a live body is amply evident from the number of publications that it has brought out in such a short space of time.

The book under review is a small collection of some of the speeches delivered by prominent Members of the Indian Parliament just after the Chinese Communists invaded Tibet in utter disregard of India's repeated requests to the Chinese Government to desist from taking such a step. All the speeches are marked by calm and clear thinking and a studied sobriety—something highly commendable, in view of the fact, that our politicians are just novices in the diplomatic art. The first speech is by Prof. N. G. Ranga. He contends that Communist China has imperialistic designs over the whole of Asia and the unprovoked invasion of Tibet is a terrible pointer to the alarming situation thus created for us; but, we, instead of rising to the occasion and taking adequate measures such as strengthening the hands of the United Nations against the aggressor Government, "go about accepting, admitting and apologising to it". Prof. Ranga in a very convincing manner goes to explain the reason why our Prime Minister's relentless efforts for the preservation of Peace are foredoomed to end in smoke. The existing war is a clash between two ideologies one of which is not "tolerant of other people's way of living and is anxious to spread the tentacles of its own strength and power." He then goes on to show that the policy of appeasement does not succeed in preventing war but

only puts it off for a while and the failures of Edward VII and Neville Chamberlain in our living history bear it out amply. There is a great truth in what Prof. Ranga says because the psychological forces that are egging on the Communists to amass greater and greater power are unquenchable in their very nature. The reviewer learnt this truth from Pandit Nehru himself. In his *Glimpses of World History*, he again and again says, "the lust for power grows with use" and he says this not only of great conquerors but even of such an emancipator of his nation as Kemal Ataturk.

The second speech is by Frank Anthony—a speech remarkable for its restraint and dignity, full of warm understanding and appreciation of Pandit Nehru's standpoint. In a few sentences he has crystallised the nature of the Communist menace threatening our very existence. He says, "Communism works to a consistent and unchanging pattern. The first part of the pattern is a process of infiltration and subversion. The second part is that when Communism considers the time to be ripe, it goes over to cynical, brutal and open assault. I say this without qualification, that, in spite of all the wishful thinking that we may indulge in, in the eyes of Communism whether of the Chinese or the Russian variety, India will, when it suits their purpose, be right at the top of the list of victims". We feel indebted to Mr. Anthony for the useful information that he has imparted to the House, viz., "that for the most part Tibet constitutes a vast natural airfield, hostile planes operating from Tibet would only have to cover a distance of 300 miles in order to bomb and destroy Delhi." The common man in India is blissfully ignorant of the peril to our hard-won independence and the Government also, though not napping, is not fully alive to it. His speech ends with a most practical note which if heeded can pave the way for an enduring peace. He

says, "What we want is this more specific collaboration in building up our defences with the only people who can help to build our defences, those democracies with an industrial potential." Certainly, that is the need of the hour. Pious wishes and appeals to nations to hitch their waggons to stars unbacked by any solid strength will not deliver the goods. We must strengthen ourselves and if we are opposed to totalitarianism and stand for liberty of thought and expression, then it is incumbent on us to strengthen ourselves in collaboration with those who stand for democratic ideals and vouchsafe the right of self-determination to every nation, and we should make it clear to those who are intoxicated with the lust for power that they have no moral support in the outside world and that any further violation of the U.N. Charter will mean courting unparalleled disaster for themselves.

Mr. P. Y. Deshpande has achieved a masterpiece of compression in his short and pithy speech and he has very lucidly exploded the myth of two power blocs. It is this myth which forms the cornerstone on which our whole foreign policy stands, and Mr. Deshpande has with a searching analysis of the term "Power-bloc" made a powerful plea for a reorientation of our foreign policy. He says, "By a power bloc I mean a group of nations each one of which accepts a dictatorial central leadership of one nation. Such a group of nations can alone be called a power bloc. Look at the Soviet Bloc. Look at the way they have voted in the United Nations. You will find them uniformly voting with Russia and in no other manner. Look at the other nations in the United Nations. How have they voted? You will find that they have voted just as the Prime Minister would like them, on each issue on its merits, independently of this nation or that nation." Mr. Masani whose speech is given at the end of the book establishes the above by undeniable facts and

figures. In view of all this, we dare say that our Government can join hands with the democratic forces without any qualms of conscience, for such a step would not in the least jeopardise our independence and we need not do anything for which we may be accused of being tied to the apron strings of any powers. Mr. Deshpande is perfectly right when he says, that "there is no greater menace to human liberty in the world than Communists of the Stalinist type. Unless this fact is realised by everybody, and more so by the Prime Minister, we cannot have a dynamic and active foreign policy."

The last speech is by Sri M. R. Masani and also perhaps the most cogent and ably argued. The foreign policy of our government is based on a "peace at any price" stand and that is why our Prime Minister has been advocating a policy of appeasement towards China and Russia; but, "peace," maintains Mr. Masani, "can only come through collective security", and there is no mistake more fatal than entertaining the idea "that there are two power-blocs, that both are of the same quality and level and that we can, therefore, be equally independent of or detached from both."

The efforts of the Democratic Research Service will be hailed with acclaim, in due course of time, for there is no greater danger facing the present civilisation than the expansion of Communism which is marching on heedlessly like a steam-roller. India must recognise the gravity of the situation and we must strain every sinew to keep alive our spiritual heritage and keep off the crude materialism which is the bed-rock of the Communist ideology. It denies the existence of any soul or spiritual reality behind the universe and aims to crush all idealistic thought out of existence. Much remains to be done in this direction and with faith in human destiny success is bound to crown our efforts.

R. N. KHANNA.

Full Moon

In this full moon no golden mean can live.
Immensest wisdom or intensest joy
Springs from this virgin mother of mystery:
The brain, a rapt crystal, sees all life's core
Or the heart drains a giant wine of the world.
Flat earth is no home for eyes that shut out time,
For lips that open abysses infinite:
An argent absolute blotting colourful day's
Confident clarity breaks each level mood
To a mountain haloed with ineffable white
Or a silver ocean singing the Unseen.

K. D. SETHNA.

Lammergeyer

Preach pity to the lammergeyer's breast,
Make its brute claws grasp intellectual truth—
Vain strife! yet only the subhuman nest
Bears the untrammelled vigour that can strain
To skies like some vast super-rose of ruth,
Seer suns beyond the gold of Plato's brain.
The exquisite heart, the delicate reverie gain
Miracled escape, but never the God-life's zest.
Blind hungers alone draw down transcendent things,
And we must scour the Infinite with wild wings
Spread by that giant vulture of the West!

K. D. SETHNA.