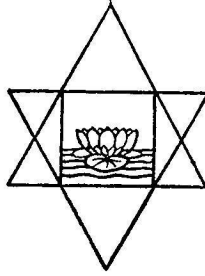


# MOTHER INDIA

AUGUST, 1954

SRI AUROBINDO'S BIRTHDAY NUMBER

Price: Re. 1.



The Supramental is a truth and its advent is in the very nature of things inevitable...

I believe the descent of this Truth opening the way to a development of divine consciousness here to be the final sense of the earth evolution.

SRI AUROBINDO

\* \* \*

*A new Light shall break upon the earth,  
a new world shall be born: the things that  
were promised shall be fulfilled.*

*Sri Aurobindo*

TRANSLATED FROM THE MOTHER'S  
"Prayers and Meditations."

# MOTHER INDIA

## MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

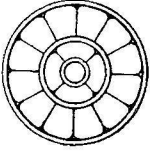
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*"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"*

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Sri Aurobindo Ashram

## A DECLARATION

I WANT to mark this day by the expression of a long cherished wish, that of becoming an Indian citizen. From the first time I came to India—in 1914—I felt that India is my true country, the country of my soul and spirit. I had decided to realise this wish as soon as India would be free. But I had to wait still longer because of my heavy responsibilities for the Ashram here in Pondicherry. Now the time has come when I can declare myself.

But, in accordance with Sri Aurobindo's ideal, my purpose is to show that truth lies in union rather than in division. To reject one nationality in order to obtain another is not an ideal solution. So I hope I shall be allowed to adopt a double nationality, that is to say, to remain French while I become an Indian.

I am French by birth and early education, I am Indian by choice and predilection. In my consciousness there is no antagonism between the two, on the contrary, they combine very well and complete one another. I know also that I can be of service to both equally, for my only aim in life is to give a concrete form to Sri Aurobindo's great teaching and in his teaching he reveals that all the nations are essentially one and meant to express the Divine Unity upon earth through an organised and harmonious diversity.

August 15, 1954

## A COMMENT

THE Mother's declaration, on this day of Sri Aurobindo's birth and India's independence, flashes one's mind back to a day in July, 1920, when in answer to an inquirer's letter she set on record her profound feeling that ever since 1910, when she first got into touch with Sri Aurobindo, India was to her the country which she always cherished as her true mother-country.

In the same reply she says also that when the joy of seeing India was granted her in 1914 and she stood in the presence of Sri Aurobindo whom she at once recognised as the Being who used to help her in her inner life, she was fully convinced that her place and work were near him in India.

What the Mother has declared today is therefore the revival, in other words, of a truth of her inmost self, to which living testimony has stood for the last thirty-four years.

To make this truth a fact of the physical life she has found at last the right moment. This moment is packed with immense significance both for herself and the country which is her soul's love. For here is no mere change of citizenship. Here is a flaming milestone in a mighty mission—the mission to incarnate the true spirit of this great land and by that incarnation bring forth again and carry to its climax the light of a more than human consciousness that India throughout her history has sought to manifest.

In that consciousness India is not a country divided from other countries but the leader of a manifold oneness, the head of a concert of all nations feeling their essential unity and fulfilling in a grand co-operation the destiny of Man the Pilgrim of the Infinite.

An outward sign of this Indianness which is all-embracing is the double nationality for which the Mother has made her appeal. Not repudiation of one thing for another but an acceptance that synthesises and harmonises diverse elements in a most natural, an innate way by which the inward reality takes an organic outward form—this is the meaning of the Mother's appeal to combine and complete by each other the French spirit and the Indian, to both of which she feels born.

If the Mother's vision of a double nationality for her comes true it will be a most regenerative step for our world that is so torn and bewildered. It will be a concrete expression of Sri Aurobindo's ideal of human unity in terms of a divine manifestation. For the Mother is amongst us as the embodiment of Sri Aurobindo's creative power and through the symbol of her double nationality a beginning will be made of channelling to earth the wonderful waters of a Super-life. And from those waters, as in the old legend, Mother India the undying Goddess will rise in her true shape and make great with her soul of universality this land as well as the wide world that is essentially continuous with it.

August 15, 1954

K. D. SETHNA

I CONTAIN the whole world in my soul's embrace:  
In me Arcturus and Belphegor burn.  
To whatsoever living form I turn  
I see my own body with another face.

All eyes that look on me are my sole eyes;  
The one heart that beats within all breasts is mine.  
The world's happiness flows through me like wine,  
Its million sorrows are my agonies.

Yet all its acts are only waves that pass  
Upon my surface; inly for ever still,  
Unborn I sit, timeless, intangible:  
All things are shadows in my tranquil glass.

My vast transcendence holds the cosmic whirl;  
I am hid in it as in the sea a pearl.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Poem entitled "The Indwelling Universal"*  
*from "Last Poems"* )

# THE SUPERMIND AND ITS MANIFESTATION

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Extracts from Letters*)

THE words Supermind and Supramental were first used by me, but since then people have taken up and are using the word supramental for anything above mind....

The Supermind is the vast Truth-consciousness of which the ancient seers spoke; there have been glimpses of it till now, sometimes an indirect influence or pressure, but it has not been brought down into the consciousness of the earth and fixed there. To so bring it down is the aim of our Yoga....

All truths below the Supramental (even that of the highest spiritual on the mental plane, which is the highest that has yet manifested) are either partial or relative or otherwise deficient and unable to transform the earthly life; they can only at most modify and influence it....It was because of this failure that the spiritual effort of India culminated in Mayavada. Our Yoga is a double movement of ascent and descent; one rises to higher and higher levels of consciousness, but at the same time one brings down their power not only into mind and life, but in the end even into the body. And the highest of these levels, the one at which it aims is the Supermind. Only when that can be brought down is a divine transformation possible in the earth-consciousness....

But for that, surrender of the mortal mind, life and body to that higher Consciousness is indispensable, since it is too difficult for the mortal human being to pass by its own effort beyond mind to a Supramental Consciousness in which the dynamism is no longer mental but of quite another power. Only those who can accept the call to such a change should enter into this Yoga....

I have no intention of achieving the Supermind for myself only—I am not doing anything for myself, as I have no personal need of anything, neither of salvation (Moksha) nor supramentalisation....My supramentalisation is only a key for opening the gates of the Supramental to the earth-consciousness; done for its own sake, it would be perfectly futile....

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 most direct way and anyone can do it, if he makes his mind and vital quiet....

No difficulty that can come on the sadhak but has faced us on the path; against many we had to struggle hundreds of times (in fact, that is an understatement) before we could overcome; many still remain protesting that they have a right until the perfect perfection is there. But we have never consented

## THE SUPERMIND AND ITS MANIFESTATION

to admit their inevitable necessity for others. It is, in fact, to ensure an easier path to others that we have borne that burden....

The descent of the Supermind is a long process, or at least a process with a long preparation, and one can only say that the work is going on sometimes with a strong pressure for completion, sometimes retarded by the things that rise from below and have to be dealt with before further progress can be made. The process is a spiritual evolutionary process, concentrated into a brief period—it could be done otherwise (by what men would regard as a miraculous intervention) only if the human mind were more flexible and less attached to its ignorance than it is. As we envisage it, it must manifest in a few first and then spread, but it is not likely to overpower the earth in a moment. It is not advisable to discuss too much what it will do and how it will do it, because these are things the Supermind itself will fix, acting out of that Divine Truth in it, and the mind must not try to fix for it grooves in which it will run. Naturally, the release from subconscious ignorance and from disease, duration of life at will, and a change in the functionings of the body must be among the ultimate elements of a supramental change; but the details of these things must be left for the Supramental Energy to work out according to the truth of its own nature....

There is no difference between the Mother's path and mine; we have and always had the same path, the path that leads to the supramental change and the divine realisation; not only at the end, but from the beginning they have been the same.

The attempt to set up a division and opposition putting the Mother on one side and myself on the other and opposite or quite different side, has always been a trick of the forces of Falsehood when they want to prevent a sadhak from reaching the Truth. Dismiss all such falsehoods from your mind.

Know that the Mother's light and force are the light and force of the Truth; remain always in contact with the Mother's light and force, then only can you grow into the divine Truth....

If you cannot profit by her help, you would find still less profit in mine. But, in any case, I have no intention of altering the arrangement I have made for all the disciples without exception that they should receive the light and force from her and not directly from me and be guided by her in their spiritual progress. I have made the arrangement not for any temporary purpose but because it is the one way, provided always the disciple is open and receives, that is true and effective (considering what she is and her power).

Nothing can be done except through the force of the Mother....All has to be done by the working of the Mother's force aided by your aspiration, devotion and surrender.



## THE NEED OF SUPRAMENTAL PEACE

EXPERIENCE seems to show that one must be divine oneself before one can bear the pressure of divine love.

In the old days...plenty of things were brought down—including the love. Hardly one could bear it and even then only in a small measure.... That is why I want the Supermind first—and especially the peace, the balance in an intensity unshakable. There are several who have been trying to push on with the intensities, but—. Well, let us hope for the best. For God's sake, peace, balance, an unshakable supramental poise and sanity first. Ecstasies and intensities of other kinds can come afterwards.

8-4-1935

SRI AUROBINDO

*(From Correspondence with Nirodbaran)*

## CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

### MEDICAL SECTION

*Although trained to be a doctor, I worked in other departments of the Ashram after settling down at Pondicherry; but in January 1935 I went over to the Dispensary to take up duties there. In my daily letters to Sri Aurobindo I now started sending reports of the ailments of my patients and asked for his guidance and the help of his spiritual Force, whose efficacy I soon began to realise more and more. Over and above this valuable aid, his remarks on various things pertaining to medicine in general were always very enlightening especially where they showed up the limitations of the established ways of thinking. Whether they dealt with allopathy and homeopathy or monkey glands, or sex energy and its transmutation, they always gave me knowledge doctors ordinarily do not get a chance to acquire.*

NIRODBARAN

DURING the last week of January, I sent a diagnosis of the ailment of my first patient to Sri Aurobindo. I wrote at the end: "It is bad luck for me to have to tackle such a difficult case at the very outset of my medical work in the Ashram. But why do you have to spend so much Force, when you can really do the whole job by a word; I mean, why not cut short our labour and the patient's discomfort by launching your '*tathāstu*' from the higher Divine consciousness! I hope my patient gets cured soon by Your Force."

SRI AUROBINDO: It is a *test case*, I suppose! I should have thought everybody knows that doctors have to be guessing all the time and that cure is a matter of hit or miss. If you hit often, you are a clever doctor—or if you kill people brilliantly, then also. It reduces itself to that.

I did not expect you to take my *tathāstu* with such grim seriousness. Speaking semi-seriously, I am not here to do miracles to order, but to try to get in a new consciousness somewhere in the world—which is itself however to attempt a miracle. If physical miracles happen to tumble in in the process, well and good, but you can't present your medical pistol in my face and call on me to stand and deliver. As for the Force, application of my force, short of the supramental, means always a struggle of forces and the success depends

## MOTHER INDIA

(1) on the strength and persistency of the force put out (2) the receptivity of the subject (3) the sanction of the Unmentionable—I beg your pardon, I meant the Unnameable, Ineffable, Unknowable. X's physical consciousness is rather obstinate, as you have noticed, and therefore not too receptive. It may feel the Mother inside it, but to obey her will or force is less habitual for it.

MYSELF: X asked me to tell you that he felt your Presence and Force in the evening very concretely. He does not want any medicines at all; he says that he used to have doubts before, but now they have disappeared.

SRI AUROBINDO: It is queer. All the force I am putting into it or almost all turns into this subjective form—some objective result is there but still slight, uncertain and slow. Of course the cause is apparent—he has been accustomed to receive subjectively but not accustomed to receive physically. It is not however convenient for the present purpose except as a step (for him) for the more objective receptivity.

1-2-1935

MYSELF: I still can't understand why you should bother to follow us doctors. The Divine can very easily act from the supramental consciousness directly; you don't really need a diagnosis given by ordinary men!

SRI AUROBINDO: If things were like that why should we have Doctors or a dispensary at all? We don't propose to do the whole business of the inside and outside off our own bat. You are as necessary for this as Chandulal for the building or others for their work.

Who told you we are acting from supramental consciousness? We are not and cannot until the confounded quarrel with Matter is settled.

MYSELF: If we doctors are important as mediums, you must tell me what our attitude should be in conducting a case.

SRI AUROBINDO: Faith, openness, an alert and flexible intelligence. I mean by faith especially faith as a dynamic means of bringing about what has to be effected or realised.

2-2-1935

MYSELF: What is this "confounded quarrel with Matter" you mention? Does this refer to the lower vital and physical movements of the sadhaks?

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO: I am not speaking of the sadhaks, but the resistance of the Earth nature itself in its material parts. But these are things you people cannot understand unless you have less childlike notions about things.

MYSELF: I was under the impression that it is quite possible to know intuitively with the Yogic vision the exact condition of a patient without any medical diagnosis, but from your recent remarks about some patients I find that it is not so. On the contrary you say that the Force can act better and quicker when there is a proper diagnosis.

SRI AUROBINDO: It can if you train it to act in that field and if you can make it the real Intuition which sees the things without ranging among potentialities. As for me, I have no medico in me, not even a latent medico. If I had, I would not need the external one but diagnose, prescribe and cure all by my solitary self. My role in a medical case is to use the force either with or without medicines. There are three ways of doing that—one by putting the Force without knowing or caring what the illness is or following the symptoms—that however needs either the mental collaboration or quiescence of the victim. The second is symptomatic, to follow the symptoms and act on them even if one is not sure of the disease. There an accurate report is very useful. The third needs a diagnosis—that is usually where the anti-forces are very strong and conscious or where the patient himself answers strongly to the suggestions of the illness and unwittingly resents the action of the Force. This last is usually indicated by the fact that the thing gets cured and comes back again or improves and swings back again to worse. It is especially the great difficulty in cases of insanity and the like. Also in things where the nerves have a say—but in ordinary illnesses too.

MYSELF: I am still wondering why there should be doctors and a dispensary at all! Isn't it a paradox—the Divine sending his disciples to the human physician?

SRI AUROBINDO: Rubbish! This is a world of the play of forces, sir, and the Doctor is a force. So why should not the Divine use him? Have you realised that if the Divine did everything, there would be no world, only a show of marionettes?

*(To be continued)*

## THREE EXPERIENCES OF THE PHYSICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

It depends on the nature of the physical consciousness you keep. When there is the descent of consciousness into the body one becomes aware of a subtle physical consciousness and that can remain in samadhi—one seems to be aware of the body, but it is really the subtle body and not the outward physical. But also one can go deep within and yet be aware of the physical body also and of working upon it, but not of outward things. Finally one can be absorbed in a deep concentration but strongly aware of the body and the descent of the Force in it. This last is accompanied with consciousness of outward things, though no attention may be paid to them. This last is not usually called samadhi, but it is a kind of waking samadhi. All conditions from the deep samadhi of complete trance to the working of the Force in the fully waking consciousness are used in this Yoga; one need not insist on complete trance always, for the others also are necessary and without them the complete change cannot take place.

It is good that the higher consciousness and its powers are descending into the parts below the head and heart. That is absolutely necessary for the transformation, since the lower vital and the body must also be changed into stuff of the higher consciousness.

24-7-1936

SRI AUROBINDO

## ON CONCENTRATION

BOTH the realisation and the subsequent idea have their truth. In the beginning for a long time concentration is necessary even by effort because the nature, the consciousness are not ready. Even then the more quiet and natural the concentration, the better. But when the consciousness and nature are ready, then concentration must become spontaneous and easily possible without effort at all times. Even at last it becomes the natural and permanent condition of the being—it is then no longer concentration, but the settled poise of the soul in the Divine.

It is true that to be concentrated and do an outward action at the same time is not at first possible. But that too becomes possible. Either the consciousness divides into two parts, one the inner poised in the Divine, the other the outer doing the outer work—or else the whole is so poised and the force does the work through the passive instrument.

12-7-1937

SRI AUROBINDO

## SADHANA WITH THE MOTHER

### NOTE

The title of this series is *Sadhana with the Mother*, but it could as well be "*The Mother's Sadhana in Us*."

All those who are doing Sri Aurobindo's Yoga know that it cannot be done except with the Mother; in fact, as the sadhana progresses, one becomes conscious that it is she who is doing the sadhana in him and bearing the burden of his transformation. Truly speaking, to become conscious of the Mother's working in us is itself a part of the Yoga.

The Mother stands before us as a being at once individual, cosmic and transcendental. It is just this triplicity that creates in our limited human mind a problem. We try in vain for long to solve this riddle—how one in a human frame could contain in oneself these three different aspects, and not only contain, but also manifest in action.

The vision of the Mother doing sadhana in us begins to be clear as we get liberated more and more from the ego's bondage into the cosmic self. Then the Mother appears like an infinite Being holding us in herself like the blood-cells and feeding us with her consciousness, force and bliss.

In 1933 Sri Aurobindo explained a little of the Mother's sadhana in us: "The Mother has her own experiences in bringing down the things that have to be brought down—but what the sadhaks experience she had long ago. The Divine does the sadhana first for the world and then gives what is brought down to others."—"Naturally, the Mother does the sadhana in each sadhaka—only it is conditioned by their zeal and their receptivity."

### PEACE AND FORCE

SADHAKA: If I remain withdrawn an intense peace is felt. The mind gives too high a value to it and thinks that without it there can be no possibility of going even one step further.

SRI AUROBINDO: One can go forward even if there is not peace—quietude and concentration are necessary. Peace is necessary for the higher states to develop.

(4-6-1934)

MOTHER INDIA

SADHAKA: During the physical pursuits I have no complaints as before. The Mother's Force will take them up in due course. Please tell me now what I should aspire for when I am quiet.

SRI AUROBINDO: For the Mother's power to work and bring down by the proper stages the higher consciousness. Also for the system to be more and more fit—quiet, egoless, surrendered. (5-6-1934)

SADHAKA: The silence, at least quietude, was there for the whole day. During such a state shouldn't one feel the Mother's Force working in the being?

SRI AUROBINDO: If one feels it is alright—but it does not always happen. The quietness, silence or peace is a basis for the extension of consciousness, the coming of the higher experiences or realisations etc. In what way or order they come differs according to the individual nature. (22-6-1934)

SADHAKA: I could not quite understand the passage: "Peace we must have, but not the peace of a devastated nature or a mutilated capacity incapable of unrest, because it is incapable of intensity."

SRI AUROBINDO: Not a tamasic peace which is at rest because it does not aspire after anything, is too tired by suffering and misfortune etc. to care for anything. (5-7-1934)

SADHAKA: During the work the mind was not very quiet. I observed at the same time the contradiction between the inner passivity, and the mechanical working of the outer nature, the intense activity of the Force working, and the insistent thinking of the outer mind. All this is rather perplexing!

SRI AUROBINDO: Not at all. It often happens, even usually at this stage. You have to go on till the many parts are quieted down. (5-7-1934)

SADHAKA: Usually I have to make an effort for a free receptivity with closed eyes. Today however I entered into a state where there was no need of any personal endeavour, and the receptivity was spontaneous with open eyes. What is the explanation?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the silence of the mind and vital—silence implying here not only cessation of thoughts but a stillness of the mental and vital substance. There are varying degrees of depth of this stillness. (19-7-1934)

SADHAKA: When I withdraw for concentration a pressure, sometimes very powerful and intense, is felt on the entire spinal cord. If the concentration is continued for a long time the back gets tired.

## SADHANA WITH THE MOTHER

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no need to concentrate on it, if it comes as a natural result of the general withdrawal and concentration. I suppose, it is simply that the effort brings a concentration in the centres of the vital and physical to share in the stillness which the will acting through the mind is trying to impose on the nature. (19-7-1934)

SADHAKA: All the time I feel in my being an energy which is not rajasic or sattwic. It disapproves of tamasic passivity, and quietly supports my actions, helping me to accomplish them steadily and harmoniously.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the beginning of what is called Tapas—though at first it tends to have a rajasic element. (7-7-1934)

SADHAKA: The other day you said that in order to realise the Self there must be a wide and full silence. Such a silence could be possible only in an inner meditation. But when physically or mentally engrossed how can I afford to maintain a full silence?

SRI AUROBINDO: Get it first in meditation always—then we will see about work. When silence or self-realisation is achieved, it can remain in spite of the work. (25-7-1934)

SADHAKA: As to the Force, you said, "It creates its own activities in the mind or elsewhere." In that case the mind or any other part on which it acts will express only what the Force has created.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the ideal condition when the Force is the true Force only—but there is too much mixture in the nature for that to be possible at this stage of sadhana. (3-8-1934)

SADHAKA: In that case, does it not mean that what my consciousness feels as the Force is not the real Force of the Mother?

SRI AUROBINDO: I have said that it gets mixed with the action of the present mind, vital and body. That is inevitable since it has to work upon them. It is only after the transformation that it can be fully the Mother's Force with no mixture of the separate personality. If the Divine Force in all its perfection without mixture were to act from the beginning, not taking any account of the present nature, then there would be no sadhana, only a miraculous substitution of the Divine for the Human without any reason or process. (4-8-1934)

SADHAKA: Since the evening the working of the Force has begun. During the evening darshan of the Mother my consciousness opened itself before her more widely than ever before.



## MOTHER INDIA

SRI AUROBINDO: Very good. The Force usually works in that way with interruptions and returns growing each time stronger and fuller. (4-8-1934)

SADHAKA: Usually it is my mind that determines and formulates my aspiration. But in today's silence I saw that the aspiration came up spontaneously and harmoniously with a ready-made form as if it were no more the mind that was aspiring. It was mostly turned towards self-release.

SRI AUROBINDO: So much the better. It is the inner being that has become active. (6-8-1934)

SADHAKA: During the work also the silence was maintaining itself; when the mind was busy with the work or when there were some thoughts I was constantly feeling the inner stillness, firm and solid. In short, a sort of inner calm was felt behind all activities.

SRI AUROBINDO: Very good.

SADHAKA: Do these movements signify that I was not only in the inner being but on some plane of higher consciousness?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the inner being. But stillness comes from the higher consciousness.

SADHAKA: It is said that the inner being is usually unquiet.

SRI AUROBINDO: The inner being is not usually unquiet but it can be quiet or unquiet like the outer. (7-8-1934)

SADHAKA: At present I do not feel any definite pressure of Force although the silence and receptivity seem to be growing. Has not the Force veiled itself and is it not working from behind?

SRI AUROBINDO: The action of the Force does not always create pressure. When it does not need to press it acts quietly.

SADHAKA: During my physical activities, though there is a sort of quietness, my consciousness does not seem to carry with it the same inner contact or experience which it feels in meditation.

SRI AUROBINDO: That comes with more difficulty in the outward activity than in the inward concentration, but it can become quite as vivid there also. (7-8-1934)

## SADHANA WITH THE MOTHER

SADHAKA: My mechanical mind has of late become very sensitive. It finds its food in any mental activity I do, and goes on chewing it endlessly. Please tell me what could be done about it.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the nature of the mechanical mind—it is not due to any sensitiveness in it. Only as the other parts of the mind are more silent and under control, this activity looks more prominent and takes more space. It usually wears itself out, if one goes on rejecting it. (8-8-1934)

Probably you attach too much importance to it and give it too much attention. (9-8-1934)

SADHAKA: It is said that all experiences come in silence. But sometimes I find nothing coming in my silence.

SRI AUROBINDO: All experiences come in the silence but they do not come all pell-mell in a crowd at the beginning. The inner silence and peace have first to be established. (10-8-1934)

SADHAKA: During the general meditation with the Mother, my consciousness rose upwards in an utter passivity. I became unaware of my body up to the neck.

SRI AUROBINDO: It means the whole mind was liberated for a while from imprisonment in the body sense and became free in the passivity of the wider self. (16-8-1934)

SADHAKA: During that experience I did feel the freedom from the body sense. But what about the mind sense? In a full and solid experience of this kind will there be any trace of the mind's existence?

SRI AUROBINDO: That depends on the experience. It is usually had on the spiritual mental plane. There may be no active thinking mind, but the stuff of consciousness is still mental, even though it may be mind spiritual and liberated. Of course there may be the sense of pure spiritual existence, but that comes less easily. (24-8-1934)

NAGIN

## THE TANGLE OF KARMA\*

SRI AUROBINDO

OBVIOUSLY we must leave far behind us the current theory of Karma and its shallow attempt to justify the ways of the Cosmic Spirit by forcing on them a crude identity with the summary notions of law and justice, the crude and often savagely primitive methods of reward and punishment, lure and deterrent dear to the surface human mind. There is here a more authentic and spiritual truth at the base of Nature's action and a far less mechanically calculable movement. Here is no rigid and narrow ethical law bound down to a petty human significance, no teaching of a child soul by a mixed system of blows and lollipops, no unprofitable wheel of a brutal cosmic justice automatically moved in the traces of man's ignorant judgments and earthly desires and instincts. Life and rebirth do not follow these artificial constructions, but a movement spiritual and intimate to the deepest intention of Nature. A cosmic Will and Wisdom observant of the ascending march of the soul's consciousness and experience as it emerges out of subconscious Matter and climbs to its own luminous divinity, fixes the norm and constantly enlarges the lines—or, let us say, since law is a too mechanical conception, the truth of Karma.

For what we understand by law is a single immutably habitual movement or recurrence in Nature fruitful of a determined sequence of things and that sequence must be clear, precise, limited to its formula, invariable. If it is not that, if there is too much flexibility of movement, if there intervenes too embarrassing a variety or criss-cross of action and reaction, a too rich complex of forces, the narrow uncompromising incompetence of our logical intelligence finds there not law but an incertitude and a chaos. Our reason must be allowed to cut and hew and arbitrarily select its suitable circumstances, isolate its immutable data, skeletonise or mechanise life; otherwise it stands open-mouthed at a loss unable to think with precision or act with effect in a field of subtle and indefinite measures. It must be allowed to deal with mighty Nature as it deals with human society, politics, ethics, conduct; for it can understand and do good work only where it is licensed to build and map out its own artificial laws, erect a clear, precise, rigid, infallible system and leave as little room as possible for the endless flexibility and variety and complexity that presses from the

\* Unpublished writing.

## THE TANGLE OF KARMA

Infinite upon our mind and life. Moved by this need we endeavour to forge for our own souls and for the cosmic Spirit even such a single and inflexible law of Karma as we would ourselves have made had the rule of the world been left to us. Not this mysterious universe would we have made, but the pattern of a rational cosmos fitted to our call for a simple definite guidance in action and for a well-marked thumb rule facile and clear to our limited intelligence. But this force we call Karma turns out to be no such precise and invariable mechanism as we hoped; it is rather a thing of many planes that changes its face and walk and very substance as it mounts from level to higher level, and on each plane even as it is not one movement but an indefinite complex of many spiral movements hard enough for us to harmonise together or to find out whatever secret harmony unknown to us and incalculable these complexities are weaving out in this mighty field of the dealings of the soul with Nature.

Let us then call Karma no longer a Law, but rather the many-sided dynamic truth of all action and life, the organic movement here of the Infinite. That was what the ancient thinkers saw in it before it was cut and shredded by lesser minds and turned into an easy and misleading popular formula. Action of Karma follows and takes up many potential lines of the spirit, into its multitudinous surge, many waves and streams of combining and disputing world-forces; it is the process of the creative Infinite; it is the long and multi-form way of the progression of the individual and the cosmic soul in Nature. Its complexities cannot be unravelled by our physical mind ever bound up in the superficial appearance, nor by our vital mind of desire stumbling forward in the cloud of its own instincts and longings and rash determinations through the maze of these myriad favouring and opposing forces that surround and urge and drive and hamper us from the visible and invisible worlds. Nor can it be perfectly classified, accounted for, tied up in bundles by the precisions of our logical intelligence in its inveterate search for clear-cut dogmas. On that day only shall we perfectly decipher what is now to us Nature's obscure hieroglyph of Karma when there rises in our enlarged consciousness the supramental way of knowledge. The supramental eye can see a hundred meeting and diverging motions in one glance and envelop in the largeness of its harmonising vision of Truth all that to our minds is clash and opposition and the collision and interlocked strife of numberless contending truths and powers. Truth to the supramental sight is at once single and infinite and the complexities of its play serve to bring out with an abundant ease the rich significance of the Eternal's many-sided oneness.

# THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE INTEGRAL TRANSFORMATION

#### PART I

#### WHAT IS TRANSFORMATION?

“SPIRITUAL experiences can fix themselves in the inner consciousness and alter it, transform it, if you like; one can realise the Divine everywhere, the Self in all and all in the Self, the universal Shakti doing all things; one can feel merged in the cosmic Self or full of ecstatic bhakti or Ananda. But one may and usually does still go on in the outer parts of Nature thinking with the intellect or at best the intuitive mind, willing with a mental will, feeling joy and sorrow on the vital surface, undergoing physical afflictions and suffering from the struggle of life in the body with death and disease. The change then only will be that the inner self will watch all that without getting disturbed or bewildered, with a perfect equality, taking it as an inevitable part of Nature, inevitable at least so long as one does not withdraw to the Self out of Nature. That is not the transformation I envisage. It is quite another power of knowledge, another kind of will, another luminous nature of emotion and aesthesis, another constitution of the physical consciousness that must come in by the Supramental change.”<sup>1</sup>

Very important words are these that throw a flood of light upon the capital distinction between the object of the Integral Yoga and the ideals and achievements of the other yogas. Sri Aurobindo says that the transformation of the inner consciousness, even if complete, is not the transformation aimed at in the Integral Yoga. “One can realise the Divine everywhere”—a realisation which is almost universally regarded as the summit experience of spiritual life—and yet remain untransformed in his nature. “One can realise the Self in all and all in the Self”; “one can realise the universal Shakti doing all things”;

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. I.

“one can feel merged in the cosmic Self”, and yet, paradoxical as it may sound, none of these realisations, not even the sum-total of them, will constitute the transformation Sri Aurobindo holds up before us as the highest object of spiritual discipline.

What, then, is transformation? In the case of a saint or a sage, as we know, his central consciousness remains detached from the movements of his nature, whether they are delightful or painful; and he regards them as the inevitable consequences of his past action, *praravdha*. He is not troubled or disturbed by them in the depths of his being; he watches them with a perfect equality from the serene peace of his liberated state. But, however much we may have been accustomed to the sublimity of this detached poise and the spiritual greatness of this standpoint, and whatever may be the weight of tradition in its favour, we cannot for ever shut our eyes to the fact that though there is freedom in the essential part of a saint's being, his active, phenomenal part remains still shackled to the three *gunas* and in the grip of the ignorant world-forces. There is equality in his soul, but inequality in his nature; light in his depths, but darkness or twilight on the active surface. Even if he conquers a portion of this darkness, the conquest is never complete and conclusive. He has to live and labour under conditions of what appears as an insurmountable difficulty. Certainly, this is not transformation in any sense of the word. It is only the liberation of the soul and an intermittent reflex action of that liberated state in the nature. It cannot satisfy the aspiration implanted in us for a radical conquest and perfection in life.

Transformation, as it is understood in the Integral Yoga, is not moral or spiritual purification; it is a radical and integral transmutation of human nature. It implies, as Sri Aurobindo says in categoric terms, “another power of knowledge, another kind of will, another luminous nature of emotion and aesthesis, another constitution of the physical consciousness.” It is not any moral perfection or yogic *siddhi*, as it is currently understood, any seerhood or sainthood, that is meant by transformation. It is not indefinitely prolonging one's youth and living an extraordinarily long life in perfect health and vigour, or possessing a *chinmaya* or transcendental body. It is a change of consciousness and being more radical and complete than what took place when “a mentalised being first appeared in a vital and material animal world.” It is a victorious descent and manifestation of the Truth-Light (*Ritamjyotih*) in the consciousness and nature of man, and of the highest creative principle and power of knowledge marking a decisive advance in his evolution. It is true that a somewhat similar attempt was made by the Vedic Rishis, but it was confined to some parts of human nature and undertaken on an individual, and not a collective scale. The Tantrics also laboured towards some such objective, but with nothing

better than very partial and precarious, though often spectacular, results. The Alchemists, at their very best, worked on these lines in Egypt and Chaldea and Babylon, and later with a less intensity of vision, in Greece and medieval Europe. They sought to turn the base metal of human nature into the *Prima Materia* from which it is derived, so that its original purity and power could be restored to it. But all these intrepid endeavours of man which bear eloquent testimony to the fundamental demand of his being and nature, failed to achieve any enduring success for three important reasons: first, the spiritual vision behind the ideal was not deep and comprehensive enough to embrace the complex totality of human nature; second, the secret of transformation was sought for elsewhere than where it naturally belongs,—the power that was harnessed for the work was not the supreme divine Power which alone can transmûte, without coercing or crippling, the teeming elements and energies of human nature; third, the time was not ripe for such a global collective endeavour and the evolutionary march of man had not yet arrived at the stage from which the culminating saltus could be confidently taken. But today, in spite of the materialist's denial of the Spirit and his scepticism about the reality of the spiritual forces, there is a growing, an insistent, though a more or less imprecise, aspiration for a radical change, a perfect integration and a complete and integral fulfilment of human life and nature. There is a fumbling attempt, now in one direction, now in another, sometimes—as in some latest trends of modern psychology and sociology—touching even the outer rim of the delivering solution, but always falling far short on account of a lack of the right knowledge and the right dynamic will to such a thorough self-transfiguration which would necessarily entail a total renunciation of most of what constitutes our present ignorant human personality and its habitual way of living. But the ideal that is defining itself more and more clearly in the consciousness of man and the thought and aspiration that are becoming increasingly articulate and insistent cannot be stifled or eclipsed for ever—they are sure to seek and find their ultimate fulfilment.

Sri Aurobindo's originality in the spiritual field lies in his focusing in himself this deepest and highest aspiration of humanity and discovering the secret of its perfect fulfilment. He asserts—and his assertion breathes hope and confidence into the drooping heart of the modern man—that an integral transformation of human nature and life will be the ultimate redemption and perfection of man, the fallen Adam. His ascent will be as high and glorious as his fall has been painful and precipitous. An illumination in the depths of his being with a twilight in the parts of his nature will not satisfy him any longer. His inmost aspiration, obscure even to his outer mind today, is for an integral fulfilment in life, for the possession of a divine consciousness freely expressing itself

in a divine body. It is for the definitive conquest of all that has opposed his self-transcendence—his weaknesses, his incapacities, his impurities, the easy susceptibility of his body to disease and decrepitude and death—that he seems to aspire. The inertia of his body, the obscure desires and passions of his vital (prana), the dim, vagrant thoughts and fancies of his mind he must, therefore, completely transform and convert, if he would use his instrumental being to any divinely creative end. His transformed consciousness must have a fully transformed instrument for its perfect self-expression in the world.

We have spoken of the descent of a new Light of consciousness and a new Force as the indispensable agents of this stupendous work of transformation. It must be clearly understood that without this supreme Light and this supreme Force the work can never be accomplished. The highest dynamic Force of the Spirit, the native Light and Law of Truth must come down and effectuate this long and complex work, which will be the crowning achievement of human evolution. Vijnana Shakti or the supramental Force, as Sri Aurobindo calls it, is the supreme creative Force of the Divine; and it is only this Force with its Truth-Light that can new-create what it has created, new-mould what has gone out of shape, reconcile the highest status in knowledge with the fullest, unfettered play of Nature's dynamis, and convert the ignorance, the evil, the suffering, the thousand kinks and crookednesses, the jangling discords of human nature into the unity and harmony and light and bliss of the supramental nature. It is this supreme Force alone that can send its shafts of light into the caves of the Panis<sup>1</sup>, the obscure subterranean regions of our being, and release from there the penned cows, gavah, the radiances of the submerged Spirit, and turn all darkness into light, all inertia into conscious electric energies, all incapacity into divine strength and all inconscience into plenary consciousness.

The transformed human nature will be a temple housing the four supreme aspects of the divine Mother, Adya Shakti: Maheshwari, Mahakali, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati. Maheshwari will occupy its parts of knowledge, widening and illumining them with Her all-revealing Light; Mahakali will govern and guide its dynamic parts of will and power and creative impulsion, and use them for Her divine ends, imparting to knowledge "a conquering might" and to beauty and harmony "a high and mounting movement"; Mahalakshmi will turn its parts of emotion and aesthesis into a poem of love and delight, overflowing them with Her sweetness and grace and charm and tenderness, and up-

<sup>1</sup> The Panis, according to the Veda, are the lords of the sense-consciousness who steal from us the brilliant herds (rays) of the sun and pen them up in the caverns of the subconscious and in the dense hill (adri) of Matter.



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holding them with an unassailable creative harmony; and Mahasaraswati will impart to its active physical parts the right rhythm and the right spirit and technique of perfection in work, informing them with “the intimate and precise knowledge, the subtlety and patience, the accuracy of intuitive mind and conscious hand and discerning eye of the perfect worker.”<sup>1</sup> This free and harmonious working of the four supreme aspects and powers of the Divine Mother in the transformed human nature will imply in its practical results a combined and perfectly coordinated action of the fourfold type of human temperament—Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra—in a single, integrated individual. It will be, in fact, a sublimation, transfiguration and integration of the whole being of man with all its powers and faculties in full and unrestricted divine play. It will be a spontaneous, unified action of the chaturvyuha of the ancient Vaishnavic tradition—a Power for knowledge, a Power for strength, a Power for mutuality and active and productive relation and interchange and a Power for works and labour and service. A divine fullness and glory flowing freely out of the integral being of man including even his body, is the state of transformation aimed at by the Yoga of Sri Aurobindo. It is a sovereign possession of soul and nature in the illimitable ecstasy of the divine union.

*(To be continued)*

RISHABHCHAND

<sup>1</sup> *The Mother* by Sri Aurobindo.

## ILION

*(Between Book I of this epic of Sri Aurobindo in Hexameters, which was published in our last issue, and the present Book there is Book II—The Book of the Statesman—which has been published this month in the “Sri Aurobindo Pathamandir Annual”. In it the assembling of the leaders of Troy and the gathering of the citizens to hear them are described and the long speech is given of the old dis-trusted and dishonoured statesman Antenor advising Troy to submit at the moment to the Greeks but secretly and strategically bide her hour of later uprising.)*

### BOOK III: THE BOOK OF THE ASSEMBLY

BUT as the nation beset betwixt doom and a shameful surrender  
Waited mute for a voice that could lead and a heart to encourage,  
Up in the silence deep Laocoon rose up, far-heard,—  
Heard by the gods in their calm and heard by men in their passion—  
Cloud-haired, clad in mystic red, flamboyant, sombre,  
Priam's son Laocoon, fate-darkened seer of Apollo.  
As when the soul of the Ocean arises rapt in the dawning  
And mid the rocks and the foam uplifting the voice of its musings  
Opens the chant of its turbulent harmonies, so rose the far-borne  
Voice of Laocoon soaring mid columns of Ilium's glories,  
Claiming the earth and the heavens for the field of its confident rumour.  
“Trojans, deny your hearts to the easeful flutings of Hades!  
Live, O nation!” he thundered forth and Troy's hearts and her pillars  
Sent back their fierce response. Restored to her leonine spirits  
Ilium rose in her agora filling the heavens with shoutings,  
Bearing a name to the throne of Zeus in her mortal defiance.  
As when a sullen calm of the heavens discourages living,  
Nature and man feel the pain of the lightnings repressed in their bosoms,  
Dangerous and dull is the air, then suddenly strong from the anguish  
Zeus of the thunders starts into glories releasing his storm-voice,  
Earth exults in the kiss of the rain and the life-giving laughers,  
So from the silence broke forth the thunder of Troy arising;  
Fiercely she turned from prudence and wisdom and turned back to greatness  
Casting her voice to the heavens from the depths of her fathomless spirit.

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Raised by those clamours, triumphant once more in this scene of his greatness,  
Tool of the gods, but he deemed of his strength as a leader in Nature,  
Took for his own a voice that was given and dreamed that he fashioned  
Fate that fashions us all, Laocoon stood mid the shouting  
Leaned on the calm of an ancient pillar. In eyes self-consuming  
Kindled the flame of the prophet that blinds at once and illumines;  
Quivering thought-besieged lips and shaken locks of the lion,  
Lifted his gaze the storm-led enthusiast. Then as the shouting  
Tired of itself at last disappeared in the bosom of silence,  
Once more he started erect and his voice o'er the hearts of his hearers  
Swept like Ocean's impatient cry when it calls from its surges,  
Ocean loud with a thought sublime in its measureless marching.  
Each man felt his heart like foam in the rushing of waters.

“Ilion is vanquished then! she abases her grandiose spirit  
Mortal found in the end to the gods and the Greeks and Antenor,  
And when a barbarous chieftan's menace and insolent mercy  
Bring here their pride to insult the columned spirit of Ilus,  
Trojans have sat and feared! For a man has arisen and spoken,  
One whom the gods in their anger have hired. Since the Argive prevailed not,  
Armed, with his strength and his numbers, in Troya they sought for her slayer,  
Gathered their wiles in a voice and they chose a man famous and honoured,  
Summoned Ate to aid and corrupted the heart of Antenor.  
Flute of the breath of the Hell-witch, always he scatters among you  
Doubt, affliction and weakness chilling the hearts of the fighters,  
Always his voice with its cadenced and subtle possession for evil  
Breaks the constant will and maims the impulse heroic.  
Therefore while yet her heroes fight and her arms are unconquered,  
Troy in your hearts is defeated! The souls of your Fathers have heard you  
Dallying, shamefast, with vileness, lured by the call of dishonour.  
Such is the power Zeus gave to the winged words of a mortal!  
Foiled in his will, disowned by the years that stride on for ever.  
Yet in the frenzy cold of his greed and his fallen ambition  
Doom from heaven he calls down on his countrymen, Trojan abuses  
Troy, his country, extolling her enemies, blessing her slayers.  
Such are the gods Antenor has made in his heart's own image  
That if one evil man have not way for his greed and his longing  
Cities are doomed and kings must be slain and a nation must perish!  
But from the mind of the free and the brave I will answer thy bodings,  
Gold-hungry raven of Troy who croakst from thy nest at her princes.

## ILION

Only one doom irreparable treads down the soul of a nation,  
Only one downfall endures; 'tis the ruin of greatness and virtue,  
Mourning when Freedom departs from the life and the heart of a people.  
Into her room comes creeping the mind of the slave and it poisons  
Manhood and joy and the voice to lying is trained and subjection  
Easy feels to the neck of man who is next to the godheads.  
Not of the fire am I terrified, not of the sword and its slaying;  
Vileness of men appals me, baseness I fear and its voices.  
What can man suffer direr or worse than enslaved from a victor  
Boons to accept, to take safety and ease from the foe and the stranger,  
Fallen from the virtue stern that heaven permits to a mortal?  
Death is not keener than this nor the slaughter of friends and our dear ones.  
Out and alas! earth's greatest are earth and they fail in the testing,  
Conquered by sorrow and doubt, fate's hammerers, fires of her furnace.  
God in their souls they renounce and submit to their clay and its promptings.  
Else could the heart of Troya have recoiled from the loom of the shadow  
Cast by Achilles' spear or shrunk at the sound of his car-wheels?  
Now he has graven an oath austere in his spirit unpliant  
Victor at last to constrain in his stride the walls of Apollo  
Burning Troy ere he sleeps. 'Tis the vow of a high-crested nature;  
Shall it break ramparted Troy? Yea, the soul of a man too is mighty  
More than the stones and the mortar! Troy had a soul once, O Trojans,  
Firm as her god-built ramparts. When in the hour of his passion<sup>1</sup>,  
When Sarpedon fell and Zeus averted his visage,  
Xanthus red to the sea ran sobbing with bodies of Trojans,  
When in the day of the silence of heaven the far-glancing helmet  
Ceased from the ways of the fight, and panic slew with Achilles  
Hosts who were left unshepherded pale at the fall of their greatest,  
Godlike Troy lived on. Do we speak mid a city's ruins?  
Lo! she confronts her heavens as when Tros and Laomedon ruled her.  
All now is changed, these mutter and sigh to you, all now is ended;  
Strength has renounced you, Fate has finished the thread of her spinning.  
Hector is dead, he walks in the shadows; Troilus fights not;  
Resting his curls on the asphodel he has forgotten his country;  
Strong Sarpedon lies in Bellorophon's city sleeping:  
Memnon is slain and the blood of Rhesus has dried on the Troad:  
All of the giant Asius sums in a handful of ashes.

<sup>1</sup> Alternative for "passion" - "uplifting". Alternative for "in the hour of his passion" :  
"by the gods overtaken." Alternative for "gods" in this version: "the Fates", "the spears",

## MOTHER INDIA

Grievous<sup>1</sup> are these things; our hearts still keep all the pain of them treasured,  
Hard though they grow by use and iron caskets of sorrow.  
Hear yet, O fainters in wisdom snared by your pathos,  
Know this iron world we live in where Hell casts its shadow.  
Blood and grief are the ransom of men for the joys of their transience,  
For we are mortals bound in our strength and beset in our labour.  
This is our human destiny; every moment of living  
Toil and loss have gained in the constant siege of our bodies.  
Men must sow earth with their lives<sup>2</sup> and their tears that their country may prosper;  
Earth who bore and devours us that life may be born from our remnants.  
Then shall the Sacrifice reap<sup>3</sup> its fruits when the war-shout is silent,  
Nor shall the blood be in vain that our mother has felt on her bosom  
Nor shall the seed of the mighty fail when Death is the sower.  
Still from the loins of the mother eternal are heroes engendered,  
Still Deiphobus shouts in the war-front trampling the Argives,  
Strong Aeneas' far-borne voice is heard from our ramparts,  
Paris' hands are swift and his feet in the chases of Ares.  
Lo, when deserted we fight<sup>4</sup> by Asia's soon-wearied peoples,  
Men ingrate who enjoyed the protection and loathed the protector,  
Heaven has sent us replacing a continent Penthesilea!  
Low has the heart of Achaia sunk since it shook at her war-cry.  
Ajax has bit at the dust; it is all he shall have of the Troad;  
Tall Meriones lies and measures his portion of booty.  
Who is the fighter in Ilion thrills not rejoicing to hearken  
Even her name on unwarlike lips, much more in the mellay  
Shout of the daughter of battles, armipotent Penthesilea?  
If there were none but these only, if hosts came not surging behind them,  
Young men burning-eyed to outdare all the deeds of their elders,  
Each in his beauty a Troilus, each in his valour a Hector,  
Yet were the measures poised in the equal balance of Ares.  
Who then compels you, O people unconquered, to sink down abjuring  
All that was Troy? For O, if she yield, let her use not for ever  
One of her titles! shame not the shade of Teucer and Ilus,  
Soil not Tros! Are you awed by the strength of the swift-foot Achilles?  
Is it a sweeter lure in the cadenced voice of Antenor?  
Or are you weary of Time and the endless roar of the battle?

<sup>1</sup> Alternatives: "Wretched", "Miserable."

<sup>2</sup> Alternative: "hearts".

<sup>3</sup> Alternative: "gather".

<sup>4</sup> Alternative: "fought".

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Wearier still are the Greeks! their eyes look out o'er the waters  
Nor with the flight of their spears is the wing of their hopes towards Troya.  
Dull are their hearts; they sink from the war-cry and turn from the spear-stroke  
Sullenly dragging backwards, desiring the paths of the Ocean,  
Dreaming of hearths that are far and the children growing to manhood  
Who are small infant faces still in the thoughts of their fathers.  
Therefore these call you to yield lest they wake and behold in the dawn-light  
All Poseidon whitening lean to the west in his waters  
Thick with the sails of the Greeks departing beaten to Hellas.  
Who is it calls? Antenor the statesman, Antenor the patriot,  
Thus who loves his country and worships the soil of his fathers!  
Which of you loves like him Troya? which of the children of heroes  
Yearns for the touch of a yoke on his neck and desires the aggressor?  
If there be any so made by the gods in the nation of Ilus,  
Leaving this city which freemen have founded, freemen have dwelt in,  
Far on the beach let him make his couch in the tents of Achilles,  
Not in this mighty Ilion, not with the lioness fighting,  
Guarding the lair of her young and roaring back at her hunters.  
We who are souls descended from Ilus and seeds of his making,  
Other-hearted shall march from our gates to answer Achilles.  
What! shall this ancient Ilion welcome the day of the conquered?  
She who was head of the world, shall she live in the guard of the Hellene  
Cherished as slavegirls are, who are taken in war, by their captors?  
Europe shall walk in our streets with the pride and the gait of the victor?  
Greeks shall enter our homes and prey on our mothers and daughters?  
This Antenor desires and thus Ucalegon favours.  
Traitors! whether 'tis cowardice drives or the sceptic of virtue,  
Cold-blooded age, or gold insatiably tempts from its coffers  
Pleading for safety from foreign hands and the sack and the plunder.  
Leave them, my brothers! spare the baffled hypocrites! Failure  
Sharpest shall torture their hearts when they know that still you are Trojans.  
Silence, O reason of man! for a voice from the gods has been uttered!  
Dardanus, hearken the sound divine that comes to you mounting  
Out of the solemn ravines from the mystic seat on the tripod!  
Phoebus, the master of Truth, has promised the earth to our peoples  
Children of Zeus, rejoice! for the Olympian brows have nodded  
Regal over the world. In earth's rhythm of shadow and sunlight  
Storm is the dance of the locks of the God assenting to greatness,  
Zeus who with secret compulsion orders the ways of our nature;  
Veiled in events he lives and working disguised in the mortal

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Builds our strength by pain, and an empire is born out of ruins.  
Then if the tempest be loud and the thunderbolt leaping incessant  
Shatters the roof, if the lintels flame at last and each cornice  
Shrieks with pain of the blast, if the very pillars totter,  
Keep yet your faith in Zeus, hold fast to the word of Apollo.  
Not by a little pain and not by a temperate labour  
Trained is the nation chosen by Zeus for a dateless dominion.  
Long must it labour rolled in the wrath<sup>1</sup> of the fathomless surges,  
Often neighbour with death and ere Ares grow firm to its banners  
Feel on the pride of its Capitol tread of the triumphing victor,  
Hear the barbarian knock at its gates or the neighbouring foeman  
Glad of the transient smile of his fortune suffer insulting;—  
They, the nation eternal, brook their taunts who must perish!  
Heaviest toils they must bear; they must wrestle with Fate and her Titans,  
And when some leader returns from the battle sole of his thousands  
Crushed by the hammers of God, yet never despair of their country.  
Dread not the ruin, fear not the storm-blast, yield not, O Trojans.  
Zeus shall rebuild! Death ends not our days, the fire shall not triumph.  
Death? I have faced it. Fire? I have watched it climb in my vision  
Over the timeless domes and over the rooftops of Priam,  
But I have looked beyond and have seen the smile of Apollo.  
After her glorious centuries, after her world-wide triumphs,  
If, near her ramparts outnumbered she fights, by the nations forsaken,  
Lonely again on her hill, by her streams, and her meadows and beaches,  
Once where she revelled, shake to the tramp of her countless invaders,  
Testings are these from the god. For Fate severe like a mother  
Teaches our wills by disaster and strikes down the props that would weaken,  
Fate and the Thought on high that is wiser than yearnings of mortals.  
Troy has arisen before, but from ashes, not shame, not surrender!  
(Souls that are true to themselves are immortal; the soulless for ever  
Lingers helpless in Hades a shade among shades disappointed.)  
Now is the god in my bosom mighty compelling me, Trojans,  
Now I release what my spirit has kept and it saw in its vision;  
Nor will be silent for gibe of the cynic or sneer of the traitor.  
Troy shall triumph! Hear, O ye peoples, the word of Apollo—  
Hear it and tremble, O Greece, in thy youth and the dawn of thy future;  
Rather forget while thou canst, but the gods in their hour shall remind thee.  
Tremble, nations of Asia, false to the greatness within you.

<sup>2</sup> Alternative "foam".

## ILION

Troy shall surge back on your realms with the sword and the yoke of the victor.  
Troy shall triumph! Though nations conspire and the gods lead her foemen,  
Fate that is born of the spirit is greater than they and will shield her.  
Foemen shall help her with war, her defeats shall be victory's moulders.  
Walls that restrain shall be rent; she shall rise out of sessions unsettled,  
Oceans shall be her walls at the end and the desert her limit;  
Indus shall send to her envoys; her eyes shall look northward from Thule.  
She shall enring all the coasts with her strength like the kingly Poseidon,

*(Between this speech by Laocoon and the next one which is by Paris the manuscript  
leaves some space as if for unwritten connecting lines.)*

She shall o'ervault all the lands with her rule like the limitless azure."

"Calm with the greatness you hold from your sires by the right of your  
nature

I too would have you decide before Heaven in the strength of your spirits  
Not to the past and its memories moored like the thoughts of Antenor  
Hating the vivid march of the present, nor towards the future  
Panting through dreams like my brother Laocoon vexed by Apollo.

Dead is the past; the void has possessed it; its drama is ended,  
Finished its music. The future is dim and remote from our knowledge,  
Silent it lies on the knees of the gods in their<sup>1</sup> luminous stillness.

But to our gaze God's light is a darkness, His plan is a chaos.

Who shall foretell the event of a battle, the fall of a footstep?

Oracles, visions and prophecies voice but the dreams of the mortal,

And 'tis our spirit within is the Pythoness tortured in Delphi.

Heavenly voices to us are a silence, those colours a whiteness.

Neither the thought of the statesman prevails nor the dream of the prophet,

Whether one cry 'Thus devise and thy heart shall be given its wanting',

Vainly the other 'The heavens have spoken; hear then their message'.

Who can point out the way of the gods and the path of their travel,

Who shall impose on them bounds and an orbit? The winds have their  
treading,—

They can be followed and seized, not the gods when they move towards their  
purpose.

They are not bound by our deeds and our thinkings. Sin exalted

Seizes secure on the thrones of the world for her glorious portion,

Down to the bottomless pit the goodman is thrust in his virtue.

Leave to the gods their godhead and, mortal, turn to thy labour;

Take what thou canst from the hour that is thine and be fearless in spirit;

This is the greatness of man and the joy of his stay in the sunlight.

<sup>1</sup> Alternative: "the"



## MOTHER INDIA

Now whether over the waste of Poseidon the ships of the Argives  
Empty and sad shall return or sacred Ilion perish,  
Rriam be slam and for ever cease this imperial nation,  
These things the gods are strong to conceal from the hopings of mortals.  
Neither Antenor knows nor Laocoon. Only of one thing  
Man can be sure, the will in his heart and his strength in his purpose:  
This too is Fate and this too the gods, nor the meanest in Heaven.  
Paris keeps what he seized from Time and from Fate while unconquered  
Life speeds warm through his veins and his heart is assured of the sunlight  
After 'tis cold, none heeds, none hinders. Not for the dead man  
Earth and her wars and her cares, her joys and her gracious concessions,  
Whether for ever he sleeps in the chambers of Nature unmindful  
Or into wideness wakes like a dreamer called from his visions.  
Ilion in flames I choose, not fallen from the heights of her spirit.  
Great and free has she lived since they raised her twixt billow and mountain,  
Great let her end; let her offer her freedom to fire, not the Hellene.  
She was not founded by mortals; gods erected her ramparts,  
Lifted her piles to the sky, a seat not for slaves but the mighty.  
All men marvelled at Troy; by her deeds and her spirit they knew her  
Even from afar as the lion is known by his roar and his preying.  
Sole she lived royal and fell, erect in her leonine nature.  
So, O her children, still let her live unquelled in her purpose  
Either to stand with her<sup>1</sup> feet on the world oppressing the nations  
Or in her<sup>2</sup> ashes to lie and her<sup>3</sup> name be forgotten for ever.  
Justly your voices approve me, armipotent children of Ilus;  
Straight from Zeus is our race and the Thunderer lives in our nature.  
Long I have suffered this<sup>4</sup> taunt that Paris was Ilion's ruin  
Born on a night of the gods and of Ate, clothed in a body.  
Scornful I strode on my path<sup>5</sup> secure of the light in my bosom,  
Turned from the muttering voices of envy, their hates who are fallen,  
Voices of hate that cling round the wheels of the triumphing victor;  
Now if I speak, 'tis the strength in me answers, not to be little,  
That excusing which most I rejoice in and glory for ever,  
Tyndaris' rape whom I seized by the will of divine Aphrodite.  
Mortal this error that Greece would have slumbered apart in her mountains,  
Sunk, by the trumpets of Fate unaroused and the morning within her,  
Only were Paris unborn and the world had not gazed upon Helen.

<sup>1, 2, 3</sup> Alternatives: "your".      <sup>4</sup> Alternative to "suffered this": "brooked their".

<sup>5</sup> Alternative: "way".

## ILION

Fools, who say that a spark was the cause of this giant destruction!  
War would have stridden on Troy though Helen were still in her Sparta  
Tending an Argive loom, not the glorious prize of the Trojans,  
Greece would have banded her nations though Paris had drunk not Eurotas,  
Coast against coast I set not, nor Ilion opposite Argos.  
Phryx accuse who upreared Troy's domes by the azure Aegean,  
Curse Poseidon who fringed with Greece the blue of his waters:  
Then was this war first decreed and then Agamemnon was fashioned;  
Armed he strode forth in the secret Thought that is womb of the future.  
Fate and Necessity guided these vessels, captained their armies.  
When they stood mailed at her gates, when they cried in the might of their  
union,  
'Troy, renounce thy alliances, draw back humbly from Hellas',  
Should she have hearkened persuading her strength to a shameful compliance,  
Ilion queen of the world<sup>1</sup> whose voice was the breath of the storm-gods?  
Should she have drawn back her foot as it strode towards the hills of the Latins?  
Thrace left bare to her foes, recoiled from Illyrian conquests?  
If all this without battle were possible, people of Priam,  
Blame then Paris, say then that Helen was cause of the struggle.  
But I have sullied the hearth and unsealed the gaze of the Furies,  
Heaven I have armed with my sin, I have trampled the gift and the guest-rule,  
So was Troy doomed who righteous had triumphed, locked with the Argive.  
Fools or hypocrites! Meanest falsehood is this among mortals,  
Veils of purity weaving, names misplacing ideal  
When our desires we disguise and paint the lusts of our nature.  
Men, ye are men in your pride and your strength, be not sophists and  
tonguesters.  
Lie not! say<sup>2</sup> not that nations live by righteousness, justice  
Shields them, gods out of heaven look down<sup>3</sup> on the crimes of the mighty!  
Known have men what screened itself<sup>4</sup> mouthing these semblances. Crouching  
Dire like a beast in the green of the thicket, selfishness silent  
Crunches the bones of its prey while the priest and the statesman are glozing.  
So are the nations soothed and deceived by the clerics of virtue,  
Taught to reconcile fear of the gods with their lusts and their passions,  
So with a lie on their lips they march to the rapine and slaughter.  
Truly the vanquished were guilty! Else would their cities have perished,  
Shrieked their ravished virgins, their peasants been hewn in the vineyards?

<sup>1</sup> Alternatives: "ways", "world ways"    <sup>2</sup> Alternative: "prate"    <sup>3</sup> Alternative: "worth"

<sup>4</sup> Alternative to "screened itself": "thing lies screened".

## MOTHER INDIA

Truly the victors were tools of the gods and their glorious servants!  
Else would the war-cars have ground triumphant their bones whom they hated?  
Servants of God are they verily, even as the ape and the tiger.  
Does not the wild-beast too triumph enjoying the flesh of his captives?  
Tell us then what was the sin of the antelope, wherefore they doomed her  
Wroth at her many crimes? Come, justify God to his creatures!  
Not to her sins was she offered, not to the Furies or justice,  
But to the strength of the lion the high gods offered a victim,  
Force that is God in the lion's breast with the forest for altar.  
What, in the cities stormed and sacked by Achilles in Troas  
Was there no just man slain? Was Brises then a transgressor?  
Hearts that were pierced in his walls were they sinners tracked by the Furies?  
No, they were pious and just and their altars burned for Apollo,  
Reverent flamed up to Pallas who slew them aiding the Argives.  
Or if the crime of Paris they shared and his doom has embraced them,  
Whom had the island cities offended, stormed by the Locrian,  
Wave-kissed homes of peace but given to the sack and the spoiler?  
Was then King Atreus just and the house accursed of Pelops,  
Tantalus' race, whose deeds men shuddering hear and are silent?  
Look! they endure, their pillars are firm, they are regnant and triumph.  
Or are Thyestean banquets sweet to the gods in their savour?  
Only a woman's heart is pursued in their wrath by the Furies!  
No, when the wrestlers meet and embrace in the mighty arena,  
Not at their sins and their virtues the high gods look in that trial;  
Which is the strongest, which is the subtlest, this they consider.  
Nay, there is none in the world to befriend save ourselves and our courage;  
Prowess alone in the battle is virtue, skill in the fighting  
Only helps, the gods aid only the strong and the valiant.  
Put forth your lives in the blow, you shall beat back the banded aggressors.  
Neither believe that for justice denied your subjects have left you  
Nor that for justice trampled Pallas and Hera abandon.  
Two are the angels of God whom men worship, strength and enjoyment.  
Into this life which the sunlight bounds and the greenness has cradled,  
Armed with strength we have come; as our strength is, so is our joyance.  
What but for joyance is birth and what but for joyance is living?  
But on this earth that is narrow, this stage that is crowded, increasing  
One on another we press. There is hunger for lands and for oxen,  
Horses and armour and gold required;<sup>1</sup> possession allures us

<sup>1</sup> Alternative: "desired".

## ILION

Adding always as field to field some fortunate farmer.  
Hearts too and minds are our prey; we seize on men's souls and their bodies,  
Slaves to our works and desires that our hearts may bask golden in leisure.  
One on another we prey and one by another are mighty.  
This is the world and we have not made it; if it is evil,  
Blame first the gods; but for us, we must live by its laws or we perish.  
Power is divine; divinest of all is power over mortals.  
Power then the conqueror seeks and power the imperial nation,  
Even as luminous, passionless, wonderful, high over all things  
Sit in their calmness the gods and oppressing our grief-tortured nations  
Stamp their wills on the world. Nor less in our death-besieged natures  
Gods are and altitudes. Earth resists, but my soul in me widens  
Helped by the toil behind and the agelong effort of Nature.  
Even in the worm is a god and it writhes for a form and an outlet.  
Workings immortal obscurely struggling, hints of a godhead  
Labour to form in this clay a divinity. Hera widens,  
Pallas aspires in me, Phoebus in flames goes battling and singing,  
Ares and Artemis chase through the fields of my soul in their hunting,  
Last in some hour of the Fates a Birth stands released and triumphant;  
Poured by its deeds over earth it rejoices fulfilled in its splendour.  
Conscious dimly of births unfinished hid in our being  
Rest we cannot; a world cries in us for space and for fullness.  
Fighting we strive by the spur of the gods who are in us and o'er us,  
Stamping our image on man and events to be Zeus or be Ares.  
Love and the need of mastery, joy and the longing for greatness  
Rage like a fire unquenchable burning the world and creating,  
Nor till humanity dies will they sink in the ashes of Nature.  
All is injustice of love or all is injustice of battle.  
Man over woman, woman o'er man, over lover and foeman  
Wrestling we strive to expand in our souls, to be wide, to be joyous.<sup>1</sup>  
If thou wouldst only be just, then wherefore at all shouldst thou conquer?  
Not to be just, but to rule, though with kindness and high-seated mercy,  
Taking the world for our own and our will from our slaves and our subjects,  
Smiting the proud and sparing the suppliant, Trojans, is conquest.  
Justice was base of thy government? Vainly, O statesman, thou liest.  
If thou wert just, thou wouldst free thy slaves and be equal with all men.  
Such were a dream of some sage at night when he muses in fancy,  
Imaging freely a flawless world where none were afflicted,

<sup>1</sup> Alternative: "happy".

## MOTHER INDIA

No man inferior, all could sublimely equal and brothers  
Live in a peace divine like the gods in their luminous regions.  
This, O Antenor, were justice known but in words to us mortals.  
But for the justice thou vauntest enslaving men to thy purpose,  
Setting an iron yoke, nor regarding their need and their nature,  
Then to say 'I am just; I slay not save by procedure,  
Rob not save by law' is an outrage to Zeus and his creatures.  
Terms are these feigned by the intellect making a pact with our yearnings,  
Lures of the sophist within us draping our passions with virtue.  
When thou art weak, thou art just, when thy subjects are strong and remember.  
Therefore, O Trojans, be firm in your will and, though all men abandon,  
Bow not your heads to reproach nor your hearts to the sin of repentance;  
For you have done what the gods desired in your breasts and are blameless.  
Proudly enjoy the earth that they gave you, enthroning their natures,  
Fight with the Greeks and the world and trample down the rebellious,  
What you have lost recover, nor yield to the hurricane passing.  
You cannot utterly die while the Power lives untired in your bosoms;  
When 'tis withdrawn, not a moment of life can be added by virtue.  
Faint not for helpers fled! Though your yoke had been mild as a father's  
They would have gone as swiftly. Strength men desire in their masters;  
All men worship success and in failure and weakness abandon.  
Not for his justice they clung to Teucer, but for their safety,  
Seeing in Troy a head and by barbarous foemen afflicted.  
Faint not, O Trojans, cease not from battle, persist in your labour!  
Conquer the Greeks, your allies shall be yours and fresh nations your subjects.  
One care only lodge in your hearts, how to fight, how to conquer.  
Peace has smiled out of Pthia; a hand comes outstretched from the Hellene.  
Who would not join with the godlike? who would not grasp at Achilles?  
There is a price for his gifts, it is such as Achilles should ask for,  
Never this nation concede.<sup>1</sup> O Antenor's golden phrases  
Glorifying rest to the tired and confuting patience and courage,  
Garbed with a subtlety lax and the hopes that palliate surrender!  
Charmed men applaud the skilful purpose, the dextrous speaker,  
This they forget that a Force decides, not the wiles of the statesman.<sup>2</sup>  
'Now let us yield' do you say, 'we will rise when our masters are weakened'?  
Nay, then our master's master shall find us an easy possession!  
Easily nations bow to a yoke when their virtue relaxes;

<sup>1</sup> Alternative: "endure":

<sup>2</sup> After this line come two verses which seem to have been rejected in the manuscript:  
O let us give ourselves bound to the swallowing lust of the Ocean!  
Surely 'twill bear up our sloth on its crests to a harbour of Triumph!

## ILION

Hard is the breaking fetters once worn, for the virtue has perished.  
Hope you when custom has shaped men into the mould of a vileness,  
Hugging their chains when the weak feel easier trampled than rising  
Or though they groan, yet have heart nor strength for the anguish of effort,  
Then to cast down whom, armed and strong, you prevailed not<sup>1</sup> opposing?  
Easy is lapse into uttermost hell, not easy salvation.  
Or have you dreamed that Achilles will save, this son of the gods and the ocean?  
Naught else can be with the strong and the bold<sup>2</sup> save foeman or master.  
Know you so little the mood of the pursuer? Think you the lion  
Only will lick his prey, that his jaws will refrain from the banquet?  
Rest from thy bodings, Antenor! Not all the valour of Troya  
Perished with Hector, nor with Polydamas vision has left her;  
Troy is not eager to slay her soul in a pyre of dishonour.  
Still she has children left who remember the mood of their mother.  
Helen none shall take from me living, gold not a drachma  
Travels from coffers of Priam to Greece. Let another and older  
Pay down his wealth if he will and his daughters serve Menelaus.  
Rather from Ilion I will go forth with my brothers and kinsmen;  
Troy I will leave and her shame and live with my heart and my honour  
Refuged with lions in Ida or build in the highlands a city  
Or in an isle of the seas or by dark-driven Pontic waters.  
Dear are the halls of our childhood, dear are the fields of our fathers,  
Yet to the soul that is free no spot on the earth is an exile.  
Rather wherever sunlight is bright, flowers bloom and the rivers  
Flow in their lucid streams to the Ocean, there is our country.  
So will I live in my soul's wide freedom, never in Troya  
Shorn of my will and disgraced in my strength and the mock of my rivals.  
First had you yielded, shame at least had not stained your surrender.  
Strength indulges the weak! But what Hector has fallen refusing,  
Men! what through ten loud years we denied with the spear for our answer,  
That what Trojan will ever renounce, though his city should perish?  
Once having fought we will fight to the end nor that end shall be evil.  
Clamour the Argive spears in our walls? Are the ladders erected?  
Far on the plain is their flight, on the farther side of the Xanthus.  
Where are the deities hostile? Vainly the eyes of the tremblers  
See them stalking vast in the ranks of the Greeks and the shoutings  
Dire of Poseidon they hear and are blind with the aegis of Pallas.

<sup>1</sup> Alternatives to "prevailed not": "could hold not", "were mastered".

<sup>2</sup> Alternative: "mighty".

## MOTHER INDIA

Who then sustained so long this Troy, if the gods are against her?  
Even the hills could not stand save upheld by their concert immortal.  
Now not with Tydeus' son, not now with Odysseus and Ajax  
Trample the gods in the sound of their chariot-wheels, victory leading:  
Argos falls red in her heaps to their scythes; they shelter the Trojans;  
Victory unleashed follows and fawns upon Penthesilea.  
Ponder no more, O Ilion, city of ancient Priam!  
Rise, O beloved of the gods, and go forth in thy strength to the battle.  
Not by the dreams of Laocoon strung to the faith that is febrile,  
Nor with the tremblings vain and the haunted thoughts of Antenor,  
But with a noble and serious strength and an obstinate valour  
Suffer the shock of your foes, O nation chosen by Heaven;  
Proudly determine on victory, live by disaster unshaken.  
Either Fate receive like men, nay, like gods, nay, like Trojans.”  
So like an army that streams and that marches, speeding and pausing,  
Drawing in horn and wing or widened for scouting and forage,-  
Bridging the floods, avoiding the mountains, threading the valleys,  
Fast with their flashing panoply clad in gold and in iron  
Moved the array of his thoughts; and throughout delight and approval  
Followed their march, in triumph led but like prisoners willing,  
Glad and unbound to a land they desire. Triumphant he ended,  
Lord of opinion, though by the aged frowned on and censured,  
But to this voice of their thoughts the young men vibrated wholly.  
Loud like a storm on the ocean mounted the roar of the people.  
“Cease from debate,” men cried, “arise, O thou warlike Aeneas!  
Speak for this nation, launch like a spear at the tents of the Hellene,  
Ilion's voice of war!” Then up mid a limitless shouting  
Stern and armed from his seat like a war-god helmèd Aeneas  
Rose by King Priam approved in this last of Ilion's sessions,  
Holding the staff of the senate's authority. “Silence, O commons,  
Hear and assent or refuse as your right is, masters of Troya,  
Ancient and sovereign people, act that your kings have determined  
Sitting in council high, their reply to the strength of Achilles.  
‘Son of the Aeacids, vain is thy offer; the pride of thy challenge  
Rather we choose; it is nearer to Dardanus, King of the Hellenes.  
Neither shall Helen be led back, the Tyndarid, weeping to Argos  
Nor down the paths of peace revisit her fathers' Eurotas.  
Death and the fire may prevail o'er us, never our wills shall surrender  
Lowering Priam's heights and darkening Ilion's splendours.  
Not of such sires were we born but of kings and of gods, O Larissan.

## ILION

Not with her gold Troy traffics for safety<sup>1</sup>, but with her spearpoints.  
Stand with thy oath in the war-front, Achilles; call on thy helpers  
Armed to descend from the calm of Olympian heights to thy succour  
Hedging thy fame from defeat; for we all desire thee in battle,  
Mighty to end thee or tame at last by the floods of the Xanthus.' ”  
So Aeneas resonant spoke, stern, fronted like Ares,  
And with a voice that conquered the earth and invaded the heavens  
Loud they approved their doom and fulfilled their impulse immortal.  
Last Deiphobus rose in their meeting, head of their mellay;  
“Proudly and well have you answered, O nation beloved of Apollo;  
Fearless of death they must walk who would live and be mighty for ever.  
Now, for the sun in hastening up the empyrean azure,  
Hasten we also. Tasting of food round the call of your captains  
Meet in your armèd companies, chariots and hoplites and archers,  
Strong be your hearts, let your courage be stern like the sun when it blazes;  
Fierce will the shock be today ere he sink bloodred in the waters.”  
They with a voice as of Oceans meeting rose from their session,—  
Filling the streets with her tread Troy strode from her Ilian forum.

SRI AUROBINDO

<sup>1</sup> Alternative to “traffics for safety”: “seeks out her foemen”.



## “SAVITRI”

(SOME NOTES AND IMPRESSIONS)\*

ON August 15, the birthday of Sri Aurobindo, a most splendid offering to the Master is the one-volume edition brought out by the Ashram of his greatest poetic achievement—*Savitri, a Legend and a Symbol*—over which he had worked for, we may say, almost his lifetime. It is on record that Virgil devoted approximately ten years to his *Aeneid*, Dante sixteen intermittently and six wholly to his *Divina Commedia*, Milton at least eight to *Paradise Lost* and Goethe spread the writing of his *Faust*, with long intervals, over nearly fifty years of crowded life. Sri Aurobindo's occupation with his masterpiece is comparable in time-span to Goethe's—and his too was a life variously crowded, at the beginning with political events, afterwards with mystical realisations and inner discoveries and partly with the writing of a dozen books philosophical or literary on a large scale. But it was not merely lack of time or even a desire to put the maximum of available life-experience into the poem, that made it cover fifty years or so. Unlike any of the other epic poets Sri Aurobindo made recast after recast, not merely addition on addition—and this he did rarely because the early versions wanted in pure poetic merit: his aim was primarily to lift the work to the highest and most comprehensive expression possible of spiritual realities within the scheme set up by him of character, incident and plot.

This aim and the artistic method employed for achieving it were to be explained in a long Introduction which he intended to write to the complete *Savitri*. Mostly, *Savitri* was meant to create in massive proportions the kind of poetry that, in his published literary criticisms, he used to designate as hailing from “Overhead” planes—the ranges of consciousness broadly envisaged by ancient Indian scriptures as lying hidden above the human and possessing an inherent light of knowledge and a natural experience of the infinite. He distinguished in general a progression of four levels as having found rare voice in the world's literature and art: Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind. A fifth and highest plane, which he named Supermind and whose realisation above on its own peaks and ultimate descent below into the physical being are the aim

\* For a more detailed and systematic study introducing the poem the reader may refer to the last part of the author's book, *The Poetic Genus of Sri Aurobindo*.

of his own "Integral Yoga", was regarded by him as not having directly manifested yet.

The absence, cannot help being regretted of what would have been a unique expository and elucidative document on the unusual poetic afflatus—unusual in both message and music—that blows through the nearly twenty-four thousand lines of this Legend of the past that he has presented as a Symbol of the future. Luckily, however, we have a substantial number of letters by him on his epic. Out of them an informal commentary has been compiled and put after the text with the object of throwing in the poet's own precious words some light on the poem's conception and development and on its qualities of inspiration, vision, style and technique. This commentary, which is now longer by a further sheaf of letters than when first published separately and follows a scheme of grouping differing in several respects from the one adopted then, serves also to add to the description of the "Overhead" planes given by Sri Aurobindo in *Savitri* itself as well as in his philosophical work *The Life Divine* and to clarify certain aspects of their role in poetic creation. It etches memorably on our minds what the author calls the metaphysical psychology of the new art inspired by the extraordinary experiences and significances that have gone to the making of his poem and, in seeking affinities for this art, it ranges over a wide terrain of world-poetry and give us vivid illustration, penetrating analysis, suggestive evocation—aesthetic sensitiveness, intellectual grasp and spiritual insight moving harmoniously together.

Of course the letters, extending over eighteen years and often touching on various subjects at a time or dealing with the same subject at different times, could not always be arranged chronologically and in a regular series to make a continuous exposition. They have been sorted into sections, each section determined mostly by similarity of theme in its contents or by their broad subsumableness under a common head. One section has been specially devoted to comments on individual lines, phrases and words given as far as possible in the order of their occurrence in the poem. The order of the sections as well as of their contents has been dictated in the main by the consideration of either logical or textual sequence.

A short Note prefacing the wonderful letters gives us some valuable information on the way the poem was actually composed and finished. Not the least interesting and meaningful part of this Note is the quotation of some of the very last lines dictated by Sri Aurobindo—lines which strike one as being pregnant with a foreknowledge of the end at a time when there were no physical pointers to it and with a symbolic prefiguring of the spiritual situation that on his departure from his own body would face his comrade and co-worker in the Integral Yoga—the Mother.

Both in quality and quantity *Savitri* must be counted as remarkable among even the world's remarkable achievements. With its 23,813 lines, it is the longest poem in the English language, beating *The Ring and the Book* of Browning with its 21,116 to the place of runner-up: in fact it is the longest in any European language modern or ancient and in any language of the modern world. Among epics which can be compared with it in general poetic quality, only the *Shah-Nameh*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* exceed it in length—three works which, like it, are products of the East. And indeed *Savitri* stands with the masterpieces of Valmiki and Vyasa in more than one respect. It has been conceived with something of the ancient Indian temperament which not only rejoiced in massive structures but took all human life and human thought in the spacious scope of its poetic creations and blended the workings of the hidden worlds of Gods and Titans and Demons with the activities of earth. A cosmic sweep is *Savitri's* and Sri Aurobindo wanted his poem to be a many-sided multi-coloured carving out in word-music of the gigantic secrets of his "supra-mental Yoga."

With the *Mahabharata* it has a direct link too. For, it is based on a story, in that epic, of a victorious fight by love against death. Such a fight is a theme that has haunted Sri Aurobindo from his very youth, as is proved by his early narrative *Love and Death* which is somewhat similar in outward intention as well as based on an episode in the same ancient Indian epos. That other narrative of his twenties—*Urvashi*—is also a variant of the identical theme, since, though there is no death in it, it poetises a triumphant struggle against the fate which circumscribes mundane life and snatches away the beloved. As we know, *Savitri* itself was first drafted quite early in Sri Aurobindo's poetic career and, in it, the recurrent theme takes a form that clearly shows it to be bound up with Sri Aurobindo's own work in the world. As he went on making each of the nearly twelve recasts in order to lift the meaning and the music ever higher until they should press everywhere towards what the old Rishis had called the *Mantra* and arrive again and again at this speech that Sri Aurobindo has distinguished as one in which the vision, the word, the rhythm are born with an intense wideness and unfathomable massiveness from the Overmind, *Savitri* of the *Mahabharata* fighting the God of Death who took away her consort Satyavan becomes more and more an Avatar of the eternal Beauty and Love plunging into the trials of terrestrial life and seeking to overcome them not only in herself but also in the world she has embraced as her own: she is sworn to put an end to earth's ignorant estrangement from God—estrangement whose most physical symbol is Death, the bodily opposite of the luminous inherent immortality of the Divine. Her story grows a poetic structure in which Sri Aurobindo houses his special search and discovery, his uttermost

exploration of hidden-worlds, his ascent into the top ranges of the Spirit, his bringing down of their power to divinise man's total nature. And the figure of Savitri suggests in general his own companion in the field of Yoga, the Mother, who is at present carrying on the great task set by the Master.

The technique of *Savitri* is attuned to the scriptural conception at work. The iambic five-foot line of blank verse is adopted as the most apt and plastic for harmonies like those of the Vedas and the Upanishads. The blank verse, however, is given certain special characteristics affining it still further to them. It moves in a series of blocks formed by a changing distribution of correctly proportioned sentence-lengths. Scarcely any block breaks off in the middle of a line and each thus forms, in spite of linkage with the others, a kind of self-sufficient structure like a stanza, but in general no two such "stanzas" are equally long. The units also of each block tell markedly in their own individual mass and force of word and rhythm, though a concordant continuity is maintained in the sense. Enjambment, which was used to impetuous effect in *Urvashi* and *Love and Death*, is not altogether avoided, yet end-stopping is the rule as serving better the graver more contained movement demanded by the scriptural mood.

*Savitri* begins with a picture of darkness passing into day. This transitional hour has a particular appeal for Sri Aurobindo: several of his poems, short as well as long, are a-quiver with auroral suggestions. Among contemporary poets, we may point to Valéry as also responding very sensitively to the dawn-moment, but the glimmering obscurities of *La Jeune Parque* or the elusive lucidities of some other poems of his are "a sunrise upon ideas", as Thibaudet puts it, which, though penetrating, have little of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual evocativeness, least of all the largeness of it that is in *Savitri*.

In *Savitri* the passage of darkness into day is the last dawn in Satyavan's life, a dawn packed with the significance of the immortal light which Savitri has to win for earth by challenging the age-old decree of death. "The huge foreboding mind of Night" is first figured with a fathomless effectivity.

Almost one felt, opaque, impenetrable,  
In the sombre symbol of her eyeless muse  
The abyssm of the unbodied Infinite.

But

A long lone line of hesitating hue

troubles at last the depths of the darkness in which consciousness seems sepulchred and we have poetry of an intense visionary loveliness:

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

Then the "pallid rift" widens and "the revelation and the flame" pour out—  
the poetry richly reflecting them:

The brief perpetual sign recurred above.  
A glamour from the unreached transcendences  
Iridescent with the glory of the Unseen,  
A message from the unknown immortal Light  
Ablaze upon creation's quivering edge,  
Dawn built her aura of magnificent hues  
And buried its seed of grandeur in the hours.

Almost the epiphany appears to be disclosed, the goal of all our mortal gropings,  
and two lines at once simple and subtle in their sovereign spiritual suggestion  
afford us a glimpse of it:

Infinity's centre, a Face of rapturous calm  
Parted the eternal lids that open heaven.

But

Only a little the God-light can stay

and the intensity of the wonderful Presence fades into accustomed sunshine.

In the soul of Savitri, however, the sense of her mission never disappears.  
Hedged in though she is by mortality, her life's movement keeps the measure  
of the Gods. Painting her being and its human-divine beauty Sri Aurobindo  
achieves some of his supreme effects. Perhaps his grandest capture of the  
*Mantra* are the nine verses which form the centre of a long passage, variously  
mantric, in which Savitri's avatarhood is characterised:

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

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A hieratic poetry, demanding a keen sense of the occult and spiritual to compass both its subjective and objective values, is in this audacious and multi-dimensioned picture of a highly Yogic state of embodied being. Not all might respond to it and Sri Aurobindo knew that such moments in *Savitri* would have to wait long for general appreciation. But he could not be loyal to his mission without giving wide scope to the occult and spiritual and seeking to poetise them as much as possible with the vision and rhythm proper to the summits of reality. Of course, that vision and that rhythm are not restricted to the posture and contour of the summits, either the domains of divine dynamism or

The superconscient realms of motionless peace  
Where judgment ceases and the word is mute  
And the Unconceived lies pathless and alone

or the mid-worlds, obscure or luminous, fearsome or marvellous, of which Savitri's father, King Aswapathy, carries out a long exploration which is one of the finest and most fascinating parts of the poem. They extend to the earth-drama too and set living amongst us the mysteries and travails of cosmic evolution, like that dreadful commerce of Savitri with one whom Sri Aurobindo gives no name:

One dealt with her who meets the burdened great...  
Assigner of the ordeal and the path  
Who uses in this holocaust of the soul  
Death, fall and sorrow for the spirit's goads,  
The dubious Godhead with his torch of pain  
Lit up the chasm of the unfinished world  
And called her to fill with her vast self the abyss.

*Savitri* would hardly be the unique poem that it is if it did not try to bring home to us the Unknown as it is in itself. However, it is a poem of many layers and no mean part of its excellence lies in its deploying its imponderables of sight and sound and remaining intensely spiritual even when its innumerable ranges and changes are not ostensibly concerned with spirituality. It is Legend as well as Symbol, a story with many scenes and levels of development at the same time that it is instinct with a mystical light. That light itself plays over many regions and does not fail to cover most aspects of world-thought. It is therefore not possible for it to confine itself straightforwardly to mystical substance. What it must do in order to be, despite its complex plan, a direct poetising of the Divine is to sustain everywhere the Overhead afflatus with the help principally of the sound-thrill shaking up hidden tracts of our being even

while the outer attention is engaged with apparently non-mystical subjects. Thus a direct poetising of the Divine is achieved without a rejection of human interest or of the teeming motives and currents of man's mind.

A few quotations will indicate the variety of matter as well as of style, that is yet infused with the typical Aurobindonian quality. Glimpses of Nature's moods come again and again, exquisitely evocative as in

The colonnade's dream grey in the quiet eve,  
The slow moonrise gliding in front of night,

or with a powerful haunting suggestion as in that transference into English of a phrase of Vyasa's:

some lone tremendous wood  
Ringing for ever with the crickets' cry.

Glimpses of the human situation mix often with those of natural objects as in that simile cosmically sublime in its sweep:

As a star unaccompanied moves through heaven  
Unastonished by the immensities of space,  
Travelling infinity by its own light,  
The great are strongest when they stand alone.

The inner strength of the great is also brought vividly home in that gesture of Savitri when, confronting Death's subtle arguments and refusing to employ the frail artifices of Reason, which are vain because always open to doubt, she chooses to match all fate with the nude dynamism of her heart and soul in a terrific line which we may term, in a phraseology popular today, super-existentialist:

I am, I love, I see, I act, I will.

Here is an expression deriving its force and resolution from deeper layers of being than the famous close in Tennyson's poem about Ulysses and his comrades:

Made weak by fate and time, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Those deeper layers render Sri Aurobindo's line more effective art than also Shelley's memorable words put into the mouth of Rousseau's ghost in his *Triumph of Life*:

SAVITRI

Before thy memory,  
I feared, loved, hated, suffered, did and died.

The insufficiency of the mere Reason as compared either to the inner soul's moved perception or to the puissant supra-intellectual sight is pictured with an inspired conceit the Elizabethans or the Metaphysicals would have welcomed with a whoop:

A million faces wears her knowledge here  
And every face is turbaned with a doubt.

As unexpectedly striking and happy, though in a different key of inspiration, is the simile applied to the truth-direct ways of the higher harmonies of consciousness to which Savitri's father Aswapathy climbed:

There was no gulf between the thought and fact,  
Ever they replied like bird to calling bird.

The felicity and the novelty that are prominent features of Sri Aurobindo's style in *Savitri* come at times in a compact strangely figured epigrammatic form heightened as well as enlightened the more by being immediately followed by a verse of simple surprise:

Earth's winged chimeras are Truth's steeds in Heaven,  
The impossible God's sign of things to be.

The simple and yet the surprising, with but a minimum of image-glimmer, is in Sri Aurobindo's hands as perfect in its noble finality as in Dante's: take as instances—

None can reach heaven who has not passed through hell,

or

All can be done if the God-touch is there,  
or, again,

His failure is not failure whom God leads,  
or, lastly,

Our life's repose is in the Infinite.

A certain type of effect, however, occurs often in *Savitri*, which escapes all comparison. The line about earth's winged chimeras is one facet of it. That line is not only a pure Overhead version of what in the very next is a compound



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of the mental and the Overhead, an incisive conceptualisation of the intuitive sense. It is, besides, a sheer depth of Yogic insight conveyed with concentrated richness and audacity—the unique Aurobindonian effect. Less densely shaped yet with a body as bold and brilliant is the vision developed by the Yogi's eye in the phrases:

All things hang here between God's yes and no... ..  
The white head and black tail of the mystic drake,  
The swift and the lame foot, wing strong, wing broken  
Sustaining the body of the uncertain world,  
A great surreal dragon in the skies.

A single sentence can be made by Sri Aurobindo the Yogi to sum up the whole *Angst* of the idealist whose feeling of the supramundane is confronted not only by the world's enigmatic opposites lit up in the above lines but also by the impersonal indifference under which the Numinous appears to a certain philosophic mood:

An awful Silence watches tragic Time.

Or look at the Overhead and Yogic alchemisation of the state which in the language of the poetic intelligence Sri Aurobindo elsewhere in *Savitri* puts thus:

My mind transfigures to a rapturous seer.

In the Overhead style at a high pitch and in the unique Aurobindonian tone we have:

Our minds hush to a bright Omniscient.

And, when the spiritual profundity has been realised, the entire knowledge-process is shown, in the same style, as altered:

Idea rotated symphonies of sight,  
Sight was a flame-throw from identity.

And here, in a similar manner though with a more outward turn, is the dynamic reason of the change and of the possibilities of world-divinisation, the concrete movement of the Yogic seeker undaunted by the world's doubts or denials:

I cherish God the Fire, not God the Dream.

Something of this penetrating insight, at once mystical and clear-cut, comes into play at rare moments in Iqbal, flashing up his religious and philosophical passion, as in those vehement phrases Englished by A.G. Arberry in which he exemplifies the knowledge which Sufi love gives him of the world's kinship with his being:

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I have seen the movement of the sinews of the sky,  
And the blood coursing in the veins of the moon.

But this is more related to the adventurously imaginative style of Francis Thompson and we feel that for all its magnificence the knowledge is not directly Yogic. A similar impression we get *vis-à-vis* Tagore's lyrical soars, high and intense though they are, as in the lines of a somewhat Overhead breath he has translated thus into English prose-poetry: "There, where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flight in, reigns the stainless white radiance. There is no day nor night, nor form nor colour, and never, never a word." An affinity with Shelley in his less aching moments is here, an instinctive sense of the Spirit's ether and a moved felicity of articulation. Sri Aurobindo comes also at times recognisably with turns that have been admirably practised by the Thompsons and Iqbals, the Shelleys and Tagores of man's aspiration; but every now and then come effects of the direct Yogi, tranquilly amazing, as in

There looked out from the shadow of the Unknown  
The bodiless namelessness that saw God born  
And tries to gain from the mortal's mind and soul  
A deathless body and a divine name—

or amazing with a graphic boldness:

White chambers of dalliance with Eternity  
And the stupendous gates of the Alone.

Yes, *Savitri* is full of diverse excellences woven together. And it does not reject any strand of life, it includes and absorbs every theme of import in man's evolution towards deity. Ancient motifs and motifs of our own day are equally caught up. Even modern totalitarianism is seized in its essence in the occult figure of it that from demoniac planes behind earth precipitates amongst us the Hitlerite power and propaganda:

A bull-throat bellowed with its brazen tongue;  
Its hard and shameless clamour filling space  
And threatening all who dared to listen to truth  
Claimed the monopoly of the battered ear;  
A deafened acquiescence gave its vote,  
And braggart dogmas shouted in the night  
Kept for the fallen soul once deemed a god  
The pride of its abysmal absolute.

Even the new physics that has replaced the classical concepts in which "all was precise, rigid, indubitable" enters the poetry:

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Once more the world was made a wonder-web,  
A magic's process in a magical space,  
An untelligible miracle's depths  
Whose source is lost in the Ineffable...  
A quantum dance remained, a sprawl of chance  
In Energy's stupendous tripping whirl...  
The rare-point sparse substratum Universe  
On which floats a solid world's phenomenal face.  
Alone a process of events was there  
And Nature's plastic and protean change  
And, strong by death to slay or to create,  
The riven invisible atom's omnipotent force.

But here too the accent is recognisably Aurobindonian. The Overhead breath flows everywhere and in the last line we have its art at top pitch. The craftsmanship of that line is superb, with its dense humming sound dextrously mixed with other expressive vibrations, and both moving in a metre packing fourteen syllables and a predominantly anapaestic run into a scheme of five strong stresses which are helped to beat out clearly as well as to contain the overflowing music by massed consonants in several places. The four "i"'s and the four "o"'s suggest at once penetration and expansion, the latter as if from an all-round fastness. The "v" in "riven", pronounced as it is with the upper teeth touching the lower lip, aids the sense of cutting that is in the word, while the "v" in "invisible" not only supports and increases the cutting suggestion but also hints by occurring in that particular word and in the midst of several syllables successively short in "quantity" the marvellous carrying of the power of fission into the mystery of the infinitesimal that constitutes the unseen atomic nucleus. Then there are the two "m"'s with their movement of lip-closure corresponding to the closed secrecy that is being spoken of and they are preceded and followed by the labials "b" and "p" respectively which correspond to the initial motive of breaking open the closed secrecy and to the final accomplishment of that explosion. The hard strokes of the three "t"'s mingle a further nuance of breaking. The "f" of "force" picks up again the fission-power of the "v"'s and completes it with its own acute out-loosening sound accompanied by the somewhat rolled sibilance at the end. The sibilance itself, giving clear body to the softer sound of the pair of "s"'s earlier in the line, achieves the idea of a full escape of the power that was so far not sweeping out of the charmed circle, as it were, of the atom's vibrant energy.

Indeed, the craftsmanship of the line is superb, but its success is different from what most poets might have attained, for it is due to the choice and col-

location of particular words so as to create a particular rhythm embodying the vision-thrill of an Overhead consciousness. A Homer could be grandly resonant, a Milton make majestic thunder, a Shakespeare deploy a crowded colourful strength, and all be perfect poets thereby, but they could not charge their utterances, except in rare self-exceeding moments, with that vision-thrill, for the simple reason that the psychological levels on which they were accustomed to draw inspiration were specifically neither Overhead nor even orientated towards Yoga. And least of all without being a Yogi in a direct sense and having easy access to the planes above the mind would a poet, however great, be able to infuse into a verse about atomic energy or about some other apparently non-mystical subject the very *enthousiasmos* of the *Mantra*.

However, it is in the frequently mantric expression of reality's occult dimensions rather than of familiar or terrestrial objects that the major virtue of *Savitri* resides. For mainly by that expression, endowing with concrete intimacy what is usually a remote Wonder, it seizes our minds with the ideal of the spiritual Superman that we have to become through inward growth into and outward manifestation of the unexplored magnitudes and intensities of our subliminal and supraliminal being. Only, we must remember that no narrowly esoteric aim animates this poetry. The magnitudes and intensities of the Unknown that are expressed are not meant to be mysteries to which a mere handful can have the key. Although they may not be immediately comprehended by the major bulk of readers, they are voiced with a luminous faithfulness, not with a recondite or *recherché* ambiguity, and are brought into commerce with the familiar, the terrestrial. Their poet is never unaware of his mission to help by his calm

the swaying wheels of life  
And the long restlessness of transient things.

His pulses throb with earth's no less in *Savitri*, where the utmost heavens are spanned by

The lines that tear the veil from Deity's face

than in *Urvashi* and *Love and Death* and *Baji Prabhau* with their more directly human interest and their

Words winged with the red splendour of the heart.

Indeed, just as they touch the skies with hands of clay, *Savitri* touches the poor dust with "the high Transcendent's sunlike hands".—Man's earth-born heart is never forsaken by it. And perhaps the intensest throb of that heart is heard in those four long colloquies—first, the dialogue between King Aswa-

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pathy and the Divine Mother who grants him the boon he so passionately craves:

O radiant fountain of the world's delight  
World-free and unattainable above,  
O Bliss who ever dwellest deep hid within  
While men seek thee outside and never find,  
Mystery and Muse with hieratic tongue,  
Incarnate the white passion of thy force,  
Mission to earth some living form of thee...  
Let thy infinity in one body live,  
All-Knowledge wrap one mind in seas of light,  
All-Love throb single in one human heart...  
Omnipotence, girdle with the power of God  
Movements and moments of a mortal will,  
Pack with the eternal might one human hour  
And with one gesture change all future time—

then the sage Narad's talk with King Aswapathy and his Queen-wife about the fate chosen by their daughter Savitri and the pain involved by it:

Pain is the hand of Nature sculpturing men  
To greatness: an inspired labour chisels  
With heavenly cruelty an unwilling mould.  
Implacable in the passion of their will,  
Lifting the hammers of titanic toil  
The demiurges of the universe work;  
They shape with giant strokes their own; their sons  
Are marked with their enormous stamp of fire—

then the debate of the God of Death and the incarnate Love that is Savitri, in which Savitri affirms that

Love must not cease to live upon the earth;  
For Love is the bright link twixt earth and heaven,  
Love is the far Transcendent's angel here;  
Love is man's lien on the Absolute,

and defines against the lure of the Death-god towards escape beyond earth into pure peace the meaning of true freedom:

SAVITRI

Freedom is this with ever seated soul,  
Large in life's limits, strong in Matter's knots,  
Building great stuff of action from the worlds  
To make fine wisdom from coarse scattered strands  
And love and beauty out of war and night,  
The wager wonderful, the game divine.  
What liberty has the soul which feels not free  
Unless stripped bare and cannot kiss the bonds  
The Lover winds around his playmate's limbs,  
Choosing his tyranny, crushed in his embrace?  
To seize him better with her boundless heart  
She accepts the limiting circle of his arms,  
Bows full of bliss beneath his mastering hands  
And laughs in his rich constraints, most bound, most free.  
This is my answer to thy lures, O Death.—

and lastly the passage of ecstatic words between the Godhead of the supramental glories and Savitri the conqueror of Satyavan's mortality facing now the test and temptation of heaven's bountiful wonders and still holding out the claim of earth-life as the field of the divine Spirit:

O life, the life beneath the wheeling stars  
For victory in the tournament with death,  
For bending of the fierce and difficult bow,  
For flashing of the splendid sword of God!  
O thou who soundest the trumpet in the lists,  
Part not the handle from the untried steel,  
Take not the warrior with his blow unstruck.  
Are there not still a million fights to wage?  
O King-smith, clang on still thy toil begun,  
Weld us to one in thy strong smithy of life.  
Thy fine-curved jewelled hilt call Savitri,  
Thy blade's exultant smile name Satyavan.

Savitri is granted her prayer by the Supreme and allowed to be the centre of His manifestation among the cosmic myriads:

O lasso of my rapture's windening noose,  
Become my cord of universal love.

Thus the earth-born heart of man is shown in the poem not only in its finiteness aching for the infinite but also in an apocalyptic fulfilment. And this

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fulfilment, though dense with the mystical light, is again and again depicted in terms which go home to us and which set forth in a colossal clarity the Eternal in the movements of Time. For, Sri Aurobindo did not write his epic with the disposition of either a sworn Surrealist wedded to the obscurely entangled or a strict Symbolist cherishing a cult of the glimmeringly elusive. Behind the poet in him is the Master of Yoga whose work was to enlighten and not to puzzle and who, with all his roots in India's hoary past of spirituality, was yet a modern among moderns and the seer of a new mystical progression, a collective advance in consciousness from mind to Supermind, a whole world evolving Godwards and breaking the fetters not only of political or social tyranny but also of mortal ignorance. A democracy of the Divine liberating the human was his goal, as in those words he puts into the mouth of his Savitri:

A lonely freedom cannot satisfy  
A heart that has grown one with every heart:  
I am a deputy of the aspiring world,  
My spirit's liberty I ask for all.

K. D. SETHNA

## SOME LITERARY COMMENTS

(*Unpublished Letters of Sri Aurobindo*)

(What do you think of Yeats's letter to Purohit Swami, in which he advises Indian poets to write in their mother tongues—Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Tamil—and not try English?)

“All very well for those who can write in some language of India and don't know English intimately. But what of those who think and write naturally in English? Why didn't Yeats write in Gaelic?” (17-9-1936)

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(How is it that, among the planes of poetic inspiration, the plane of the physical consciousness or being is never mentioned by you? Is no poetry possible there? If even the lower vital can be poetic, why not this?)

“Certainly—Homer and Chaucer are poets of the physical consciousness. I have pointed that out in *The Future Poetry*.”

(But Homer you have assigned to the subtle physical, a plane quite unknown to the outer consciousness. If Chaucer too belongs there, my question still remains to be answered, doesn't it?)

“You can't drive a sharp line between the subtle physical and the physical like that in these matters. If a poet wrote from the outward physical only, his work is likely to be more photographic than poetic.” (31-5-1937)

(Much of the poetry of the Vedic Rishis is surely what you have called “overhead”, but isn't there some atmosphere of the physical plane clinging strongly to it?)

“The Vedic times were an age in which men lived in the material consciousness as did the heroes of Homer. The Rishis were the mystics of the time and took the form of their symbolic imagery from the material life around them.” (20-10-1936)

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(Does “poetic eloquence” belong to the Poetic Intelligence only or can it be part also of the Higher Mind which is an “overhead” plane?)

“It belongs to the poetic intelligence, but as in most of Milton, it can be lifted up by the touch of the Higher Mind rhythm and language.” (29-11-1936)

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(Would you take, as many critics do, Hamlet as typically a mental being? How would you characterise his essential psychology?)

“Hamlet is a Mind, an intellectual, but like many intellectuals a mind that looks too much all round and sees too many sides to have an effective will for action. He plans ingeniously without coming to anything decisive. And when he does act, it is on a vital impulse. Shakespeare suggests but does not bring out the idealist in him, the man of bright illusions.”

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(Do you think one can say that Swinburne overdoes the music-part of his poetry and that his use of assonance and alliteration is too frequent and obvious, a method to be avoided?)

“Swinburne’s defect is preference of sound to sense, but I would find it difficult to find fault with his music or his rhythmical method. There is no reason why one should not use assonance and alliteration, if one knows how to use them as Swinburne did. Everybody cannot succeed like that and those who cannot must be very careful and restrained in their use.”

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(What is exactly your idea of a “conceit” in poetry?)

“When an image comes out of the mind not properly transmuted in the inner vision or delivered by the alchemy of language, it betrays itself as coin of the fancy or the contriving intellect and is then called a conceit.”

(Would you call the following poem “mere coin of the fancy”? What is the peculiarity of poetic effect here?)

## NIGHT

No more the press and play of light release  
Thrilling bird-news between high columned trees.  
Upon the earth a blank of slumber drops:  
Only cicadas toil in grassy shops—  
But all their labours seem to cry “Peace, peace.”  
Nought travels down the roadway save the breeze;  
And though beyond our gloom—throb after throb—  
Gathers the great heart of a silver mob,  
There is no haste in heaven, no frailty mars  
The very quiet business of the stars.)

“It is very successful—the last two lines are very fine and the rest have their perfection. I should call it a mixture of inspiration and cleverness—or

perhaps ingenious discovery would be a better phrase. I am referring to such images as 'thrilling bird-news', 'grassy shops', 'silver mob'. Essentially they are conceits but saved by the note of inspiration running through the poem—while in the last line the conceit 'quiet business' is lifted beyond itself and out of conceitedness by the higher tone at which the inspiration arrives there."

(20-8-1936)

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(In the lines,

O Grace that flowest from the Master's Will,  
How fondly thou dost mitigate the power  
Of utter summit for our valleyed sake...

what do you think of the turn "our valleyed sake"? Can it pass?)

"'For our valleyed sake' is a locution that offers fascinating possibilities but fails to sound English. One might risk, 'Let fall some tears for my unhappy sake' in defiance of grammar or humourously, 'Oh shed some sweat-drops for my corpulent sake'; but 'valleyed sake' carries the principle of the *arsha prayog* (Rishi's license) beyond the boundaries of the possible."

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(Of course nobody can deny Shaw's wit or force or novelty, but hasn't he also title to be philosopher—that is, one who has a reasoned theory about basic realities? And, by the way, what do you think of the famous speech of Caesar about the Sphinx in the play *Caesar and Cleopatra*? Aren't there some thrilling touches of profundity in it?)

"I do not admit that Shaw has a reasoned theory about basic realities; the only realities he or his characters have argued about are the things of the surface; even his Life Force is only a thing of the surface or, at the most, just under the surface.

"I am not thrilled by the speech; it is a creation of the intellect, eloquent and on the surface."

(16-5-1932)

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(Would you attach real importance to the fame some poets achieve in their life-time? Do you think fame gives any clue to a poet's stature?)

"I remain convinced that fame is a fluke. Even a settled literary fame seems to be a very fluctuating affair. Who gave a thought to Blake or Donne in former times—when I was in England, for instance? But now they bid fair to be reckoned among the great poets. I see that Byron is in the depths, the quotations for Pope and Dryden are rising, it was very different in those days."

(5-2-1932)

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## MOTHER INDIA

(Here are some extracts from Fiona Macleod's poetry. Will you please comment on them?)

1) So through the grey dune-grasses  
Not the wind only cries,  
But a dim sea-wrought Shadow  
Breathes drowned sighs.

2) .....with trampling sounds  
As if herds confusedly crowding gorges...

The gloom that is the hush'd air of the Grave...

3) As the birds of Brigid, made of foam and the pale moonwhite wine  
Of dreams, flits under the sombre windless plumes of pine.

4) .....the wheeling cry  
Where in the dusk the lapwing slips and falls  
From ledge to ledge of darkness.)

1) "There is a very distinct charm about it. I am not sure of the entire success."

2) "I could not pronounce on this without seeing the poem as a whole or at least more of it. It depends on how it comes into the general scheme of the rhythm."

3) "Very fine and original and authentic in rhythm, it is absolutely the native rhythm of what she expresses."

4) "This I think magnificent."

## THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH AND CORRECT PRONUNCIATION

Now that the tide of unthinking nationalism is ebbing away, an appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober might be listened to with due attention.

During British rule the most pressing problem was to throw off the foreign yoke and it was customary to trace all our ills to the one root cause—our slavery. One often heard political leaders urging the need of abolishing English as the medium of instruction or as a compulsory subject from our universities because it imposed an atrophy on our own cultural development and put a heavy strain on the growing mind of the student who had to cram the grammatical rules of a language spoken by people living across many seas. It was also believed that Indians could never use English with the ease and flexibility natural to English-speaking peoples and thus could not write creatively in it nor make any contribution of abiding value in that language.

But, we ask, is it so in sober fact? I will take up the last point first: Can Indians—being foreigners—write creatively in English? Has such a thing happened in the past? Now, if we study the history of ancient Greek culture we find that many of the brightest stars in that firmament were not Greeks nor did they live in Greece. Syracuse in Sicily vied with Athens itself as a great centre of Greek culture and produced a shining harvest of poets, philosophers and scientific thinkers. The ancient Roman Empire also called forth the dormant genius of other nations. Seneca, the famous dramatist, hailed from Spain; even Horace and Virgil were not Romans.

Coming to our own times, we see Indian culture sweeping into the West on a wave aroused by the quickening influence of the latter. If, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, “.. today we see a humanity satiated but not satisfied by victorious analysis of the externalities of Nature preparing to return to its primeval longings” and turning towards God, Light, Freedom and Immortality it is because the great figures in recent Indian history carried our spiritual message to the world through the medium of the English language. Vivekananda, Rama Tirtha, Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, all men of high achievement and wide influence, have used it without that fretting sense which sore besets a writer when his inspiration has to grope its way out with difficulty. English, at present, is the most flexible language and answers to every need; the subtlest shades of thought and feeling can be most effectively expressed in it.

A student of the History of the English language cannot fail to be struck by the many notes that have mingled harmoniously to enrich it: the gods themselves seem to have forged out this most supple instrument of expression. First there is the old Celtic strain with its fiery aspiration for the Intangible, then the Anglo-Saxon with its simplicity and power, the French with its sweetness and precision and the care for the *mot juste* and the Latin with its sonority at once packed and polysyllabic and the Greek with its subtle suggestive terminology lending itself readily to philosophic and scientific uses—all have gone to the making of this world-language.

That there are some difficulties which a foreigner has to cope with goes without saying. But only faint hearts blench from their purpose when faced with obstacles. The question is: Is the effort required to surmount these obstacles out of proportion with the harvest that we are going to reap? If so, then nothing save wrong-headedness will persist in such an endeavour. But, if, on the contrary, the difficulties are more imaginary than real—a sort of mind-forged manacles—and the results far outweigh them, then we should face them, always remembering that every effort increases our capacities and the mind also has muscles which can be developed with training and perseverance. The possibilities of the human body and mind are endless if the will and faith are firm, and the wistful dreams of today can turn into the solid facts of tomorrow.

The benefits that accrue from a mastery of English are obvious—stretching over a wide range—from the most utilitarian to the most idealistic and spiritual. Indians enjoy a great advantage in establishing relations with the English-speaking nations and even others and our students feel at home in U.K., U.S.A., British Commonwealth countries and start their special studies at once without having to spend any time and labour in acquiring facility in the language. Commerce, International Relations and Scientific and Technological development all demand that we should not let go to waste the legacy of the English contact but make the best use of it. Our libraries are full of the most valuable books in English and only a rabid nationalism can deprive our students of the wide knowledge contained therein; rather they should acquire high proficiency in English so that they may be abreast of the most progressive nations of the world. This will also pave the way for mutual understanding between the East and the West.

Even our own past is returning upon us with its full effulgence because the greatest exponents of our culture happened to be masters of a language that has played a great part in bringing closer the peoples of the Indian sub-continent. Sri Aurobindo's *Foundations of Indian Culture* and his translations and exposition of the Vedas, Upanishads, Gita and Mahabharata and of Kalidasa bid fair to forge out the new world which will be a synthesis of East and

## THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH AND CORRECT PRONUNCIATION

West and open an era of the deepest soul-interchange between India and the World.

The Sri Aurobindo International University Centre, though yet in its infancy, has been started with Human Unity on a higher spiritual basis as its Ideal. It receives children from all parts of India and abroad. Students and teachers hail from France, Switzerland, Australia, U.K., and U.S.A. Adequate arrangements have been made for the teaching of the mother tongue but French and English serve as the media of instruction. We find children speedily picking up many languages with the result that their minds have acquired extraordinary alertness and nimbleness. The Students' Section in some past issues of *Mother India* can give some idea of their clarity of mind and high imaginative power.

*(To be continued)*

R. N. KHANNA

## LOTUS-FLAME

*(An Extract from Part Fifteen\*)*

“I am now thy body and thy infinite soul;  
My arms are more puissant than death and fate  
And I shall come back with a diamond face  
To illumine the earth, to change the base of the world  
And bring down the termless radiance and the might  
On the rocky nakedness of the dust-abys.  
In me shall be the far immaculate sun,  
The zenith-force to build the throne of God.  
And I shall leave not till the missioned height  
Of transfiguration’s last summit is reached.  
And I shall bear the nameless universe-main  
Like a child asleep upon my golden soul  
And wake its core, its hidden matchless heart.  
I shall not brook the timest barrier-wall;  
No power shall stand athwart my celestial path.  
I sacrificed my white god-living limbs;  
My human all I have offered for the globe;  
I have bestowed what gods can never grant,  
Nor life nor heaven boon with radiant hands;  
I have burst open the locks of my bosom’s seas  
To fury and cold passion-stabs of hell;  
I have been what none can dream or be or reach;  
I have discovered what none can unveil, unmask;  
I have suffered what no dust-self can endure;  
I have essayed the huge impossible  
And have achieved in my bright earth-born home  
The large unachievable unfallen ends.  
To me nothing unsurpassed is or unspanned;  
To me all is the glimmer of Her sun;  
The million sparks of Her unmanifest All.  
Now I am She, the Mother-Queen of Flame.

\*The poet figures Sri Aurobindo as speaking the following lines after he has conquered death and yet for his own purposes left his body.

## MOTHER INDIA

I am Her seed, Her might imperishable,  
The centre-fountain of Her glorious love  
And all the sweeping passion of Her grace  
And Her white unsurmountable loveliness.  
I am one with Her—limb of each diamond limb,  
The bud of Her moon-rose of changeless mood,  
The epiphanies inscrutable of Her heart.  
I am the bodiless whole, unvanquished, sheer  
Of Her undiscoverable spirit-height,  
Of the inexpressible wonder of Her soul.  
Because I am, Her being She can manifest  
And reveal Her queenship to earth's time-haunted pain.  
Because She is, I dare to leave my fane  
And plunge rudderless to black oblivion's gulf.  
I speak through Her imperial voice of light;  
She speaks through my supernal striding voice.  
Though I have left my glorious citadel,  
I have made the world of Her omnipotence  
My vast abode and playing fields of bliss.  
Though I seem to cower under the law of Death,  
I am the victor, the undefeatable king.  
Though I seem to fall, I rise perpetually free  
Because my Self no death can grip or rule.  
If I have left the outer acres of time  
Or left the shelter of exterior space,  
It is to cut with my unhorizoned stroke  
A greater landmark of God's undying fire  
And sluice-gate the gold tide upon the dust.  
Larger victories now shall attend on earth;  
Greater revelations loom on the soil;  
I have possibled the wide advent of God  
With my colossal sacrifice of flame.  
I have opened the vast doors of the Supermind  
With my stupendous holocaust of fire.  
I have bridged the known and the interminable Unknown  
With my soul's ardent offering to the Unseen.  
Now soon all barriers like nightmares shall fade;  
All shall be a ceaseless chant of gratitude,  
A hymeneal of earth and the thunder-peak;  
Soon shall the dust bear on its motionless breast



## MOTHER INDIA

The far sapphire tremours of release supreme  
And Death shall be the white altar of the Vast.  
Luminous like a sudden and sweeping bird  
I shall appear with the peak-brilliant limbs,  
A blazing miracle on the surfs of Time,  
An amazing epiphany of the Infinite.  
I shall build my body from the sparks of bliss,  
From the bright unseen elements of the sun.  
I shall make the universe the stupendous room  
Of my Elysian game, my grandiose cast.  
The whole cosmic darkness shall fall like a robe  
Of gloom and sleep and primeval ignorance  
From the termless body of universal space.  
Like a splendid pageantry of the nameless All,  
The power of the world its heart shall undrape  
And show its breasts of soul-immensities  
Where sun and moon are its far symbol-orbs,  
The curves of deathless grace, unmeasured hope,  
Where stars are born from its depths of ecstasy.  
Within its spirit, a continent of peace,  
Enthroned upon a majestic seat of sun  
The Mother of the unborn increate world  
And I the priest-king of immortality  
Shall reveal our splendour to the awakened soul.  
Time shall obey our high omnipotence;  
Space shall become the throb of spacelessness,  
A shadowless background for our eternity.  
The air shall be the hierophant of delight,  
The bearer of the wine unseen of gods.  
The earth's oceans and streams of crystal hymns  
Shall be the sacred image of our Face,  
The globe shall be the icon of our limbs,  
The ancient clay a mirror of the Supreme."

ROMEN

# NEW ROADS\*

## BOOK III

### THE NIGHT HAD ITS STARS

#### I

THROUGH what regions pass these roads to immortality?  
Through regions of high fate, doubt and despair—  
Red rage and passions that were once asleep;  
Dark thoughts that rise from deep inconscient Night  
To fright the common eyes of feeble lives  
And turn the failing heart to mortal things.  
Through swamps and quagmires of uncertainty,  
Through endless journeyings of seeking mind—  
Through trials of half sincerity and pain  
That still the heart to lonely roads of noon.  
Noon with its brilliant shadowless heat of day—  
Between the soft expectancy of dawn  
And the quiet fulfilment of the twilight hour.  
Noon, with its endless vistas of past dawns  
And the long interminable tramp towards the night.  
Noon with its blazing Eye of burnished gold  
And the heat-high hunger of relentless Time.  
Noon, with its mocking splendour of bright day  
That gilds the far horizons of the Night,  
The Night through which the soul must live and pass.

These are the roads that seek no compromise,  
That pass through valleys strewn with a bygone dead,  
The dead of ages that have gone before—  
Dead moments of doom and unremembered days;  
Dead deeds of glory—drowned unfinished dreams

\* Books I and II appeared in the issue of December, 1953.

## MOTHER INDIA

Left in the valley of forgotten tears.  
Past fames long fallen from their peaks of light  
Into the slumber of the noon-high shade  
To build a Pathway to eternity,  
To lay new roads across the valley of Night.

## II

There are moments when the bitterness of life  
O'erwhelms the aspirations of the soul;  
When Time should come to rest or turn away  
From sorrow and the hungry eyes of pain.  
There are moments when uncertainty intrudes  
Upon the sorry loneliness of Time;  
When shadows cross the Roads through which we move,  
And Fear—the habit of an animal past—  
Engulfs our nervous being like a cloud,  
Chills with the bleakness of Himalayan peaks  
To wrest from us the energy of life,  
And leaves us haggard of despair and doubt.  
These are the shadows met with on the Roads,  
The cloaks of night that shroud our ego pain,  
The veils of darkness that obscure the soul;  
The winds of bleakness that precede the dawn.  
Yet on we journey, onward is the law—  
Within our deepest being burns the Flame;  
O ever felt though sometimes lost to sight  
It frames the pattern of our destiny  
And sets the seal upon our Nature's law.  
Vast hordes of danger may assail our route,  
A barricade of difficulties uprise,  
A myriad armies bar our path in Time  
But out of Time our destiny we weave  
In spite of the contrariety of life.  
God made the worlds—the play of life is His,  
His the certitude of Victory.  
These are the Roads—the shadows and the shades;  
But man may walk, his eyes raised to the stars  
Though both his feet tread on the abyss floor.

## NEW ROADS

### III

We passed through long deserted valleys bare,  
Like troubled days with storm-wrack overhead.  
We stumbled in darkness and darkness filled our minds  
Recalling the ancient memories of fear.  
Yet this same fear could not approach the soul.  
Some fell in error, some in dire distress,  
Some wandered off on other paths to roam,  
Some sought relief in vital worlds of sense,  
Some left the yoga for a life of ease  
Thinking that comfort would appease desire.  
Life was a desert waste to be endured  
For those who tried to conquer by themselves.  
Life was an ocean vast, unending, wide  
To unknown horizons where no eagle flies  
For those who strove with mind to understand  
The darkest hour before the coming Dawn.  
Or life was a drear despondency of doom  
Leading to death, through lonely roads of thought,  
For those whose heart was covered with a cloud  
Of dark forebodings from inconscient Night.  
Some tried to prove themselves perfect and wise  
To cover up a poverty of soul.  
Some of the oldest warriors stumbled and fell,  
Some were lost on the perilous road we trod.  
Some even were lost and found on other roads  
To be recovered and to start again.  
Some drank the bitter cup of human ills  
To find small consolation in the world.  
Despair arose from weak despondent lives,  
To mock the flame of faith that yet remained.  
The route became one long tremendous march  
To measure the light of our sincerity  
Against the background of the encircling night.  
The Roads led onward to a vast Unknown;  
Onward to the imperative urge of Light  
That lingered yet within the memory—  
And the Godhead shining through all symbols and signs.  
A true awareness was the high demand,

## MOTHER INDIA

A vigilance firm, constant and austere  
Was here expected from the chosen few.  
A brave sincerity aspired on high,  
Informed the warrior march of destiny  
And found its fulness in the blossoming years.  
The roads led inward through the night of the soul.

## INTERLUDE TO PEACE

Bright sunlight kissed the leaves;  
The rain-washed sky  
Lifted the burden of a heart that grieves,  
Answered the appealing cry  
Of a soul to know  
The truth and purpose of its destiny.  
And from the earth below  
A wave of love  
Mounted the magic of an inward glow—  
Echoed the skies above  
And found its peace  
In the mystic fastness of an alien cove.

*(To be continued)*

NORMAN DOWSETT

# *Students' Section*

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## THE MOTHER'S TALKS

*(To the Children of the Ashram)*

### THE DIVINE SUFFERING

GENERALLY speaking, when one is unhappy, it is one more suffering added to the collective suffering of the Divine. The Divine acts upon Matter in a state of deep compassion: this compassion is translated in Matter and is figured there by what we call Psychic Sorrow. It is, as it were, a reversed image of the original reality.

The Divine's compassion, translated in the individual physical consciousness, becomes a sorrow that is not egoistic, a sorrow that is an expression of one's identification with the universal sorrow through sympathy. I have described the experience at some length in one of the Prayers and Meditations. I spoke there of "the sweetest tears that I shed in life"; for those tears were not for my sake, I was not weeping for myself. In almost every case man grieves for egoistic reasons, in the human way. Whenever anyone loses a person he loves, he suffers and weeps, not over the condition of the person: in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred or even more, people do not know in what condition the person gone may be, they do not and cannot know if the person is happy or unhappy, if he is suffering or is in peace. It is the sense of separation that causes the grief, the feeling that he will not be with them any more which they so much wish. At the root of all human sorrow, there lies this return upon one's own self, more or less conscious, more or less admitted. But when you feel unhappy for the unhappiness of others, there comes in a mixture. That is to say, to your personal grief is added a psychic element which I described as the reversed image of the Divine Compassion. Now, if you can distinguish between the two, the personal anguish and the disinterested sorrow, come out of what is egoistic and concentrate upon the divine element, make yourself one with it, then you can in that way come in contact with the great universal compassion, which is

something immense, vast, calm, mighty, profound, which is perfect peace and infinite Bliss. If you know then how to enter into your suffering, go down to the very bottom of it, pass beyond the portion that is egoistic and personal, go farther on, then you arrive at the door of a wonderful revelation. Not that you should seek suffering for the sake of the suffering and in order to have the experience; but when it is there, when it has come upon you, then try what I have suggested, cross the border, the barrier of egoism in your suffering: note first where is the egoistic part, what is it that makes you suffer, what is the egoistic reason of your suffering, then step across and beyond, towards something universal, towards a greater principle. You enter then into the vast, the infinite compassion, the door of the Psychic opens for you. If, in that domain, you see me in tears, as you say you did in your dream, then you can identify yourself with me at the moment, enter into those tears as it were, melt into them. That will open the door and it will bring you an experience, a very unique experience that leaves always a deep mark upon the consciousness. It is never blotted out altogether even if the door closes again and you become once more what you are in your ordinary movements. That experience, that mark remains behind and you can recall it, go back to it, refer to it in your moments of concentration. You feel then the immensity of an infinite sweetness, a great peace, pervading all your being, it is not in your thought only; it goes out and sympathises with everything and can cure everything.

Only you must sincerely wish, you must have the will, to be cured. Everything lies there. Now I always come back to the same theme. You must be sincere. If you want an experience for the sake of the experience and, once you have it, to go back to your ordinary ways, that will not do. You must sincerely will to be cured—cured precisely of the ordinary ways—you must have the aspiration, the true aspiration to overcome the obstacle, to mount up and up, above and beyond yourself, so that you may drop all that pulls you back, drags you down, to break all limits, clarify and purify yourself, rid yourself of all that lies in your way. If you have this will, the true intense will not to fall back into past errors, to rise out of obscurity and ignorance towards the light, shorn of all that is human, too human—too small, too ignorant—then that will and that aspiration shall act, act gradually, strongly and effectively bringing you a complete and definitive result. But beware, there must be nothing that clings to the old movements, that does not declare itself but hides its head and when the occasion is opportune puts up its snout.

So I say you must be truly sincere, very truly. If you discover anything clutching, sticking somewhere in the depths, you must be ready to pluck it out, wholly erase it and see no mark of it is left behind. Yes, sometimes you repeat your mistakes. You repeat till your suffering becomes too acute to bear

## THE MOTHER'S TALKS

and compels you to be sincere in spite of yourself as it were. But you need not try that line. It is a method, but a bad method: bad, because it destroys so many things, wastes so much energy, leaves such bad vibrations. In the intensity of your suffering you do discover the will towards perfect sincerity. But you can be sincere also in less arduous and tortuous a way.

There is a moment in the life of every one, there is a moment when this need of perfect sincerity comes as a matter of ultimate choice. There is a moment in the life of the individual and there is a moment in the life of the group also to which the individual belongs, when that choice has to be made, the final purification has to be performed. It is a question then almost of life and death, the progress has to be made if one is to survive.

26-5-1954

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA



## MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

### VISIONS AND VOICES

SELF: Sometimes scenes come before my eyes even when I have not thought of them and when I have not wanted their presence. Are these images mental ones or something subtler?

SRI AUROBINDO: These are not mental images. There is an inner vision that opens when one does sadhana and all sorts of images rise before it or pass. Their coming does not depend upon your thought or will; it is real and automatic. Just as your physical eyes see things in the physical world, so the inner eyes see things and images that belong to the other worlds and subtle images of things of this physical world also. (31-5-1933)

SELF: Suppose an image has appeared before one's eyes. If one had not desired or even thought of it, would it not disqualify from being called a mental image?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, it is not like that. A mental image may also come suddenly, e.g. if some one is thinking of you, you may see a mental image of that person. (1-6-1933)

SELF: Can one stop such mental images when one does not want to see them?

SRI AUROBINDO: One can always dismiss them and if one is very conscious one can put up a mental will against their appearance. (2-6-1933)

SELF: Do things and images seen by the inner eyes rise and pass rapidly and directly to the consciousness? Has one no power to do anything with his inner eyes? Can they not turn and look towards the divine worlds?

SRI AUROBINDO: You see what you are able to see, it is a mental vision. If you try to see this or that, you are likely to create mental images only. It is only by the development of consciousness that you can see the divine worlds. (5-6-1933)

SELF: Are subtle images restricted to any particular object or realm?

MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO: Subtle images can be images of all things in all worlds.  
(5-6-1933)

SELF: Is there any distinction between the images seen by the inner eyes and those produced by the lower forces?

SRI AUROBINDO: Everything not physical is seen by an inner vision.  
(28-7-1933)

SELF: I saw Mother's form in a dream last night. Was it real or was imagination only at work?

SRI AUROBINDO: What do you mean by real? It was the form of Mother in a dream experience; Imagination applies only to the waking mind. (3-7-1933)

SELF: But cannot false forces take the form of the Mother?

SRI AUROBINDO: If false forces take the form of the Mother, it will be with some bad object. If there is no attack or wrong suggestion, you need not suppose that it is false forces that have done it.

Of course it is always possible that something in your own consciousness has constructed a dream about the Mother or put her figure there when she herself was not there. That happens when it is only a dream, a number of ideas and memories etc. of the mind put together and not experience on another plane.  
(5-7-1933)

SELF: In a letter about subtle supraphysical fragrance, you used the phrase: "Like the supraphysical light seen by the eyes." Do our eyes see the supraphysical light, then? Can one really enjoy it without going to the supraphysical worlds?

SRI AUROBINDO: What light? If you mean the supraphysical light you don't get it on the physical. You get the supraphysical inner vision often behind the physical sight and you see with that, supraphysical things as is perfectly natural.  
(23-10-1933)

SELF: At pranam while putting my head in the Mother's lap I heard some voice. It was felt to be the Mother's. Did she really say something to me inwardly or was it a mere illusion of mine?

SRI AUROBINDO: It may have been that the Mother conveyed something to you. At this moment she does not remember.  
(27-4-1933)

MOTHER INDIA

SELF: When one tries to do something that is contrary to the Divine's Will, what is it that tells one inwardly not to do it?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is the discriminating mind or the psychic that tells. (8-7-1933)

SELF: Is it not a fact that to hear the Mother's voice inwardly and to recognise it as hers is easy?

SRI AUROBINDO: No, to hear and recognise the Mother's voice within is not easy. (8-7-1933)

SELF: When is one said to be ready to hear the Mother's voice from within?

SRI AUROBINDO: When one has equality, discrimination and sufficient yogic experience,—otherwise any voice may be mistaken for the Mother's. (7-7-1933)

SELF: Can one rely solely upon the voice from within and be thus guided by the Mother?

SRI AUROBINDO: If it is the Mother's voice; but you have to be sure of that. (7-7-1933)

SELF: On several occasions I seemed to listen to people's thoughts. What being in me did this?

SRI AUROBINDO: It is not a being listening. It is simply that your mind became aware of the others' thoughts. (1-6-1933)

SELF: After I become aware of others' thoughts, if I am not careful and if I let them enter me they may take hold of my vital being and disturb my consciousness. If they come and pass, it is all right, but I must not stick to them.

SRI AUROBINDO: Certainly, but if you don't know where they come from, still they might come in and then you would take them for your own thoughts and find it more difficult to dismiss them. (2-6-1933)

NAGIN DOSHI

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH PROSE

(ELIZABETHAN AND 17TH CENTURY)

THE development of a good English prose (such as we only have within the last century) was a slow process. It was only by the end of the 17th century that there began to emerge some definite idea of the proper function of prose as a distinct form of utterance from poetry (although poetry then began to suffer at the expense of prose development). This distinction between the functions of prose and poetry was an important step; and although it restricted for a certain time the domain of poetry, it increased the intensity and clarity of prose. From the beginning of the 18th century prose began to serve not only for the transmission of logical thought and ideas, but also in its own right as a medium of imaginative expression and flights of fancy. In other words, prose had begun by that time to include the domain formerly occupied by poetry. The relation between prose and poetry had thus become exactly reversed. In the great flowering of Elizabethan poetry, prose was completely coloured by the lyrical and poetic expression. By the beginning of the 18th century, prose had attained an independent and powerful status, so that it could, and did begin to, command the region of imagination and fancy. The chief trend of this period is therefore the gradual emergence of prose as a separate and distinct form, and thenceforth its growing dominance over poetry.

We have to go back to the pre-Reformation period (before 1535) in order to see the powerful influence that Latin—at least mediaeval Latin—held over earlier English prose development. It was a hold that retarded the whole development of English as we know it today. Through the Church and the Universities Latin had been for centuries both the sacred and secular or “learned” language of England. It was the language for inter-European communication between scholars, as well as the one for political and ecclesiastical matters. Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516) is an example of an English writer’s work that appeared only in Latin.

The Reformation gave the impetus for scholars to turn to the vulgar English tongue—a long-neglected ground—as the medium of the new Prayer Book and Bible. It took three-quarters of a century for the rough native English to be cast into a purified form, and emerge as a standard “thoroughbred” in the 1611 Bible. Much of this work of refinement was the achievement of the

Elizabethan dramatists, who had of necessity to work on the foundation of the common speech. Shakespeare's contribution here played a major part in uplifting and enriching the language.

The beginning of the Elizabethan period, which followed in the wake of the Reformation, marks also the real beginning of the struggle of English prose to emerge as an independent medium as well as to stand up in its own right free of Latin props. It was the struggle between the scholars who approached English with the Latin background and achievement in mind, and the writers who saw the need for developing a living English prose that kept close to the common speech. It was part of the long process of assimilating the foreign elements into English (including Latin), and the need for refining the native idiom (chiefly of Teutonic origin) by means of those alien elements. An early example of the defender of pure native English is Roger Ascham, whose classic work *The Scholemaster* appeared in 1570.

Ascham's efforts (and those of other early Elizabethans also) were soon submerged by new influences which came concurrently with the new poetic outburst around 1580. These influences were centred around the Romantic prose tales, chiefly translations from the Italian, that were beginning to appear in England. Lyly's *Euphues* is the well-known example of these new romances, which introduced the ornate elaborate prose style, fanciful in both theme and language. It was the direct influence of the poetical Italian prose that went hand-in-hand with the developing lyrical impulse of the Elizabethan writers. This ornate style became the vogue of the Elizabethans. It was taken up by Sir Philip Sidney and thence passed on into the drama (which was at first fired by this same lyrical impulse). Shakespeare's earliest plays, such as *Love's Labour's Lost*, show the strong and widespread influence of the Euphuistic writing on Elizabethan literature. (Shakespeare, however, soon shook himself free of this influence when he had developed a dramatic speech free of lyricism.)

Two Elizabethan prose writers appear, at the end of the century, with a more serious tone: Richard Hooker and Francis Bacon. The first was a sober ecclesiastical writer, and the second the writer of the first English essay. Both faced anew the struggle of reconciling Latin phraseology with English constructions, which were yet in the state of formation; and both show the signs of this struggle. It was an admirable effort; and though their prose is on many occasions uneven and repetitive, or awkward with long tortuous constructions, it revealed clearly for later writers the real problem that had to be faced.

The prose of the early Elizabethan writer, Ascham, seems comparatively simple when placed alongside the work of these writers of the close of the century; but we have to remember that Ascham and the early Elizabethans had merely concentrated on simplified phrasing, but had not tackled the problem of the cons-

truction of a forceful and ample prose. They had merely used the short sentence, as Bacon had detrimentally done in his early writings. The chief difficulty of the later Elizabethan writers was to achieve a continuity in their prose, while at the same time admitting streams of subordinate ideas that seemed to spring spontaneously from their central motive. Their whole work, therefore, appears to be a lavish overgrowth, in which the principal theme is for the most part submerged or difficult to separate. Ben Jonson—the last of the Elizabethans—made the most valiant effort to achieve a classical prose that was yet related to the speech rhythm, but he also had not yet hit on the clue of the subordinate clause construction.

The root difficulty of the Elizabethan prose is bound up with the high flights of fancy, the roving imagination, to which the Elizabethan mind was prone. The following extract from Ben Jonson—one of the highlights of Elizabethan prose—shows this poetic entanglement clearly, and also shows its disadvantage, in this context, when a more defined statement was needed.

“Scientia. Knowledge is the action of the soul, and is perfect without the senses, as having the seeds of all science and virtue in itself; but not without the service of the senses; by those organs the soul works: she is a perpetual agent, prompt and subtle: but often flexible and erring, intangling herself like a silkworm, but her reason is a weapon with two edges, and cuts through. In her indogations oft-times new scents put by her, and she takes in errors into her by the same conduits she doth truths.”

We find these same entanglements of the poetic impulse and the flights of fancy—in Bacon’s prose, which owing to the nature of his chosen field (natural philosophy) was a more serious intrusion against the clarity of the thought, than in the case of Jonson. The sedate and more tempered prose had not yet come.

The great landmark establishing the independence of English prose was the appearance of the Bible in 1611, which presented a plain standard English completely free of Latinisms. But this was only a beginning, and not the solution of the problem. The Bible, being itself a translation from the Hebrew and Greek original, merely showed the potentiality of native English as a literary language. It was neither an original English literary expression, nor had it reconciled the classical influence. It was the task of the ensuing writers to work out a more literary synthesis of the classical and the rough native elements.

*(To be continued)*

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