PAST LIVES AND REBIRTH

(That you were Kaliadas is, I imagine, regarded by everyone as an open secret. It is almost a part of our credo. Just the other day I happened to ask Nolini whether you were Kaliadas and Shakespeare. He was diffident about the Bard, but Kaliadas—certainly! My own belief is that you have somehow amalgamated all that was precious in those forces also from other worlds, that manifested as Homer, Shakespeare, Valmiki, Dante, Virgil and Milton; if not all, at least the biggest of the lot. Kindly let us know the truth. Among your other, non-poetic incarnations, we have heard of Alexander, Caesar, da Vinci, le Grand Monarque.)

"Good heavens, all that! You have forgotten that Mrs. Besant claims Julius Caesar. I don’t want to be proselytized by her for misappropriation of personality. Alexander was too much of a torrent for me; I disclaim Milton and Virgil, an unconscious of Dante and Valmiki, diffident like Nolini about the Bard (and money-lender) of Aven. If, however, you can bring sufficiently cogent evidence, I am ready to take upon my back the offensives of all the famous people in the world or any of them; but you must prove your case.

"Seriously, the historical identifications are a perilous game and open a hundred doors to the play of imagination. Some may, in the nature of things must be, but; once people begin, they don’t know where to stop. What is important is the lines, rather than the lives, the incarnation of Forces that explain what one now is—and, as for the particular lives or rather personalities, those alone matter which are very definite in one and have powerfully contributed to what one is developing now. But it is not always possible to put a name upon these; for not one hundred-thousandth part of what has been has still a name preserved by human Time." (1-4-1932).

(Mother or you are said to have declared that a divine descent was attempted during the Renaissance, with Leonardo da Vinci as its centre—a very credible report since we believe you were Leonardo and Mother Mona Lisa. I shall be much interested to know something about the inner side of the phenomenon. Was Leonardo aware of a semi-avatārshah or a pressure of the spiritual planes?)

"Never heard before of my declaring or anybody discussing such a thing. What Leonardo da Vinci held in himself was all the new age of Europe on its many sides. But there was no question of Avatarhood or consciousness of a descent or pressure of spiritual planes. Mystics was no part of what he had to manifest." (15-7-1937).

(Certain poets very strongly appeal to me and their minds and characters seem to have strong affinities with mine in different ways. Have you any intuitions in the matter of my past lives? Mother once saw Horace (as well as Hector) behind Dilip; but she has told me nothing about myself except that she is positive I was an Athenian.)

"A strong influence from one or more poets or all of them together is not sufficient to warrant a conclusion that one has been those poets or any of them in former lives. I have myself no intuition on the subject of your past lives, though from general impressions I would be inclined to wager that you were not only in Athens (that is evident) but in England during the Restoration time or thereabouts, in Renaissance Italy etc: these, however, are only impressions."

(12-5-37).

(Can one be born a man in one life and a woman in another? A French friend of mine once told me she was an Indian guru in a past life. Nishkanto related to me an old dream of his in which he saw himself as a famous English poetess.)

"The devil! An Indian guru? Well! As for Nishkanto’s dream, it does not show that he was that poetess, he may only have been identified with her in the dream. In any case, as far as I know, the births follow usually one line or the other and do not alternate—that, I think, is the Indian tradition also, though there are purposeful exceptions like Shikhandi’s. If there is a change of sex, it is only part of the being that associates itself with the change, not the central being." (15-7-1937).

(Isn’t it the popular idea that the same soul takes the form of either a man or a woman according to need in its birth-series? Annie Besant is reported to have declared that she had been not only Julius Caesar but Giordano Bruno, and also Hercules with Dr. Leach at Mrs. Hercules! What do you say to that? At least about Harin wasn’t she remarkably correct in saying that he had been Shelley? And she ought to be better informed about her own past.)

"What do you mean by the popular idea? All the instances I have heard of in the popular accounts of rebirth are of men becoming man and woman becoming woman in the next life—except when they become animal, but even then I think the male becomes a male animal and the female a female animal. There are only stray cases quoted like Shikhandi’s in the Mahabharata for variation of sex. The Theosophist conception is full of raw imaginations, one Theosophist even going so far as to say that if you are a man in this birth you are obliged to be a woman in the next and so on. A good prospect for you in your next life . . . I know nothing about Harin having been Shelley."

(16-7-1937).

(It’s surprising that you should so completely forget your own discoveries. There is absolutely no doubt that Mother attributes to you the intuition that Harin was Shelley. It’s true you had once joked about Mrs. Besant’s declaration to the same effect, but, later on, you yourself felt as a practical certainty that what she had said was true. Just ask Mother whether you hadn’t done so. If both of you say “No” now—well “chaos has come again!” Another interesting point about Harin is that in all his lives he is said by Mother to have been a poet.)

"Did Mother say that to you or have you heard it from Harin or anyone else? I ask because I have never had any practical certainty or any certainty that Harin was Shelley—what by the way is this practical certainty? The phrase would mean normally that I was not quite sure about it but rather felt as if it must be so. I asked Mother and she said that the question had frequently been raised and she spoke to me about it and I said it might be so. If that is what is meant by practical certainty, then of course! But how is that an intuition? The question was often raised, often by Harin himself because he was anxious to get it confirmed—I remember to have replied in the negative. No doubt there was a strong Shelleyan vein in Harin’s poetry, but if everybody who has that to be accounted a reincarnation of Shelley, we get into chaotic waters. In that case, Tagore must be..."
Sri Aurobindo's Letters — Continued from page 1

a reincarnation of Shelley and Harin, logically must be a reincarnation of Tagore—who couldn't wait till Tagore walked off to Paradise or Shilpigah—because I can remember very well (psychically and not in any outward event) my contact with his personality then. So also Mother saw a series of past lives in various countries in which Harin was always a poet, hence the statement alluded to by you. But about what is not seen or inwardly remembered, there can be no certitude. Mother's statements are often misheard or exaggerated—so unless she told it to you herself and in that case did she really speak of an intuition or a practical certainty? There is an enormous difference between the two—as big a difference as between sight and inference.

"Besides, I imagine Shelley was not an evolutionary being but a being of a higher plane assisting in the evolution."

(18-7-1937.)

"You say you have a distinct psychic memory of your contact with Dilip's personality as Horace. Well, who were you at that time? Your figures stand out in that period as likely: Caesar, Antony, Virgil, Maccenas and we may add Caesar Octavianus. Maccenas and Virgil cannot be in contact with Horace—the latter was called by Horace the 'whitest soul I know.' But I have heard it said that you were Julius Caesar—though I don't know if he ever came into touch with Horace. Antony recommends himself in the most clearly associated with Maccenas who, I believe, Mother was. Please settle the point instead of leaving us in the midst of reports and conjectures.

"I don't see why I should not learn swimming in the joy of a mere swimmer, but I don't think so famous people were. Why not Pollux? Or one of those friends Horace speaks of or in his odes and epistles?"

(26-7-1937.)

"It is not likely that when Mother was blazing away as Cleopatra she should have hidden your light under a bushel—much less that you should have never come into contact with her but chosen rather to be an unimportant art friend of Horace's who didn't care a rap whether Cleopatra lived or died, existed or didn't. As Caesar said wittily, yes, either Caesar or nobody, except the only other figure thinkable: Antony. So I have narrowed your choice and unless you choose I'll believe that you divided yourself equally between the two—a peculiar sort of Divide et impera business by which you could come doubly into contact with Horace, and in a sense the more probable because he conquered Vercingetorix who one of your disciples in the Ashram is supposed to have been—only, I don't know if Caesar had anything to do with Horace. To know that Mother was Cleopatra and not to know who you were at that time creates an asymmetry in my artistic mind can't bear."

"Julius Caesar had nothing to do with Horace, so he is out of court. Antony was not—so far as I know—he was another man if you could have got into the picture. Then? Your artistic passion for symmetry may easily mislead you, for life has all sorts of irregular figures. Your reasonings are too geometrical. Because Julius Caesar was the conqueror and slayer of Vercingetorix in one life is not a reason why in another he should not be a slave to you."

(28-7-1937.)

"(My statement that you could not have been a nonentity or one who has had as much contact with Cleopatra remains—and it has given me the clue that you were neither Julius Caesar nor Antony. So who remains—a famous person in contact at one time or another with both Horace and Cleopatra? The answer is unmistakable: Caesar Octavianus, afterwards Augustus, the first Emperor of Rome. Have I at last hit the nail on the head? If so, will you please tell me, as you did about Leonardo da Vinci, what exactly he stood for in the history of Europe?)"

"Augustus Caesar organised the life of the Roman Empire and it was this that made the framework of the first transition of the Graeco-Roman civilisation to Europe—he came for that work and the writings of Virgil and Horace and others helped greatly towards the success of his mission. After the interlude of the Middle Ages, this civilisation was reborn in the Renaissance but not in its life-aspects but in its intellectual aspects. It was therefore a supreme intellectual, Leonardo da Vinci, who took up again the work and summarised in himself the seeds of modern Europe."

(28-7-1937.)

"(What determines the character and conditions of one's next life?)

"The psychic being at the time of death chooses what it will work out in the next life and determines the character and conditions of the next life personality. Life is for the evolutionary growth by experience in the conditions of the Ignorance till one is ready for the higher Light."

(25-7-57.)

"(Is the psychic being's choice coloured completely by the dying wish of the man, as the Gita seems to imply?)

"The dying wish of the man is only something on the surface—it may be the word 'psychic' and so help to shape the future but it does not determine the psychic's choice. That is something behind the veil. It is not the outer conscious men's action that determines the inner process, but the other way round. Sometimes, however, there are signs or frag-
WHAT NEXT?
By A. L. CRAMPTON CHALK

The speed of events in the world-to-day is so breath-taking that it is hardly possible to secure a reasonably balanced inventory of world affairs at any one time. No sooner does some sort of general shape of things emerge than it is fundamentally altered overnight by the impact of other factors from quite unexpected directions. The human race has invented so many machines of such power and ingenuity that it can turn millions of people in one corner of the globe into an artist's nest of tumult and confusion when someone makes a speech at the opposite side. Naked power is shooting about like a new human instrument like lightning in a dark cosmic storm, and civilised as well as uncivilised folk are cowering and looking up apprehensively to see where it will strike next.

It is all very terrifying; obviously this is one of the great dramatic birth periods of humanity, and it is much more than a matter of intellectual interest to each one of us to see whether there emerges a new Child of Light and hope out of the monster of darkness to take over as the tyrant force of the immediate future. For these two opposite possibilities seem at first sight to be not unevenly matched at the moment. It is the purpose of this article, however, to suggest that even from a material standpoint there is sound ground for the hope that the course which the race is now taking is, in fact, now set rather towards the light than the darkness; moreover that this probability fits in with the general evolutionary scheme and urge of Nature as presented by Sri Aurobindo's teaching.

Let me consider first the change that has recently taken place in the Western world, where the overwhelming material power of the race is based. It is obvious at once that a quite astonishing, unprecedented broad-based evolutionary advance has been made. There is a co-operativeness and unity of purpose among the freedom-loving peoples that is much more real than ever before in recorded history. The United States of America, to take the greatest and most arresting example, emerge not only as the most powerful single nation in the world but as a people aware of themselves as having a destiny and responsibility of a kind that a few years ago was positively abhorrent to them. Perhaps such a political redress has never before been seen in the world; it is quite stupendous as a sign of the evolutionary temperature of the times. Indeed, it is perhaps an exaggeration to say that it is the sort of evolutionary leap that separates one world age from the next and starts a new human orientation.

It is nothing whatever against the purport of this astonishing change in outlook that it is partly based on self-interest. Nature has nothing to do with our little local morbidities and her vast economies make use of ethics that are utterly beyond our comprehension; it is simply the case that America has arisen to the need and impulsion of the moment and, by her own ways and her own pattern of enlightenment, has taken up the work and the burden that was presented to her as a choice. It is instructive and very easy to imagine how black the case would look for the free world if America had not seized her weapons when the assassination of South Korea was entered upon by the Communists. She might have hidden her face in a gesture of appeasement of the murderer, justifying herself for inaction by her love of peace and the secret hope that by letting the countries of the world be eaten up one by one the appetite of the ravenous would be satisfied and leave her alone in the West in her riches, luxury and power. We are quite sure that voices were not lacking in her midst to urge the wantonness of committing American lives and treasure to the horror and wickedness of another war.

The Americans are a truly peace-loving people and abhor war but, fortunately for the free world, there are things they abhor more—oppression and enslavement on any plane of life, for example. It seems inevitable that if America had held her hand when South Korea was raped every country on the Asian mainland not already occupied by Communists would now be in imminent danger of assault by them. Probably the same conditions would prevail in Europe. Here then, is a great sign and movement of the effective that one force that will—we hope—establish the race in an era of freedom of spirit, and beat down the attacks of the dark armies of the new tertiary states.

Here it seems necessary to say that there is a great deal of muddled thinking among free men concerning the evils of war and the impropriety

Ananda

O come, the soul awaits Thy Golden Kiss,
To hold Thy Bliss but not the pride of bliss.

O stay, pure Loveliness—
O rare Delight!
Leave Thy Love's sweet impress
Upon our night.
Savitri

By SRI AUROBINDO

BOOK VII: THE BOOK OF YOGA

Canto 3: The Entry into the Inner Countries

The text below—describing Savitri’s plunge inward into mysterious worlds on her way to her soul’s light for combating Satyavan’s too early doom and, in the figure of that doom, mortal man’s imperfection on earth—was recently revised by Sri Aurobindo, but some final touches remained to be given.—EDITOR

At first out of the busy hum of mind
As if from a loud thronged market into a cave
By an inward moment’s magic she had come
A stark hushed emptiness became her self:
Her mind unvisited by the voice of thought
Stared at a void deep’s dumb infinity.
Her heights receded, her depths behind her closed;
All fled away from her and left her blank.
But when she came back to her self of thought,
Once more she was a human being on earth,
A lump of Matter, a house of closed sight,
A mind compelled to think out ignorance,
A life-force pressed into a camp of works
And the material world her limiting field.
Amused like one unknowing she sought her way
Out of the tangle of man’s ignorant past
That took the surface person for the soul.
Then a voice spoked that dwelt on secret heights:
“For man thou seekest, not for thyself alone.
Only if God assumes the human mind
And puts on mortal ignorance for his cloak
And makes himself the Dwarf with triple stride,
Can he help man to grow into the God.
As man disguised the cosmic Greatness works
And finds the mystic inaccessible gate
And opens the Immortal’s golden door.
Man human follows in God’s human steps.
Accepting his darkness thou must bring to him light,
Accepting his narrowness thou must bring to him bliss.
In Matter’s body find thy heaven-born soul.”
Then Savitri surged out of her body’s wall
And stood a little span outside herself
And looked into her subtle being’s depths
And in its heart as in a lotus-bud
Divined her secret and mysterious soul.
At the dim portal of the inner life
That bars out from our depths the body’s mind
And all that lives but by the body’s breath,
She knocked and pressed against the ebony gate.
The living portal groused with sullen hinge:
Heavily reluctant it complained inert
Against the tyranny of the spirit’s touch.
A formidable voice cried from within:
“Back, creature of earth, lest tortured and torn thou die.”
A dreadful murmur rose like a dim sea; the Serpent of the threshold hissing rose,
A fatal guardian hood with monstrous coils,
The hounds of darkness growled with jaws agape,
And trolls and gnomes and gobins scowled and stared
And wild beast roarings thrilled the blood with fear
And menace muttered in a dangerous tongue.
Unshaken will she pressed on the rigid bars:
The gate swung wide with a protesting jar,
The opponent Powers withdrew their dreadful guard;
Her being entered into the inner worlds.
In a narrow passage, the subconscious’s gate,
She breathed with difficulty and pain and strove
To find the inner self concealed in sense.
Into a dense of subtle Matter packed,
A cavity filled with blind mass of power,
An opposition of misleading gleams,
A heavy barrier of unseeing sight,
She forced her way through body to the soul.
Across a perilous border line she passed
Where life digs into the subconscious dark
Or struggles from Matter into chaos of mind,
Aswarm with elemental entities
And fluttering shapes of vague half-bodied thought
And crude beginnings of incipient force.
At first a difficult narrowness was there,
A press of uncertain powers and drifting wills;
For all was there but nothing in its place.
At times an opening came, a door was forced;
She crossed through spaces of a secret self
And trod in passages of inner Time.
At last she broke into a form of things,
A start of finiteness, a world of sense:
But all was still confused, nothing self-found.
Soul was not there but only cries of life.
A thronged and clamorous air environed her.
A hoarde of sounds defied significance,
A dissonant clash of cries and contrary calls;
A mob of visions broke across the sight,
A jostled sequence lacking sense and suite.
Feelings pushed through a packed and burdened heart,
Each forced its separate inconsequent way
But cared for nothing but its red and drive.
A rally without key of common will,
Thought started at thought and pulled at the taut brain
As if to pluck the reason from its seat
And cast its corpse into life’s runaway drain,
So might forgotten lie in Nature’s mud
Abandoned the slain sentinel of the soul.
So could life’s power shake from it mind’s rule,
Nature renounces the spirit’s government
And the bare elemental energies
Make of the sense a glory of boundless joy,
A splendour of ecstatic anarchy,
A revel mighty and mad of utter bliss.
This was the sense’s instinct void of soul
Or when the soul sleeps hidden void of power.
But now the vital godhead wakes within
And lifts the life with the superman’s touch.
But how shall come the glory and the flame
If mind is cast away into the abyss?
For body without the mind has not the light,
The rapture of spirit sense, the joy of life;
All then becomes subconscious, tenacious,
Inconscience puts its seal on Nature’s page
Or else a mad disorder whirs the brain
Posting along a ravaged nature’s roads,
A chaos of disordered impulses
In which no light can come, no joy, no peace.
This state now threatened, this she pushed from her.
As if in a long endless tomsing street
One driver mad a trampling hurrying crowd
Hour after hour she trod without release.
Holding by her will the senseless mute at bay;
Out of the dreadful press she dragged her will
And fixed her thought upon the saviour Name;
Then all grew still and empty; she was free.
A large deliverance came, a vast calm space.
Awhile she moved through a blank tranquility
Of naked Light from an invisible sun,
A void that was a bodiless happiness,
A blissful vacuum of nameless peace.
But now a mightier danger’s front drew near:
The press of bodily mind, the Inconscient’s brood
Of aimless thought and will had fallen from her.
Approaching loomed a giant head of Life
Un govemed by mind or soul, subconscious, vast.
It tossed all power into a single drive,
It made its power a might of dangerous seas.
Into the stillness of her silent self,
Into the whiteness of its muse of Space
A spate, a torrent of the speed of Life
Broke like a wind-lashed driven mob of waves
Racing on a pale floor of summer sand;
It drowned its banks, a mountain of climbing waves.
Enormous was its vast and passionate voice.
It cried to her listening spirit as it ran,
Demanding God’s submission to chainless Force.
A deaf force calling to a status dumb,
A thousand voices in a muted Vest.
It claimed the heart’s support for its clutch at joy,
For its need to act the witness soul’s consent,
For its lust of power her neutral being’s seal.
Into the wideness of her watching self
It brought a grandiose gust of the Breath of Life;
Its torrent carried the world's hopes and fears.
All 'life, all Nature's dissatisfied hungry cry,
And the longing all eternity cannot still.
It called to the mountain secrets of the soul
And the miracle of the never-dying fire,
It spoke to some first imperishable unity
Hidden in the creative beat of Life;
Out of the never unwept tears of love
Its sure and magic of disordered bliss,
Into earth-light poured its music of tangled charts
And heavily naught of Nature's primitive joy
And the fire and mystery of forbidden delight
Drunk from the world-ahhido's bottomless well,
And the heavy-sweet perfume of lust and death,
But dreamt a vintage of glory of life's gods,
And felt in celestial rapture's golden string.
The cycles of the infinity of desire
And the mystique that made an unrealised world
Wider than the known and closer than the unknown
In which hunt for ever the hounds of mind and life,
Tempted a deep disentangled urge within
To long for the unfilled and ever far
And make this life upon a limiting earth
A clasp towards summits vanishing in the void,
A search for the glory of the impossible,
It dreamed of that which never has been known,
It grasped at that which never has been seen,
It chased into an Elysian memory
The charms that flee from the heart's soon lost delight;
It feared the force that slays, the joys that hurt,
The imaged shape of unaccomplished things
And the sorrow of a Circassian transmuting dance
And passion's memory of the courts of love
And the wild Beauty's ramp and romp with Beauty and Life.
It brought its cry and surge of opposite powers,
Its moment of the touch of luminous planes.
Its free ascension and sky-glimpsed vast attempts,
Its fiery towers of dream built on the winds,
Its sinkings towards the darkness and the abyss,
Its honey of tenderness, its sharp wise of hate,
Its charred of sun and cloud, of laughter and tears.
Its burning dregs set swallowing gulf,
Its fear and joy and ecstasy and despair,
In occult wandrings, its simple lines
And great communion and splitting moves,
Its faith in heavens, its intercourse with hell,
These powers were not blunt with the dead weight of earth,
They gave an atmosphere and poison's sting.
There was an arbor in the gate of Life,
That saw heaven blue in the grey air of Night:
The impulsive outward soared on passion's wings.
Mind's quick-pasted thoughts floated from their high peaks
A glowing splendour arid of an revered name,
A parure of pure intuitions light;
Its flame-foot gallop they could imitate;
Mind's voices mingled inspiration's stream,
Its voice of infallibility,
In speed and lightening heaven-leaf of the Gods.
A trenchant blade that shone the net of doubt,
Its sword of discernment seemed almost divine.
Yet all that knowledge was a borrowed sun's
The forms that came were not heaven's native birth:
Its quiescence dangerous and absolute
Couldingle poison with the wind of life.
On these high shining backs falsehood could ride;
Truth lay with delight in error's passionate arms
Glide downstream in a tilted gilded barge:
She enjoyed her view with a magnifying lens.
Here in Life's ether realm all contraries meet;
Truth stars and does her works with bandaged eyes,
And ignorance is Wisdom's patron here.
Those galloping horses in their enthusiastic speed
Could bear to a dangerous intermediary some
Where Death walks wearing a robe of deathless Life.
Or they enter the valley of the wandering Glens
Whence the captives or victims of the Fates
Are caught up in their region never can escape.
Age's, not masters, they serve Life's desires
Tolling for ever in the name of Time.
Their bodies born out of some Maha's womb
Unsure the spirit in the secret moments, dreams,
Then vomiting the immortal soul
Out of Matter's belly into the sink of thought.
Yet some unhurt, unslain can wary pass
Carrying Truth's image in their sheltered heart,
Pluck Knowledge out of error's screwing grip,
Break paths through the blind walls of little self,
Thought's flight lost not itself in heaven's blue:
It drew upon the skies a patterned flower
Of disciplined beauty and harmonic light.
A temperate vigilant spirit governed life:
Its acts were tools of the considering thought,
Too cold to take fire and set the world ablaze,
Or the careful reason's diplomatic moves
Testing the means to a pretense.
Or at the highest pitch some calm Will's plan
Or a strategy of some High Command within
To conquer the secret treasures of the gods
Or win for a masked king some glorious world,
Not a reflex of the spontaneous self,
An index of the being and its moods,
A winging of conscious spirit, a sacrament
Of life's consummation with the still Supreme
Or its pure movement on the Eternal's road.
Or else for the body of some high Idea
A house was built with too close-fitting bricks;
Atoned and thought cemented made a wall
Of small ideals limiting the soul.

Even meditation mused on a narrow seat;
And worship turned to an exclusive God,
To the Universal in a chapel prayed
Whose doors were shut against the universe:
Or kneedle to the bodiless Impersonal
A mind shut to the cry and fire of love:
A rational religion dried the heart.
It planned a smooth life's arts with ethic's rule
Or offered a cold and flameless sacrifice.
The sacred Book lay on its sanctified desk,
Wrapped in interpretation's silken strings:
A credo sealed up its spiritual sense.
Here was a quiet country of fixed mind,
Here life no more was all nor passion's voice;
A cry of sense had sunk into a hush.
Soul was not there nor spirit but mind alone;
Mind claimed to be the spirit and the soul.
The spirit saw itself as form of mind,
Lost itself in the glory of the thought,
A light that made invisible the sun.
Into a firm and settled space she came
Where still all was and all things kept their place.
Each found what it had sought and knew its aim.
All had a final last stability.

There one stood forth who bore authority
On an important brow and held a rod;
Command was incarnate in his gesture and tone;
Tradition's petrified wisdom carved his speech,
His sentences answered the croaks.
"Traveller" or pilgrim of the inner world,
Fortunate art thou to reach our brilliant air
Flaming with thought's supreme finality.
O contrast to the perfect way of life,
Here find it; rest from search and live at peace.
Ours is the home of cosmic certainty.
Here is the truth, God's harmony is here.
Register thy name in the book of the elite,
Admitted by the sanction of the few,
Adopt thy station of knowledge, thy post in mind,
Thy ticket of order draw in Life's bureau
And pass the gate that made thee one of ours.
All here, docketed and tied, the mind can know,
All cerebrated by that God permits to life.
This is the end and there is no beyond.
Here is the safety of the ultimate walk.
Here is the clarity of the sword of Light.
Here is the victory of a single Truth.
Here burns the diamond of flawless bliss,
A favourite of Heaven and Nature live.

But to the too satisfied and confident sage
Savitri replied casting into his world
Sight's deep release, the heart's questioning inner voice.
For here the heart spoke not, only clear daylight
Of intellect reigned here, limiting, cold, precise.
"Happy are they who in this chaos of things,
This coming and going of the feet of Time,
Can find the single Truth, the eternal Law:
Untouched they live by hope and doubt and fear.
Happy are men anchored on fixed belief
In this uncertain and ambiguous world,
Or who have planted in the heart's rich soil
One small grain of spiritual certitude.
Happiest who stand on faith as on a rock.
But I must pass leaving the ended search,
Truth's rounded outcome form, immutable
And this harmonic building of world-fact,
This ordered knowledge of apparent things.

Here I can stay not, for I seek my soul.
None answered in that bright contented world,
Or they only turned on their accustomed way
Astonished to hear questioning in that air
Or thoughts that could still turn to the Beyond.
But some murmured, passers-by from kindred spheres.
Each by his credo judged the thought she spoke.
"Who then is this who know not that the soul
Is a least gland or a secretion's fault
Disquieting the sane government of the mind,
Disordering the function of the brain,
Or a yearning lodged in Nature's mortal house
Or dream whispered in man's cave of hollow thought
Who would prolong his brief unhappy term
Or cling to living in a sea of death?"
But others, "Nay, it is her spirit she seeks.
A splendid shadow of the name of God,
A formless breath from the Ideal's realm,
The Spirit is the Holy Ghost of Mind,
But none has touched its limits or seen its face.
Each soul is the great Father's crucified Son,
Mind is that soul's one parent, its conscious cause,
The ground on which trembles a brief passing light,
Mind, sole creator of the apparent world.
All that is here is part of our own self;
Our minds have made the world in which we live."
Another with mystic and unseeing eyes
Who loved his slain belief and mourned its death:
"Is there one left who seeks for a Beyond?
Can still the path be found, opened the gate?"
So she fared on across her silent self.
To a road she came thronged with an ardent crowd
Who sped brilliant fire-footed, sun-light eyed,
Frothing to reach the world's mysterious wall,
And pass through masked doorways into outer mind.
Where the Light comes not nor the mystic voice,
Messengers from our subliminal greatnesses,
Guests from the cavern of the secret soul.
Into dim spiritual sonnolence they break
Or shed wide wonder on our waking self,
Ideas that haunt us with their radiant tread,
Dreams that are hints of unborn Reality.
Strange goddesses with deep-pooled magical eyes,
Strong wind-haired gods carrying harps of hope,
Great moon-hued visions gliding through gold air,
Aspiration's sun-dream head and star-carved limbs,
Emotions making common hearts sublipse.
And Savitri mingling in that glorious crowd,
Yearning to the spiritual light they bore
Longeth once to hasten like them to save God's world;
But she reined back the high passion in her heart.
She knew that first she must discover her soul.
Only who save themselves can others save.
In contrary sense she faced life's riddling truth
They carrying the light to suffering men
Hurried with eager feet to the outer world,
Her eyes were turned towards the eternal source.
Outstretching her hands to stay the throng she cried:
"O happy company of luminous gods,
Reveal, who know, the road that I must tread,—
For surely that bright quarter is your home,—
To find the birthplace of the occult Fire
And the deep mansion of my secret soul."
One answered pointing to a silence dim
On a remote extremity of sleep.
In some far background of the inner world.
"O Savitri, from thy hidden soul we come.
We are the messengers, the occult gods
Who help men's drab and heavy ignorant lives
To wake to beauty and the wonder of things
Touching them with glory and divinity.
In evil we light the deathless flame of good
And hold the torch of knowledge on ignorant roads;
We are thy will and all men's will towards Light.
O human copy and disguise of God
Who seekest the deity thou keepest hid
And livest by the Truth thou hast not known,
Follow the world's winding highway to its source.
There in the silence few have ever reached,
Thou shalt see the Fire burning on the bare spot
And the deep cavern of thy secret soul."
Then Savitri following the great winding road
Came where it dwindled into a narrow path
Trod only by rare wounded pilgrim-feet.
A few bright forms emerged from unknown dept
And looked at her with calm immortal eyes.
There was no sound to break the brooding hush:
One felt the silent nearness of the soul.
CHAPTER IX
THE POET-MAKER

I referred, in the seventh chapter, to Sri Aurobindo as a poet-maker. In this I am going to transcribe a part of my experience on which I based the remark, less to convince others than to state—as truly as I can—some of the data which carried conviction to me, personally. Those who are not interested in the politics of the present chapter or are likely to find it tendentious may well skip it. I know of course that what I am saying here is liable to be misunderstood since my chief datum is going to be my own poetic feeling. But I have thought it fit to risk it because I do not think it will be able to present material I possess and so if I keep silent, a great trait of Sri Aurobindo’s character will stay for ever unknown—namely, the pains he took, with almost incredible patience; not only to help those who wanted to give a poetical expression to spiritual truth and experience, but also to disseminate a prevalent false notion that Yoga belongs to the province of silence to the exclusion of expression. Also it was because he was a great poet that it was given to him to assuage such truths about spiritual poetry which had been his grand passion long before he started Yoga. He himself once said (as one of his earliest disciples Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta testifies in his preface to Gurudeve’s Collected Poems) that he had been first and foremost a poet: it was only later that he became a Yogi. To be more explicit, I shall now hazard writing about what I came to know from in-doubtless personal experience to be true: to wit, that poets can be made through Yogic powers and that he achieved it consciously in quite a few of us. But this statement being against the widely accepted belief that poets are born not made, I shall begin with a letter, written in 1911, in which he made the following statement about Yogic powers which is too clear and categorical to be dismissed by anybody who comes to the question with the humility of an open mind. As, however, in this he wrote about poetry somewhat incidentally, I must first explain briefly its context.

My brother-in-law, Bhavashanker, came to our Ashram with my sister, Maya; my little niece, Reha; a grand-uncle, Saurin and a cousin, Sachin. He had arrived, for which he had deposited an arrival with the Police Commissioner of Pondicherry. On the day before his departure he went with Sachin to claim his revolver. About an hour later, as I was composing a poem in my room, Sachin burst in excitedly and told me how they both had a narrow escape. Here was his story.

When my brother-in-law with Sachin called on the Police Commissioner he was received very cordially. After a friendly chat the latter showed him a French revolver and explained something about the trigger which he pressed, casually, when, lo, two shots rang out in quick succession and the bullets, grazing past them, pierced the bonnet of a motor car which was standing in front of the verandah where they were sitting. The sudden shock completely unnerved both of them, as may well be imagined.

Dadaji had never been to Bengal the day after, in the last week of August. What happened next will appear from what I wrote to Gurudev on 1-9-1931.

‘O Guru,’ I wrote, ‘you remember the revolver incident? That was hair-raising. I was just coming from the verandah; had caught hold of it, and, almost sensational! Saurin has written to me a long letter and is convinced that nothing but your Force and the Mother’s protective Grace could have saved them when it was literally touch and go. But I am running ahead of my story.

“They got down at Sheorapuli and took a ferry boat to cross over to Barrackpore. As the Ganges is now in spate after the rains, the ferry rocked a little which made Bhavashanker nervous. He had been somewhat off his stride since the revolver episode and having been always a trifle afraid of the river—as he did not know how to swim—the moment he got up to come and sit by my sister he lost his balance and fell plump into the water in midstream. My sister, who is equally unable to swim, cried out and the Mother, Mahadevi, leaped out madly into the rush and screamed out: ‘O Mother, O Gurudeve, save us!’ But it was not easy to save two corpulent persons from a river in spate in midstream and it did seem that all was lost, when Bhavashanker’s secretary, seeing a hand protruding out of the Ganges, leaped out and caught hold of it, and, almost simultaneously, a boatman who saw tufts of my sister’s hair floating near the helm, seized them. But tell me, Guru, what are we to think of it all? Is it possible that your Force or Mother’s took a hand in saving them? Also, the premonition of what was going to happen? You know, Guru, that I have had a European education and so find it rather difficult to believe that such things can really happen, but Saurin swears that he felt your intervention. My sister also is fully persuaded that this was certainly no coincidence, and other were similarly convinced.

Lastly, I put a few questions to him about clairvoyance and the power that occult or Yogic powers can play in our day-to-day lives. These will be readily inferred from his reply which was first published in my Anand in 1915.

‘Dilip,’ he wrote, ‘it is certainly possible to have consciousness of things going on at a distance and to intervene—you will hear from the Mother one or two instances from her own experiences. In this instance we had no such knowledge of the actual accident. When Bhavashankar was about to return to Bengal, both the Mother and myself became aware, independently, of a danger of death overhanging him—I myself saw it with the goddess from which he suffered, but I did not look further. If this extraordinary combination of the goddess with the boat and the river had been foreseen by us, the accident itself would not have happened, I think, for against something specific one can always put a special force which in most cases of the kind prevents it from happening—colles indefatigable, ceaselessly active, as the astrologers call it. Actually, we did as we always do when we see anything of the kind, we put a strong screen of protection around him. A general protection of that kind is not always unaffable, because the person may yet pass away from him into the clutches of some thought or act of his own; but usually we have found it effective. In this case there were two persons, Maya and your grand-uncle, Saurin, who were open to the Mother and called to her in the moment of danger, and Bhavashanker himself had been at least touched. To that I attribute it.

‘The idea that true Yogis do not or ought not to use such powers, I regard as an ascetic superstition. I believe that all Yogis who have these powers do use them if they find that they are called upon from within to do so. They may refrain if they think the use in a particular case is contrary to the Divine Will or see that preventing one evil may be opening the door to a worse or for any other valid reason, but not from any general prohibition. I do not turn them in such cases into superfluous use, like the other of the amiable weaknesses to which human nature is prone. It is because half-baked Yogis so often fall into these traps of the hostile forces that the use of the Yogic powers is sometimes discouraged as harmful to the Inner Being.

‘But it is mostly people who live much in the vital that so fall; with a strong and free and calm mind and a psychic awake and alive, such pettinesses are not likely to occur. As for those who can live in the true divine consciousness, certain powers are not possible for them. The one thing that is to say, supernatural or abnormal, but rather their normal way of seeing and acting, part of the consciousness—and how can they be forbidden, or refuse to act according to their consciousness and its nature?

‘I suppose I have had myself an even more completely European education than you and I have had, too, my period of ascetic denial, but from the moment I looked at these things I could never take the attitude of doubt and disbelief which was for so long fashionable in Europe. Abnormal, otherwise super-physical experiences and powers, occult or yogic, have always seemed to me something perfectly natural and credible. Consciousness in its very nature could not be limited by the ordinary physical human-consciousness, human—can have been the necessary minimum; the powers are no more supernatural or incredible than is supernatural or incredible the power to write a great poem or compose great music. Few people can do it, as things are—not even one in a million; for poetry and music there is a market and to write what is not original, something one has to have a passage clear between the outer mind and something in the inner being. That is why you get the poetic power as soon as you begin Yoga—Yogic force made the passage clear—for they are already there within you. One has to be assiduous and, with the true urge within, make the endeavour.’

I need hardly comment more on the preceding, the less because being ignorant of the workings of occult forces impinging on our world of senses, I prefer to keep my ignorance of speculating about things beyond my ken. So I shall attempt now what I know and understand a little better, namely, poetry and how he actually helped and inspired me.

I will have to pause to explain (for instance) how yoga became, once more, a little auto-biographical, since otherwise I may not be able to explain the next. But in spite of my inherent scepticism, I have been persuaded that without his active help plus invisible Yogic powers I could not have achieved poetic utterance.

I can lay claim to having acquired as a boy a taste for poetry and music. For music I have had a native aptitude since I was a child. But my taste for poetry developed later till, in my adolescence, it grew into a ruling passion. But I knew very little about the technique of poetry. But I came to the Ashram I had, indeed, written and published a few poems, but I cannot say that I was proud of my style. My style and rhythm were halting, so much so that Tagore who spoke highly of my musical talents later wrote to me acclaiming my lines and (leading component) never gave me a word of encouragement about my poetical utterances. So, naturally, after first mediocre attempts I lost faith in my poetical potentialities. It was a disappointment, because I was by nature vain and sensitive; but then I could not have music to fall back on in times of depression. I was, in fact, one of my teens and to which I now applied myself with a reddened ardour.

Continued on page 8
When I came to the Ashram I was told by Gururud and the Mother that Yoga could assuredly achieve many a miracle, for instance it could help one develop overnight a perfect sense of rhythm. I was thrilled and kept praying to them that I might flower into a poet. Then I composed a few poems which were far better than my previous hobbly attempts and far from convincing. Thereafter I started translating Gururud’s poems, when “the miracle” happened!—since I cannot give it a lesser name—not even to propitiate the acent in me or the critical reader. Besides, being by nature a strong-willed and truthful person, self-confidence, I can never lack confidence with grace to the conventional humility which, as I have often felt to my chagrin, puts a premium on telling falsehoods by wanting to be impeccably comme il faut. In a word, I have always attached much more importance to veracity and sincerity than to humility which advocates the accepted etiquettes of a false flawlessness. With this much of a philosophy I shall now drive straight to the point though I know I can only tell but not prove what I have felt to be true, especially in the realm of what I can only call the intangibles which yet happen.

What I wish to imply by this is a perception, which grew rather suddenly in me, of a contact with my Daemon felt by me to be intimately connected with Sri Aurobindo. This feeling grew rapidly in strength subsequently, when Sri Aurobindo, while praising me as a “unique translator,” actually wrote: “It was when you were translating my poems that you came into my light!”

I grew sure, indeed, of this afterwards, but at the time I thought that the poems were too good to be true as I have always been self-critical to a fault. So I posted a bunch of my poems to Tagore and requested him to tell me frankly what he thought of them. “Also, please, guide me once more in my poetic aspirations,” I wrote, “and point out any errors in the choice of rhythm and metre.” I enclose Sri Aurobindo’s opinion hereewith.

(“The opinion was contained in two letters. In the first he wrote: “It is a great pity you have not written more than this but not better than these. But why erect mental theories and suit your poetry to them, whether your father’s or Tagore’s? I would suggest you not to be bound by either but to write as best suits your inspiration and poetic genius. Each of them was in the way suited to his own inspiration and substance; but it is the habit of the human mind to put one way forward as a general rule for all. You have developed an original poetic turn of your own, quite unlike your father’s and not by any means, a reflection of Tagore’s. Besides, there is now, as a result of your talent, a quality in your work, a power of expressing with great felicity a subtle psychic delicacy and depth of thought and emotion which I have not seen elsewhere in modern Bengali verse. If you insist on being rigidly simple and direct as a mental rule, you might spoil something of the subtlety of the expression, even if the delicacy of the substance remained. Obscurity, artifice, rhetoric have to be avoided, but for the rest follow the inner movement.”

In the other he wrote: “Poetry can start from any plane of consciousness although like all art—or, one might say, all creation—it must come through the vital if it is to be alive. And as there is always a joy in creation, that joy along with a certain enthusiasm and suicidal mania, if you please, but another aspect of mania, always is there whatever the source. But your poetry differs from the lines you quote. N—writes from a purely vital inspiration; G—torso, though he puts a vital feeling in the form of passionate thought; L—writes with a rather different kind of inspiration, the contrary, comes from the linking of the vital creative instrument to a deeper psychic experience, and it is that which makes the whole originality and peculiar individual power and subtle and delicate perfection of your poems. It was indeed because this linking-on took place that the true poetic faculty suddenly swook in you; for it was not there before, at least on the surface. The joy you feel, therefore, was no doubt partly the simple joy of creation, but there comes also into it the joy of expression of the psychic being which was seeking for an outlet since your sadhana."

Kind as ever, Tagore replied to me answering my many questions in due sequence till, towards the end, he commented on my Bengali poems thus:

“Now let me come to your poetry. The quantity you sent me at one sweep did give me a scare! Hilalerto I have seen many of your Bengali poems which are supposed to belong to the category of verse. But they made me feel that you had missed your way to the heart of melody of our Bengali language, that you were a cripple in rhythm...”

“But what is it? You seem to have acquired rhythm overnight! You have left me no scope to correct with a vengence. How did you manage to train your ears? Now you have no cause to be indifferent any more. But how a cripple can possibly dispense with his crutches one finds it nigh impossible. But while these are wrote by your own method—first time at least— I ask myself, if you might not have had it all written by somebody else? But now that the Goddess Saraswati has touched your tongue with Her magic wand may we say your say in your newly awakened language in your own creative spirit... And then what you have to say is pulling fast deep down in your core.”

* * *

After I had mastered the Bengali metres in which I was now regarded as one of the authorities (I wrote a book of prosody also whereupon many began to besiege me with questions about the intricacies of Bengali rhythm) I appealed to Gururud to take me in hand so that I could advance including quantitative metres. It will be going beyond the scope of my reminiscences to go on relating how he taught me, in what detail, and with what meticulous pains. But I am sure that a few instances of the poems he composed for my education will not interest the general reader but be enjoyable as well to many a lover of English poetry, not to mention the young aspirants.

The first poem he composed for me, in five-foot iambics, he wrote as having “improved for the occasion” (23-4-1924) in the note-book I used to send up to him daily. To explain to me how modulations are introduced he scrawled it carefully for me thus:

All eye/s has seen, all she/ the ear/ has heard
Is a correction, by that great ear, voice,
That might/ or vision, Not the sweet/ est bird
Nor the/thrilled hues/ that make the heart/ rejoice
Can e/qual those/ dis/uns/ or tastes.

He explained that in the first line he used a modulation, a spondee in the first foot and a trochee in the third; in the second line, an anapest in the first foot; in the third line, a sponde in the second foot and a pyrrhic in the third and so forth.

I will give just one sample of how he corrected our English poems— not of mine alone but of Nirod, Romen, Nishikanta and others.

The first poem I wrote in English (in April, 1934) was a literal translation of a Bengali poem of mine.

The sorrow of Autumn woos the absent Spring;
Chill winter hushes the cuckoo’s vibrant grove;
To the Lord of Vernal sweetness now I sing:
Let streams of friendship roll to bathe old lore.

In his own handwriting he wrote on the margin:

“That is all right but the second line though metrically permissible is not very rhythmic. It would be better to write either ‘Cold winter chills’ or ‘Winter has hushed’.

Next I wanted his guidance on how to write six-foot iambics (I quote from my thick note-book which I used to send up to him daily leaving generally a margin for his comments and corrections):

‘O Guru,’ I shrilled, ‘please give me now at least two lines in Alexandrines. I translate two lines of a Bengali poem of mine in which in the second line I have put two spondees—in the first and third feet. I amちはr for your corrections.’

The bird/ to find such a ski/ cy rap/ ture/ said the Tree,
Earth-free/to seek/ peace shal/ ler in the rest/ less wind/’

He only deleted the word “For” and wrote: “Yes, that is good, but I will send you some Alexandrines to see a map of possibilities (not quite complete of course) without the use of any but an occasional anapest.” He wanted me to vary the pauses.

Next day he sent me the promised poem with this short preface (25-4-1934):

“I was writing for your edification a poem in Alexandrines, but as it is lengthening out, I send only a part of it, unrevised, so as not to keep you waiting.”

I divided the lines differently, varying the capping thus:

I walked beside the waters/of a world of light
On a gold-edge/guarding too seas of high-hayed night.
One was drearily topped/with a pale blush moon
And swam in a happy/deep spiritual unseen
More conscious than earth’s waking//the other’s wide delight
Bellowed towards an ardent orb/of diamond white.
But where I stood, there jostled/in a bright murrescent haze
The miracle/swoon/with a lone voice blase.
I knew not if two ushings/er two mighty sleepers
Mixed the great diamond fires/and the pale pregnant deeps,
But all my glad expanding soul/flowed satisfied
Around me and became/the mystery of their tide.

As one who finds his own eternal self/extent,
Needing naught else/beneath the spirit’s firmament,
It knew not Space/it heard no more Time’s running feet,
Terrified, fell, lifted/lost victory in this sight.
And so it might have been for ever/for there came
A dire inscription/scrapped in married cloud and flame,
Across the blue-azure moon-kiss/of my mapy seas
A sudden appearing/of immense purpose.

Of darkness ringimg lambent lustres//shadoy-oast
A nameless deed/a Power incalculable passed
Whose feet were death/whose wags were immortality;
It’s changing mind was time/its heart eternity.
All opposites were//unreckoned, unsead,
SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME.
—Continued from opposite page

Fiercer/grievous you have/miserable/to these too/God will give

ending.

(3) Nee je/cudina/deseret/hanc,/nee/lucidus/ordeo (Horace)

Him shall not/conspicuous/leave/ nor/clearness and/order.

“In the first example, the caesura comes at the third foot; in the second example, it comes at the third foot but note that it is a trochaic caesura; in the third example the caesura comes at the fourth foot. In the English hexameter you can put them there or you may take greater liberties. I have myself cut the hexameter sometimes at the end of the third foot and not in the middle: e.g.

(1) Opaline/rhythm of/tears, notes of/the lyre of/the Sun-God...

(2) Even the/tendril/strung her/notes that/the Gods had erected...

and there are other combinations possible which can give a great variety to the run of the line as if standing balanced between one place of caesura and another.”

At this time I was transposing some English modulations into our Bengali verse which he greatly appreciated in so much that to encourage me, he composed short poems now and then as English counterparts to my Bengali bases. Then I asked Nishikanta also to help. As he compiled we both besieged him, literally, with our poems day after delightful day. Once Nishikanta wrote a poem in Bengali with an anapaestic movement in the first line followed by dactyls in the next three lines:

Here is your stanza:

To the hill-tops of silence from over the infinite sea,
Golden he came,
Armed with the flame,
Looked on the world that his greatness and passion must free.

“Or you can have another, colourful you will admit, if highly un-scientific:

Oh but fair was her face as she lolled in her green-tinted robe,
Emerald trees, Sapphire seas,
Sun-ring and moon-ring that glittered and hung in each lobe.

Nishikanta wrote another in Bengali:

Here is your two stanzas also:

In the end of time, in the sinking of space
What shall survive?

Here is your stanza:

To reign is worth ambition, though in hell; (7th)
Better to reign in hell than serve in Heaven.

Or from Shakespeare:

(1) Though full of pain, this intellectual being, (4th)
Those thoughts that wonder through eternity,
To perish rather, unclouded up and lost? (5th)

(2) Fall’n cherub, to be weak is miserable (6th)

(3) Here we may reign secure and in my choice (6th)
To reign is worth ambition, though in hell; (7th)

Better to reign in hell than serve in Heaven.

Or from Shakespeare:

(1) Sees Helen’s beauty/in a brow of Egypt (5th)

(2) To be or not to be, that is the question (8th)

But I don’t know whether your prosody would agree to all that. As for the hexameter, the Latin classical rule is to make the caesura either at the middle of the third or the middle of the fourth foot: e.g. (you need not bother about the Latin words but follow the scanion only):

(1) Quadraples/dance on/tremble/cour/au/quills/ungs/campsum.

(Virgil)

Horse-hooves tumbled the crumbling plains with a four-footed gallop.

(2) O pass/i grass/on/sea/dit its hoove/facem. (Virgil)

* The sign U stands for a short syllable, — stands for a long.
SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME—Continued from previous page

In their harmo/ny stupendous,
Smote earth's ear.

Then I wrote a poem thus:

U—/U—/U—/U—/U—/U—/U—
U—/U—/U—/U—/U—/U—
U—/U—/U—/U—/U—/U—
U—/U—/U—/U—/U—/U—
U—/U—/U—/U—/U—/U—
U—/U—/U—/U—/U—/U—
and so on.

He wrote: “After all, I got some lines:
O life! thy breath is but a/ny to the Light
Insomnor'ah out of which, has sprung thy delight,
Thy grasp.
All things/in coin/ty hands seize,
Earth's ma/ic fail/les, the note cease
Or rap,
A loud/thou call/ to blind Fate:
Remove the bar / the gold gate
Unask.
But sen'er yet/ but thou, the goal of thy race
Attained; nor/th to the / in / face
And clasp.

I wrote then a poem in Bengali; thus (published later in Suryamukhi, p.332):

U—/U—/U—/U—/U—/U—
Sri Aurobindo composed a long poem on which it was published later in his Collected Poems (Vol. II, p.308), entitled "Thought the Paraclete."

So I need not quote more here in full; the first two lines of the poem will suffice as an illustration:

As some bright/ arch-an/her in vision flies
Plunged in dream's / caught spirit in mementoes...

Then I wrote a poem in Bengali thus:

U—/U—/U—/U—/U—/U—
U—/U—/U—/U—/U—/U—
U—/U—/U—/U—/U—/U—
U—/U—/U—/U—/U—/U—
U—/U—/U—/U—/U—/U—
U—/U—/U—/U—/U—/U—

The following was its counterpart in English which he sent me:

Vast-united / the wind runs, va/lient, black-covered / the waves
Over-topped / with force / green eyes of the deep,
Huge heads / upraised.

Death-hunted, woe-despair, greeted like a whispered bear the ship,
Shaken, covered, sobbed, each blow like fate's
Despairing felt.

Next Nishkant sent a Bengali poem:

U—/U—/U—/U—
U—/U—/U—/U—
U—/U—/U—/U—
UUU—/U—

To that he wrote:

Your model this time is exceedingly difficult for the English language—for the reason that except in lines closing with triple rhymes the language draws back from a regular dactylic ending. I have at any rate made the following attempt:

Winged with / danger/ous / deity,
Passion / swift and im/placable
Arise and / storm-fooled
In the dim / heart / of him.
Rise insatiate, conquering,
Worlds de / covering and / hearts of men
Then per / nished bro / ken by
The irre / visible
Occult / masters of / destiny,
They who sit / in the / secrecy
And watch / unused / ever
Unto the end / of all.

The last metre I sent him in Bengali I shall not quote at length, as it is too complicated and technical. I shall only quote his answering poem which he sent back with the following:

a I have struggled with your yesterday's poesy and after a stupendous effort almost conquered—not altogether, for the first stanza at the end of a line was too much for me: I had to change it into a chorisma (trock-siamb)

Most of all I am anxious to do the thing in rhymed verse was a failure, not from the point of view of metre but from that of rhythm and poetic quality; it simply fell heavy and flat. So I have made it an unrhymed verse which can be taken as a continuation of the three stanzas in the Arnold or Greek chorus style: 'Winged with dangerous deity.' A change of metre of this kind would be quite permissible in this style, if done at regular intervals. These stanzas run thus:

Outspread a / voice-burst, a / Force leaped from / the unseen;
Vague, wide, some:// veiled maker / masked Lighter of the Fire,
With dire blows the Smith of the World/
Forged strength from / hearts of the weak;
Earth's fate / the / edge of the age./

Glory,
Heun, jelled, the / Forrn cracked that / touched Heaven / and its stars.

I have often wondered why he spent so much of his precious time to help us even in our poetic experimentations when much more seemingly important things were crying for his attention in vain! To quote a random instance: When the Golden Book of Tagore was being compiled, Sri Pratama Choudhuri wrote to me urgent letters to induce Gurudev to contribute something. But Gurudev wrote back to me (in 1931):

I can not afford Pratama Choudhuri is asking from me a thing psychologically impossible. You know that I have forbidden myself to write anything for publication for some time past and some time to come. I am self-debarred from the press, platform and public. Even if it were otherwise, it would be impossible, under present circumstances, to write at a week's notice. You will present him my excuses in your best and most tactful manner."

But Sri Pratama Choudhuri would not listen and imported again: "Tagore's Golden Book will be incomplete without Sri Aurobindo's tribute. Even a message of two lines or a couplet coming from him will be looked upon as a boon of his Grace." etc.

But Sri Aurobindo's Grace was not like Caesar's, amenable to flattery.

"I take Pratama Choudhuri's remark—that Tagore's Golden Book will be incomplete without my contribution—as a complimentary hyperbole. The Golden Book will be as golden and Tagore's work and fame as solid without any lubrication from me to gild the one or buttress the other."

But when he found it "impossible" to finish even a few minutes for such an important work—for Tagore was then at the summit of his fame and glory—he not only went on encouraging the poems of such a nature as we but went on actually correcting our English verses—and with what meticulous pains! I myself have written more than six hundred pages of English verses alone and produced and published at not two thousand pages in Bengali, and he came to read all these carefully but to comment on most of them as well as throw out suggestions for improvement. Nevertheless, when he was asked to write for a poet like Tagore he declined firmly and obstinately. I would possibly wish to instruct him that he felt no sympathy with the others on whose behalf he was often asked to write tributes from time to time. For his was a spirit that reminded one of A.E.'s famous quatrains:

When the spirit groans wide
It will have no less
Than the whole of the world
For its tenderness.

Yes, "tenderness" is the note just. For once when I wrote to him that Tagore had recently—in a letter to me published in my Anami—recounted his faith in the Divine, having been overwhelmed by the modern craze about Humanity with a big H he asked me almost with a motherly solicitude to criticise Tagore adversely for his new fad.

"I do not think," he wrote, "that we should hastily conclude that Tagore's passing over to the opposite camp is a certificate. He is sensitive and perhaps a little affected by the positive, robustous, slogan-fed practicality of the day—he has passed through Italy and Persia and was feted there. But I don't see how he can turn his back on all the ideas of a lifetime. After all, he has been a wayfarer towards the same goal as ours in his own way—that is the main thing, the exact stage of advance and putting the steps are minor matters. I hope there will be no look on him. Besides, he has had a long and brilliant day—I should like him to have as peaceful and undisturbed a sunset as may be. His exact position as a poet or a prophet or anything else will be assigned by posterity, and we need not be in haste to anticipate the final verdict. The immediate verdict after his departure or soon after it may very well be a rough one, for this is a generation that seems to take delight in trampling with an almost Nazi rudeness on the bodies of the ancestors, especially the immediate ancestors. I have read with an interested surprise that Napoleon was only a bustling and self-important nincompoop all of whose great achievements were done by others; that Shakespeare was 'no great things' and that most other great men were by no means so great as the stupid respect and reverence of past ignorant ages made them out to be! What chance has then Tagore? But these injustices of the moment do not endure—in the end a wise and fair estimate is formed and survives the changes of time."

"As for your question, Tagore, of course, belonged to an age which had faith in its ideas and whose creative aspirations. That makes an immense difference. Your strivings on his later development (turning away from the Divine to democratic humanity) may or may not be correct, but this is better than to nourish a tangible hope of a fusion into something new and true—therefore it could create. Now all that idealism has been smashed to pieces by the immense adverse event and everybody is busy exposing its weaknesses—but nobody knows to put in its place. A mixture of sincere and sardonic, 'Heil-Hitler' and the Fascist salute and Five-year-plan and the beating of everybody into one amorphous shape, a disguised denial of all ideals on one side and on the other a blind shut-eye-and-shut-eye, nobody's eyes plunge into the fog in the hope of finding some firm foundation there will not carry us very far. And what else is there? Until new spiritual values are discovered no great enduring creation is possible."

He always insisted that we follow our own line—express spiritual perceptions, psychic emotions and truths which we saw its way towards the Light which he had invoked by his superhuman audacity, He used often to tell us that psychic poetry (that is, poetry inspired by the psychic emotion) was rare on earth and therefore when Tagore once wrote to me that one must write verses of all kinds to be a great poet he disagreed and reminded me that we had not come here to become great in anything...
SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME —Continued from opposite page

but only to realise the Divine and be His humble instruments on earth. For the psychic being must be brought with equal rapidity into a contemplation of the reason why he encouraged me to write poetry was revealed in one of his letters to me:

“When you write your poetry the psychic being is always behind it—even when you are in the depths of mental and vital despondency, as soon as you write the psychic being intervenes and throws its self-expression into what you write. It is that which made people with some inner life in them, those who have some touch of the spiritual, feel these poems of yours to be so much.”

Such judgments of his were often challenged by many, but words such as “many,” “multitude” or “majority” never had any terror for him. On the one hand he was the softest and the most tolerant of appellators; on the other, the whole world could not make him sneer. An inch from the path once he decided to tread it as the way to his Goal. That is why once he fell like a ton of bricks on Nirad. As it is germane to my theme I shall quote the correspondence which passed between them in 1935.

“For creation and effective expression, Sir,” wrote Nirad, “style is very important. ‘Le style——c’est l’homme,’ as they say. And to acquire an effective style one must read and read and read. For instance, you can’t deny that your style which is incomparable was manufactured partly by your enormous reading!”

“I agree,” he answered, “that without style there is no literature except in fiction where a man with a bad style like Dickens or Balzac can make up by vigour and power of his substance. But I cannot agree with you that I manufactured my style laboriously; style with any life in it cannot be manufactured. It is born and grows like any other living thing. Of course mine was fed by my reading which was not enormous—there are people in India who have read a hundred times as much as I have, only I have made much out of that little. For the rest, it is Yoga that has developed my style by the development of consciousness, fineness and accuracy of thought and vision, increasing inspiration and an increasing intuition, discrimination (self-critical) of right thought, word-form, just image and figure.”

But Nirad seldom yielded without a brave tussle.

“Methinks,” he wrote ironically, “you are making just a little too much of Yogic Force. Its potency as regards matters spiritual is undeniable, but as for art, can one possibly be as sure? Take Dilip’s case. Might one not say: Why posit an extraneous Force? Had he been so assiduous, sincere and earnest in his literary efforts somehow else he would have succeeded just as convincingly?”

“Well will you explain to me,” Gurudev retorted, “how Dilip who could not write a single good poem and had no power over rhythm and metre before he came here, suddenly, not after long ‘assiduous efforts’ blossomed into a poet, rhythmist and metrist after he came here? Why was Tagore dunned by a lame man throwing away his crutches and running freely and surely on the path of rhythm? And then why was it that I who had never understood or cared for painting, suddenly, in a single hour by an opening of vision got the eye to see and the mind of understanding about colour, line and design? How was it that I who had been unable to understand and follow a metaphysical argument and when a page of Kant or Hume or even Berkeley used to leave either my uncomprehending and fatigued or totally uninterested, suddenly began to write poems of the stuff as soon as I started the Arya and am now reputed to be a great philosopher? How is it that at a time when I felt it difficult to produce more than a paragraph of prose in time to telephone to some one to write me short and labouring, perhaps one in two months, suddenly, after concentrating and practising pranayama daily, began to write pages and pages in a single day and kept sufficient faculty to edit a big daily paper and afterwards to write 50 pages of philosophy every month? Kindly reflect a little and don’t talk facile nonsense. Even if a thing can be done in a moment or a few days by Yoga which would ordinarily take a long, assiduous sincere and earnest cultivation, that would of itself show the power of the Yoga-force. But a faculty that did not exist appears quickly and spontaneously or impotence changes into highest potency, or an obstructed talent with equal rapidity into fluent and facile sovereignty. If you deny that evidence, no evidence will convince you because you are determined to think otherwise.”

“But, Sir,” pursued Nirad, still unconvinced, “my grey matter does not open at once. So it is difficult for me to understand how far the Yogic Force has been responsible without any assiduous, sincere and earnest endeavour on your part for the perfection of your style.”

“It may be difficult for you to understand,” came the retort, “but it is not difficult for me since I have followed my own evolution from stage to stage with a perfect vigilance and following of the processes. I have made no endeavour in writing. I have simply left the Higher Power to work and even when it did not work, I made no effort at all. It was in the old intellectual days that I sometimes tried to force things and actually I cannot achieve the development of poetry and prose by Yoga. Let me remind you also that when I was writing the Arya and also whenever I write these letters or replies, I never think or seek for expression or try to write in the grand style; it is out of a silent mind that I write whatever comes ready-shaped from above. Even when I correct, it is because the correction comes in the same way. Wherein then the place for even a slight endeavour or any room at all for ‘my great endeavours’? Well?”

“By the way, please try to understand that the supra-intellectual (not the Supermental only) is the field of a spontaneous and automatic action. To get it or to get yourself open to it needs effort, but once it acts there is no effort; it comes up also too easily, so each time an effort has to be made again—perhaps too much effort—if your grey matter would sensibly accommodate itself to the automatic flow, there would not be the difficulty and need of equal ‘assiduous, sincere and earnest endeavour’ each time. Methinks. Well!”

“I only venture, Sir,” pleaded Nirad, unchanged still, “that the Yogic Force could be more effective in its own field, to wit, in the spiritual not literary, which is mental.”

“But no,” countered Gurudev, “I challenge your assertion that the Force is more easily potent to produce spiritual than mental (literary) results. It seems to me the other way round. In my own case, the first time I started Yoga, pranayama etc., I laboured five hours a day for a long while and concentrated and struggled for five years without any least spiritual result, (when spiritual experiences did come, they were as unaccountable and automatic as—blames) but poetry came like a river and prose like a flood and other things too that were essential vital or physical, not spiritual richnesses or openings. I have seen in many cases an activity of the mind in various directions as the first or at least an early result. Why? Because there is less resistance, more cooperation from the confounded lower members for these things than for a psychic or a spiritual change. That is easy to understand at least. Well!”

I have quoted his unilinear and personal letters (letters he probably would not have allowed to be published had he been with us today) to emphasize where he differed from the accepted view of things. For in such letters where he seems to be perfectly at his ease—with no arrière pensée of any kind—his outlook on life and things comes out in a way which allows Mr. Kaisiep to misunderstand us for the simple reason that we who have learned to live all along in our surface consciousness have thereby forfeited our birthright to the inner view, so native to the Yoga. That is why we find a deal too much of head-shaking when men live in and act from a deeper consciousness and speak to us of values which our superficial consciousness cannot apprehend. Not for nothing did the First Creator, Brahma, warn the First Sage, Narada:

The sages whose hearts and senses are delivered
From the yoke of passions—know the Mystic Lore:
But when the wordsy storms again come surging
The sensitive light of Truth retire once more.*

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*Rishe viśdānti manuṣyām prabhūhitam tortāntāyassyāh
Yādā devaśa varṇakāśaś ca bhūtyāt viśpaltam.
(The Bhagavad... 2.69)

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REGIMENTATION

BY JOHN STEPHEN

The great majority of writers who have attempted to give us a word picture of the life of a man have laid stress on regimentation. Everything seems to revolve around the State which becomes, in the ultimate limit, not only the supreme security, but the only Medium known to the people. Names are replaced by titles, their control is rigidly enforced and enthusiasm the expected end for the feeble. Food is plentiful and always within reach of the eating, amusement, travelling and holidaying is provided by the State itself. Surely this should be or should be since the entire life of man has been colorized by the State. Unit M-140969 and his wife Unit F-140906 have absolutely nothing to worry about provided their lives are lived in complete accord with the principles and precepts laid down by the State. This does not mean that the citizens of this future Ubiquia are not individualists because they have the freedom not only of individualism, but of individual thought. Why is it there is nothing to think about?

It should be remembered that thought, in the reasonable person, is almost an unnecessary evil. No logical and rational individual acts without it. It follows that if you capture thought you also command action since to a limited extent, the hypothesis of Good is necessary, so necessary to the leadership of all lives, and thus invested in the people. The first step towards an infant dictator or embryo totalitarian State is to wrestle this power away from the people themselves. The creation of a single governing body a Super-State, will automatically eliminate the need for thought. A single World Cabal would allow any group of entities to reach a decision by a simple majority. The desire of the main character is to dominate over the mind and body necessary to the efficient working of such an organisation.

The very life breath of freedom lies in the ability to oppose, with some measure of success, the dictates of authority when and where they are improper. Freedom to strove upon some fundamental right of liberty. Civilized communities rigidly ban such actions as theft, rape and murder for obvious reasons. The democracy also holds on tenaciously to base tenets of personal and public consciences and private affairs such as, for instance, his duty to worship efficiently, his proper place and where he pleases. In spite of the spirit of the times, genuine religious men remains the only powerful instrument in most parts of the world; whereas the rebuke of the masses may be swayed this way or that. Through its rites, preachings, edicts and private individualities a well-ordered religion guides its adherents in the path it wishes them to tread. Thus, religion wields a respectable amount of such power which, through too much or too little is a matter of opinion. But it would certainly be too much for a totalitarian State to suffer with comfort and one of its first acts must be to crush or entirely destroy all such secular power commanded by any spiritual body. This would ultimately lead to a declaration of Religion as we know it now and the . . . part of the State. Demanded by efficiency the process of regimentation would be complete.

Earth's population is increasing by leaps and bounds. Quantity is in one pan of the balance with quality in the other. Surely one must choose regarding whether the future man must be a quantity or a quality product. At the moment it seems that quantity will be the answer.

But if quality is to be the answer, then an effort must be made to develop freedom to develop themselves into intellectually and spiritually enlightened men. Of course, the answer will be to search the question of the ages: "What went wrong with his fellows?" If a man has to love his neighbour as himself, he can only do this by direct spiritual experience that he is in essence the same as himself.

But for developing oneself mentally and spiritually, and creating and moulding one's social and cultural life in the light of the new development, freedom of thought and action is necessary. That is why thinking people are alarmed about being brought into the orbit of Communism. They know that life under a Communist regime would savour of a living death. There would be no liberty of thought or action in any degree. Under such a Government mankind would truly be reduced to slavery.

The totalitarian State could do what it mostly promises in vain—namely to give its subjects freedom of thought and action. As we know it now—even if it did not promise anything—it is only an illusion—could it do anything else?

Of what use is he in terms of evolution of being and consciousness?"

SECRETS OF AYURVEDA

By Dr. R. S. AGARWAL

The ancient Indian system of medicine, Ayurveda—has not, for all its success, met with wholehearted acceptance and understanding. It must be considered unfortunate, for that system had solid principles behind it. But we cannot overlook the whole blame on the modern mind, especially on the intellect, which rests wholly on its own past; it must satisfy the test of a progressive life.

The West's impression is that the philosophy of Indian medicine about life and diseases is something metaphysical and not understandable; that is to say, the philosophy may be sublime but the scientific approach is absent. This is a misrepresentation. India has lived through ages with a difference of view from the western; view not easily understandable by the surface intellect but also often held by the Indians without much subsidy and insight.

The Bhagva wrote of medicine with a vision far ahead of its time. This great work, extant and summed up the whole philosophy of medicine in one word: "Ayurveda." The word is derived from two roots: Ayurv meaning life and eda meaning knowledge. To explain these principles they selected three terms or symbols which are the expression of life in terms of natural conditions.

The first is climate (wind), the second is Pitta (bile), and the third Kapha (mucus). They think of these three factors as the principal causative agents of disease. According to Ayurveda, disease is the failure or imbalance of any of these three factors, called Dosha, which we will briefly consider.

1. EXPULSION OF DOSHA IN MATERIAL FORM: Here mucous through the nose is the physical expression of disease. This is illustrated by the common cold, Barbie, colds, etc. is Kapha; yellow or bitter disease is Pitta; heaving or any other manifestation of wind is called Vata.

2. EXPULSION OF DOSHA IN THE BODY BY THE PHYSICIAN: Feeling of cold is Pitta; feeling of warmth is Kapha; feeling of dryness of abdomen is Vata. 3. CAUSES OF DISEASES: Man is composed of a mind to think and will, a vital force to execute and a different at a different place. These terms were used just to simplify the science, though too much simplification has created difficulty in understanding the real spirit and true meaning of Ayurveda. It is the purpose of a World State to control the vision of the human race as rats in a racetrack or bees in a colony. The mind and body necessary to the efficient working of such an organisation.

Tridoshas are the primary cause of most of the illnesses and diseases.

4. CLASSIFICATION: OF DISEASES: Here the interpretation is rather different. Here Vat is for painful and para lytic diseases. Pitta is for inflammatory diseases, Kapha is for non-inflammatory diseases. Tridoshas are for purulent and degenerative diseases. Diseases which could not be included in Vat, Pitta and Kaphas types of diseases, were named Tridoshas. Tridoshas does not mean something malicious or that all the doshas are present in a disease. Serious diseases in each type of disease, even if the other doshas are present in other types of disorders.

A disease may pass through one or more of the stages without any invariable consequence. In the opinion of Ayurveda, the stage of Kapha stage. The discomfort turns into a red pimple showing inflammation, inflammation will be in the Pitta stage. The pimple becomes painful that will move to the Vata stage. Stage forms in it and we have: the Tridoshas.

TREATMENT: In the treatment also the main principles have been applied.