

# MOTHER INDIA

Managing Editor:  
K. R. PODDAR

FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW

Editor:  
K. D. SETHNA

"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

ALTERNATE SATURDAYS

JUNE 2, 1951

VOL. 3 NO. 8: ANNAS 4

## CONTENTS

SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS: Past Lives and Rebirth	1	SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME by Dilip Kumar Roy	
WHAT NEXT? by A. L. Crampton Chalk	3	Chapter IX. The Poet-Maker	7
ANANDA (Poem) by Norman Dowsett	3	REGIMENTATION by John Stephen	12
SAVITRI by Sri Aurobindo	4	SECRETS OF AYURVEDA by Dr. R. S. Agarwal	12
BOOK VII: The Book of Yoga—Canto 3: The Entry into the Inner Countries			

## SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS

Over and above various collections under different titles, four volumes of Sri Aurobindo's Letters have already appeared—the last a very recent publication of the Sri Aurobindo Circle, Bombay. But there are many letters still to see the light or, to be more spiritually accurate, still to show their light. Some of them, addressed to the Editor of "Mother India", during his stay in the Ashram at Pondicherry, or to others connected with Sri Aurobindo's work, will be reproduced from time to time in these columns, with the questioner's notes prefixed in order to give the utmost point to the replies, bring out best the personal touch in them and frame more definitely both their profundity and their humour.

### PAST LIVES AND REBIRTH

(That you were Kalidasa 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 Kalidasa and Shakespeare. He was diffident about the Bard, but Kalidasa—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 prosecuted by her for misappropriation of personality. Alexander was too much of a torrent for me; I disclaim Milton and Virgil, am unconscious of Dante and Valmiki, diffident like Nolini about the Bard (and money-lender) of Avon. If, however, you can bring sufficiently cogent evidence, I am ready to take upon my back the offences of all the famous people in the world or any of them; but you must prove your case.

"Seriously, these 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 true; 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-avatarhood or a pressure of the spiritual planes?)

"Never heard before of my declaring or anybody declaring 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. Mysticism 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 intuition 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, how-

ever, 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. Nishikanto related to me an old dream of his in which he saw himself as a famous English poetess!)

"The deuce! An Indian guru? Well! As for Nishikanto'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 Shikandi'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. Leadbeater as 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 man 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 is 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 Shelley must have divided himself between the couple. It may be that afterwards I leaned at a time towards a hesitating acceptance, but I am certain that I was never certain about it as I am for instance about Dilip having been Horace. I am certain because that was *seen* and I myself 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 only a practical certainty? There is an enormous difference between the two—as big as the difference between sight and inference.

"Besides, I imagine Shelley was not an evolutionary being but a being of a higher plane assisting in the evolution." (19-7-1937).

(You say you have a distinct psychic memory of your contact with Dilip's personality as Horace. Well, who were you at that time? Four figures stand out in that period as likely: Caesar, Antony, Virgil, Maecenas and we may add Caesar Octavianus. Maecenas and Virgil came most into 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 because he is most clearly associated with Cleopatra 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 leave people swimming in the joy of conjecture. But why those too famous people? Why not Pollio? Or one of those friends Horace speaks of or to in his odes and epistles?" (26-7-1937).

(It is not likely that when Mother was blazing away as Cleopatra you 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 friend of Horace's who didn't care a rap whether Cleopatra lived or died, existed or didn't. *Aut Caesar aut nullus*—yes, either Caesar or nobody, except the only other figure thinkable: Antony. So I have narrowed down 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 Cleopatra! Caesar seems all 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 my artistic mind can't bear).

"Julius Caesar had nothing to do with Horace, so he is out of court. Antony I was not—so far as I know—he was another fellow—so he too is out of 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 be his guru." (28-7-1937).

(My statement that you could not have been a nonentity nor one who had nothing to do with Cleopatra remains uncontradicted—and you have 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 transmission 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 a new mould in what is called the Renaissance, 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." (29-7-1937).

(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 birth and determines the character and conditions of the new personality. Life is for the evolutionary growth by experience in the conditions of the Ignorance till one is ready for the higher Light." (28-7-37).

(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 determined by the 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 consciousness's action that determines the inner process, but the other way round. Sometimes, however, there are signs or frag-

ments of the inner action that come up on the surface, e.g. some people have a vision or remembrance of the circumstances of their past in a panoramic flash at the time of death, that is the psychic's review of the life before departing." (28-7-1937).

(It appears that the psychic being's choice at the time of death automatically works out the next formation of personality. But what fixes the span of time between one birth and another? Is it the new formation getting prepared during the psyche's rest? And how does the psyche come to know when that formation is ready? Also, is the latter just what the former has willed or are there other elements and forces which come in and interfere so that the work becomes imperfect? Again, there is the question whether the so-called law of Karma has any validity at all. A man, for instance, who lives criminally and in sordid circumstances in this life may be born a beautiful character in a fine environment just because the psyche has worked out the criminal and the sordid experiences. So what exactly would be meant by the injunction to create good karma in order to better one's condition in the next birth?)

"The psychic being's choice at the time of death does not work out the next formation of personality, it fixes it. When it enters the psychic world, it begins to assimilate the essence of its experience and by that assimilation is formed the future psychic personality in accordance with the fixation already made. When this assimilation is over, it is ready for a new birth; but the less developed beings do not work out the whole thing for themselves, there are beings and forces of the higher world who have that work. Also, when it comes to birth, it is not sure that the forces of the physical world will not come across the working out of what it wanted—its own new instrumentation may not be strong enough for that purpose; for, there is the interaction of its own energies and the cosmic forces here. There may be frustration, diversion, a partial working out—many things may happen. All that is not a rigid machinery, it is a working out of complex forces. It may be added, however, that a developed psychic being is much more conscious in this transition and works out much of it itself. The time depends also on the development and on a certain rhythm of the being—for some there is practically immediate rebirth, for others it takes longer, for some it may take centuries; but here, again, once the psychic being is sufficiently developed, it is free to choose its own rhythm and its own intervals. The ordinary theories are too mechanical—and that is the case also with the idea of *punya* and *papa* and their results in the next life. There are certainly results of the energies put forth in a past life, but not on that rather infantile principle. A good man's suffering in this life would be a proof according to the orthodox theory that he had been a very great villain in his past life, a bad man's prospering would be a proof that he had been quite angelic in his last visit to earth and sown a large crop of virtues and meritorious actions to reap this bumper crop of good fortune. Too symmetrical to be true. The object of birth being growth by experience, whatever reactions come to past deeds must be for the being to learn and grow, not as lollipops for the good boys of the class (in the past) and canings for the bad ones. The real sanction for good and ill is not good fortune for the one and bad fortune for the other, but this that good leads us towards a higher nature which is eventually lifted above suffering, and ill pulls us towards the lower nature which remains always in the circle of suffering and evil."\* (30-7-1937).

(It is written in some Tibetan book that when a person is dead he does not immediately realise the fact but tries to talk and touch just as usual and discovers the fact of his death only because he fails to touch and gets no response from the living people he has left behind. Is all this true? Does the disembodied being carry on his earth-habits for a time or is there a sudden gap in the consciousness? The Parsi scriptures say that for three or four days the being lingers by its corpse and the powerful mantric sounds made by the Avesta prayers during the death-ceremony serve to break the connection—but I wonder if the breaking is supposed to sever the being permanently from the world of the living. The spiritualists say that as long as we keep on mourning the spirit is kept tied and its progress is impeded.)

"It may happen to some not to realise for a little time that they are dead, especially if the death has been unforeseen and sudden, but it cannot be said that it happens to all or to most. Some may enter into a state of semi-unconsciousness or obsession by a dark inner condition created by their state of mind at death, in which they realise nothing of where they are, etc., others are quite conscious of the passage. It is true that the departing being in the vital body lingers for some time near the body or the scene of life, very often for as many as eight days and, in the ancient religions, mantras and other means were used for the severance. Even after the severance from the body a very earthbound nature or one full of strong physical desires may linger long in the earth-atmosphere up to a maximum period extended to three years. Afterwards, it passes to the vital worlds, proceeding on its journey which must sooner or later bring it to the psychic rest till the next life. It is true also that sorrow and mourning for the dead impede its progress by keeping it tied to the earth-atmosphere and pulling it back from its passage." (31-7-1937).

\* This letter has already appeared in "Letters of Sri Aurobindo—Second Series"

# 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 scure 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 ant's nest of turmoil and confusion when someone makes a speech at the opposite side. Naked power is shooting about the human firmament 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 or, unhappily, a 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 belief and hope that the course of events 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 us 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 now 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 and accepting a destiny and responsibility of a kind which a few years ago was positively abhorrent to them. Perhaps such a political *volte face* 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 not 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 moralities and her vast economics make use of ethics that are utterly beyond our comprehension; it is simply the case that America has risen to the need and impulse 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 now 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 weak hope that by letting the countries of the world be eaten up one by one the appetite of the ravager would be satiated and leave her alone in the West in her riches, luxury and powers. 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 by now be in imminent danger of assault by them, and probably the same conditions would prevail in Europe. Here then, is a great sign and movement of the effective rally of the forces 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 termite 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

of the use of force. Sri Aurobindo has said that "one principal reason for the failure of past attempts to spiritualise mankind (is that) they endeavoured to spiritualise at once the material man by a sort of rapid miracle..."\* He goes on to say that "though that can be done, the miracle is not likely to be of an enduring character if it overleaps the stages of man's ascent and leaves the intervening levels untrodden and therefore unmastered". The race is still in a sort of Stone Age of its inner spiritual development, notwithstanding its astonishing achievements in purely intellectual and even lower emotional planes. To quote Sri Aurobindo again: "The average human being even now is in his inward existence as crude and undeveloped as was the bygone primitive man in his outward life". It seems obvious to every rational enquiry that the use of force and even war will be natural and inevitable to the human race until its mental and higher emotional powers, as a composite whole, can overcome the crudities of its lower instincts and passions. It is quite useless and merely shows a silly ineptitude in the face of the facts of life to breathe words of peace at a savage with weapons in his hands and a face contorted with the lust to kill and conquer. A Master might be able to do this but not the ordinary run of mankind; by surrendering the right to use force the ordinary man at his ordinary evolutionary level surrenders his right to physical survival. Which, of course, is exactly what the Communists wish him to do everywhere. While on this subject it is relevant to say that force assumes many forms; when applied, for instance, as deliberate and positive non-cooperation in some movement of authority it is no less a revolutionary force because it looks peaceful. There is no more enraging and provocative action than non-cooperation when this is skilfully and forcefully applied. It is the very antithesis of the peace and quiet for which it is often mistaken, and it may easily provoke violence.

In his wonderful "Postscript Chapter" to *The Ideal of Human Unity*, Sri Aurobindo points out how even the unsuccessful attempts at political world unity through the League of Nations, and now the utilisation of the U.N.O., are indications of the grand intention of Nature herself, which cannot be ignored and are unlikely to be set aside. There may, of course, be intermediate and immediate pains and disasters in the way, but we may dare to look "with a legitimate optimism on what has been hitherto achieved and on the prospects of further achievement in the future. This optimism need not and should not blind us to undesirable features, perilous tendencies and the possibilities of serious interruptions in the work and even disorders in the human world that might possibly subvert the work done."

Nature's cosmic progress towards the drawing down of the Spirit into the lowest material levels, as by the teachings of the Integral Yoga, is brought into the focus of present conditions by Sri Aurobindo apropos modern man's attempt at the political union of the nations of the world in peaceful association. "The League of Nations came into being as a direct consequence of the first war; the U.N.O. similarly as a consequence of the second world-wide conflict. If the third war which is regarded by many if not by most as inevitable does come, it is likely to precipitate as inevitable a further step and perhaps the final outcome of this great world-endeavour. Nature uses such means, apparently opposed and dangerous to her intended purpose, to bring about the fruition of that purpose". The whole relevant passage is too long to quote here but the reader is urged to refresh his spirits with what he will find on p. 382 of *The Ideal of Human Unity*.

This is the time, as the Mother has said many times lately, for standing firm in faith and with fortitude; it is presumably the greatest testing time for upward aspiring souls in the culmination of our race evolution to date. There may be another and vaster world catastrophe—also for the reasons discussed, among others, there may very well not be. "Yet even in such a contingency, the intention in the working of Nature is likely to overcome the obstacles she has herself raised up and they may be got rid of once and for all." So, the movement towards spiritual integration goes on, and devoted souls cannot lose or be lost in this lottery of fate—provided they hold firm to the Light which is within them and to the faithful application of the wisdom they have heard in their hearts from the Master.

\* "The Human Cycle", p. 313.

† "The Synthesis of Yoga", p. 29.

## 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.

Plant one immortal hour  
In matter's frame,  
Create one golden flower  
To bear Thy Name;

So, near or far,  
Man can with Thee converse—  
Thy Golden Star  
Lighting the universe.

NORMAN DOWSETT



# 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.  
Amazed 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 spoke 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 sorrow 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 groaned 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 goblins scowled and stared  
And wild beast roarings thrilled the blood with fear  
And menace muttered in a dangerous tongue.  
Unshaken her will 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 dips into the subconscious dusk  
Or struggles from Matter into chaos of mind,  
Aswarm with elemental entities  
And fluttering shapes of vague half-bodied thought  
And crude beginnings of incontinent 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 horde 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 ego's drive.  
A rally without key of common will,  
Thought stared at thought and pulled at the taut brain  
As if to pluck the reason from its seat  
And cast its corpse into life's wayside 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 renounce 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 supernal'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, tenebrous,  
Inconscience puts its seal on Nature's page  
Or else a mad disorder whirls 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 tossing street  
One driven mid a trampling hurrying crowd  
Hour after hour she trod without release,  
Holding by her will the senseless meute 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 tranquillity  
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  
Ungoverned 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 Vast,  
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;

## SAVITRI —Continued from page 4

Its torrent carried the world's hopes and fears,  
 All life's, all Nature's dissatisfied hungry cry,  
 And the longing all eternity cannot fill:  
 It called to the mountain secrecies of the soul  
 And the miracle of the never-dying fire,  
 It spoke to some first inexpressible ecstasy  
 Hidden in the creative beat of Life;  
 Out of the nether unseen deeps it tore  
 Its lure and magic of disordered bliss,  
 Into earth-light poured its maze of tangled charm  
 And heady draught of Nature's primitive joy  
 And the fire and mystery of forbidden delight  
 Drunk from the world-libido's bottomless well,  
 And the honey-sweet poison-wine of lust and death,  
 But dreamed a vintage of glory of life's gods,  
 And felt as celestial rapture's golden sting.  
 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 dissatisfied urge within  
 To long for the unfulfilled and ever far  
 And make this life upon a limiting earth  
 A climb 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 won,  
 It chased into an Elysian memory  
 The charms that flee from the heart's soon lost delight;  
 It dared the force that slays, the joys that hurt,  
 The imaged shape of unaccomplished things  
 And the summons to a Circean transmuting dance  
 And passion's tenancy of the courts of love  
 And the wild Beast's ramp and romp with Beauty and Life.  
 It brought its cry and surge of opposite powers,  
 Its moments of the touch of luminous planes,  
 Its flame-ascensions and sky-pitched 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 wine of hate,  
 Its changes of sun and cloud, of laughter and tears,  
 Its bottomless danger pits and swallowing gulfs,  
 Its fear and joy and ecstasy and despair,  
 Its occult wizardries, its simple lines  
 And great communions and uplifting moves,  
 Its faith in heaven, its intercourse with hell.  
 These powers were not blunt with the dead weight of earth,  
 They gave ambrosia's taste and poison's sting.  
 There was an ardour in the gaze of Life  
 That saw heaven blue in the grey air of Night:  
 The impulses godward soared on passion's wings.  
 Mind's quick-paced thoughts floated from their high necks  
 A glowing splendour as of an irised mane,  
 A parure of pure intuition's light;  
 Its flame-foot gallop they could imitate:  
 Mind's voices mimicked inspiration's stress,  
 Its ictus of infallibility,  
 Its speed and lightning heaven-leap of the Gods.  
 A trenchant blade that shore the nets 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 births:  
 Its puissance dangerous and absolute  
 Could mingle poison with the wine of God.  
 On these high shining backs falsehood could ride;  
 Truth lay with delight in error's passionate arms  
 Gliding downstream in a blithe gilded barge:  
 She edged her ray with a magnificent lie.  
 Here in Life's nether realms all contraries meet;  
 Truth stares and does her works with bandaged eyes,  
 And Ignorance is Wisdom's patron here.  
 Those galloping hooves in their enthusiast speed  
 Could bear to a dangerous intermediate zone  
 Where Death walks wearing a robe of deathless Life.  
 Or they enter the valley of the wandering Gleam  
 Whence, captives or victims of the specious Ray,  
 Souls trapped in that region never can escape.  
 Agents, not masters, they serve Life's desires  
 Toiling for ever in the snare of Time.  
 Their bodies born out of some Nihil's womb  
 Ensnare the spirit in the moment's dreams,  
 Then perish vomiting the immortal soul  
 Out of Matter's belly into the sink of Nought.  
 Yet some uncaught, unslain can warily pass  
 Carrying Truth's image in their sheltered heart,  
 Pluck Knowledge out of error's screening grip,  
 Break paths through the blind walls of little self,

Then travel on to reach a greater life.  
 All this streamed past her and seemed to her vision's sight  
 As if around a high and voiceless isle  
 A clamour of waters from far unknown hills,  
 Swallowed its narrow banks in crowding waves  
 And made a hungry world of white wild foam:  
 Hastening, a dragon with a million feet,  
 Its foam and cry a drunken giant's din,  
 Tossing a mane of darkness into God's sky,  
 It ebbed receding into a distant roar;  
 Then smiled again a large and tranquil air:  
 Blue heaven, green earth, partners of Beauty's reign,  
 Lived as of old, companions in happiness;  
 And in the world's heart laughed the joy of life.  
 All now was still, the soil shone dry and pure.  
 Through it all she moved not, plunged not in the vain waves.  
 Out of the vastness of the silent self  
 Life's clamour fled; her spirit was mute and free.

Then journeying forward through the self's wide hush  
 She came into a brilliant ordered Space.  
 There Life dwelt parked in an armed tranquillity;  
 A chain was on her strong insurgent heart.  
 Tamed to the modesty of a measured pace,  
 She kept no more her vehement stride and rush;  
 She had lost the careless majesty of her muse  
 And the ample grandeur of her regal force;  
 Curbed were her mighty pomps, her splendid waste,  
 Sobered the revels of her bacchant play,  
 Cut down were her squanderings in desire's bazaar,  
 Coerced her despot will, her fancy's dance,  
 A cold stolidity bound the riot of sense.  
 Her spirit's bounds they cast in rigid lines.  
 A royalty without freedom was her lot;  
 The sovereign throned obeyed her ministers:  
 Her servants mind and sense governed her house  
 And guarded with a phalanx of armoured rules  
 The reason's balanced reign, kept order and peace.  
 Her will lived closed in adamant walls of law,  
 Coerced was her force by chains that feigned to adorn,  
 Imagination was prisoned in a fort,  
 Her wanton and licentious favourite;  
 Reality's poise and reason's symmetry  
 Were set in its place sentinelled by marshalled facts,  
 They gave to the soul for throne a bench of Law,  
 For kingdom a small world of rule and line:  
 The ages' wisdom, shrivelled to scholastic lines,  
 Shrank patterned into a copy-book device.  
 The Spirit's almighty freedom was not here:  
 A schoolman mind had captured life's large space,  
 But chose to live in bare and paltry rooms  
 Parked off from the too vast dangerous universe,  
 Fearing to lose its soul in the infinite.  
 Even the Idea's ample sweep was cut  
 Into a system, chained to fixed pillars of thought,  
 Or rivetted to Matter's solid ground:  
 Or else the soul was lost in its own heights:  
 Obeying the Ideal's highbrowed law  
 Thought based a throne on unsubstantial air  
 Disdaining earth's flat triviality:  
 It barred reality out to live in its dreams.  
 Or all stepped into a systemed universe:  
 Life's empire was a managed continent,  
 Its thoughts an army ranked and disciplined;  
 Uniformed they kept the logic of their fixed place  
 At the bidding of the trained centurian mind.  
 Or each stepped into its station like a star  
 Or marched through fixed and constellated heavens  
 Or kept its feudal rank among its peers  
 In the sky's unchanging cosmic hierarchy.  
 Or like a highbred maiden with chaste eyes  
 Forbidden to walk unveiled the public ways,  
 She must in close secluded chambers move,  
 Her feeling in cloisters live or gardened paths.  
 Life was consigned to a safe level path,  
 It dared not tempt the great and difficult heights  
 Or climb to be neighbour to a lonely star  
 Or skirt the danger of the precipice  
 Or tempt the foam-curved breakers' perilous laugh,  
 Adventure's lyrist, danger's amateur,  
 Or into her chamber call some flaming god,  
 Or leave the world's bounds and where no limits are  
 Meet with heart's passion the Adorable  
 Or set the world ablaze with the inner Fire.  
 A chastened epithet in the prose of life,  
 She must fill with colour just her sanctioned space,  
 Not break out of the cabin of the idea  
 Nor trespass into rhythms too high or vast.  
 Even when it soared into ideal air,

## SAVITRI—Continued from page 5

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 prefigured end,  
 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 communion 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;  
 Action 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 kneeled 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 acts with ethics' 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 all was still 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 savoured the oracle.  
 "Traveller or pilgrim of the inner world,  
 Fortunate art thou to reach our brilliant air  
 Flaming with thought's supreme finality.  
 O aspirant 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 praise thy fate that made thee one of ours.  
 All here, docketed and tied, the mind can know,  
 All schemed by law that God permits to life.  
 This is the end and there is no beyond.  
 Here is the safety of the ultimate wall,  
 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 firm, 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 knows 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 lustre 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 unsatisfied 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,  
 Pressing 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 somnolence 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 sublime.  
 And Savitri mingling in that glorious crowd,  
 Yearning to the spiritual light they bore  
 Longed 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 stone  
 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 depth  
 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



# SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME

By DILIP KUMAR ROY

## 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 truthfully as I can—some of the data which carried conviction to me, personally. Those who are not interested in the title of the present chapter or are likely to find it tendentious may well skip it. I know of course that what I am claiming here is liable to be misunderstood since my chief datum is going to be my own poetic flowering. But I have thought fit to risk it because I do not think anybody else will be able to present the 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 dissipate 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 assay such truths about spiritual poetry which had been his *grande 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 Gurudev'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 indubitable 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 1931, in which he made a definite statement about Yogic powers which is too clear and categoric 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, Bhavashankar, came to our Ashram with my sister, Maya; my little niece, Esha; a grand-uncle, Saurin and a cousin, Sachin. He had a revolver which he deposited on 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 had 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.

They all left Pondicherry for 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 enough in all conscience; but what followed was even more 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 Bhavashankar 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: 'O Mother, Mother' and then jumped madly into the river. Saurin screamed out: 'O Mother, O Gurudev, 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 Bhavashankar's secretary, seeing a hand protruding out of the Ganges, leaned 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, tell me if you or the Mother had any 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 you and the Mother were their saviours."

Lastly, I put a few questions to him about clairvoyance and the part 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 *Anami* in 1934.

"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 connected with the giddiness from which he suffered, but I did not look farther. If this extraordinary combination of the giddiness 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—unless indeed it is a case of irresistible predestination, *Utkata Karma*, 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 round him. A general protection of that kind is not always unfailing, because the person may push it away from him or go out of its circle by 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 Bhavashankar himself had been at least touched. To that I attribute their escape.

"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 whenever 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 prohibitory rule. What is forbidden to anyone with a strong spiritual sense is to be a miracle-monger, performing extraordinary things for show, for gain, for fame, out of vanity or pride. It is forbidden to use powers from mere vital motives to make an Asuric ostentation of them or to turn them into support for arrogance, conceit, ambition or any 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 user.

"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 'powers' at all in that sense, not, 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 agnostic 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 supra-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-animal consciousness; it must have other ranges. Yogic or occult 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 come from the inner being and to write or to compose true and great things one has to have a passage clear between the outer mind and something in the inner being. *That is why you got the poetic power as soon as you began Yoga—Yogic force made the passage clear—for they are already there within you.* Of course the first thing is to believe, aspire and, with the true urge within, make the endeavour."

I need hardly comment more on the phenomena, the less because being ignorant of the working of occult forces impinging on our world of senses, I prefer to keep my ignorance from 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.

But I will have to pause here and become, once more, a little autobiographical, since otherwise I may not be able to bring out how and why, 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. Before I came to the Ashram I had, indeed, written and published a few poems, but I cannot say that I am proud of them. My style and rhythm were halting, so much so that Tagore who spoke highly of my musical talents (and later wrote to me acclaiming me as a leading composer)<sup>†</sup> never gave me a word of encouragement about my poetical utterances. So, naturally, after first mediocre attempts I lost faith in my poetic potentialities. It was a disappointment, because I was by nature vain and sensitive; but then I had my music to fall back on in which I had made a mark before I was out of my teens and to which I now applied myself with a redoubled ardour.

Continued on page 8

\* The italics are mine.

† This letter was published in my *Tirthankar* (Bengali translation of *Among the Great*).

## SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME—Continued from previous page

When I came to the Ashram I was told by Gurudev and the Mother that Yoga could assuredly achieve many a miracle, as 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 songs which were, indeed, better than my previous babblings, but still far from convincing. Thereafter I started translating Gurudev's poems, when "the miracle" happened!—since I cannot give it a lesser name—not even to propitiate the sceptic in me or the critical reader. Besides, being by nature rather prone to truthfulness and self-confidence, I can never confess 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 apology 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 incredible which yet happened".

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 news was 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 my *chhanda* (rhythm and metre). I enclose Sri Aurobindo's opinion herewith."

(The opinion was contained in two letters. In the first he wrote: "It is again a beautiful poem you have written, but not better than the other." But why erect mental theories and suit your poetry to them. whether your father's or Tagore's? I would suggest to you not to be bound by either but to write as best suits your inspiration and poetic genius. Each of them wrote 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 *sadhana*, a new 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 *enthousiasmos*—not enthusiasm, if you please, but *anandamaya avesh*—must always be there whatever the source. But your poetry differs from the lines you quote. N—writes from a purely vital inspiration; G—ditto, though he puts a vital feeling in the form of passionate thought; L—in the lines you quote—from a rather light and superficial vital. Your inspiration, on 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 awoke 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 boyhood. It is this that justifies your poetry-writing as a part of 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! Hitherto I have seen many of your writings 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 this? You seem to have acquired rhythm overnight! You have left me no scope to correct with a vengeance. How did you manage to train your ears? Now you have no cause to be diffident any more. But how a cripple can possibly dispense with his crutches one fine morning and start to run straight are what I find unfathomable deeps. At times 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 you say your say in your newly-awakened language in your own native accent. And then what you have to say is pullulating fast deep down in your core."

\* Both the poems were published, later, in my book of poems entitled "Anami" which Tagore himself named and blessed with a beautiful poem. The two poems will be found on pp. 116 and 130 of "Anami."

I have quoted Tagore's letter because I fear that otherwise my readers may not be able to gauge the nature and sweep of the miracle that was achieved by Gurudev not only in me but in quite a few others including Chadwick. But to come now to how he initiated me into English poetry where, naturally, he could help me even more with his Yogic Force.

\* \* \*

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 Gurudev to take me in hand to teach me English prosody 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 only 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 "improvised for the occasion" (on 25-4-1934) in the note-book I used to send up to him daily. To explain to me how modulations are introduced he scanned it carefully for me thus:

All eye/has seen,/all that/the ear/has heard  
Is a pale/illu/sion, by/that great/er voice,  
That might/ier vi/sion, Not/the sweet/est bird  
Nor the/thrilled hues/that make/the heart/rejoice  
Can e/qual those/divi/ner ec/stasies.

He explained that in the first line there are two modulations, a spondee in the first foot and a trochee in the third; in the second line, an anapaest in the first foot; in the third line, a glide anapaest in the second foot and a pyrrhic in the third and so on.

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 swell to seas of love."

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 abjured, "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 athirst for your corrections."

"For the bird/to find/such a ski/ey rap/ture!" said/the Tree,  
"Earth-free/to seek/peace shel/ter in/the rest/less winds!"

He only deleted the word "For" and wrote: "Yes, that is good, but I shall send you some Alexandrines in which you can see a map of possibilities (not quite complete of course) without the use of any but an occasional anapaest." 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."

He divided the lines differently, varying the caesura thus:

I walked beside the waters//of a world of light  
On a gold ridge//guarding two seas of high-rayed night.  
One was divinely topped//with a pale bluish moon  
And swam as in a happy//deep spiritual swoon  
More conscious than earth's waking//the other's wide delight  
Billowed towards an ardent orb//of diamond white.  
But where I stood, there joined//in a bright marvellous haze  
The mirrored moons//with the lone ridge's golden blaze.  
I knew not if two wakings//or two mighty sleeps  
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//content,  
Needing naught else//beneath the spirit's firmament,  
It knew not Space//it heard no more Time's running feet,  
Termless, fulfilled//lost richly in itself, complete.  
And so it might have been for ever//but there came  
A dire intrusion//wrapped in married cloud and flame,  
Across the blue-white moon-hush//of my magic seas  
A sudden sweeping//of immense peripheries  
Of darkness ringing lambent lustres//shadowy-vast  
A nameless dread//a Power incalculable passed  
Whose feet were death//whose wings were immortality;  
It's changing mind was time//its heart eternity.  
All opposites were there//unreconciled, uneased,



# SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME —Continued from opposite page

Struggling for victory, // by victory unappeased.  
All things it bore, // even that which brings undying peace,  
But secret, veiled, // waiting for some supreme release.  
I saw the spirit // of the cosmic Ignorance;  
I felt the power besiege // my gloried fields of trance.

At the end he explained:

"Some of these can be differently divided, not the way I have done; it depends much on how one wants to read it. But the main thing is that there can be a variation of even or uneven divisions (of the syllables); the even ones have three varieties, 4-8, 6-6, 8-4; the uneven ones may be 5-7, 7-5, 9-3, or even 3-9. The division may be made by the caesura of a foot, a pause in the sentence or a pause of the voice. If there is a succession of similar lines (4-8, 6-6, 8-4 are always tending to come), then great care must be taken to bring in minor variations so that there may be no sheer monotone.

"This by the way is my own theory of the Alexandrine evolved at need. I don't know if it agrees with any current prosody. Perhaps there is not a fixed prosodic theory as the Alexandrine has been left very much in the cold, not having been adopted by any of the great writers."

Next day I wrote to him:

"I am very grateful—especially for the caesuras you have indicated. I find you have used the caesura dividing the twelve syllables in all sorts of ways e.g. 2-10, 4-8, 6-6, 8-4, 10-2, even 5-7, 7-5, and 9-3. The only omission is 3-9, please send me one line to fill up the gap."

He wrote in the margin:

And in the silence of the mind // life knows itself  
Immortal, // and immaculately grows divine.

I need not go further into all he discussed with me about English metres and modulations and his comments on the quantitative metres in English—a discussion, besides, too technical to be enjoyable to those who have not made a special study of such subtleties. But just to give an idea, (hoping always that it may be of interest to a few at least) here is a stray sample:

I asked him about what is meant by caesura in English. I quoted Voltaire's definition: "la césure rompt le vers partout où elle coupe la phrase.

"Tiens, le voilà, marchons, il est à nous, viens, frappe'."

"From this example given by Voltaire," I wrote, "does it not seem that he takes caesura to mean every pause of the kind indicated by a comma? But that is not, I gather, what is meant by caesura in English prosody? Please enlighten."

To that he wrote in my note-book:

"Voltaire's dictum is quite baffling, unless he means by caesura any pause or break in the line; then of course a comma does create such a break or pause. But ordinarily, caesura is a technical term meaning a rhythmical (not necessarily a metrical) division of a line in two parts equal or unequal, in the middle or near the middle, that is, just a little before or just a little after. I think in my account of my Alexandrines I myself used the word caesura in the sense of a pause anywhere which breaks the line into two equal or unequal parts, but usually such a break very near the beginning or end of a line would not be counted as an orthodox caesura. In French there are two metres which insist on a caesura—the Alexandrine and the pentameter. The Alexandrine always takes the caesura in the middle of the line, that is after the sixth *sonnant* syllable, the pentameter always after the fourth, there is no need for any comma there, e.g. Alexandrine:

*Ce que dit l'aube à l'aube // et la flamme à la flamme*

"This is the position and all the Voltaires in the world cannot make it otherwise. I don't know about the modernists, however,—perhaps they have broken this rule like every other.

"As for caesura in English I don't know much about it in theory, only in the practice of the pentameter decasyllabic and hexameter verses. In the blank verse decasyllabic I would count it as a rule for variability of rhythm to make the caesura at the fourth, fifth, sixth, or seventh syllable e.g. from Milton:

- (1) *For who would lose*  
*Though full of pain, / this intellectual being, (4th)*  
*Those thoughts that wander through eternity,*  
*To perish rather, / swallow'd 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 prosodist 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 scansion only):

- (1) *Quadrupedante / pu / trem / cur / su quatit / ungula / campum.*  
(Virgil)  
*Horse-hooves / trampled the / crumbling / plain / with a / four-footed*  
*gallop.*
- (2) *O pass / i gravi / ora, / dab / it deus / his quoque / finem. (Virgil)*

*Fiercer / griefs you have / suffered; / to / these too / God will give /*  
*ending.*

- (3) *Nec fa / cundia / deseret / hunc / nec / lucidus / ordo (Horace)*  
*Him shall not / copious / eloquence / 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 follow that 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 / towers, / notes of the / lyre of the / Sun-God...*

- (2) *Even the / ramparts / felt her, / stones 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 complied 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:

UU— / UU— / UU— / UU— / UU— /  
—UU / —  
—UU / —  
—UU / —UU / —UU / —UU / —

I wrote to him as I sent up this poem:

"It is melodious, you will admit, if somewhat unorthodox in its modulations."

At once he sent me back two poems and wrote:

"Dilip,

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 unscientific:

*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:

UU— / UU— / UU— / UU— /  
—UU / —  
—UU / —  
—UU / —UU / —

Sri Aurobindo wrote back to me:

"As for Nishikanta's model I give you two stanzas also:

*In the ending of time, in the sinking of space*

*What shall survive?*

*Hearts once alive,*

*Nay, these shall be safe in the breast of the One,*

*Man deified,*

*World-spirits wide,*

*Nothing ends all but began."*

Nishikanta wrote in Bengali:

UU / — /  
UU / — /  
UU— / UU— /  
UU— / UU— /  
UU— / UU— / UU— /

"These are not very manageable metres in English," he wrote back, "but all the same here you are:

*In some / faint dawn,*

*In some / dim eve,*

*Like a ges / ture of Light,*

*Like a dream / of delight*

*Thou comst near / er and near / er to me."*

Next I sent up a poem in which the third paeon alternated with the molossus—published later in my *Suryamukhi*, page 338, thus:

UU—U / UU—U /  
— — — /

He answered by composing:

*In a flaming / as of spaces*

*Curved like spires,*

*An epipha / ny of faces*

*Long curled fires,*

*The illumined / and tremendous*

*Masque drew near,*

*A God-pageant / of the aeons*

*Vast, deep-hued,*

*And the thunder / of its paeans*

*Wide-winged, nude,*

\* 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—/UU/U—/UU—/  
U—/U—/UU/U— UU—  
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 cry/to the Light  
Immor/tal out/of which/has sprung/thy delight,  
Thy grasp.*

*All things/in vain/thy hands seize,  
Earth's mu/sic fails;/the notes cease*

*Or rasp,  
Aloud/thou callst/to blind Fate:  
'Remove/the bar,/the gold gate  
Unhasp.'*

*But nev/er yet/hast thou/the goal/of thy race  
Attained,/nor thrilled/to the/inef/fable Face  
And clasp.*

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

—U—/—/—/UU/—U—

Sri Aurobindo composed a long poem on it which was published later in his *Collected Poems* (Vol. II, p. 300), entitled "Thought the Paraclete." So I need not quote it here in full: the first two lines of the poem will suffice as an illustration:

*As some bright/arch-an/gel in/vision flies  
Plunged in dream/-caught spi/rit im/mensities....*

Then I wrote a poem in Bengali thus:

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

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

*Vast-winged/the wind/ran, vi/olent, black-cowled/the waves  
O'er-topped/with fierce/green eyes/the deck,  
Huge heads/upraised.*

*Death-hunted, wound-weary, groaned like a whipped beast the ship,  
Shank, cowered, sobbed, each blow like Fate's  
Despairing felt."*

Next Nishikanta sent a Bengali poem:

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

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/dangerous/deity,  
Passion/swift and im/placable  
Arose/and storm/footed  
In the dim/heart of him  
Ran insatiate/, conquering,  
Worlds de/vouring and/hearts of men  
Then pe/rished bro/ken by  
The irre/sistible  
Occult/masters of/destiny,  
They who/sit in the/secretcy  
And watch/unmoved/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 this preface:

"I have struggled with your yesterday's poser and after a stupendous effort almost conquered—not altogether, for the first paeon at the end of a line was too much for me: I had to change it into a choriamb (trochee-iamb).... Moreover, my first attempt 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/wave-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 hate the/edge of the axe,/  
Smitten/by the Gods./  
Hewn, felled, the/Form crashed 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 Pramatha Choudhuri wrote to me urgent letters to induce Gurudev to contribute something. But Gurudev wrote back to me (in 1931):

"I am afraid Pramatha 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 Pramatha Choudhuri would not listen and importuned 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 Pramatha 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 lucubration from me to gild the one or buttress the other."

But when he found it "impossible" to find 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 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 at least two thousand pages in Bengali, and he not only found time 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 cannot possibly wish to insinuate that he felt no sympathy with him and others on whose behalf he was often asked to write tributes from time to time. For his was a spirit that reminded one often of A.E.'s famous quatrain:

*When the spirit grows wide  
It will have not have less  
Than the whole of the world  
For its tenderness.*

Yes, "tenderness" is the *mot juste*. For once when I wrote to him that Tagore had recently—in a letter to me published in my *Anami*—recanted 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 not to criticize Tagore adversely for his *volte face*.

"I do not think," he wrote, "that we should hastily conclude that Tagore's passing over to the opposite camp is a certitude. He is sensitive and perhaps a little affected by the positive, robustious, 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 of the steps are minor matters. I hope there will be no attack 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 very denials were creative affirmations. That makes an immense difference. Your strictures on his later development (about turning away from the Divine to democratic humanity) may or may not be correct, but this mixture even was the note of the day and it expressed 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 what to put in its place. A mixture of scepticism and slogans, 'Heil-Hitler' and the Fascist salute and Five-year-plan and the beating of everybody into one amorphous shape, a disabused denial of all ideals on one side and on the other a blind shut-my-eyes-and-shut-everybody's-eyes plunge into the bog 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 the soul visions on its way towards the Light which he had invoked by his superhuman *sadhana*. 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 this the psychic being must be brought to the fore, he emphasised. And 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 so much."

Such judgments of his were often challenged by many, but words such as "many", "multitude" or "majority" never had any terrors for him. On the one hand he was the softest and the most tolerant of appraisers; on the other, the whole world could not make him swerve 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 Nirod. 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 Nirod, "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 on 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 Nirod 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 somewhere else he would have succeeded just as convincingly?"

"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 dumbfounded 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 whom a page of Kant or Hume or even Berkeley used to leave either dazed and uncomprehending and fatigued or totally uninterested, suddenly began to write pages 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 from time to time and more than a mere poem short and laboured, perhaps one in two months, suddenly, after concentrating and practising *pranayam* 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 60 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 spontan-

ously 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 Nirod, 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 process. I have made no endeavour in writing. I have simply left the Higher Power to work and 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 not after I started 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. Where then is 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 Superamental 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 closes 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 the need of such 'assiduous, sincere and earnest endeavour' each time. Methinks. Well?"

"I only venture, Sir," pleaded Nirod, unvanquished 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, *pranayam* etc., I laboured five hours a day for a long time and concentrated and struggled for five years without any least spiritual result, (when spiritual experiences did come, they were as unaccountable and automatic as—blazes) but poetry came like a river and prose like a flood and other things too that were mental, 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 unliterary and personal letters (letters he probably would not have allowed to be published had he been with us today) to emphasise 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 almost bewilders 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 Yogi. That is why we find a deal too much of head-shaking when men live in and act from a deeper consciousness and talk to us of values which our superficial consciousness cannot appraise. 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 wordy storms again come surging  
The sensitive light of Truth retires once more. \*

\*Rishe vidanti munayah prashāntātmendriyāśayah  
Yadā tadevasattarkais-tirodhiyeta viplutam. (The Bhagavat.... 2.6.40)

## OUR READERS ARE REQUESTED TO

- (1) renew their subscriptions without delay;
- (2) send in the exact amount of their subscriptions by M.O. preferably;
- (3) point out errors in addresses;
- (4) intimate changes in address at least a week prior to publication;
- (5) write their addresses legibly—preferably in block letters;
- (6) address all correspondence (pertaining to the above points) to the Ag. Manager and not to the Editor;
- (7) make all cheques payable to "Mother India";
- (8) add 8 as. in case of cheques on banks outside the city of Bombay.



# REGIMENTATION

BY JOHN STEPHEN

The great majority of writers who have attempted to give us a word picture of life in the future have laid great stress on regimentation. Everything and everybody is subject to the State which becomes, in the ultimate limit, not only the supreme secular power but also the only God known to the peoples. Names are replaced by numbers, birth control is rigidly enforced and euthanasia the expected end for the feeble. Food is plentiful and free, clothing obtainable for the asking, entertainment, travelling and holidaying is provided by the State. Everybody is contented or should be since the entire battle of life has now been shouldered by the State. Unit M-14009b and his wife Unit F-14009b 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 Utopia need be unhappy just because they have the freedom not only of individual action, but of individual thought. Why think if there is nothing to think about?

It should be remembered that thought, in the reasonable person, is always the father of action. No logical and rational individual acts without prior thought. From which it follows that if you capture thought you also command actions as does, to a limited extent, the hypnotist. Good oratory, so necessary to the budding politician on the hustings, has this effect: fortunately, in inverse ratio to the intelligence of the audience. Power lies with and is invested in the people. The first step necessary to an infant dictator or embryo totalitarian State is to whee-

dle this power from the people into their own hands. In order to do this it is essential that all the people be fooled, not all the time, but until the mantle of power has been properly fixed on the usurper or usurping authority. Once firm in the saddle it becomes very difficult if not an impossibility for a people to unseat an efficient dictatorship or its equal without aid from peoples outside the yoke. Please note the word "efficient." An efficient regimen demands the exercise of ruthlessness, hence material power must always be coupled with cruelty. This is a fact, not at all strange, that many people do not appreciate.

That there is a definite trend towards regimentation of action and thought nobody will deny. As more and more masses become incorporated under a single Government it is necessary, not merely advisable, that all subjects react to authority in the same way. The more unwieldy the authority the more autocratic it must become in order to govern with efficiency. A single World Government is held out by many as the only panacea for the ills of this earth. The creation of a single governing body a Super-State, will automatically eliminate wars. That it would certainly do, for police action would be instant and effective against any subversive activities, assuming that the Governing Council of a World State would allow any group of malcontents to reach a dangerous stage. The glamour of a World State conceals the vision of the human race as ants in a formicary or bees in a colony. It obscures the regimentation of 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 threaten to encroach on some fundamental right of liberty. Civilized communities rigidly ban such actions as theft, rape and murder for obvious reasons. The democrat also holds on tenaciously to basic tenets intimately concerned with his private affairs such as, for instance, his right to worship how, when and where he pleases. In spite of the spirit of the times, genuine religion remains the most powerful instrument in most parts of the world whereby the minds of the masses may be swayed this way or that. Through its rites, preachings, writings, edicts and private individual catechisms a well-ordered religion guides its adherents in the path it wishes them to tread. Thus, religion wields a respectable amount of secular power; whether 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 curb or entirely abolish any secular power commanded by any spiritual body. This would ultimately lead to the dissolution of all religion as we know it now and the transfer of all spiritual allegiance to 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. Shortly we must choose 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 create a State where men have the freedom to develop themselves into intellectually and spiritually enlightened beings—beings who can successfully answer the premier question of the ages: How can man live in brotherhood with his fellows? If a man has to love his neighbour as himself, he must know as a fact of 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 fearful of being brought within the orbit of Communism. They know that life under a Communistic 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. Even if the totalitarian State could do what it mostly promises in vain—namely to give its subjects freedom from the common anxieties of life as we know it now—even if it did succeed in doing this to a certain extent—it could not do so for nothing. In order to function at all, it demands payment, not in money, not so much in work, but in abject subservience of our soul to it. In effect, you become a robot, an automation. And is it worth while feeding and clothing an automaton so that he may live? 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 wholesale approval by the modern mind. This must be considered unfortunate, for that system had solid principles behind it. But we cannot put the whole blame on the modern mind, either. Ayurveda cannot rest wholly on its own past; it must satisfy too the tests of a progressive life-force and of the mind of today.

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 richly and greatly, but with a different view of life from the western, a view not easily understood by the surface intellect but also often held by the Indians without much subtlety and insight.

The Rishis wrote of medicine with a certain kind of direct inner knowledge and summed up the whole philosophy of medicine in one word: 'TRIDOSHA'. Tridosha means three principles to be used in dealing with the disorders of man. To explain these principles they selected three terms or symbols which could be very well understood in terms of physical nature. The three symbols are Vat (wind), Pitta (bile), and kuph (mucous); but as soon as we speak of these terms and try to apply them for ascertaining the causes, classification, symptoms and treatment of diseases,

we find ourselves confused, as the interpretation is different at each place. These terms were used just to simplify the science, though too much simplification has created difficulty in understanding the real spirit behind their explanation.

The symbolic word has a different meaning at each point or place of application. For example, take the word: fire. In the material sense one understands what fire is when wood burns; but fire will have a different meaning when the patient complains that a fire is burning in his body and this means he feels great heat and restlessness. Or the patient complains of the fire of appetite and this means he is very hungry. Or one remarks that he is like fire, and this means that he commands great force and power. Thus at each place the interpretation of fire is different though linked with the symbol. Similarly Vat, Pitta and Kuph are terms used in medicine at different places and the following are some illustrations:

1. **EXPULSION OF DOSHA IN MATERIAL FORM:** Here mucoid discharge through nose, mouth, eye, etc. is kuph; yellow or bitter discharge as in vomiting is called Pitta; belching or any other manifestation of wind is called Vat.

2. **FEELING OF DOSHA IN THE BODY BY THE PATIENT OR PHYSICIAN:** Feeling of cold is Kuph; feeling of heat is Pitta; feeling of distension of abdomen is Vat.

3. **CAUSES OF DISEASES:** Man is composed of a mind to think

and will, a vital force to execute the thought and will, and a body to express the thought and will. Here Vat is for mind, Pitta is for vital or life force, and Kuph is for body. A disharmony between the mind, vital force and body, or, so to say, between Vat, Pitta and Kuph is 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 paralytic diseases, Pitta is for inflammatory diseases, Kuph is for non-inflammatory diseases, Tridosha is for purulent and degenerative diseases.

Diseases which could not be included in Vat, Pitta and Kuph types of diseases, were named Tridosha. Tridosha does not mean something very serious or that all the doshas are present in a disease. Serious diseases are in each type and all the doshas are present in other types of disorders.

A disease may pass through one or more or all the stages. For example, there is some discomfort at a localized place on the thumb without any sign of inflammation: this is the Kuphaja stage. The discomfort turns into a red pimple showing signs of inflammation: now there is the Pittaja stage. The pimple becomes very painful: that is the Vattaja stage. Then pus forms in it and we have the Tridosha stage.

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

1. **ELIMINATION:** Elimination of toxic matter from the body by way of bringing it out or neutralization through medicines, operations or any other process.
2. **STIMULATION:** Stimulation of dormant energy in the body to fight out the disease through medicines, injections, exercises etc.
3. **RELAXATION:** Relaxation of the mind and nerves through medicines or psychology or any other process.

This is how Indian medicine deals with the disorders of the body. Allopathy or so-called modern medicine also works on the same lines. Of course, modern medicine has detailed each part of itself with the help of a highly developed intellect, but both the ancient and modern systems are based on the same principles, hence a synthesis is possible. We must take full account of the potent revelations of modern knowledge and combine them with the luminous secrets of Indian medicine which seem to be veiled. The modern doctor will still find something simple and efficacious in Indian medicine and will be surprised to discover rare secrets worth applying to patients. This combination will enable the modern scientific doctor to have command and confidence in relieving the sufferings of men.