SRI AUROBINDO’S LETTERS

THE MOTHER

The Mother’s Presence

(You have told us that the Mother is aware of everything. Does she
know all our insignificant thoughts always or only when she concentrates?)

"I have said: ‘Always behave as if the Mother were looking at you,
for she is indeed present.’ This does not mean that in her physical mind
she is thinking of you always and seeing your thoughts. There is no need
of that, since she is everywhere and acts everywhere out of her universal
knowledge." (12-8-33)

(In what sense is Mother everywhere? Does Mother know all happen-
ings in the physical plane?)

"Including what Lloyd George had for breakfast today or what Roose-
velt said to his wife about the sevants? Why should the Mother ‘know’
in the human way all happenings in the physical plane? Her business
her embodiment is to know the workings of the universal forces and use
them for her works; for the rest she knows what she needs to know, some-
times with her inner self, sometimes with her physical mind. All know-
ledge is available in her universal self, but she brings forward only what is
needed to be brought forward so that the working is done." (13-8-33)

The Mother’s Grace

(What does Mother in her universal act according to the law of
things, but in her embodied physical by constant Grace?)

"It is the work of the Cosmic power to make the cosmos and the
law of the cosmos. The greater transformation comes from the Transcen-
dent above the universal and it is that transcendent Grace which the em-
bodyment of the Mother is there to bring to action." (13-8-33)

(What is the law of the working of the Mother’s Grace?)

"The more one develops the psychic, the more it is possible for the
Grace to act." (13-8-33)

(Can it be believed that the Mother’s Grace is acting even when the
difficulties do not disappear?)

"In that case everybody might say that all my difficulties must disap-
ppear at once, I must attain to perfection immediately and without diffi-
culties, otherwise it proves that the Mother’s Grace is not there." (30-7-33)

(Is it not that the more we individually open to the Mother’s Light and
Force, the more her power is established in the universal?)

"It is the transforming power that is established—the universal power
is always there." (13-8-33)

(Is not Grace a miracle also?)

"No. There is really no such thing as miracle." (13-8-33)

(What would you say about the utility of the physical approach to the
Mother?)

"There is the utility of the physical approach to the Mother—the ap-
proach of the embodied mind and vital to her embodied Power. In her
universal action the Mother acts according to the law of things—in her
embodied physical action is the opportunity of a constant Grace—it is for
that that the embodiment takes place." (12-8-33)

The Mother’s TrueBeing

1. Do you not refer to the Mother—our Mother—in your book
The Mother?

2. Is she not the “Individual” Divine Mother who has embodied "the
power of these two vaster ways of existence"—Transcendent and Universal?
3. Has she not descended here amongst us into Darkness and False-
hood and Error and Death in her deep and great love for us?)

"Yes". (17-8-33)

(There are many who hold the view that she was human but now
embodies the Divine Mother. Her Prayers and Meditations, they hold, ex-
plain this view. But, to my mental conception, to my psychic feeling, she is
the Divine Mother who has consented to put on her the cloak of obscurity
and suffering and ignorance so that she can effectively lead us—human
beings—to Knowledge and Bliss and the supreme Lord. I also conceive
that her Prayers are meant to show us—the aspiring psychic—how to pray
to the Divine. Am I right?)

"Yes. The Divine puts on an appearance of humanity, assumes the
outward human nature in order to tread the path and show it to human
beings, but does not cease to be the Divine. It is a manifestation that takes
place, a manifestation of a growing Divine consciousness, not human turning
into divine. The Mother was inwardly above the human even in childhood.
So the view held by ‘many’ is erroneous." (17-8-38)

(Am I right in thinking that she as an Individual embodies all the
Divine Powers and brings down the Grace more and more to the physical
plane and that her embodiment is a chance for the entire physical to change
and be transformed?)

"Yes. Her embodiment is a chance for the earth-consciousness to
receive the Supramental into it and to undergo first the transformation
necessary for that to be possible. Afterwards there will be a further trans-
formation by the Supramental, but the whole consciousness will not be
supramentalized—there will be first a new race representing the Super-

mind, as man represents the mind." (12-8-33)

The Mother’s Action

(Sometimes the Mother does not smile at us. Does this mean dis-
pleasure on her part?)

"It is a mistake to think that the Mother’s not smiling means either
displeasure or disagreement. This is not the case. It is often merely a
sign of absorption or of inner concentration. On this occa-
sion the Mother was putting a question to your soul." (31-7-33)

(Can Mother see to the details of organisation?)

"It is quite impossible for the Mother to see to detail of the or-
ganisation of the Ashram in person, even as it is she has no time free at all.
It is understood that you can have things done, but it is with those who
have charge that you must insist on the execution of any arrangement." (20-7-33)

(On what basis did Mother’s action proceed in the case recently sub-
mitted to her?)

"Mother acted on her inner perception about the whole affair; she does
not act only on the outer facts but on what she feels or sees lying behind
them." (25-8-33)

(X’s letter to me about her hip-joint pain was sent to Mother by me
not on the same day but on the next. Yet it seems from X’s latest that her
pain has disappeared soon after that letter had reached me. Was there an au-
tomatic effect of the letter, even before Mother was told of the letter’s con-
tenets?)

"You spoke to the Mother about X’s pain on the same day—it is not
necessary to suppose an automatic effect of the letter itself. But such an
Sri Aurobindo’s Letters —Continued from page 1

(How does Mother’s protection of the sadhaks from certain forces of death, disease, etc., work?)

“The Mother has made an arrangement with a view to all the occult forces and the best possible conditions for the protection of the sadhaks from certain forces of death, disease etc. It cannot work perfectly because the sadhaks themselves have not the right attitude towards food and kindred vital physical things. But still there is a protection. If, however, the sadhaks go outside her formation, it must be on their own responsibility. But this arrangement is for the Asram and not for those who are outside.”

(Is Mother testing us always?)

“The idea of tests is not a healthy one and ought not to be pushed too far. Tests are applied not by the Divine but by the forces of the lower planes—mental, vital and physical—and allowed by the Divine because that is a part of the soul’s training and helps it to know itself, its power and the limitations it has to outgrow. The Mother is not testing you at every moment but rather helping you at every moment to rise beyond the necessity of tests and difficulties which belong to the inferior consciousness. To be always conscious of that help will be your best safeguard against all attacks whether of adverse powers or of your own lower nature.” (23-2-31)

The Mother and Sri Aurobindo

(Is it possible that the Mother cannot help me but you can?)

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

“The Mother’s consciousness is the Divine Consciousness and the Light that comes from it is the Light of the Divine Truth.

One who receives and accepts lives in the Mother’s Light will begin to see the truth on all the planes, the mental, the vital, the physical. He will reject all that is undivine—the undivine is the falsehood, the ignorance, the error of the dark forces; the undivine is all that is obscure and unwilling to accept the divine Truth and its Light and Force of the Mother.

That is why I am always telling you to keep yourself in contact with the Mother and Her Light and Force, because it is only so that you can come out of the confusion and chasms and receive the Truth that comes from above.

When we speak of the Mother’s Light or my Light in a special sense, we are speaking of a special occult action—we are speaking of certain Lights which come from the Supermind. In this action, the Mother’s is the White Light that purifies, illumines, brings down the whole essence and power of the Truth and makes the transformation possible. But in fact all Light that comes from above, from the highest divine Truth is the Mother’s.

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

The attempt to set up a division and opposition putting the Mother on one side and myself on another and opposite or quite different side, has always been a trick of the forces of Palsehood when they want to prevent a sadhaka from reaching the Truth.

Know that the Mother’s Light and Force are the Light and Force of the Truth; remain always in contact with the Mother’s Light and Force, then only can you grow into the divine Truth.” (16-9-1931)

Portrait of Savitri

From Sri Aurobindo’s “Savitri”—Book 1, Canto 2

Her mind, a sea of white sincerity,
Passionate in flow, had not one turbid wave.
As in a mystic and dynamic dance
A priestess of immaculate ecstasy
Inscribed and ruled from Truth’s revealing vault
Moves in some prophet cavern of the gods,
A heart of silence in the hands of joy
Inhabited with rich creative beats
A body like a parable of dawn
That seemed a niche for veiled divinity
Or golden temple door to things beyond.
Immortal rhythms swayed in her time-born steps;
Her look, her smile awoke celestial sense
Even in earth-stuff, and their intense delight
Pour’d a supernatural beauty on men’s lives.
A wide-self-giving was her native act;
A magnanimity as of sea or sky
Enveloped with its greatness all that came
And gave a sense as of a greatness world;
Her kindly care was a sweet temperate sun,
Her high passion a blue heaven’s equipose.
As might a soul fly like a hunted bird,
Escaping with tired wings from a world of storms,
And a quiet reach like a remembered breast,
In a haven of safety and splendid soft repose
One could drink life back in streams of honey-fire,
Recover the lost habit of happiness,
Feel her bright nature’s glorious ambiance,
And greet joy in her warmth and colour’s rule.
A deep of compassion, a hushed sanctuary,
Her inward help unbarred a gate in heaven;
Love in her was wider than the universe,
The whole world could take refuge in her single heart.
The great unsatisfied godhead here could dwell:
Vacant of the dwarf self’s imprisoned air
Her mood could harbour his scattered breath
Spiritual that can make all things divine.
For even her gulfs were secretaries of light.
At once she was the stillness and the word,
A continent of self-diffusing peace
An ocean of untrembling virgin fire:
The strength, the silence of the gods were hers.
In her she found a vastness like his own,
His high warm subtle ether he refrained
And moved in her as in his natural home.
In her he met his own eternity.
June 5 marked the completion of six months since Sri Aurobindo's departure. Here is a commemorative article from "New Age Interpreter," Los Angeles, California. We are happy to reproduce this fine tribute which shows that Sri Aurobindo's light is marching on, touching the mind and soul of the West no less than the East.

"Whenever there is the fading of the Dharma and the uprising of unrighteousness, then I loosen myself forth to birth.

"For the delivereance of the good, for the destruction of the evil-doers, for the enshrining of the Right, I am born from age to age."

That the times in which we live bear the mark of the "fading of the Dharma" and the "uprising of unrighteousness" in an exceptional measure has long been evident to many of us, who have, therefore, been alerted for the Avataral Descent in one or more embodiments. For those who are spiritually awake the signs of such Descent, in more than one embodiment, currently or within the recent past, have not been lacking, so that, indeed, a time of exceptional darkness has also been the occasion for the manifestation of rare inner Light. Among these embodiments Sri Aurobindo stands out as one of the most luminous figures of all historic time. It is but fitting, therefore, that we should direct at least some portion of our thoughts and research towards this man who in an uncommon degree manifested the Divine Nature and Wisdom.

Sri Aurobindo was born in 1872 and passed from physical embodiment on the fifth of last December. Rarely have we known lives so packed with accomplishment as is the case with this man. His education began in England at the age of seven and was completed at Cambridge. His life-work began in the secretariat of the Gaekwar of Baroda and soon extended to the teaching of English and administrative work in Baroda College. It was only when his interests were directed into the field of Indian politics and in the years just preceding 1910 he became the leader of the independence movement. In fact he originated the technique of non-cooperation which was later continued so effectively by Mahatma Gandhi. Like other such leaders he experienced arrest and waited a year in jail for the trial which ultimately cleared him from the accusations brought against him.

For the biographer, able to trace only the tangible events in a human life, the final forty years might well seem poor in the material offered; but for him who has metaphysical vision, these were the great years which reveal One with a stature comparable with that of a Krishna, a Buddha or a Christ. These years saw the manifestation of greatness in two senses. First, there was a vast literary production, in both the mediums of verse and poetry, which is available to the scholar and which may be in some measure evaluated by the latter. The second and greater part of his labor lay in the unseen dimensions which only the few can ever truly evaluate. Along with this double labor, and really incidental thereto, an ordered and well-established open to both sexes, and dedicated to the dual objective of individual Realization and the Spiritualization of the world in a sense that is not restricted to the human portion of that world.

Leaving this all too brief sketch of an extraordinarily full life-work, we must turn to an evaluation of the more tangible production of his last forty years. Sri Aurobindo became a Yogi and a Rishi or, as the Buddhists would say, an Enlightened One. He was not merely a mystic but a master of mystical and Gnostic Consciousness with a comprehensiveness that does not seem to have been surpassed within historic times. His literary work was dedicated, almost exclusively, to the revelation of Gnostic Consciousness in so far as that may be, and to the encouragement and guidance of effort upon the part of all who may respond, to the end that they too may know the Gnostic Realization. But he implemented this work with a most unusual scholarly equipment, a stock of knowledge and material. While this equipment is strongest in the Vedic and Yoga philosophical, and general

literary, linguistic and historic sense, yet there is not lacking a considerable understanding of Western science, save only that phase of science of which mathematics is an essential part. Along with all this, Sri Aurobindo was thoroughly trained in, and a master of, the English language in both the forms of prose and poetic literature. He thus for the first time in the history of Indian Gnostic contributions we have original production in the language of the reader of English, and in terms adapted to the needs of the modern mind; all of which results in a product of far more value than the translations of ancient Sutras composed for a mentality which is strange and often incomprehensible to us.

While it is true that Sri Aurobindo often speaks in pejorative terms of the mind and the reason, particularly in later writings, yet his formulations, even in his poetry, are always highly rational and, therefore, intelligible. The reader does not have to labor with the unintelligible words which are so often the curse of mystical production, as in the case of Jacob Boehme. Perhaps, despite himself, Sri Aurobindo found it to be impossible to cease being reasonable, and the reader may well be thankful for this. The writer would class him with Shankara as being one of the two clearest and most rational of mystical philosophers. And, further, Sri Aurobindo rarely, if ever, imposes intellectual violence upon the reader, since he avoids categorical assertion and denial in the highest degree possible, though the authority of Direct Realization is such that the categorical form cannot be completely avoided. He suggests possibilities or difficulties for the reasonable consideration of the reader and in his philosophic writings and letters ever seeks to lead the understanding by argument, rather than to compel it by authoritarian pronouncement. The result is that the thoughtful reader is often convinced away from his previous predilections and, when not convinced, yet feels that Sri Aurobindo permits and respects his differing view. Of all the merits of this great man, this is not the least.

Lack of space prevents saying more than a word concerning the substance of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga philosophy, but we would fail in the sketch of this man's life and thought if we did not say something. In the main, he continues in the current established by the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita and, in so far, is in accord with the established Indian tradition. But he derives from, or superimposes upon, that current an interpretation which, in certain important respects, diverges radically from views that have been predominant in India, particularly the views of Shankara and the Mayavadins. He teaches a philosophy of universal Realism as opposed to the Mayavadins' universal illusionism. Hence, for Sri Aurobindo, the attainment of Nirvana, while a preeminently valuable achievement, is not the goal of a process which returns to the evolution, whereas, for Shankara and the Mayavadins, the evolution is simply irrelevant and Nirvana a culmination. For Sri Aurobindo, world process and development remain significant even for the Divine Life.

The Crown of Sri Aurobindo lies in this that through him the Divine has been drawn down into the mundane field for its spiritualization in a degree and sense that has rarely, if ever, been realized heretofore, and thus He is truly an Avatar.

Hail to Thee, Thou Man-God!

"Small is his work, even if he succeeds, who labours for his own salvation or the salvation of a few; infinitely great is he, even if he fails or succeeds only partially or for a reason, who lives only to bring about peace of soul, joy, purity and perfection among all mankind!"

*Editor's Note: Spiritual" instead of "Gnostic" would be more accurate. For, though what Sri Aurobindo terms "Gnostic" can be termed "Spiritual," all that is Spiritual is not necessarily Gnostic. By Gnostics Sri Aurobindo means a special kind of power of the Spirit, which is not Diestamental and which in its full and integrally dynamic world-transformative Light is outstanding the realization of Sri Aurobinda.

**Editor's Note: Sri Aurobindo speaks poetically of the mind and reason in the role of discoverers or arbiters of ultimate truths. He acknowledges their pragmatic usefulness in certain spheres and accepts them as instruments which, if made sufficiently clear and plastic, can serve effectively to explain something of the spiritually realised knowledge.

13 Sri Aurobindo.
THE INVISIBLE WHOLE AND THE PERSONAL WORKER

By A. L. CRAMPON CHALK

"The knowledge on which the door of works in Yoga has to found all his action and development has for the keynote of its structure a more and more concrete perception of unity, the living sense of an all-pervading oneness; he moves in the increasing consciousness of all existence as an indivisible whole."

The dominant motif of the grand symphony of Sri Aurobindo’s teaching is its insistence upon the Wholeness of Life. It is the Integral Yoga and its purpose is to make whole or integrate the life as it exists at present in different levels of consciousness. Boundaries and divisions of consciousness have to be broken down and the Divine flood allowed to penetrate and flow everywhere. It is in contrast with other yogas that achieve their purpose of uniting the fragmentary individual spark of consciousness to the whole by isolating and augmenting the local powers until they form a unit strong enough to leap from ordinary into super-consciousness. It is the broad, general, and flexible quality of Aurobindonian teaching that should, and no doubt will, establish it as the foundation of spiritual philosophy in the ensuing decade; this and, of course, the incomparable lucidity of its exposition.

Of all practical aids that of the "concrete perception of unity, the living sense of an all-pervading oneness" is the most pregnant with significance at this time; the formula is a very powerful, mass-paper test of the presence or absence of all the other qualities of the whole. Boundaries and divisions of consciousness have to be broken down and the Divine flood allowed to penetrate and flow everywhere. The clue to the solution of this dilemma in action is obvious—by and fight always for the principle of the Indivisible Whole, and not to find oneself siding with a power that is fighting or working for the division or disruption of the whole.

An adequate conception of the all-pervading oneness is subtle and not easy, for it implies the right to a place within the whole scheme of things of all the differing, even warring, segments of life at their present levels of development and manifestation. As the light of consciousness drops deeper into matter so does separation become more and more a principle of conditions; equally this is true of the consciousness that informs a particular ray called a personality. The more intense the personal obsession, i.e., the more rooted in matter, the more separated its outlook; conversely, the less the ego-centricity the wider and truer the conception of life. Paranoia is the extremity of one limit, and the ananda of conscious union with the Divine Whole the other.

All this seems to add up to the practical need to live and let live in a very high, wide, and comprehensive sense. Whenever, for instance, a Communist seeks to enslave or wage war on a friendly neighbour—in any sphere of action—one should help to stop him; even, if necessary to prevent him killing his neighbour, stop him by the force of war. Equally, wherever his neighbour wages war on a friendly Communist, stop him too, with lethal force if necessary. (The fact that non-Communists have not, so far, shown any particular desire to wage war on Communists does not invalidate this; it actually adds point.)

It is within the canon of this doctrine of the indivisible Whole that each part must stick up for itself as well as for its neighbour. Weak concession to other points of view is no part of the technique of preserving peace; it actually encourages innovation. Sincere surrender of an outward viewpoint is another matter entirely and is a sign of progressive enlightenment if it proceeds from strength of mind and perception and not moral weakness.

Sticking up for one’s principles does not necessarily involve aggressive action, though it does imply a clear and even militant attitude in dealing with conditions that are natural to and impinge on one’s circumstances. One’s thoughts and attitude, within one’s dramma and way of life, must be uncompromising for the individual whole. “Every standpoint, every man-made rule of action which ignores the indivisibility of the cosmic movement, whatever its utility in external practice, is the eye of spiritual Truth an imperfect view and a law of the ignorance.”

It is of the essence of the yoga that it should be “difficult for us in our outward parts and active nature to square accounts between this universal standpoint and the claims of our personal opinion, our personal will, our personal emotion and desire.” While he is differentiating himself from the general mass of consciousness it is normal and well that man should distinguish and cherish his individual nature; but when he turns in the corner for his return journey home to the Eternal his ego-consciousness must go. Western feeling, profoundly influenced by Christianity, does not take kindly to the necessity for surrendering the ego-consciousness to the Christian atonement appears to be based on the idea of permanent personality; but to the mystical perception of the Indivisible Whole this teaching seems perforce to be a temporary one, a sort of resting stage towards the final conception of the Wholeness of God. It is true that the Father’s house has many mansions, but within the Father’s heart is one spirit of the Eternal which is indivisible and Whole, possessing and possessed of all the forms of consciousness.

Within the Indivisible Whole what is to be the attitude of the personal worker? He is to hold himself a specialist for a task specifically assigned to him, a task with both an outward impact on circumstances about him and an inner impact on his own soul; these two aspects he will feel to be two poles of the same current of fate. The compas point for his perpetual guidance is to be the idear of the Indivisible Whole, and all his efforts are to be devised and implemented with his spiritual eye on that. For him there will be “a constant drive towards a reverberating, intensifying, overwhelming openness to the secret truth of things.” Time, in no doubt, he will have that freedom of the Spirit and access to supreme Truth which will render his service perfect.


\* The Synthesis of Yoga, p. 121.

I DECLINE TO ACCEPT THE END OF MAN

By WILLIAM PAULKNER

This is the Speech delivered in Stockholm on the occasion of the Award to William Paulkner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, December 10, 1956.

I feel that this award was not made to me as a man but to my work—a life’s work in the agency and sweat of human spirit, not for glory and least of all for profit, but to create out of the materials of the human spirit something which did not exist before. So this award is only mine in trust. It will not be difficult to find a dedication for the part of me which commen- nurate with the purpose and significance of its origin. But I would like to do the same with the acclaim too, by using this moment as a pinnacle from which I might be listened to by the young men and women already dedicated to the same anguish and travail, among whom is already that one who will some day stand where I am standing.

Our tragedy today is a general and universal physical fear so long sustains us; fear of failure, fear of death, fear of suffering the judgment of the spirit. There is only the question: when will I be blown up? Because of this, the young man or woman writing today has forgotten the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good religion and good art. And what I should write is a book rather than an essay. It will be longer than this.

He must learn again. He must teach himself that the base of all things is to be afraid; and, teaching himself that, forget it forever, leaving no room in his workshop for anything but the ancient eternal values of the heart—love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacri-
SRI AUROBINDO, THE LEADER OF THE EVOLUTION
PART II OF “THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA”

SECTIOIN III : THE NEW WORLD-VIEW

(i) THE SPIRITUAL METAPHYSICS

THE SUPERMIND

Our enquiry into the nature of the Higher Knowledge has led us to the spiritual mental range of the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, the Intuitive Mind, and the Overmind; the characteristic mode of cognition on each of these levels has been described at length in the previous essays, but so far, a detailed exposition of the Supramental cognition has not been given, except when comparing it to the Overmind or when relating it to “Self-realisation.” This has been done because it would not have been correct to bracket the Supermind with other levels as it belongs to a plane which is not only beyond the mental, but even beyond the spiritual mental; therefore, in a philosophical sense it is necessary to consider it as a separate category. The Supermind is supra-cosmic—its ontological station is in Paramma, the higher hemisphere containing the triple world of Sachchidananda (Consciousness-Power: Bliss), and not in Apurvaraka, the lower hemisphere of Mind: Life; Matter; yet it is not extra-cosmic, it is not severed from the cosmos, for it is by its creative and formative action that all manifestation becomes possible—in this sense it connects the lower and the higher hemispheres. Out of its depths the One Divine Reality, through the instrumentation of the Supermind, which is its gnostic light and creative dynamism, develops the trinity principle of Sat: Chit: Ananda; out of the one indivisible unity it brings out and establishes a Trinity, but “doing as it only differentiates, it does not divide, so that the unity is constantly maintained. Sri Aurobindo clarifies the relation of Supermind to Sachchidananda in the following lines: “The supreme supra-cosmic Sachchidananda is above all Supermind may be described as its power of self-awareness and world-awareness, the world being known as within itself and not outside. So to live consciously in the supreme Sachchidananda one must pass through the Supermind. If one is in the supra-cosmic apart from the manifestation, there is no place for problems or solutions. If one lives in the transcendence and the cosmic view at the same time, that can only be by the Supramental consciousness in the supreme Sachchidananda consciousness.” And in his Life Divine he writes: “We have to regard therefore this all-deriving, all-originating, all-consummating Supermind as the nature of the Divine Being, not indeed in its absolute self-existence, but in its action as the Lord and Creator of its own worlds. This is the truth of that which we call God.”

This Epistemological Section will not be complete without a description of the Supramental cognition, which is the highest mode of knowledge-apprehension—the highest, because it is the Divine Truth-consciousness in itself, God-consciousness self-aware in all its integrity, totality and unity, that consciousness by which the Divine Being known His essence as well as His entire manifestation. The Supermind is self-aware and aware of all that is by its own inherent light and governs this Universe of myriad worlds by its own self-force; it is the Supreme Divine Intelligence and Will, the Highest Law, that presides over and secretly controls the workings of the cosmic manifestation—secretly, because overtly it does not;* as we shall see later in the Ontology Section, the Supermind has not directly created this Universe, but through its immediately delegatory power, the Overmind. However, even though the Supermind does not directly control the cosmic process, it stands veiled behind it and supports it.

Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind the “Real Idea” of the universe, because it is according to its Truth-Idea and Truth-Law that all manifestation proceeds. It contains the archetypes of the cyclical earthly realities, the perfect forms and patterns in the likeness of which the imperfect earthly creations are gradually evolving. It bears within itself the seed-truths of terrestrial things; it brings out, from the “Transcendent Divine”, truths of existence and puts them forth into cosmic creation. The “Ideas” of Plato can be said to be the reflections of these archetypes on the spiritual-mind plane; though not a mystic in the strict sense like Pythagoras, Plato’s mind was nevertheless receptive to a certain extent to spiritual inspiration—in the calm ether of his mind many truths of the Spirit were reflected; that is why he was able to intuit the existence of archetypal realities. Jung, on the contrary, posits his archetypes on an infra-rational plane, not on a supra-rational one like Plato; therefore they have for him a different denomination and a more earth-bound significance—in his system of Psychology they become perennial symbols and patterns in the Racial Unconscious that influence and condition the religious, philosophic, aesthetic, and psycho-social life of men.

Coming to the question of knowledge-apprehension on the level of the Supermind, it can be stated that the Supramental consciousness has a dual aspect—it is a consciousness of inherent self-knowledge as well as, through identification of Self and its manifestation, of intimate world-knowledge. It is, says Sri Aurobindo, fundamentally a “Truth-consciousness, a direct and inherent awareness of the truth of being and the truth of things; it is a power of the Infinite knowing and working out its finitude, a power of the Universal knowing and working out its own consciousness and detail, its coexistence and its individualities; self-possessed of Truth, it would not have to seek for the Truth or suffer from the liability to miss it as does the mind of the Ignorance.” The consciousness of the evolved gnostic being would be “a consciousness of universal identity and a consequent or rather inherent Truth-knowledge, Truth-sight, Truth-feeling, Truth-will, Truth-sense and Truth-dynamic of action implicit in his identity with the One or spontaneously arising from his identity with the All. His life would be a movement in the steps of a spiritual liberty and largeness replacing the law of the mental idea and the law of vital and physical need and desire and the compulsion of a surrounding life; his life and action would be bound by nothing else than the Divine Wisdom and Will acting on him and in him according to its Truth-consciousness”.

* Establishing the Supermind as an overtly operative power, instead of its remaining in “Rosy Gnarl” in territorial creation, as the work Sri Aurobindo has been doing for the last forty years.

When sweet enchantment wraps the hush of day,
And moon-glow fills his heart,
He hears a whisper amidst the trees:
“See Me in all that is.”

But in moments darkened by sorrow’s gloom,
In loneliness of heart and mind,
An eremite, he cries out loud:
“O where art Thou? I am blind.”

He shouts across the Cosmic Void,
To Him who dwells beyond the stars,
To reawaken in dumb earth
His own Descent in human garb.

The Presence is Here

He waits and waits through many moons,
But dawn is not still the lording-for day,
He lingers outside the sacred place
To see but an imagined face.

Perchance the Lord of Heaven heard the voice
And said: “Let faith be justified”
For the Grace that moves ’midst human things
Blessed with Her smile his soul-yearnings.

Then warmth and glow filled the blank air
And clapped the being rendered mute,
And gold-light hovered in mind-space—
He knew: The Presence is here.

“ALASTOR”
In Chapter VIII the closing stress was on Sri Aurobindo's vision of earth as the final venue of heroic souls who are sent to carry through a great experimental task, the concern of which is "as the soul of our nature shapes His works." This experiment has a twofold aim: first the aspiration of the animal nature of man under Divinity and secondly the imposition of the answering Divinity in order to transform the seemingly inert, which has been the condition of the desolate human race into active life, a dynamic earth, a spiritual base, a home for the spiritual saints, a descent of the Divine Power into our dismal humanity, a descent ever increasing with realization of the Ascent and missioned to promote a new manifestation in the "earthly human future."

But to invoke the Divine power for the bitter lot of earth and man is one thing: to apply the power to alleviate the misery of man is quite another. How hard this task is in practice is difficult to say, for such a creation of material power on the scale envisaged, requires knowledge of occult powers and even less due to their right utilization when such powers are given us, as they occasionally are, before we have acquired some insight into the mysterious springs of human nature and action. Sri Aurobindo gave me a pregnant hint of this deep difficulty in 1924, when he said that he had come to realize through his Yogic knowledge that "to help humanity out it was not enough for an individual, however great, to achieve an ultimate solution individually" because "even when the Light is ready to descend it comes to stay till the lower plane is also ready to bear the pressure of the Descent...consequently the utmost you can do, here and now, is to communicate only partially the light of your realization in proportion to your receptivity."  

But what I had understood him to mean then proved very different from what, little by little, I came to realize afterwards. Often enough a saying of Sri Ramakrishna recurs to me as I ideal changes. In the presence of present problems the knowledge, the power of a past moment is of very little use. Sri Ramakrishna once said: "What I had conceived about sadhana corresponded little with my subsequent experience of it." No one, I am afraid, can possibly grasp the complex simplifications of this simple statement. I will not, however, venture to elucidate on these because, for one thing, I do not feel myself competent and, for another, this is not a treatise on Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga. What I am undertaking to pay my homage to his Master's great personality through my own reactions and perhaps apprise it better by failing to plead it. So I will, as the safe side, confine myself to his personality as it impressed me from day to day.

As I lived in his Ashram and, much to my shame, tended with him in my pathetic ignorance which made me rush in again and again against my own nature and purpose to try to treat, I was finding that his increasing on my consciousness, as it were. To think that I knew so little—less than nothing at all—in spite of the beautiful opinion I had formed of his brilliant knowledge of men and things and truth in general. But he did all he could to make the burden of my self-pity bearable because he was what he was, and not because I was anything near what he wanted me to be. And what was it after all that he had wanted of me? A very simple thing: to grow in trust and come with a working faith in his superior wisdom, his verifiable power of helping me in my helpless and his unfailing indulgence for one who had failed him at every turn. I do not say this in mere (so-called) humility. For as the days passed I came to realize, progressively, how much I had been forgetting when I was not accepting his radiant lead, desire him (sometimes unwittingly), at others prejudices to lead me in the way I thought proper? In other words, did I not presume, time and time again, to give him a lead, as it were, as to which direction I was to go to or what acts I was to perform? Was I not trying to be clever. I want only to steer clear of platitude and focus the limited light of my vision on his personality that I may bring out the only thing I can: his greatness as I saw it from close quarters and perhaps apprise it better by failing to plead it.

For days after heart-shattering day I saw how I was pattering out even though the more restive I grew the more patiently he gave me a long rope. He did not for the sake of the balm of his wisdom on my unruly ego but to show me the way to my own fuller nature the which the undefined forms of my boisterous self-blurred so effectively from my "rational" eyes, as I put it self-appreciatively. Month after weary month I challenged him to prove his thesis which I knew in my heart of hearts to be unanswerable and yet, consistently, I insisted on finding there a deeper essence always than I let him down to accord me a kindlier hand-clasp. I aimed at him my crude gibes but he came down unperturbed to my level and met me with his superior repartees. I doubted him but he blessed me in return. I can not recall his holding the only hallucination by the old Adam in me. I challenged him to prove his acts—a thing I had not dared even when I was learning such an elementary thing as Euclidean geometry—and yet he came out invariably with his patient arguments substantiating the view of a higher reality and the old Adam became the only hallucination by the old Adam in me.

In this strong ignorance, castigate the dogmatism of spiritual teachers may appear very sweetly undogmatic to the uninformed, but those who have ever once come into contact with an authentic Guru can only testify to his overpowering techniques.

But what I wish to stress here is not simply his tolerance and patience, nor even his matchless capacity for understanding the robber's point of view but a gift, amounting to genius, of appraising in imaginative sympathy the latter's position as an antagonist and then coming down to his level of intelligence and receptivity. To give an instance in point.

I had come to the Ashram with a strong mental formation in favour of asceticism. So even though I loved karma—being, by nature, ineradicable—I wanted to situate karma in the infinite divinity of things as a living example of inaction, bhakti and wisdom. I was told by a guru—bhai that the Mother favoured a dynamic spirituality and karma as against static wisdom. This made me at once glad and sad. Glad because I was by nature energetic; sad because I feared she would alter me irre- revocably to the world and therefore, a fortiori, to my present state of no-experience as against transcendent God-realisation. Yet why must he go on browbeating Nirod, the charming pessimist, with his Aurobindoist sadhiks, and I might add those of bhakti which at least led somewhere? Did not even the great Sri Ramakrishna warn the spiritual aspirant against being caught in the toils of karma when he was, like Dilip, loved the traditional thoroughfare of bhakti? And why, when the child is born, she has only to live for the child to the exclusion of everything else?

As I waked elated over the bliss of inaction I often enough went too: my impulse led me in an anti-climax and I looked like a disciple who wanted to give points to his Guru. No wonder my brief glow of questioning have never disturbed the truth of sadness if not an aftermath of depression. Could it be right to take such liberties with one's Guru (and what a Guru!) because he tolerated them? And was it seemingly to assume such a tone of banter if not irreverence, treating him as though he were something like a fellow-member in opposition whom one could address with polite reverence only to show up the more effectively his deficiency in acumen? So I apologised in a postscript: wouldn't be pardon my unpardonable impertinence? For if he got pleased with what I was, he wouldn't be at least an energetic worker in practice though an opponent of works in idealistic theory—etc.

To that he wrote, indolent as ever (at 1904): I have no doubt whether you understand that I am displeased with the karma question. I castigated or fustigated Nirod not from displeasure nor even 'more in sorrow than in anger', but for fun and also from a high sense of duty: for that era martial was held enough to generalise from his limited experience and impose it as a definite law in yoga, discredit- ing in the process my own immortal philosophy! What then could I but to jump on him in a spirit of genial massacre?

Nirod used to come almost daily in those days as we two happened to be birds of the same shade of pessimistic feather. Thus while rooting together, we two drowned many a time our world dissatisfaction in our morning jereisen over the tea. So we chuckled at this point, albeit, alas, a little too prematurely!

"I am afraid," Sri Aurobindo went on, "your letter too does very much the same thing. For in spite of your disclaimer, you practically come to the conclusion that all my nonsense about karma was being as much a way to realisation as jnana and bhakti is either a gleaming chimera or practicable only by Avatars or else a sheer laborious superficiality—since one can jump straight into the Divine through the open door of bhakti or sweep majestically into him by the easy way of knowledge of karma by which nobody reached anywhere? The old Yogas are true, are they not? Then why a new- fangled and more difficult one with this unheard-of talk about Supernal and God knows what else? There can be no answer to that; for I can only answer by a repetition of the statement of my own knowledge and experience. That is what I have in my done in the latter's answer to Nirod and perhaps that amounts only to a perverse obstinacy in ridiciling my gleaming and damning chimeras and forcing my innocence of a superficiality on a world of itself and anxious to get an easy short cut to the Divine. Un- fortunately, I do not believe in short cuts—at any rate none ever led me where I wanted to go. However, let it rest there.

The second thing to bear in mind is that the experience of Vaishnava bhakti or of swerna, I recognise their truth in their own field and for their own purpose—their truth of the experience so far as it goes—though I am in no way bound to accept the truth of the yoga is true in its own field—a larger field, as I think—and for its own pur- pose. The purpose of the old is to get away from life to the Divine—so obviously, let us drop karma. The purpose of the new is to get a better field of Words out of our unfruitful subject is to get out of life—for that, yoga by works is indispensable. It seems to me that there is no mystery about that or any- thing to perplex anybody—it is rational and inevitable. Only you say that the thing is impossible; but that is what is said about everything—so I drop it.

"I may point out, however that farmayoga existed even before the Gita. Your idea that the only justification in the Gita for works is that it is an unavoidable nuisance, so much better make the best use of it, is true. But the summary and crude. If that were all, the Gita would be the production of an imbecile and I would hardly have been justified in writing two volumes
blowing my bubble of sorrow, inveigled by its phantom irreducence.

But this time he did not choose to meet my bauster with banter and wrote back in his not stern seriousness.

I "must again point out that I have never put any ban on bhakti, so there is no meaning in your saying that I have lifted a ban which never existed. Also I am not conscious of having banned meditation either at all—a thing the sentimental praise of some poets has made me.

I have stressed both bhakti and knowledge in my yoga as well as
devotion, even if I have not given to any of them exclusive importance like Shankara or Chaitanya. Also I think I have not imported upon anyone the character of Sadaque. Those who wanted to go Wholesale for meditation, I have left to do without any interference, though not without any help I could give. I have latterly sometimes discouraged entire meditation, but that was not because it was against N. or others, who, in spite of my warnings, went in for it and came
to grief. I have written what I thought when people asked me; but if they have no use for my ideas about things, why do they ask me?

I now make remarks about being broken, mere Socratic irony.

Of course I am not in the least puzzled by the case either of Shankara or of Ramakrishna.

"The difficulty you feel or any sadhaka feels about meditation is not really a question of meditation versus bhakti versus works. It is a matter of the attitude to be taken, the approach or whatever you call it. Yours seems to be characterized on one side by a tremendous effort in the mind, on the other a glossoy certitude in the vital which seems to watch and muster

antagonism to it. Yours is not the form of the work itself or mere activity but the consciousness and Godward will find behind that are the essence of karma-yoga; the work is only the necessary instrumentation for the union with the Mother. The work is the path to that pure and power of Light from the will and power of the Ignorer.

"Finally why suppose that I am against meditation or bhakti? I have not the slightest objection to your taking either or both as the means of approach to the Divine. Only I saw no reason why anyone should feel foul of
works and deny the truth of those who, as the Gita says, reached through
works perfect realization and nearness of nature with the Divine—suddhidharmam (so did Janaka and others)—simply because he himself

indulgence emboldened me. But paradoxical though it may sound, I myself loved karma for its own sake, and yet I saw no reason why one

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SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME—Continued from previous page

severe. What seemed to be denied and impossible for years (bringing about a state of confusion and isolation and disbelieve in even the goodwill and power of the Divine, the spiritual Force and the Guru) suddenly happens after all—when those who never had any experience for years get the opening. The difficulty is great and the darkness of the material..."...

And then he went on to add reassuringly: "It is not true that you have never received forces from us. You have received them. It is only that you could not be conscious of it, but that happens with many. Certainly none of the sadhaks receives or uses the Force that the Mother sends, but that is a general fact and not peculiar to you. I hope you will not carry out your idea of gracelessness. Whatever else you may do, I do not doubt that our love and affection will always be with you. But I still hope that you will be able to overcome this despair and develop the great forces..."

And he wrote in a postscript in reply to my own, preoccupation with the Empeyrean: "No, it is not with the Empeyrean that I am busy: I wish I was! It is rather with the opposite end of things: it is in the Alaya that I have to plunge to build a bridge between the two."

What exactly he meant by building a bridge and what was the nature of the resistance he was confronted with at every turn we shall probably never know, but we can surely infer from his beautiful if somewhat sad poems that in his spiritual quest for laughter and during the years he had known disillusion long it was unlikely to be an easy achievement of Yogic engineering: I had hoped to build a rainbow bridge (Nailing the soil to the sky) And saw in this dancing planet stride The moods of infinity. But too bright were our heavens, too far away, Too frail our earthly staff, too apathetic; one might not could not stay; The roots were not deep enough. How could the roots be deep enough when we, instead of tending the saplings, would throw so lightly away the seeds of faith and aspiration he would plant again and again in us? To give but one instance, one of his disciples on whom he had simply lavished his love declined to change and deserted. A year later this disciple wrote to me foaming not only an ephemeral success, but in a truly undeviating of his but rationalizing it into a deep (?) philosophy: "Life is a mirror, Dīkī," he hallucinated complacently, "and being a mirror, it must return smile for smile and frown for frown." I forwarded it to Gurudev and received his comment the next morning: "As for his philosophy it is phrases and nothing else: what he means is, I suppose, that when one is successful one can be jolly—which is not philosophy but commonplace, only he turns it upside down to make it look wise. Or perhaps he means that if you smile at Mussolini and Hitler they will spare you castril or cudge: but even that is not sure, they may want to know what the smile means first—flattery or satire." But smile or no smile, he added, one must stave off defeatism and encourage a spirit of dispassionate despair: "Don't allow the assiduous (Insidious Mr. Doubt) to become a companion, don't give him the open door and freerise seat. Above all, don't drive away the one who alone can help with that wet blanket of submissiveness and despair! Or, to put it more soberly, accept once for all that this thing has to be done, that it is the only thing left for yourself on the earth. Outside are earthquakes and Hitlers and a collapsing civilization and, generally speaking, the war and the god. All the more reason to tend towards the one thing to be done, the thing you have been sent to do, and for getting it done. It is difficult and the way long and the encouragement given meagre: What then? Why should you expect so great a thing to be easy or that there must be either a swift success or none? The difficulties have to be overcome. The more cheerfully they are faced, the sooner they will be overcome. The one thing to do is to keep the warfare of success, the determination of victory, the fixed resolve: Have it I must and have it I will." Indeed, there is no such thing as impossibility: there are difficulties and things of longue haleine, but no impossibilities. What one is determined fixedly to do, will get done—now or later it becomes possible to do and the despair and the disheartenment go forgiven you, your novels and your yogas. As the darkness disappears, the inner doors too will open."

Tagore once said of the poetry of my father, Davijindra Lal Roy, that he probably could not write a better book of love than the light acrostic easy breakfast and the sunrise on your garden, your novels and your yogas. And the darkness disappears, the inner doors too will open."

Once upon a time, Guru, there was a foolish ass who lived in the neighbourhood of a wise yogi. One day a sudden flood burst the banks of a river near by and flooded the countryside. The wise yogi, being wise, predicted the flood and called all the villagers to run to the hills for refuge and leave behind their cows and barns, then to meditate day and night in a cave. But the ass—being foolish, not to say unmeditative—was swept away by the rushing tides. "Alas!" he brayed, "the world is being drowned!" "Don't be an ass," reprimanded the wise yogi in a tone from poetic light and cheerfulness: It's only a little flood—not this great big world." But sir," argued the idiot, "if I myself am drowned how can I know that the world will survive!" And the yogi was struck dumb and wondered, for the first time, which was the deeper delusion. And it occurred to me—what should I do?—"Go to the Guru!" I added, on my own. "So I appeal to you to adjudge: whose is the more pitiable plight: the yogi's or the ass's?" And incident-

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ally, tell me also if my mind is going off the handle because I find the foolish ass’s argument nearly as valid as the wise Yogis’*.

To that he replied: “Your wise but not overwise ass has put a question that cannot be answered in two lines. Let me say, however, that the teachings of the two are diametrically opposed; he is a very clever and practical animal and the malignment of stupidity to him shows only human stupidity at its worst. It is because the ass does not do what man wants him to do ever unto his end that he is taken as stupid.

But really, the ass behaves like that first because he has a sense of humour and likes to provoke the two-legged beast into irrational antics, and secondly, because he finds that what man wants of him is quite a ridiculous one for what he is capable of, the result of which there was, necessarily, a taut relationship, the musical note was partly spoiled. This saddened me and I asked Sri Aurobindo if I had been responsible in any way, or if I had stimulated a blabki unfelt by my heart. To that he replied:

“Even if I knew the cooking is better in Krishna; if there was anybody responsible it was Anilkumar with his table (Indian drum). But there was nothing wrong and no possession in the evil sense of the word—nothing hostile. The beat-beat of the table—more than anything else—created a vibration which was caught hold of by some rhythmic material energy and that in turn was caught hold of by Purushottam’s body which considered itself under a compulsion to execute the rhythm by himself. There is the whole (occult) science and genesis of the affair. Purushottam thought himself in love with Ambu and thought in a trance; in Purushottam was going to break his own head and other people’s legs; a number of others thought Purushottam was going cracked or already cracked; some thought Purushottam was killing Ambu which Ambu after thoughtful consideration rejected; in all, out of these conflicting mental judgements—if they can be called so—arose the whole row. A greater quietude in people’s minds would have allowed the incident to be ‘liquidated’ in a less urban fashion—but the music was absorbed in the music and could only intervene later on when Champakali consulted her. That is all.”

And sometimes, though rarely, we had pure fun as well—just unrestricted I might say. To give an example:

I had a friend whom we called Bindi. He wrote to Gurudev (1934) a long letter besieging him with a number of world-shaking questions to which the reply came in due course:

“Dear Bindi,

Good heavens! But what! But when! But which! You expect me to give you ‘clear and concise’ notes on all that, fixing the ‘nature and salient features’ of each blessed thing? It will take me the rest of my life, with the aid of all the graphic pens with which I am capable! And how the deuce am I to tell you in a ‘clear and concise way’ what consciousness is or mind or life is? Do you think these confused entities are themselves clear and concise or have any salient features? They are ‘salient only in the Latin sense of jumping about all the time and becoming something different each moment. For as ‘consciousness’ you might as well ask me to define the world. Of course I could do it by replying—a damned mess,—and that would be very satisfactory to me as well as ‘clear and concise’ but it would hardly serve the purpose.”

Bindu had, however, a peculiar humour wedded to a native gift for insinuation which he developed like a master craftsman till it looked almost into the mysterious. I can give an instance. Once Bindi penned him a dis-connect letter a copy of which I still possess.

“Gurudev,” he wrote, “Nalina brought me back the dishes. I was stunned to find that you had hardly touched them. I am deeply pained, sorely disturbed, mortally dejected and mortally wounded, and cannot imagine why you are so unsympathetic to me.”

Gurudev wrote back a sweet letter of solace:

“Bindu don’t be absurd! Our sympathy towards you is profound and perfect, but it cannot be measured by our sympathy towards your estables. We, usually, just taste the prasad people send to us; sometimes we take more. This was the first time it was very sweet. The vermicelli pudding we could well speak in the language of the passionate address of the lover to his beloved: ‘O sweet! O too sweet! (which doesn’t mean, though, that it was not well done). And the stew was extraordinary, albeit of another world—so much so that if I tasted the first forkful with anxiety, the second was with awe, after which I ventured no further into these unknown, however happily, far more of the vermicelli than I usually have of these concentrated puddings. So you are wrong in thinking that I did not touch your prasad.”

Bindu came triumphantly to me flourishing the letter as a lethal weapon.

“You may write to him reams and reams of letters and poems and what not,” he chortled, “but you dare not cook for him.”

“Don’t be silly child!”

“I defy you to prove it, scrooge” he retaliated.

I had to accept the challenge, to save my face. But here too came a snag; for the stipulation was that I must do all, boil, fry, in a word, do all that has to be done single-handed.

So when I had playfully accepted the gauntlet flung by him, I felt scared: how could one who had never even boiled an egg in his life manipulate into being a sizable dish over the stove? Joking was all right, but I could hardly send up to Gurudev and Mother a horrible concoction as a prasad! Suddenly I had a brain-wave: I应邀 pitifully to an experienced lady, Aniyya, to come to my rescue and thus prove my savi-or. I asked her to direct me, verbally, somewhat splendidly. Gurudev went on:

“I had not disclosed the secret about Aniyya’s ‘whispers’ I would have been in clined to claim it as a yogic miracle! Even with the ‘whispers’ it is an astonishing first success. ‘Achchhappurnam padhathi kshabhaah’ as Gita says! My palate and stomach as well as my pen has done full justice to the event.”

“Guru,” I wrote once, “Lady Indignant told me today that she had reported of late to you that she was being forced by me and Saurin to accept our invitations to tea. A word in self-defence. We never suspected that she had disliked our—shall I say?—‘chivalry’. In fact when we invited her we had thought it was a simple complaisance which we had to pay to yes because when she came to tea, she, with her face wreathed in smiles, did not at all toy with the tea, far less with the cakes! ‘Caprice!’ I philosophied ruefully, ‘thy name is woman!’ But beforehand was that the iron has entered my soul—she comes to tea at our own peril, what!”

He wrote back applauding: “Well, that is all right. If Lady Indignant is a devotee of the Great Chat! Devi she will fly and throw herself on the altar without need of urging: if not, she will sit in tears, meditation, as a chivalrous Krishna, if it is more than a century ago, that Burke lamented: ‘The days of chivalry are gone! And in the year of grace, 1932, with feminism triumphant everywhere—except in France and Bohhara—how do you propose to keep the chivalry going any longer?”

Sometimes—just for fun—we wrote to him telegraphically even though it bordered upon irreverence if not blasphemy. Here is a sample.


His repartee came, as echo to the song:

“I shall see if I can get a few minutes for revising your English transla tion. But you seem to have progressed greatly in your English verse. (How so quickly? Yogic Force? Internal combustion? The subconscious self?) Rahaina’s letter and drawing which have unaccountably turned up again with me. (Polarographic? Your inadvertence? Mine?)”

“O Guru,” I wrote, “I could not meditate of late, thanks to mountains of proofs. But soon I will start like Pahari Babu. So beware!”

He answered it promptly the next day:

After mountains of proof the mountain of meditation, with you, the BABA, on top? All right! I am ready to face it!”

“O Guru,” I wrote, “three solid pieces of jolly news: first, a Muslim woman named Afzel Foul comes to congratulate me because in my event controversial with Tagore, he opines the letter had very much the worst of it. Then comes a sonnet who praises my Bengali novel, Dola. Least, though not least, turns up a Zamindar who implores me to draft for him an address from the Indian doctor who has been heaved at by a Rajah. Do you smile on it or frown?”

He wrote back: I sympathise. Three cheers for Abul Fazl and the servant. But I don’t feel enthusiastic about the doctor’s note even though I was not aware of these things coming to! (Please don’t tell this to

*Quoted from the Gita, it means ‘some look upon it as amazing.”

**Ch in Bengali means tea.”
SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME—Continued from previous page

MOTHER INDIA, June 16, 1951

Nirad. Perhaps, however, it may be on the principle: ‘Honour the doctor that I have not met. But then to call in an eminent doctor that I have not seen with a long address on the romance of medicine beginning with Dhanwantri, Charaka and Galen and ending with Nirad Taloutdor or Dr. Ramchandra.’

When his correspondence in our Ashram increased to unanswerable proportions and he had to deal with them all by himself night after night from 9 p.m. till 3 A.M. the next morning, Mother intervened and decided that henceforth only a few were to be allowed to write to him, by special permission. But as the number of the privileged ones mounted day by day, I wrote one day to him (1933):

“Have you given any special permission to write to you? Nirad confided to me—it’s 121. Sindu says—impossible, it is only 97—out of the present total 150.”

The reply came:

“An openly accepted is two by tacit understanding, two by express notice and two by self-permission. If it had been 97 or 121 I would have translated myself to the Gobi desert or the Lake Manasa in the style of Sri Bijoy Krishna Goswami.”

“O Guru,” I wrote once, “Lady Demure insists on being deeply shocked whenever somebody is caught lying, forgetting that she lies herself—so often as not. But then we all do, Guru! So why are we so pro-feminism shocked when others repeat our favourite pastimes? Please elucidate.”

“Lies!” he wrote back. “Well, a Punjabi student at Cambridge once took her kabaddi away from the frankness and comprehensive profundity of his affirmation: ‘Lies! I’ve got all lies! ’ It appeared that he intended to say ‘lawyers’, but his pronunciation gave his remark a deep force of philosophical observation and generalisation which he had not intended! But this was told to me in the word on human nature. Only the lying is sometimes intentional, sometimes vaguely habitual, sometimes quite unintentional, uncontroverted and unconscious. So there you are!”

“O Guru,” I confided, “Mr. Cocksure told me yesterday for nearly half-an-hour that he feels a wonderful power astir in him day and night leading him to a wonderful self-surrender! I am impressed. Aren’t you?”

On this he commented:

“When he speaks of the power in him and his self-surrender—well, one can only wish that if and when people are so wonderful, they might as well be a trifle less eloquent about their wonderfulness. One never knows what excess of self-appreciation will lead and the past examples do not encourage.”

“O Guru,” I communicated, “Mr. Euphistic, who is an admirer of yours has just sent me a Bengali poem which he implies me to sing to you without fail.” But I wonder how you would react to it if you compiled, he has in effect sounded the death-knell of Rishibodh, calling you virtually the last of the Romans. I will translate into English only the opening couplet so that Mr. Euphistic may also know, if he is to be forewarned:

‘Gloomy to thee, O wise Indus, last and latest of the Romans.”

O let me expire with thee, my Lord, no more shall I appear.”

One hardly knows whether one should laugh or whether weeping is here de rigueur? What do you say? And he wants you: blessings too, remember.”

“Dilip,” Gurudeva admonished, “you don’t understand! What he meant by your skhajagan (disciples) will all become supermen; ergo, there can be no possible chance of any such small thing as a Rishi (seer) appearing again—I am positively the last of that cast. All the same, you may send him my blessings—he deserves it richly for giving us such a gorgeous prospect.”

“O Guru,” I wrote after reading two autobiographies which set me thinking once again, “in Yoga prayers you, I understand, a very important function to fulfill even when they are of the petitionary brand. In his reminiscences entitled Vale Deo Inge says, with true humility, that although the pearl of great price is only for those few who stake their all for the All-in-all, yet no sincere prayer is unheard. But then, I ask myself, why is there so much prevalence of misapplying miserably keep praying—any rate a large proportion of them do. I have seen myself so much prayer and praying till they are blue in the face but nothing happens! Dean Inge may assert that his prayers have been heard often enough, but what about our Jwaharal who writes, essentially, that he has often enough been just thirsty for a little peace but to no purpose, and wonder his scepticism is reinforced about a Divine Ordainer and he goes on reasoning against the reasonable. To the seer mystic his incantations may seem empty and superfluous, but can anyone say that he really is as little as he seems since he does not, alas, want to dive deeper and so remain where he is, admiring Gandhi (I believe, sincerely?) and yet poohpoohing his ordonnance towards mysticism! Or is it because he simply banked for peace—but never prayerly? ’”

“As for prayer,” he wrote back, “no hard and fast rule can be laid down. Some prayers are answered, all are not. The eldest daughter of my maternal uncle, Sri Kiranma Kumar Mitra (the editor of Santoshini—}
SRI AURIBINDO CAME TO ME —Continued from opposite page

without all this sternness and trouble.”

“O Guru,” I replied, “I thank you sincerely for refusing assent to my doom. And yet, paradoxically, I feel a definite disappointment too along with the relief. For I had a lurking suspicion that your Supernal wisdom would somehow impose a sacrifice on me. Since I have, willfully, to practise your Supramental Yoga and no other; so I decided, after a mighty wrench, to ban everything my mind loved or even approved of. But now, you yourself are turning down my proposal to conquer attachment which are poisoning me up. I repeat that I am still ‘game’ if you reconsider your veto to give me another trial.”

To that he replied next morning:

“But how in the earth did you get this strange idea that we were pressing asceticism on you? When? How? Where? I only admitted it as a possibility after you pressed the assertion that you wanted to do this formidable thing, and it was with great-searchings and terrible apprehensive visions of an ascetic Dilmun with wild weird eyes and aloon-cloth, eating groundnuts and nails and sleeping on iron spikes in the presence of swarms of angels. I was deeply grieved at your insinuation at all: it was you who were clamouring for it, so I gave in and tried to make the best of it, hoping that you would think better of it. As for the Mahatma, the first time he heard of it she knocked it off with the most emphatic ‘Nonsense!’ possible. In fact what you proposed was even more formidable than my vision—a shaven-headed and mosquito-bitten Dilmun in loin-cloth and the rest (not that you actually proposed the last but it is the logical outcome of the devastating attack). Conquest of attachment is quite a different matter—one has to learn to take one’s tea and potatoes without weeping for them or even missing them if they are not there. But we have repeatedly said that you could go on with them and need not follow the way taken by others; and so I have written my distrust of retirement several times: it is only a few people who can do it and profit by it, they are not a rule for others... If I am living in my room it is not out of passion for solitude... So you need not be anxious: solitude is not demanded of you, for we are for ascetic dryness or isolated loneliness cannot be your destiny since it is not consonant with your sukh-ness (nature) which is made for joy, largeness, expansion, a comprehensive movement of the life-force. So your subtle interpretation of one intention or wishes was a bad misfit. However, all is well that ends well and in any event your suggestion of being ‘game’ I will consider the danger as over. Laos Deed!”

The Maharaja of Dewas who was then a refugee in Pundicherry once invited me to dinner. Gurudev wrote:

“Your hope dinner did not turn out like my first taste of Maharatta cookery—when for some reason my dinner was non eat and somebody sent a good friend to my neighbor, a Maharatta Professor. So I took one mouthful of a juicy and only one. O God! Sudden fire in the mouth could not have been more catastrophic! Enough to bring down the whole of London in one agonised sweep of flame!”

To be continued

Correction

In Mother India on June 2, on page 9 (column 2) read

Beauty and charm of a face?

after the line.

Hearts alone alive.
Books in the Balance

"Much Riches in a Little Room"

MODERN TENDENCIES IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

By Dr. AMIYA CHAKRAVARTY

(With the Book Exchange, 217, Cornwallis Street, Calcutta.

Pp. X plus 73. Price: Rs. 2.)

MOTHER INDIA, June 16, 1951

Much has been written in recent years on Modern Literature but few have covered so wide a range in so small a compass as Dr. Amiya Chakravarty in his latest book. Here there is no laying down of the law. The crystal-clear understanding of individual poets as against a background enables the writer (formerly Professor of English in Calcutta University and now occupying a Chair in English Literature in the New World) to give the novice as well as the advanced student of English Literature the main tendencies as they affect and are affected by the people and the prevailing "isms".

Through poetizing the unpoetic and by refining the medium the poets often reveal a harmony that exists between themselves and the subjects they deal with, and show the unity of truth in the "diverse riches of humanity." The chapter "Yeats and the Moderns" shows the Irish poet and mystic in a frame of mind that separates him from all others of his age, and he is a lonely figure in the realm of poetry—the Grand Old Man of Letters—another Blake and Thompson, looking to the other for inspiration and passionate music. Enter Mr. T. S. Eliot brings us to what was once the "dreamland atmosphere of Symbolism... suddenly become heavy with shadows," when a beautiful life of dreams and shadow play is moved by sheer taste come to nought in a world of "The Waste Land," "Murmurs in Cathedrals" and "Sord Elecra Calling.

In Poetry there have been rapid changes and developments, and two chapters in the book are devoted to them. The poet utilized the line or rhythm scheme in a way that pleased but more often distract ed by untuned, subtoned, detoned words. The poets were for throwing overhead the tradition of verse—and the Sonnet, so loved by the poets, particularly the nineteenth century poets, was given a rest and a variegated conglomeration of verse structure was the fashion, with Free Verse thrown in as a rich bait. The pendulum swings once again and the rhythmical variations become more virile and are in consonance with an age of far-reaching changes and stresses (with a change in the meaning of words), rhythmic breaks (as used by Shakespeare) and the "sprung rhythm" (as used by Hopkins) along in the era of modernist verse and extend the domain of poetry over "palm and pine".

Each of the three major poets of today, Spender, Lewis and Auden, receive considerable attention at the hands of Dr. Chakravarty and the main tendencies are so well brought out that the broad outlines can be filled in from time to time by up-to-the-minute reading of the works of these poets. In Stephen Spender who are made aware of the poet's early phase, of his introduction in a mythological past and the difficulty he gave his readers by bringing up to his poems the incrustability of life. In C. D. Lewis, the Past and Present are depicted in a series of "black and white antitheses"; and in the same belief it is shown, immediate and startling, makes him a singer of the Promised Land, with self-fulfilment or "private dawn" as a reward for all who strive and do. In W. H. Auden we see the poet-reformer and his diagnosis of the world that inclines him to conclude that the world's "plague" can be cured if individuals have an iron will. His Orators is a psychological analysis of their posterity. The world, the captor's readers by his wholeness, the admixture of poetry and prose and a happy turn of expression.

WILLIAM HOOKERS.

The Harlequin of Sagacity

Continued from page 11

dering eyes and pretty gaping mouth and take to everything her big friend gave her, because she liked fairy tales and Chesterton's theories looked as astonishingly like them. But generally with children he was like a child, dreaming up nonsense with them or showing his de terious jugglery to them. "Well," said the aunt to the little boy who had been to tea with Chesterton; "well, Frank, I suppose you have had a very instructive afternoon?" I "Don't know what that means," said Frank; "but oh, you should see Mr. Chesterton catch a wasp with his mouth!" History does not show a more pleasing picture of a man of genius.

Chesterton was a kicker of convention wherever he saw it—-from bun eating to citizenship. Insist on rigid rules of behaviour and he would break them all, one after another. Make it a game to some victory over an enemy, and he would lift your hat to a lady friend and he would cut dead all the bellows he knew, to be saved the humiliation of acquiescing in this tyranny. Pass a Bill in Parliament and he would stand with the man who would find Chesterton balanced on the dome of St. Paul's with his legs cutting wild seraphs in the sky. Declare that literary criticism should be sober and classical and he would instantly contrast the poetry of Tennyson with that of Browning by delightfully describ ing how we could be kicked downstairs in their respective styles. Throw volumes of parodying pedantry at his head, teaching him the art of verse, and he would fling back at you divine doggers and lurid limericks to shock you out of your senses. Play the puritan against play houses and taverns and you would get from him a spirited defence of the drama and a ringing lyric on a glass of ale. Be original, he says; do not strike the beaten track; do not be a timid camp-follower afraid of the van. Make it the last and vilest of superstitions because it is neither mean nor good. Know yourself much but be yourself few. More fare there are whose life is not mimicry, whose conduct is not imitation. Biologically the apes are our ancestors, socially we are apes ourselves. We do what our neighbours do, we copy them to the last button, we ape them to a hair—-without shame, without revulsion, without humour. But though a bit of imitation may be excusable, servile adherence to a type is a mortal sin. To he a quotation from society in many respects is inevitable, but to be a pedant is in it to be not worth the while.

It is queer in spite of his being most himself the British public picked him out as the most typical Englishman among them. Their choice in literature is either exactly or entirely, and method is entirely, for everybody, for anybody is his way, and is as dull and rigid Englishman the law of being inflicted upon us as a rule, it was G.K.C. But he was selected because he represented the abiding love of the Englishman for his funny little island floating in the North Sea. Chesterton loves England but to him it is always Little England. He could never turn a Kipling, however much Kipling might jibe at the stay-at homes and praise the march of Tommy Atkins to the ends of the earth across the deep which the Lord has "made dry" for him. Though he shares Kipling's admiration for England it is not for what it has not done, for the evils it has not occasioned, the temptations it has not yielded to in the course of its imperial expansion. Kipling would admire it for what it has done, for the Boer War, the Dembowa Affair, the Kipps Affair. Kipling takes it from his hand and puts it between Kipling and himself He holds the idea of the Empire in abomination. Let England be a tiny country—to be tiny is to be romantic. No fight is worth one's strength but to fight against the by deities, the by deities who are against big battalions, no defeat one's honour unless at the hands of overwhelming multitudes. For the great battle, the great contest, the great grapple the political one, the one for the made and territory was the earth given and the first award forged at the first snivel and the fields spread for banners to sweep over and cavalries to gallop across. Chesterton's is ever the country of which the capital is London and never the country of which the capital is England!

As in his patriotism, he can be serious and polemical at times. When some anarchist declares education to be unnecessary for children he cannot keep his temper and vents it in a satiric essay. When some socialist wants to abolish private property and make everybody a servant of the State, he shouts out that this is only Capitalism in excelsis, the substitution of the many by the one, the multitude of capitalists by the greatest capitalist—the Socialist State! When some Eugenists puts forth a proposal for the scientific breeding of the human animal he sees in it a conspiracy of the governing class for a more thorough exploitation of the labourers. The poor classes are now physically exhausted and cannot overwork in the factories; so the aristocracy turns to Eugenics to restore its victims to health and equip them for more strenuous drudgery. Chesterton stands up for the common people. His religion is a kind of democracy, and democracy is to him almost a religion; for, in his eyes, both proclaim the doctrine that all men are equal—democracy because there is the same earthly birth, and religion because they have the same heavenly parens.

Seriousness, however, is confined merely to his ultimate aims: the means he employs are always funny. And the writer who chooses humour to abolish private property and make everybody a servant of the State, he hangs on whether he excites our ridicule or awakes our interest. G.K.C. touches the latter; for if he just penned a dicky paradox we might be inclined to laugh at him, but we cannot help laughing with him in appreciation when he ingeniously proves its extreme plausibility!