THE SACRIFICE OF SRI AURIBINDO

1.26 a.m., December 5, 1950. A moment like any other, in a night like many a night—except to those who watched in the room where for over two years Sri Aurobindo had lived. For them there was all human history coming to a cryptic climax: after summing up in himself the aspiration of man in entirety—man the soul, the mind, the life-force, the body—and after bringing a power of complete godhead to answer this fourfold aspiration, Sri Aurobindo was throwing away the earnest of the final and supreme triumph, a physical being in which the very cells were beginning to flower into a divine substance such as the world had scarcely dreamed of in even its most apocalyptic hours.

The doctors who were at his attendants knew their patient to be no mere mortal: they treated his body for what they recognized it to be, a vehicle of supernatural light, and they had to accept the mysterious "No" he had categorically returned to their question: "Are you not using on yourself the sovereign spiritual force with which you have saved hundreds?" The body that seemed able to live without end by the protection of all an-atmospheric power was being allowed by its master to suffer extreme uraemia and pass into profound unconsciousness. Indeed the doctors were permitted—as it was out of compassion for them—to try their palliatives; but there was no suspension of Sri Aurobindo's fiat that though he had the whole perfection of man in his own hands he should lay aside its last victory in himself and embrace death.

No doubt it was not death in its utter commonness. The uraemia that preceded it had been unique. Every medical sign was there of its absolute hold over the body's reactions—save one: Sri Aurobindo, as if by an incision of conscious brain and nerve, could come conscious again and again, inquire what the time was or ask for water. Unique also was the sequel of the uraemic poisoning. Between the instant when life clinically ended and the instant when the body was lowered in the death chamber, the Aurobindonian courtyard more than four years had passed without a trace of decomposition. And many saw with even their physical eyes the body glowing with what the Mother had called the concentration in it of the light of the Supermind, the Divine Consciousness in its integrity which Sri Aurobindo and she had been labouring with the patience of heaven-sent pioneers to bring down for the first time to suffering man. Mortality in its normal form was not here; yet something of its age-old down was present and that was a question-mark glaring in the face of every disciple and making most eminent that varied wonderful life of seventy-nine years, triumphant over all human difficulties.

The question-mark cannot be completely removed. Depths beyond depth lie in an event of this nature: the human mind is unable to compass them all. But a few significances gleam out for an initial understanding and set a general perspective in which our seeking and groping gates may rest.

There was no failure on Sri Aurobindo's part: this is certain from the psychological and physical details put together of the preceding months as well as of the actual illness. There was only a strange sacrifice. And if Sri Aurobindo the indomitable gave the sacrifice, it must be one that was a subtle terrible short-cut to some secret victory for God in the world at the cost of a personal consummation. What occulted the sacrifice appears to have been earth's insufficient receptivity to the Aurobindonian gift of the descending Supermind. Something in the gross constitution of terrestrial creatures would not thrill to the Grace from on high, if this Grace were deep enough to reach the whole bodily work that was being done at a selfless expense of energy and with a silent bearing of "the fierce inner wounds that are slow to heal." If the earth's consciousness had been more receptive, the crisis of the human body's conversion into terms of divinity would have begun in a less radical shape and without so extreme an upshot for one individual in the van of life's fight towards perfection. Hence much of the responsibility for the upshot lies with the absence of cooperation of the mind and body. It was as if the beings Sri Aurobindo had come to save had turned his enemies—not deliberately in all cases, yet with a dullness of perception and an inertia of the will that were as cruel.

This dullness and this inertia were not only an obstacle to the descending Divine: they were also perilous for the world itself. To the obscure occult forces—powers and principalities of darkness—which always oppose the Divine's work and which were reacting against the tremendous pressure of the Aurobindonian light in a vast upsurge, these forces bent on a final calamitous counter-attack across the battle-field that is man, man's dullness and inertia gave a ground of support and thus signed his own doom. Sri Aurobindo, born to put his mission above everything else, could not but follow the course he did: how could he betray the long-invoked Supermind whose hour on earth was preparing to strike, or let the world which he had bound to his heart pay dismally for its unreadiness before the divine advent! He gathered, as it were, the myriad antagonist spears into his own breast, took upon himself a globe-wide catastrophe. Most unlike him would it have been to do anything in the crisis saw sanction the very worst that could happen to him because of humanity's unresponsiveness, and somehow weave it with his invincible spiritual art into the design of his own master mission.

That mission was the conquest of the very foundations of life's imperfect structure through the ages. Not only to build a golden dome but to transform what he symbolically called the dragon base in the Inconscience from which the universe has evolved: this was Sri Aurobindo's work. And it had to be done in an hour, more than four years had passed without a trace of decomposition. The way of revolutionary evolution, thrown open like an abyss, was to let his body admit an illness symbolic of the drive of the Inconscience from below and, after a limited though intensely significant contest, carry in an actual death its own godlike presence into the stuff of the Inconscience. Death was the glory-hole desperately blown into the massive rock of that stuff for the physical divinity of Sri Aurobindo to permeate in a direct and literal sense the darkness wrapped within darkness which the Vedas seem had long ago intimated to be Nature's cryptic womb of lightward creation. By identifying his physical divinity with that primal Negation of the Divine, he has effected an immediate entry into the heart of the enigma's camp: he has taken by surprise the central stronghold of all that frustrates and destroys, all that renders precarious the body's beauty, frail the life-energy's strength, flickering the mind's knowledge and swallows up in its monstrous void the marvellous legacy left to mankind by the hero and the sage.

By passing beyond the visible scene he has not passed to some transcendent Ineffable. He who had held incarnate within him self the potential and the peace of the Transcendent—the creative Supermind, the Truth-Consciousness of the ultimate Spirit—needed no flight from the universe to reach the Highest. Nor like a background influence would he act now on earth, he whose wide aim was not only to widen and raise the individual but make all wideness and height focus themselves and become dynamic in the individual instrument. Still in the foreground of events, in the thick of time's drama with eternity as his theme, still as a concentrated individualisation of the wide and the high, an organised being in the Supernal louse shrubs or casual
THE MOTHER'S MESSAGE
TO THE CHILDREN OF THE ASHRAM

THE SACRIFICE OF SRI AUROBINDO
—Continued from page 1.
SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS

(LIT ERARY VALUES AND SOME PERSONAL VALUES)

(Continued)

(2) Lost the ritten winging of the thought...

(3) Arms taking to a voiceless supreme delight.

(4) Life that meets the Eternal with close breast,

(5) Force one with unimaginable rest.

(6) My consciousness climbed like a topless hill..."}

(1) He who from Time's dull motion escapes and thrills

(7) Bays, thought as a silence into the Eternal's breast.

(8) Unrolls the sign and form of being,

(9) Seated above in the omniscient Silence.

(10) Calm faces of the gods on backgrounds vast

(11) Bringing the marvel of the inaudible...

(12) A silent unnamed emptiness content

(13) Either to fade in the Unknowable

(14) Or thrill with the luminous rest of the Infinite.

(15) Crossing power-accept silence rapture-stunned,

(16) Climbing high far ethers eternal-annu...n

(17) I have drunk the Infinite like a giant's wine.

(18) My son unburthened wisdom to measureless light.

(19) Fire of God like a blush of rapture on Eternity's face,

(20) Rose of love, ruby depth of all being, fire-pasion of Grace!

Artic from the heart of the yearning that soaks in Nature's depth,

Make earth the home of the Wondrous and life Risteidea's kiss.

I shan't ask you to tell me in detail the sources of all these lines—

but what do you think in general of my choice? Only for one quotation I must crave the favour of your closer attention. Please do try to tell me something about it, for I like it so much that I cannot remain without knowing all that can be known: it is, of course, Number 3 here. I consider these lines the most satisfying I have ever read: poetically as well as spiritually, you have written others as great—but what I mean to say is that the whole essence of the truth of life is given by them and everything in the being seems answered. So be kind enough to take a little trouble and give me an intimate knowledge about them. I'll be very happy to know their sources and the sort of enthusiasm you had when writing them. How exactly did they come into your mind?

"The choice is excellent. I am afraid I couldn't tell you in detail the sources, though I suppose they all belong to the overall inspiration. In all I simply remained silent and allowed the lines to come down shaped or shaping themselves on the way—I don't know that I know anything else about it. All depends on the stress of the eucharistousm, the force of the creative thrill and largeness of the wave of its Ananda, but how is that describable or definable? What is prominent in No. 3 is a certain kind of expression taken up by the spiritual vision that sees exactly the state or experience and gives it its exact revelatory words. It is an overmind vision and experience and condition that is given a full power of expression by the word and the rhythm—there is a success in 'embodiment' them or at least the right emotion of them which gives the lines their force."

(4-5-37)

(You have nowhere said anything about Ferdaus, the epic poet of Persia, author of Shahnameh? Would you rank him with the other epic poets whom you consider absolutely first-rate—Homer, Valmiki, Vyasa? How is it that you who have made your own culture so wide by means of learning so many languages have allowed a serious gap in it by not knowing Persian?)

"I read Ferdaus in a translation long ago but I gave me no idea at all of the poetic qualities of the original. As for gaps in the culture—well, I don't know Russian or Finnish (missing the Kalevala) and haven't read the Kinhuluenged in its original, nor for that matter Palmer's poem on the conquets of Rameses in ancient Egyptian or at least the fragment that survives. I don't know Arabic either, but I don't mind that, having Burton's translation of the Arabian Nights which is as much a classic as the original. Anyhow, the gaps are vast and many."

(10-7-37)

(Dr. Iyengar has given an interpretation to your poem Thought the Parakeet, which some other critic has fallen foul of. What is your own analysis of the thought-structure in this poem?)

"There is no thought-structure in the poem; there is only a succession of vision and experience, it is a mystic poem, its unity is spiritual and concrete, not a mental and logical building. When you see a flower, do you ask the gardener to reduce the chemical components? There would then be no flower left and no beauty. The poem is not built upon intellectual defitions or philosophical theorizations; it is something seen. When you ascend a mountain, you see the scenery and feel the height of the ascent; do you ask a man down below to draw inspiration from the rock and peak or spend time studying its geological structure—that is work for the geologist, not for the traveller. Iyengar's geological account (to make one is part of his métier as a critic and writer on..."

(20-1-34)

(1) I spoke to Nirod and Jyoti that it has been a habit with me to reread repet and reread and hum lines which I have felt or known to come from very high. I mentioned your recent twelve poems as my side to drawing inspiration from the overseas planes. I quoted also the famous lines from other poets which have derived from the highest levels.

(2) Jyoti begged me to type for her all the lines of this character. From your twelve poems I have chosen the followings:"

(1) A marvellous bird with the burning wings of light and the unbarred lids that look beyond all space..."
Sri Aurobindo's Letters

Continued from page 3

literature is probably as good as any other is likely to be; but each is free to make his own contributions to his own idea. Re-arrangement and redraft are not likely to make one account truer and invalidate the rest. A mystic poem may explain itself or a general idea may emerge from it, but it is the vision that is important or what one can get from it by inference or the explanation of one idea. Thought, form, articulation is a vision or revelation of an aspect through spiritual planes, but gives no names and no photographic descriptions of the planes crossed. I leave it there.

(1944)

(See it seems there was on P's part some sort of hesitation about publishing in the Adveot my article on Art-Principles and that you gave some general directions apropos of it. May I have a copy of your remarks on P's letter?)

"COPY"

There are three separate questions mixed together in this letter, (1) dealing with the "white" and "black" with controversial questions, (3) the tone of the article with regard to the "black" and sometimes sharp frankness and sometimes sharp offensive. Nevertheless to avoid all objections I have erased or altered all references to X and his supporters except the two or three that are indispensable. In that there is nothing whatever that can be considered objectionable. As to politics, I presume that the prohibition referred to current politics. I cannot suppose that a dealing with political philosophy and the political ideas in general could cause important the prohibition. It would not be, for instance, a violation of the rule if some passage from The Ideal of Human Usury were quoted in the Adveot. Nor can we be debarred from differing with Marx's or Marxist ideas on history or society. I think it is only the philosophy of Biology and to some extent as it is a philosophy per se which is why it is not been published. Aamir's article is not about politics but about a question of art theory. The fact that one of the ideas combated is that art must have social or political or proletarian inspiration does not make it political. I have erased certain sentences which might be regarded as too tendentious allusions to present-day politics. As for controversy, it was I myself who insisted on there being no writing whether in the Adveot or other of our journals embodying political, social or economic ideas; but I did this for my own reasons and not from any timorous concession to any Government or to the sensibilities of political leaders. Discussion, even if controversial, on other subjects such as philosophy, art or similar matters has not been prohibited, though there need be no written debate.

"I do not understand why the Adveot should limit itself to expressing my views about the world's future only or why it should ban my views about the world's past or present. It seems to me that both have been referred to occasionally in the pages of the Adveot and that remarks about current topics, not political, do occur there. I may add that the mere fact of some one being an eminent political leader does not debar us or any one from differing with his views about philosophy, religion, art or other matters. Current Indian politics have to be avoided in our publications, that is all."

(13-8-66)

(But it is a bit of a surprise to me that Virgil's "Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalis tangunt in now considered by you "an almost direct descent from the Overmind consciousness". I was under the impression that, like yourself, Ishwarya, you were doing your work as I was not of a givenquoise face, it was a perfect mixture of the Higher Mind."

The winds come to me from the fields, steep but in the Adveot and that remarks about current topics, not political, do occur there. I may add that the mere fact of some one being an eminent political leader does not debar us or any one from differing with his views about philosophy, religion, art or other matters. Current Indian politics have to be avoided in our publications, that is all."

(13-8-66)

"Yes, certainly my ideas and reactions to some of the lines and passages about which you had asked me long ago have developed and changed and could not but change. For at that time I was new to the overhead regions or at least to the highest of them—for the higher thought and intuition too of the older and my own old friends and it is not strange to me in my perception of many things concerning them. I hesitated therefore to assign anything like Overmind touch or inspiration to passages in English or other poetry and did not presume to claim any of my own writings as being of the higher plane. Besides, the intellect took too large a part in my reactions to poetry: for instance, I judged Virgil's line too much from what seemed to be its surface intellectual import and too little from its deeper meaning and vision and its reverberations of the Overmind, as also with Wordsworth's line about the 'fields of sleep'. I have since then moved in these fields of sleep and felt the breath which is carried from them by the winds that came to the poet, so I can better appreciate the depth of vision in Wordsworth's line. I could also see more clearly that Virgil's Overhead on the work of poets, and how one's own poetry is the result of one's own consciousness, for the human mind and the universe of a given plane of life."

(20-3-66)

In that long letter on your poetry, apropos my friend's criticisms, you have written of certain influences of the later Victorian period on you. Meredith's from Modern Love I have been unable to trace concretely—unless I consider some of the more pointed and bitter-sweetly reflective turns in Songs to Myrtilla to be Meredithian. That of Tennyson is not possible to link up clearly and sometimes the obviousness of Tennysonian influence in particular constructions is what one can tell of the use of some words. Perhaps more than in your early blank verse the Tennysonian influence of this kind in general is there in Songs to Myrtilla. Arnold has influenced your blank verse in respect of particular constructions the two or three "but" or "and" or or "No displicable wayfarer, but Rurs, But son of a great Rishi,"

"But tranquil, but august, but making easy."

Arnold is also observable in the way you build up and elaborate your similes both in Urvase and in Love and Death. Less openly, a general tendency poetic mind from him can also be felt, it persists subtly in even the poems collected in Ahana, not to mention Beati Prophetarum. I don't know whether Swinburne is anywhere patent in your narratives; he probably does have something to do with Songs to Myrtilla. Stephen Phillips is the most direct influence in Urvase and Love and Death. But as I have said in my essay on your blank verse he is assimilated into a stronger and more versatile genius, together with influences from the Elizabethans, Milton and perhaps less consciously Keats. In any case, whatever the influences, your early narratives are intensely original in essential spirit and movement and expressive body. It is only unreactiveness or but tention that can fail to see this and to savour the excellence of your work.

The influences I spoke of were of course only such influences as every poet, at some stage or other, has entirely formed himself. What you say about Arnold's influence is quite correct; it acted mainly, however, as a power making for restraint and refinement, subduing any uncontrolled romanticism and insisting on clear lucidity and right form and build up. Swinburne had no influence either. I think that it is I did not make myself acquainted with all his poetry, it was only Modern Love and poems under the sonnet on Lucifer and the Ascent to Earth of the Daughter of Havoc that I strongly admired and it had its effect on the overtone of my poetry style and its influence on my specific style."

"I fear that the sonnet on Myrrh, one of the Elizabethan sonnets, is the adjective "empyrean" that the second syllable is stressed, but the noun is never stressed that way, so far I as clearly. Perhaps you will have a precedent in the Elizabethans? Or have you deliberately taken liberty with the accentuation? The same mis-stressing occurs also in Book II, Cantos 11, of Sastri: page 63, line 4 from below:

Surprised in their unwarped empyrean.

But you certainly do not always stress the noun like the adjective. In Book II, Cantos 5, 13 line 15 from below and in the parallel passage in the splendid verse: An empyrean vision awos and knew.

Here the penultimate syllable gets the lute. May I have some explanation? Perhaps there are acknowledged alternative accentuations and I am just ignorant? I really hope so, for otherwise, while the line from Book II of Sastri it can easily take a noun after "empyrean" or get its "empyrean" changed to "empyreal" and then take a noun, the sonnet-line will not have the same absolute grandeur of phrase as now it is written:

His heart is a chaos and an empyrean's span.

If it is to rhyme with "man", "plan" and "scan" in your sonnet, scheme it must be in "span (manna isn't)"

"I find in the Chamber's Dictionary the noun 'empyrean' is given two alternative pronunciations, each with a different stress,—the first, 'empyre/an' and secondly, 'empyre/ean'. Actually in the book the accent seems to fall on the penultimate 'e' instead of the vowel. That must be a mistake in printing; it is evitable that it is not an effect of the vowel that is stressed but the 'e' although unaccented still keeps its long pronunciation. Then? But even if I had no justification from the dictionary and the noun 'empyre/ean' were only an English pronunciation freak and a willful shifting of the accent, I would not refuse to change it; for the syllable 'e' is an essential part of whatever beauty there is in the line.

P.S.—Your view is supported by the small Oxford Dictionary which, I suppose, gives the present usage. Chambers being an old authority. But Chambers must represent a former usage and I am entitled to revive even a past or archaic form if I choose to do so."
The Cross of
Throw off the world-clamour awfully
Listen to a Voice which penetrates
To where men sleep—
An insistent Power beats
That the slowly glistening drove
The Levithian mind of earth.
Look to the heights—!
A Promise long foretold,
Brimnant in gold and flaming like the sun.

New Creation
Beguiled the bridal Dawn.
And from cosmic vaults
A cube-like form appears,
A crystal cruciform Nativity
Begins to shape—.
A white lamb—pure—
From earth's own heart of tears,
A Cross is made
No blood can ever stain.

NORMAN DOWSETT
The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo

By RISHABHCHAND

C H A P T E R VII

(Continued)

THE THREE STAGES OF SURRENDER

The First Stage

All our turning towards God is caused by the soul or psychic being from behind. In the soul that infuses its influence, little by little, into the most developed part of our being, will begin to act in its heart or the will in the vital, and then diffuses it into the other parts by a general penetration and expansion. When our mind begins to think of God or the Infinite or of something transcending our ignorance and mortals, it is that the senses, being freed from the bonds of the vital desires, it seeks an Absolute of Light or an Absolute of Peace or an Absolute Bliss, it is invariably the soul that has inspired the seeking. But our logistic personality is not aware of this occult influence and inspiration. It feels that it is itself thinking of the Eternal or the Absolute, or that there is naturally developing a love of God and devotion and an attitude of self-offering in its heart. It takes the credit of this spiritual orientation to itself and derives a secret proud satisfaction from the change. And certainly there is nothing unnatural or undesirable in it. So long as the soul does not come to the front of our consciousness, it is always the ego that is the organizer and ruler of our nature. It may be a tamer ego, warping in inertia and insouciance and sheer physical amenities; or it may be rajaist, drunk with desires and revelling in strife, in a strong power and possession; or it may be satvico, stationing itself in the growing light of the intelligence (buddhi) and progressing in comparative peace and purity; but none the less it is the ego all through, living in a constant sense of its separateness from others and raising its personal inclinations and preferences. But a stage arrives in the evolution of the human individual, when he comes to perceive that his separateness is an illusion, a hollow and uneasy illusion, and that behind it there is something infinite and eternal, of which he is a finite and fugitive figure. This Infinite and Eternal appears to be more than a mere immutability, impersonal immortality—it looks as a Being, as the supreme Master of our existence, as God. This perception kindles in the individual a new faith and aspiration and releases his power from the self-seeking to self-surrender. The more he evolves, the more he realises his own littleness and his undeniable dependence on God, who enrolls and enrols him and against whom it does he feel that he is sustained and protected by the Infinite Being, but that his very will is a tool of His will and that all his decisions and determinations are but disfigured and diminished reflections of His inescapable decrees. This perception is the right step towards knowledge taken by the individual, and it initiates the first stage of surrender. It is his voluntary surrender to that which contains and transcends him.

As we have said above, this change in man is really engineered from behind by the soul, which is evolving in him and whose egoistic personality would never have come by this liberating knowledge of its essential dependence on God. But in the beginning the soul works from behind the veil, and it is the ego that is the overt leader of the nature. It is, of course, the soul that surrenders. Enlightenment and fires with aspiration, it says, in effect, to God. "Take me, take my all, and make me Thine; for, in truth, I belong to Thee. Deliver me from myself, and let me be Thy servant." Not "I" and "mine", but "Thou" and "Thine" becomes then the heart's sole prayer. A new stage is characterized by personal effort. Instead of seeking to arrogate every desirable object to itself, it yearns with a greater and greater sincerity to offer all it has and all it has to the All and Beyond-All. In the Integral Yoga this surrender tends to be integral, that is to say, it becomes the surrender of the mind with its thoughts and ideas, of life with its will and emotions and desires, and of the body with its movements and activities,—a synthetic progress in Jnanayoga, Bhaktiyoga and Karmayoga, though the start may be only with one or two, or, as in recent times, with two or all three. The Constantly and conseciously, the individual offers all his mind's thoughts, all his heart's love and devotion and all his works to the Divine Mother, and transforms his whole existence into a happy and loving sacrifice, into an unceasing Yaja, as the Gita calls it. At this stage of surrender, the seeker and lover of God becomes His servant; therefore, we call it the stage of the servant,—the long and arduous stage of self-consecration by personal effort. It is a stage of the transformation of the centre of gravity from the ego to the Divine. It is a stage of relentless self-observation, constant self-purification, unsleeping vigilance and persistent, unreserved surrender. A tamaric surrender failing to fulfill the condition of calling on God to do everything and save all the trouble and struggle is a delusion and to such a delloation does not lead to freedom and personal liberation.

The Second Stage

In proportion as the self-offering through personal effort becomes more or less integral, the sadhaka (spiritual aspirant) begins to feel that the hold of the ego on him is slackening, and that the Mother's Power is even more and more manifest in his life. The sense of the personal effort then tends to disappear gradually into the growing experience of becoming an instrument of the Mother's Will. This transition takes long

* "The Mother" by Sri Aurobindo.
SRI AUROBINDO, THE LEADER OF THE EVOLUTION
PART II OF "THE WORLD CRISIS AND INDIA"
by "Synergist"

SECTION III: THE NEW WORLD-VIEW

(a) THE SPIRITUAL METAPHYSIC

(ii) KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINE REALITY

POWERS OF MIND AND SUPERMIND

(Continued from the issue of November 10)

The possibility of attaining to the Higher Knowledge because of an inherent three-termed identity* between God, man and the universe was pointed out in the previous essay, in which it was shown that through self-knowledge one can rise to possess God-knowledge and world-knowledge—how it is within man's power to trace through his own being the Universal Force to its source and become aware of its world-action, and how by ascending in consciousness to his highest self in the Supermind he can become one with the Divine Truth-consciousness. Further, it was shown that over and above this three-termed identity, there was another unified identity—that between the manifested principles in terrestrial creation, the Absolute, the Absolute principle independent of the cosmos—Existence, Consciousness-Force, Bliss, and Supermind; it was stated that this secret identity between Supermind and its subordinate principle, mind, made the acquisition of the Higher Knowledge possible.

In this essay, the problem of the powers and faculties of the mind, like observation, judgment, reason, memory, imagination, the capacity to analyse and synthesize, as well as those of the intuitive intellect, like inspiration and revelation, receiving a corresponding designation, is presented to the Supermind level, is discussed. The statement made here should help to ally the fevers of the rationalists who believe that any knowledge acquired through non-sensory and non-rational means must necessarily be of a highly dubious character, and that if reason is abandoned the knowledge acquired would inevitably be based on emotional responses and vague imaginings. It will be clear from what follows that as one abandons the ordinary rationalistic way of knowing and seeing and rises into the Supermind, one can be really of the rye high powers and instead develop equivalent gnostic powers, with the result that instead of the usual uncertain indirect and separative knowledge, one begins to possess direct and immediate and certain knowledge. The mind sees through a glass, darkly, but the Supermind sees clearly and directly through identification in essence and dynamism and knows with certitude, because it is the Truth-consciousness itself—a consciousness always holding within itself the complete truth of the Divine and His manifestation. But it must be understood that the acquired gnostic powers are supernatural faculties, occult and spiritual powers, added on to the normal consciousness which can be made available for use whenever required; rather, they are intrinsic to the gnostic consciousness—they are its instrument of knowledge and means of revelation. As Sri Aurobindo says: "The transition from mind to supermind is not only the substitution of a greater instrument of thought and knowledge, but a change and conversion of consciousness. This is not devised not only a supra-mental thought, but a supra-mental will, sense, feeling, a supra-mental substitute for all the activities that are now accomplished by the mind."

In one of the preceding essays a brief statement was made about the powers of mind and Supermind—that observation is replaced on the Supermental level by a direct truth-vision, judgment by an inherent discrimination, a self-luminous discernment, the usual reasoning process of the logical mind by "a swift intuitive perception which sees the conclusion or fact at once and all the evidence by which we arrive at it as not its evidence, but as its circumstances and relations seen in one comprehensive view", and imagination by a truth-inspiration; the ordinary memory which stores knowledge in the depths of the subconscious becomes a thing consciously and luminously possessed, as something contained in one's consciousness which can be brought forward at will and seen in self-vision.

We shall now take up the mental faculties individually and examine in detail the nature of their gnostic equivalents. The reader is once again reminded that these powers described by Sri Aurobindo do not belong to the Supermind, but not to the Supermind poise in its utter Truth-consciousness; they belong to the Supermind leaning down to the level of the Overmind and modifying itself to get attuned to its workings. In Sri Aurobindo's own words: "...the Supermind when it descends into the overmind plane and takes up the overmind workings and transforms them. The highest Supermind or Divine gnosis existent in itself is something that lies beyond still and quite above. Therefore, the powers, described here are not purely gnostic or Supramental, for at first they have a limited action; they develop into instruments of the highest knowledge only when the summit of the Supermind is reached. The plane above the mind are not shut off from one another, each plane having permanence of its own from the plane below; they are gradually shaded off into one another, forming tiers of a graded gnostic hierarchy. Consequently, it is not impossible for an individual to possess some of these powers without attaining to the Supermind; of course, on the lower planes their action will not be as illumined as on that of the Supermind; they will also be narrow in range and limited in capacity.

As the gnostic powers can only be accurately described by one who possesses them and knows how to use them effectively, the author of this essay, in their description of the gnostic version of the Supermind's own words. He is sure the reader will be greatly interested in reading it, as this is the first time in the history of human thought that some one has been able to give a detailed philosophical exposition of these supra-rational faculties and powers. In this intellectual and sceptical world of ours, more parables, cryptic sayings and aphorisms, even philosophical "talks", however profound they may be in content, cannot satisfy the mind in its quest of the highest and completest truth; only an exposition of the type Sri Aurobindo gives speaks to the reason of the rationalists freed from its rationalistic bias—he speaks to the reason, but to the reason of Plato, not to that of the rationalists. The reason of Plato at its best shakes itself free of its "irrational and consequent" influences, rises above mere sense-perception and opinion into the realm of essences and archetypal ideas to gaze upon the perfect heavenly patterns of earthly realities, ultimately to behold the Supreme Good—it is reason opening itself to Reality which transcends it, it is reason with its face turned heavenwards. He says in The Republic: "The power of elevating the highest principle of the soul* to the contemplation of that which is best in existence,** may be compared to the raising of that faculty which is the very soul of the body to the contemplation of that which is brightest in the visible world." (Jowett's translation.) It is only when the reason is able to do this that the philosopher can become "the spectator of all time and all existence", a seer, a rishi; otherwise he remains a sophist like Protagoras and others, the rationalists and positivists of ancient Greece. Therefore, what Plato means by the term reason is obviously not what most of the modern thinkers mean by it. It is this lifted reason, the elevated mind, that Sri Aurobindo speaks; the inability to get poise in this higher reason is perhaps the cause of many intellectuals failing to understand the argumentation of The Life Divine; when reading it they seem to be as out of their depth as the sophists were when listening to Socrates.

Sri Aurobindo begins his exposition here by drawing the attention of the reader to the fact that though the Supramental cognition is described in terms which are usually employed for the mental way of knowing, he must understand that in this description they begin to acquire a different connotation for they express a supra-rational mode of knowing and seeing. For example, during the ascent to the Supermental level, as the individual begins to grow into the gnostic consciousness, a new form of gnosis, which is described below, takes shape in the consciousness, which Sri Aurobindo calls "the supramental thought". This "thought" is not similar to mental thought, only more powerful in action and more accurate in perception: it is fundamentally different because the change which occurs in the psycho-epistemic basis of identification brings about a corresponding change in the mode of apprehension; the same is true for the other powers, like observation, judgment, reason, memory, and imagination. Sri Aurobindo writes:

* The author has here called this identity a three-termed identity in order to avoid a misunderstanding which may occur in minds of some of the Western reader—they may be led to mistake the experience-concept of Sri Aurobindo with the basic ideas of the Identity philosophers like Schelling. The identity-metaphysics leads to pure Pantheism: from the previous essays, especially the one which described the Human, His cosmic manifestion, His Static manifestations and Dynamic and His Personal and Impersonal aspects, it is obvious that Pantheism cannot be described as pure Pantheism. As a matter of fact, it would be metaphysically absurd to place it in one of these classical categories of absolute, simple, complex, multi-aspected, and global.

** This is absolutely necessary to indicate the inner-reason regions one cannot go into without doing it, as we have seen, the intimations and communications arising from there are mostly of an unhealthy and even dangerous character. The minimal ranges are not mentioned here because their powers have already been discussed.

* The rational.
** The physical eye.
† The material sun.
and a contact consciousness, but the mental idea and experience of sense can give no conception of the essential and characteristic action of this supramentalised sense consciousness. Thought too in the supramental action is a different thing from the thought of the mental intelligences. The supramental thinking is felt at its basis as a conscious contact or union or identity of the substance of being of the knower with the substance of being of the thing known and its figure of thought as the power of awareness of the self-revealing through the meeting or the oneness, because carrying in itself at least, every knowledge and every action, significance. Therefore, observation, memory, judgment too mean each a different thing in the suprerior from what it is in the process of the mental intelligences.

This supramental knowledge is not primarily or essentially a thought knowledge. The intellect does not consider that it knows a thing until it has reduced its awareness of it to the terms of thought, not, that is to say, until it has put it into a system of representational mental concepts, and this kind of knowledge gets its most decisive completeness when it can be put into clear, precise and defining speech. It is true that the mind gets its knowledge primarily by various kinds of impressions beginning from the vital and the sense impressions arising to the intuitive, but these are taken by the developed intelligence only as data and seem to it uncertain and vague in themselves until they have been forced to yield up all their content to the thought and have taken their place in some intellectual relation or in an ordered thought sequence. Even the suprmind knows most completely and securely not by thought but by identity, by a pure awareness of the self-truth of things in the self and by the self, jnanam atmam jnanam. I get the supramental knowledge best by becoming one with the truth, one with the object of knowledge; the supramental satisfaction and integral light is most there when there is no further division between the knower, knowledge and the known, jnana, jnana, jnana. I see the thing known not as an object outside myself, but as myself or a part of my universal self consciousness, in my most direct consciousness. This leads to the highest and completest knowledge: thought and speech being representations and not this direct possession in the consciousness are to the suprmind a lesser form and, if not filled with the fullness of the infinite and the divine in all this knowledge, will not indeed be possible to us in its full extent and degree until we can rise through myriad grades of the supramind to that infinite. But still as the supramental power emerges and enlarges its action, something of this highest way of knowledge appears and grows and even the members of the mental being, as they are intuitionalised and supramentalised, develop more and more a corresponding action upon their own level. There is an increasing power of a luminous vital, psychic, emotional, dynamic and other identifications and unifications of all the things and objects of our consciousness and these transcendences of the separative consciousness bring with them many forms and means of a direct knowledge.

The supramental knowledge or experience by identity carries in it as a result or as a secondary part of itself a supramental vision that needs the support of no image, can concretise what is to the mind abstract and has the character of sight though its object may be the invisible truth of that which has form or the truth of the formless. This vision can come before there is any identity, as of a separate emanation of light from it, or may be detached from it as a separate power. The truth or the thing known is not then altogether or not yet one with myself, but an object of my knowledge: but still it is an object subjectively seen in the self or at least felt if it is still further separated and objectified to the knower, by the self, not through any intermediate process, but by a direct inner seizing or a penetrating and enveloping luminous contact of the spiritual consciousness with its object. It is this luminous seeing and contact that is the spiritual vision.... It is to the spirit what the eyes are to the physical mind and one has the sense of having passed through a subtly analogous process. As the physical sight can present to us the actual body of things of which the sight had only possessed an indication or mental description and they become to us at once real and evident, prakṛtyaśaka, so the spiritual sight surpasses the indications or representations of thought and can make the self and truth of all things present to us and directly evident, pratyakṣa.

"The sense can only give us the superficial image of things and it needs the aid of thought to fill and inform the image; but the spiritual sight is capable of presenting to us the thing in itself and all truth about it. The seer does not need the aid of thought in its process as a means of knowledge, but only as a means of representation and expression,—thought is to him a lesser power and used for a secondary purpose. If a further extension of knowledge is required, he can come at it by new seeing with the slower thought processes that are staff of support of the mental search and its feeling for truth,—even as we scrutinise with the eye to find what escaped our first observation. This experience and knowledge by spiritual vision is the second in directness and greatness of the powers of the supramental. It is something much more near, profound and comprehensive than mental knowledge, but has an identity of by knowledge, and it has this virtue that we can proceed at once from the vision to the identity, as from the identity to the vision. Thus when the spiritual vision itself is, as it were, Selves or Brahman, the soul can next enter and become one with the Self, God or Brahman.

"This can only be done integrally on or above the supramental level, but at the same time the spiritual vision can take on mental forms of itself that can help towards this identification each in its own way. A mental vision or a supramentalised vision, as I have said, an emotional vision of the heart, a vision in the sense mind are parts of the Yogic experience. If these seeings are purely mental, then they may but need not be true, for the mind is capable of both truth and error, both of a true and of a false representation. But as the mind becomes intuitionalised and supramentalised, these powers are purified and corrected by the more luminous action of the supramind and become themselves forms of a supramental and a true seeing. The supramental vision, it may be noted, brings with it a supramental and completing experiences that might be called a spiritual hearing and touching of the truth,—of its essence and through that of its significance—that is to say, there is a movement, vibration, rhythm and a seeing of its close presence and contact with substance. All these powers prepare us to become one with that which has thus grown near to us through knowledge."

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Mysterious Sleep

Mysterious Sleep! Twin-Sister of the Night!
Dream-wielded Angel! Soman, sombre, Sphynx!
Cought by thee the world-wearied Spirit sinks
Into the enchanted planes of occult Light
And glimpses thine vast eternities.

Dark-robed gate-keeper! thou hast all the keys
That open up the tightly-bolted gates
Of Being's deeper, inner, loftier states
Where Consciousness is lifted into reveries
Of her own Home, beyond the waking thought.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA

not very different from that of India. But as the wars which have dis
gregated European history in the past and the quarrels and rivalry
that one modern is feeling in the present is not only too clearly par
tially, the inhabitants of Europe are very far from being imbued with the
sense of unity which distinguishes the inhabitants of India. We can,
in short, speak of a "European" with the same appropriateness as we can
speak of an "Indian", who, in spite of differences of colour, caste, and creed, looks
upon all other Indians as his fellow-countrymen and upon India as his
home."

Says Sir J. Sarkar, the eminent Indian historian, in his India through
the ages: "The Indian people of to-day are no doubt a composite ethical
product; but whatever their different constituent elements may have been
in origin, they have all acquired a common Indian stamp, and have all been
contributing to a common culture and building up a common type of tradi
tion, thought and literature."

For Sir Henry Maine, who is so scepti
cal about the Indians' claim to be considered as one people, has been forced
to admit that 'Beneath the manifold diversity of physical and social type,
languages, custom and religion, which strikes the observer in India, there
still can be discerned a certain underlying uniformity of life or vision
from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin.' There is in fact an Indian character,
a general Indian personality, which we cannot resolve into its component
elements." (People of India). (To be continued)
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF

Nature's Bonuses

Covering an area of 1,632,015 sq. miles, India has the peculiar phenomenon of having almost the same length, about 2,900 miles, from north to south, as the breadth from east to west. Her coast line is about 4,000 miles in length, and is washed by the two embracing arms of the Indian Ocean, one to the west, the other to the east. Roughly speaking, India is thirty times as large as the British Isles, but only half the size of U.S.A., or five-sixths of the size of Europe. Her land area is 3.4 per cent of the surface of the globe, but her population is a fifth of the world's. For some time past, she has been described as the most densely populated country on earth. Her population, in fact, has no equal in the world. The least, no country of equal extent has such a variety. India has 17,000 species of flowering plants belonging to 174 natural orders. She has a fourth of the world's bovine stock, and her jungle area, an immense source of the country's wealth, is nearly 20,000 sq. miles. She is not less remarkable for her mineral resources. She is the world's main source of mines and is possessed of perhaps the world's largest reserve of high-grade iron ore. But there are still very many sources of minerals unexplored in the country.

Races, Languages, Religious

Equally varied is the human content of India. But this diversity is not as its savagery is made out to be by the orthodox scientist. No theory of race-origins has had universal acceptance. The one, however, that is held in common by most ethnocologists is that all members of the human species are fundamentally alike. In the long course of time, the races have been changed in the surface traits, such as, pigmentation, shape of hair, nose and head, formation of eye, and certain biochemical changes in the blood. These are caused by the force of variation due to which every offspring is sure to have new traits, both in his mental and physical make-up, which are different from those of his parents, and have often been new. If in India today we find a number of different types, it does not follow that these types have not intermixed here, but are the result of early migrations.

This is not to say that India has had no strain of foreign blood in her population. There has certainly been such intermingling of blood in the course of her long history.

There is also the fact that from early times India's fabulous wealth and the price-less treasures of her thought have attracted people from outside who came in the wake of the conquerors and plunderers. Likewise many foreigners came in peace for merchandise as much as for ideas and ideals. Many of these settled down in India and, when their numbers were small, were gradually absorbed in her population, adopting, more or less, the manners and customs, sometimes the religion of the people. Broadly distinguished, such foreign elements were the Greek, Iranian, Mongolian, Scythian, Han, Seng, and Manicheans, even of what constitutes the modern European. How far the characteristic features of these types are present in the human mass of India is a problem yet to be solved.

The existence in India, however, of various ethnic types does suggest that as in other aspects of her life and culture too, she should perhaps show interesting heterogeneity such as would indicate the likelihood of the evolution on this soil, one day, of a grand synthesis of human life and culture.

The vast population of India is, as it were, a mosaic of peoples, each with some traits of its own. There are the tall fair Kuns and the enterprising Punjabi in the north, the artificile Bengali, Assamese and Oriya in the east, the intellectually alert Andhra, Tamilian, Malayali and Kamma in the south, and the hardly Maratha, the chivalrous Rajput and the business-minded Gujarati and Sindhi in the west, with a great block of virile Hindu-speaking people in the centre, and the even more virile and sturdy tribes of the Himalaya and other adjacent frontier regions. Each of these has its own language and its distinctive mode of dress. These sartorial, linguistic and physical varieties—rich, powerful and interesting elements in the nation-bond—are the result of a long process of growth in those regions and also of intermingling under conditions of long and always changing.

India represents the three primary divisions of mankind—the Caspian or the white type, with its subdivisions of blonde and dark, the Mongolian or the yellow type, and the Ethiopian or the black type; the first two make up the bulk of the population of India proper and the last are the inhabitants of the Andaman Ices. The physical features of these people have led ethnologists to trace them to some types which embody these common features. This, let us repeat, may not always mean that these are the only type of mankind that existed here and rapidly changing. In every case, their origins outside India. But we shall come to this point again in the next chapter. We shall now see how peoples of particular regions are generally classified as belonging to racial entities which may be called the “early groups” because they took on certain characteristics distinguishing them from others.

In Kashmir, the Punjab and Rajputana can be seen the Indo-Aryan type with tall stature, fair complexion, dark eyes, plentiful hair on the face and narrow, prominent nose. Most of the higher classes of north India belong to this type. The bulk of the south Indian population is composed of the Dravidian type. But the term Dravidian does not at all mean any ethnic type. The loose use of this term has been responsible for much confusion in the understanding of things south Indian. An eminent author of the Dravidian type of literature, Dr. C. E. Morehead, has said, in his book on the land and its people: "The Dravidian type is characterized by brown skin, luxuriant hair, plump, plentiful hair, long head and broad nose, inhabiting almost the whole of Peninsular India south of the Vindhyas ranges. The Turko-Iranian type is found in N.W. Frontier, Baluchistan and the regions to the west of the Sindhu, having a stature above the medium, complexion fair, head broad, nose long and narrow. East of the Sindhu, Gujarat and western India represent the Scytho-Dravidian type, comprising the Indo-Aryan and Sylhetis or Scythians who were an Alpine race of western Asia and ruled in western India for more than two hundred years in the early centuries of the present era. Most of the east Punjab, U.P. and Bihar are inhabited by the Arjo-Dravidian or Hindusthani type with long head, complexion varying from brown to black, and nose from medium to broad and more below the average. The same is said to be a mixture of the Indo-Aryans with the Dravida.

The Mongoloid type is found in Burmah, Assam and the sub-Himalayan tract. It has broad head, dark yellowish complexion, acunity hair on the face, short stature, flat face and oblique eye slits.

This type is tentatively called the Bengal type, found in Bengal and Orissa, are broad head, dark complexion, plentiful hair on the face, medium stature, broad nose with a hump on the forehead, and high cheek breadness.

There is a third type, the so-called Mongoloid-Dravidian, a blend of those elements. There is reason to think, however, that it is an Alpine type which is spread along the west coast from Gujarat to Coorg, and also from Bengal and Bihar, and markedly in Bengal. Thus there is a distinct mixture between the Bengali and the Arjo-Dravidian which is also traced between the Bengalis and the Malayals on the west coast, both of them bearing striking physical resemblances. These resemblances may also be attributed to another less known fact that migrations of brahmins had twice taken place to the south, once under the influence of Buddhist influence and another when the country suffered the aggression of Islam.

These human groups apart, there are the aboriginal peoples of India who have never developed a written language of their own, whose economic life has been the simplest, who have made no progress in agriculture and handicrafts. Yet they are well ahead of their more civilised countrymen in their moral qualities. A Bhill of the Aravalli or Satyara hills, a Saot of the Varsat mountains, a Banda of Orissa, a Vedd of the Central Provinces, a Toda of the Nilgiris, a Garo or a Khasia of Assam still keeps, more or less, to a primitive life in forest areas. He is ordinarily a tall, strong man and has a well-developed body with simple social existence. None of these tribes can be called prehistoric, though they were in India before the Dravidians. They, even the most primitive amongst them like the Veddas of Ceylon, belong to the species known to anthropology as Homo sapiens. Of these the Todas of the Nilgiris have more or less irregular facial formations. There is no beauty whatsoever in their eyes and lips and nose. The tribes of eastern India show Mongoloid characteristics in their faces, while the Gonds are absolutely free from such peculiarities as slanting eyes and flat noses. In their religious life they propitiate evil spirits. They are intensely fond of dancing in a rhythmic undulating movement. The Mundas have adopted the title of Adi-casts—meaning original inhabitants—a title that well describes most of these people. Besides these tribes who lead a more or less settled life, there are still many aboriginal peoples who are absolute nomads, who are ever on the move.

The diversity of ethnic types in India, each of which is named after certain early immigrant groups, does go to indicate how in the chemistry of racial intermingling, original types were lost or modified and new ones emerged, and how this process contributed to a rich and strong composition of India's human material.

But it is not that in early days many moved into India from outside only. In India's human material there are many such movements from one region to another, apart from the original expansion of racial groups, with the result that a man may meet with people who are obviously Indo-Aryan or obviously Dravidian type in any part of India and in any caste. Indians of high caste have many branches of highly different physical characters, generally, some to have fairer skins and lighter hair than the average, which is accused to a larger strain of Aryan blood. Nevertheless, this admixture of peoples, as the result of many many important effects on India's past history and present outlook. The fact is that India's history has been a sense of fundamental unity far more vivid and persistent that can be accounted for by the circumstances of prolinquity in the same geographical area. Europeans live together in a geographical area whose size is...
LOTUS-FLAME
PART IV: THE SELF-KNOWLEDGE
By ROMEN

Continued from the issue of November 10

It was for this boundless aim and promise supreme
That, from above, the nameless, timeless Light
Urged the nude self-oblivious Lotus-flame
To open his heart to its radiance unknown
And revive the splendor of the eternally
Locked like a shining sky-seed in his soul,
A sleeping might without vesture and without form,
A sapphire-white core of bliss immaculate
Sealed behind doors of self clinging to earth.
Though estranged from the dark bosom of the dust
And escaped from the deep tyranny of gloom
And risen to an altitude of voicelessness
Visioning greater worlds and realms and heights,
He missed his great spirit's index absolute.
Yet was he a kernel of the universe
Striving to reach the peak of the Unknown,
Not a fallen godhead reaching back to his peak
Out of the ink-grey oceans of sonnolence.
Yet he could not behold the pinnacle-blaze
That hounded on his path and urged him on
Towards a goal that was to him unknown;
A hidden effulgence goaded his soul to leap
Into the vast arms of an infinite expanse
And bear the Measureless to his open heart,
As if the Mother of all the worlds and beings
Had yearned to clasp her lost infant to her breast,
The wide breast of the soundless seas of the Blue,
The deep breast of the sky and its far star-flames,
The ever moving breast of her creation's whirls.
Though drawn to the centre of the cosmic heart,
The splendid play-field of the spirit unveiled,
Wakened to light behind the curtain of time,
He was unaware of the radiance of his soul,
The Sun-cave from where all the suns and lights
Are born, created, inscribed with life and fire,
The source of all the sources and all the founts,
The Beginning of all the dawns and all the ducles,
One Vast whence came the universal whole.
From drunk and blind and wayward immobility
To the zenith of far diamond vastnesses
Is a span and gulf too unfathomable, large
To be imagined, conceived or crossed at a stride,
A high labour too precarious and immense.
Taking the dire burden of humanity
On his breast like an incalculable weight,
He trudged his way to his lofty sun-spans.
Unburdened without the robe that is our birth,
He could soar upon the lightning-wings of his soul
And reach the goal and the apex of his height
In luminous ease and willless ascents' flights.
But he came not on the soil to be free from chains—
From matter's burden and mortal ignorance;
Rather to lift this globe to the summit-vast,
This global-speak carried on its azure wings
To be changed, transfigured into a gloried fire,
An illumined sun-awakened vastitude;
To create a vacuum in the heart of Time
For a ray eternal to rush in that space
Of earth's obscure and impulsive breast
And robe its nakedness with radiance-touch,
Outpour of the faultless fount of paradise.
This was the giant mission for which he came
Down to the abyssmal jaws of eve-pale sleep—
This was the marvellous goal for which he climbed
The Olympian altitude and span and stretch
Of the giant spirals of the sky.
To bring to man the immortal pollen of fire
Culled from the depth of the eternal Gold.
And after crossing now the dominion
Of dust, he came to a place of equinox
And glowing rapture-beats of freedom and ease;
Opening wide his earthhood to the worlds
Reflecting greater light and deeper bliss.
He sensed that his upward-flight must know no end
Till he had discovered his identity-gleam
Of inner light and power and poise divine.
He felt that a greater self than that of earth
Lay hidden unconceived, remote, unmanifest,
Elusive like the distant horizons of the Blue,
For off like the majestic solar orb,
Yet nearer than his very heart or soul,
Vibrating in his blood with a mystery occult,
Turning his existence into a marvel-being
Of intimate kinship with the stars and sea.
All these he sensed, divined and dimly guessed.
But the true shape of his self illimitable
Remained a light beyond the ken of his sight.
For, covered was his golden Transparency
By the dark, unillumined shroud of birth
And by the duck-mind's pall of time and sense
And by the dull mantle of earthliness
And the subliterate wings of the ideal of the hour
Veiling him and his absolute sheer light.
He had crossed the sky-lines of birth and form and name,
Of time and sense and little humankind;
But the diaphanous mask of the ideal
Lingered on to obstruct the unwalled sense,
The boundless vision and unhorizoned seeing
Into his vast Being's countenance supreme;
As if he dared not eye his veiled face.
Met the eyes of his stark regal flame
And face the ungarbed divinity within.
Torn from the terrestrial resistance and gloom,
He saw himself as the pure heavenly child.
He visualised himself as an angel of the stars
That was above him and behind his mould,
Guiding his life and mind and day-born frame,
Exalting his deeds to undiminished truth-peaks.
Changing his ignorance to sentient sight,
Raising the curtain of his human toads
To reveal an unfruit and mystic field of sight
And a vista tremenrous and undisposed
That looks at the phenomena of the worlds
For ever unshurred, immobile, calm.
He came to take his moveless topless stand
Upon this sphere and saw the universe
Move and fret and toil perpetually,
Himself a witness-mind standing aloof.
But still he felt not himself the single soul-light
Of all creation and its manifold shapes,
The paramount puissance above all worldly things,
The measureless Being high and unborn and true,
The unique radiance dateless, spaceless, sole.
He saw himself not as the heaven-flame
Instilling power into the atomic seas,
The single meaning and breath of life and the worlds,
An endless cosmic sempiternal sere,
A white Brahmic existence that had been
Before the birth of time and space and earth
And will be after the great giant course
Of all the universes numberless
Collapses into a total featureless nought.
But he would be the luminous carrier
Of the ultimate blaze, the fire absolute,
No shadowless child of the rift summit alone
But an incarnation and theosophy,
A gold-white palpable living godhead on earth;
And in him the far gods toiled to remove
The last wels and the final shreds of dust;
They worked unseen yet very near his heart,
And for the great global flood within
His self and life and his vast spirit-done.
A whiter gleam stole into his tranquil brain;
An intense love captured his heart-expanses
And he sensed the chains of destiny and birth
Fall back like clouds before the dawning sun;
A great, new orb of blaze appeared above
The horizons of his being's oceans of hush;
All his senses were raptured, wonder-swept,
Transmuted by an unseen alchemest;
Thrilled were the largest continent-spans of his life;
Silence deeper was the body glowing with a ray
Burning invisible above his subtle matter's gulf;
His teeming calm mind felt the passage wide
Of the glorious footfalls of the super-heights;
Into the chamber of his mental worlds
A huge Himalayan burden of peace.

Continued on page 11
SRI AUROBINDO AND MAN'S SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

By C. C. DUTT

Continued from previous issue

"Two devices of absolutism have been tried—one negative, the other positive. The first was wrought by suppression of free thought, oppression of the life and soul of the community and by the methods of the taboo and the inquisition. The other device, positive, worked by means of the State religion, with the priest as the helper of the king. Both devices proved useless in the long run. They failed by decay and by the revolt of the oppressed. Still, this stage was necessary in human evolution, "for the absolutist monarchical and aristocratic State was the father of the modern idea of the absolutist and aristocratic State, which spirit is in process of birth." Only thus could the rational self-governing society firmly evolve. Unity and uniformity constitute the principal trend of modern progress. How else could this complex human life be made calculable and manageable by rational intelligence and unity?" Socialism says Sri Aurobindo is "the complete expression of the idea." This socialism, in one form or another, bids fair to be the key-note of man's collective life in the future.

The history of the growth of the State is, thus, a history of centralisation, of a growing uniformity in the various aspects of life. It is a change from a natural communism to a rational organisation. The unity of the human race implies the eventual formation and organisation of a world-State out of the already existing nation-units. Circumstances are becoming more and more favourable daily to the growth of such a state. "Science, commerce and rapid communications have produced a state of things in which the disparate masses of humanity, once living to themselves, have drawn together by a process of subtle unification into a single mass which has already a common and vital and is rapidly forming a common mental existence. A great transforming shock was also necessary and that has now been furnished by the two world wars. The idea of a single state is no longer confined to the mind of the isolated thinker but has appeared in the consciousness of humanity as a large stage. Two distinct types of a world-union present themselves before us. One is based on the principle of centralisation and uniformity, and the other on the principle of liberty. The union of the world may be brought about in various ways—"by a mutual understanding or by the force of circumstances or by a series of new and disastrous shocks."

Having indicated two alternate possibilities, Sri Aurobindo goes on to affirm that "the idea of a world-union of free nations and empires, loose at first, but growing closely knit with time, no doubt, exactly as "appears to be the only form immediately practicable, if the will to unity becomes rapidly effective in the mind of the race. On the other hand, the state idea, which has so far proved to be the most effective means of unification, is the idea to which the human mind has grown accustomed. So it is surmised that even if there is a loose union to begin with, it would rapidly grow into a stringent form of World-State. The ideal of human unity is no other than the world-state, even if it be not immediately, it proves nothing. In history, a scheme that looks absurd and unpracticable to one generation has often been acclaimed and put through effectively by the next. But there are certain indispensable conditions to be fulfilled here. A central organ of power standing for the united will of the component nations is necessary to begin with, and then there must follow the unification of all power—military, administrative, judicial, economic, etc. But what is going to be the form of the central government? Will it be a federation, an Imperial Council or a Free State? The question of the form of a world-State would then take the same direction and evolve a governing body of the same model." But in considering these various alternatives we must not lose sight of "nationalism and the conflicting interests and tendencies that it creates." It has been supposed that a world-parliament would overcome these difficulties. But there are serious obstacles in the way.

Parliamentarism, very useful as it has been in the past, has been always an instrument either of a modified aristocratic or of a middle class rule; over and above, there has always been the danger of the tyranny of a majority, even a very small majority. All this would certainly be a more serious evil in the World-State and might lead to discontent, disorder and even revolution. A parliament of nations must, after all, be a united body made up of free nations. The present distribution of power in the world is anomalous. Sri Aurobindo warns us, "The Asiatic problem alone, if still left unsolved, would be a fatal obstacle, and it is not alone. Utopian schemes of imperial federation of the existing world system has also its difficulties. It could only be successful, if controlled by an oligarchy of a few imperial nations. But it is very doubtful if national egotism would permit such a control. Whichever way we turn it is the form of the 'World-State' is beset with doubts and difficulties." But the form of Government is not the really important thing. "the real problem is that of the unification of powers and the uniformity which any manageable system of a World-State would render inevitable."

To be continued

LOTUS-FLAME

Descended and into all his dust's abode.
Into his mind empalmed of all gloom-thoughts,
Into his life immune from all the waves,
Into his soul stripped clean of earth's sense-knots
That hold him bound to the aerial clay.
Came a broad plenitude of bliss that holds
Within its wide immobile transcendent breast
Changeless grandeur, and its grandeur is.
A bush not of the spaceless, cloudless skies
But a tranquillity that bears the worlds.
From the high flame-covered omnipotent Word
Of the cosmic and all-encompassing spirit-truth
To the ignorant prattle of unillumined man.
In it was the summit-secret, the last core
Of light that made possible all these domains.
That lie supreme below the spheres of our clay
Like mute sentinels guarding ceaselessly
A wealth and splendour hidden from mortal eye.
In it were the vast realms of Thought and Forms,
Tangible gleams, unexpressed realities
And the high magical word incalculable;
And he seemed rising from his immest depths
A grandeur and an immensity of blaze
Across his heart and the caverns of his soul
And athwart his mind's solitude a wind of noise.
A mountain of flame and light formidable,
To the welkin distances of Truth's abode.
A giant cliff rising out of a cauldron of
Movestless and voiceless ocean of solitude,
It rose up like a dauntless array of steeds
Marching fire-heated to conquer the altitudes
Of Olympian wisdom unushable;
Or golden star-winged eagles multitudinous
 Governing the Blue with their unnumbered shapes,
Throughout Savitri one finds the question of Eternity and Time and their relation constantly repeated in different contexts to bring out their interdependence, or rather, the dependence of Time on Eternity. It is the Timelessness Eternity of the Absolute that wells out into the flow of Time-Eternity, carrying with it a unrolling of withness. "The Eternal's quiet holds the cosmic set" (p. 110) says Sri Aurobindo. There are two ends of Eternity visible in Savitri. One is the Eternity below, facing man with its unfathomable depth of the Nescience which may be called the Dark Eternity described in the Veda as "darkness covered thickly by darkness" in which there was neither "being nor non-being." The other is the Eternity of the Divine Absolute, beyond the realms of the three supernormals—Sat, Chit and Ananda. Many have felt an irreconcilable opposition between the Timeless Eternity of the Absolute and the Time-Eternity which is constantly flowing. Time is posited as something contradictory to the Timeless, the Eternal. It is maintained that the Eternal beyond Time alone, is the Real and that the Time-movement is unreal and even non-existent. Savitri throughout gives the vision of the truth about this opposition. It shows us the Nescience, the dark Night, as a mask of the Divine, the Eternal and whenever an opportunity occurs it also shows that the Absolute's Timeless Eternity is the font and origin of Time and that the Divine is Himself the creator and dynamical source of the cosmos behind the veil. The conception of a Time-Eternity as a dynamic Reality depending organically upon Timeless Eternity is one emanated clearly for the first time by Sri Aurobindo in the world of thought. He showed the two ladders, one of ascent from the Nescience into the Absolute and the other of descent from the Absolute to the Supreme. Far from Eternity being in opposition to Time-movement the grand vision of Savitri constantly brings Eternity in moments of Time. The opposition between Time and Eternity is, in fact, a result of our mind's divided consciousness and its inability to reconcile what seems to it the opposites. Mind commits the error of applying its own logic, which is that of the finite, to the Infinite whose logic is different. The result is that we get only a partial view of the Infinite. In any supramental view of the Reality the two—Eternity and Time—are not only reconciled but become organic and indivisible. Viewed as an expression of the supreme Divine—on some date in the "calendar of the Unknown"—the moment of Time become replete with the presence of the Eternal and then the whole cosmos from the infinitesimal material particle to the highest being is seen pulsating with such a multiple and vast play of Eternity that the word "Eternity" itself seems to gain an inscrutable significance on that great vision. It is about such a moment of realisation that Savitri says "a marriage with eternity (twinned Time)." It is possible that the mind may continue to ask "why" at all this movement, this cosmic manification from the Supreme and Silent Eternity. The answer—one among the many poetical answer—is:

That the eyes of the Timeless might look out from Time
And the world manifest the unveiled Divine (p. 67).

To another question—How did this miracle happen?—the Seer says that it is Life that "has hived the Eternal into the arms of Time" (p. 162). It is true that man does not feel this Eternity in his present state of consciousness because there is hidden by the movement of Time which exclusively occupies him. He is, as it were, buried alive. Sri Aurobindo expresses it most poetically: "Lufted by Time's beams eternity sleeps in us" (p. 155). We then feel the justification of the line which says "spiritual beauty is an expanse in Eternity on a beat of Time" (p. 7), and also of the description of Savitri as "a prodigal of her rich divinity" (p. 8) who gave herself and all she was to man. The poet speaks of Awarpathy, the human king, as "a colonist from immortality" because in his inner being he was conscious of his origin in the Eternal. He sees the relation between Eternity and Timemovement—

Ascending and descending twilt life's poles
The serial kingdoms of the graded Law
Plunged from the Everlasting into Time,
Then glad of a glory of multitudinous mind
And rich with life's adventure and delight
And packed with the beauty of Death's shapes and hues
Climbed back from Time into undying SELF
Up a golden ladder carrying the soul,
Tying with diamond threads the spirit's extremez.

Let us for a moment suppose that Eternity is realised here in Time and man succeeds in manifesting the Divine in life. What then would happen? Sri Aurobindo envisages an endless divine unfoldment in time. Says he:

The Spirit's greatness is our timeless source
And it shall be our crown in endless Time (p. 101).

The opposition between Eternity and Time seems to be resolved in human life by the intervention of a power of the Divine. It is She who acts as an "ambassador" between Eternity and Time. She embodies herself forth in the form of divine Love, or rather, of a being carrying the unifying power of the Divine Life within herself. The highest ideal of love conceived by man is really speaking a manifestation of this "infinity's centre." Love is that embodiment of the Eternal in Time which carries with it the stamp of immortality.

Eternally drawn close is visualised as Love,
And laid its bands upon the body of Time (p. 215).

In the language of the Master—"death is a shadow of love." This love "wider than the universal" is really the Divine Love. Love and Death seem to embody two contradictory principles, one affirming the divine Eternity and Immortality, the other insisting on the eternity of the Nescience, of mortality. In three of his poems this subject of love has been treated by Sri Aurobindo and it is in Savitri that it reaches its highest height. In "Uroke Purusa" the world is struck by the shaft of immortal Love, denied fulfillment by the power of the gods, at last gains his immortal love on the heights of Heaven. In "Love and Death" Ruru recovers Priyuvrada from the dark rather regions of Death by the power of the charm of the supreme Mother and that of the God of Love. In both of these poems the immortality and eternity of Love is affirmed. It is in Savitri that Love divine comes as the embodiment of the Supreme Grace to deliver the soul of man out of the clutches of Death. Here the whole problem is raised to its cosmic proportions and brings in the necessary divine elements whose intervention alone can lead to the successful solution of the opposition. The colloguery between Savitri, Love Divine incarnate, and Death is among the most inspired utterances of the world's poetry. Conquest over death, salvation of immortality has been the dream of man from the dawn of his awakening. It finds expression in the Vedic hymns, in the famous aspiration of the seer of the Upanishads who chanted "from death lead me to immortality," and who affirmed in a mortal world the immortality of man's soul by addressing man as "children of immortality." Savitri takes up the subject, brings out all the necessary conditions for the realisation of this dream of man. It affirms the necessity of the birth of a New Power, the Power of Divine Grace, or Love, which alone can save man from the reign of Ignorance which is Death.

To be continued