SRI AUROBINDO: "I AM HERE, I AM HERE!"

By NIRODBARAN

When all over the world there was a growing eagerness to know more and more about Sri Aurobindo and the interest in his work was on the increase, he suddenly disappeared from the earth-scene. Superficially, this is a terrible irony of fate. But a study of his life suggests that more than once the utterly unexpected occurred as if by a choice on his own part. One may say that such an occurrence is almost a regular feature at each decisive turn of the upward spiral of his life. We see the rising curve bending down of a sudden when he threw away the I. C. S. career after a brilliant success and retired into an unpromising State job in Baroda. There his sun was again in the ascendent, but as soon as he had captured the vision and admiration of the people, he left that peak of eminence. The sun then passed under a cloud; it worked behind the veil and it is by now the public honours of a dazzling hunter and the shock everybody's eyes were filled with wondr and joy, the light hid itself in the shadows of the prison cell where he had one of the sovereign spiritual experiences of his life. When there was none of the prr, his tremendous sacrifice and wide guidance awakened the nation and it waited at his door with the offer of All-India leadership. Again he disappeared one night and passed into oblivion for a large number of years in Pondicherry's unknown retreat. As if this was not enough, he entered into a greater oblivion when in 1929, after having achieved what we may call the first supreme victory in his sadhana, he, instead of hoisting the banner of the glory of the Spirit on the world's summit, withdrew himself for an indefinite period, to the utter surprise and disappointment of his close followers. Now at last has come as a logical conclusion the greatest oblivion in a most staggering manner and the shock had the intensity of a violent explosion. Always he has avoided the lime-light and all his great achievements have been prepared in the secret silence of his retirement, and with each emergence he has brought down a greater light, a higher range of illumination and a vaster kingdom of knowledge and power.

Why say what purpose has been chosen to withdraw through the last painful gate of human existence when, like other Yogis, he could have discarded the mortal sheath by an act of will? For Sri Aurobindo to do anything without a purpose and ultimate advantage is in the last degree inconceivable. If he gave in at times to what he called the Adversary, that was because, to quote his own words, "retreat" (paljasam) suited his purpose. One who had mastered the secrets of Life and the Spirit by his immense sadhana, who had been acclaimed as the Yogadwara by those who had attained to the height of the Spirit, to him death could be neither a terror nor a mystery nor an inevitable necessity. Paying the full price of suffering he would pass through the "exit" of the common man, only if he felt that otherwise his life, his own Yoga would lack completeness and that to bear the human destiny on his God-like shoulders he must face, in its own den as it were, the dark Power that rules over this destiny and somehow wrest from it all its secrets. He would embrace the dire extremity not in order to be the one to emerge finally victorious and say, "O human race, from the citadel of the dark King I have issued forth and brought what I promised to you, the golden seed of Immortality." This supreme sacrifice whose total significances will remain ungrasped by our limited intelligence, he accepted, as the Mother has said in unanswerable terms, for us alone. To enter into its history we have to go back two years in time when the first symptom of the malady that completed the sacrifice appeared. It was like a tiny cloud on the horizon; nobody talked about it as having any importance to it. But Sri Aurobindo wanted to know what it meant. His disciple, Dr. P. Sanyal, F.R.C.S. (Eng.), an eminent surgeon of Calcutta, who was consulted when he came for Darshan, recognized at once that it was a dangerous situation and could not be neglected. He told Mother and Sri Aurobindo that it was a case of prostatic enlargement and frequency of micturition was the first symptom. He also explained at length its development and sequelae; he mentioned that as yet there was nothing to worry about, but warned us to watch the development carefully. It was a great advantage to be forewarned with the precise knowledge of things at the very initial stage, as it would facilitate Sri Aurobindo's action on it. For as he has always maintained, knowledge of things and their processes in detail makes the action of the Yogic Force more effective. The fight would now take place in the open light—where we would be no cover of ignorance under which the dark Force could take shelter and advance its attack. We were never in doubt as to the issue of the fight, though the Mother told us once that they had cured any number of serious maladies in others but, as regards our own case, things were very different and very difficult indeed.

As we expected, after a couple of months or so, the symptoms cleared up altogether and in three weeks Dr. Sanyal came for the next Darshan, Sri Aurobindo told him emphatically, "It is no more troubling me; I have cured it." Our faith was confirmed.

The work on his epic poem Savitri went ahead with vigour and enthusiasm. Book of the Book was being revised and released for publication. Some 400 to 500 lines he once dictated in succession, whose beauty and flow were a delight for their sweep of cosmic vision and their magical language. At this rate, Savitri, it seemed, would not take long to finish. On everybody's lips was the eager question, "How far Savitri?"

But Savitri was not his sole occupation. Side by side went on other multifarious and diverse activities all the facets of which he alone could deal with by his tremendous grasp of intuitive power. The world erroneously believes, or at least used to, that Sri Aurobindo had turned his whole life inwards and that, a recluse from life, he was now engaged in his own salvation and that of his disciples. How such a misunderstanding sprung from a supreme dynamic person like him could have arisen is most surprising. Let us recall what his life had been, the major spiritual realizations he had attained in the course of his arduous political activities; let us recall what his Yoga stands for and the epoch-making books he has written during his Yogic career. Apart from Savitri, he dealt with the daily reading of papers, the perusal of numerous journals, weeklies, fortnightly quarters edited by people connected with the Ashram and of articles written in four or five languages, poems, essays, letters, the dictating of replies to questions and, to crown all, the preparation of his own books and others', the attention to their manuscripts and proofs etc.—all these were his routine work. Add urgent demands from the Press, blessings implored for help and guidance in material distress—and the list should be enough to open a blind man's eyes. All this work had to be despatched within about two hours a day! Latterly a remarkable faculty developed in him or was noticed for the first time. When I started reading some articles, he used to say: "Have you not read it before?" "No." "Are you sure?" "How could I?", I replied, "I have received it today!" "Very strange, I seem to have heard every word of it." That happened more than once. But though it must have made it easier for him to follow the article's thought, the tax on his attention for judgment of its presentation was against his style. His and the remainder of the regular labour any mortal sight can attest: but to the vast network of his cosmic activity as a Master Yogi what vision can have access? One can have a dim penetration into it through the showering verse of Savitri and through other books or when he chooses to let out a little inkling of it. We have played with him like Gopas in Vrindavan, cracked many jokes like cowards, even quarrelled with him, dismissed many subjects ranging from Art down to the attractive subject of the palate during the last few years of his companionship. The tender expressions that dropped from his lips, the pointed flashes of his quick humour, the silent unsussing distinction of his manner and, above all, his vigilant and subtle protection standing us against all adverse forces—all these had been our heritage, but could we ever reflect in one gesture, even the slightest shadow of his wide universal action? His detached greatness, disinterested largeness, limitless compassion and sweetness, as if Shiva had come down to earth to deliver the world from its roots of
Sri Aurobindo: "I am here, I am here!"

Continued from page 1

ignorance—where shall we see such a parallel? Even when his disease had advanced, he did not fail to respond to the call of the afflicted. To give an example: as he was engaged in the First Great War, he also gave last two years of his life an urgent call for help from a sadhaka living outside.

The lady was suffering from a mysterious disease; some doctors said it was coronary thrombosis, some diagnosed cerebral rub and some others cardiac trouble. Whenever Aurobindo visited her, he would rush to the hospital and sit in her ward, listen to her heart beat, then he would say, "You are going to die," and according to her chart -- in his own handwriting, death, took refuge at the Guru's feet and wired to her that she would rely on his force alone, even were she to die of it. News began to come in daily, by letters or wires. Suddenly no news at all for two or three days! Then news came again. Always the same correspondence, with no apparent reason why.

By now we knew he had realized the power of his divine control. He would advise her to take medicine and food that would suit her body, with the silence of a master, the zeal of a disciple and the devotion of a devotee, directly or indirectly, we would get a reply in their hearts as the very grace of Heaven.

Even Savitri alone, which was the preoccupation nearest to his heart, would one day fire the world's imagination—by her sheer bulk and beauty of profound images, vivid words, felicitous and daring expressions, every depiction of which he took sculptor-like pains to develop. The first Book itself went through ten revisions and had he been able to maintain the same god-like labour throughout or had he not been compelled to lean on the support of a weak and at times unwillingly required to step up with his divine energy, Savitri would have seen the light of day before his own life's light had withdrawn. But, alas, that was not to be. About the middle of the last year, the symptoms of his disease increased and there was no change in his mood. He was no more expansive, the genius of his speech became fewer and fewer. Days passed at times without any exchange of words except what was needed for the work. However much one feels that it was not "Savitri", or "The Spring", or "The Life" at most a smile that crowned our efforts and rouses. Naturally we began to speculate about the cause of this mysterious silence. Sometimes we thought it must be the grave world-situation that engaged his attention,— for at one time he remarked that in his perfect, even in every sign of punctuation flawless. One preposition was changed five times; to change a punctuation-sign one had sometimes to read a whole section. All these opened a new sight in me, for his scribe to carry that burden of distraction, of pedantry, of mortal shoulders was a task too enormous to cope with in an entirely satisfactory manner. That is why perhaps the work had "alien at places from its height, missed its peak".

That did not, however, affect his daily work. Savitri had slowed down its pace. We were engaged in the revision of the two big cantos; already 200 to 300 new lines had been added. What a revision! Every word must be the most jute, every line perfect, even every sign of punctuation flawless. One preposition was changed five times; to change a punctuation-sign one had sometimes to read a whole section. All these opened a new sight in me, for his scribe to carry that burden of distraction, of pedantry, of mortal shoulders was a task too enormous to cope with in an entirely satisfactory manner. That is why perhaps the work had "alien at places from its height, missed its peak".

At this stage, Savitri sent up a demand for a new book. The Future Poetry, a series that had appeared many years ago in his philosophical magazine, Aranya, was given the preference and taken up for revision. A fresh chapter was actually written. But as some books on Modern Poetry never appeared, we were afraid that the book had been abandoned to "Srivatsi." Again the same two cantos. The symptoms of the disease had not abated, though fortunately they had neither increased. There were temporary improvements now and then. But the course of the disease was not uniform. His whole attention was now focussed on Savitri for which we could but spare about two hours at the most. The progress had to be slow especially as he had to dictate and depend on another's sight to be guided in his movements. Now came the call from the bureaucrats for an article. That over, the correspondence and miscellaneous writings swelled up to such an extent that he was at last obliged to remark, "I am finding no time for my real work." Then the path got fairly clear and I was wondering what would be the next choice that would be expected. "I want to finish it," he said. "Take up Savitri. I want to finish it soon." The last phrase was a bombshell on my ear. "Finish it soon? What on earth...?" I asked myself. My bewildered glance met an imperturbable face.

So now the labour with those two cantos began. What surprised us even more was that he seemed actually to hurry the pace, which was quite against his characteristic nature. Always habituated to slow and leisurely ways in his moods and dealings as if the whole of eternity were his time, but now he hurried to get it over. When his bureau was ransacked, it was found littered with copies and copies of Savitri, no less than 4 or 5 versions of some cantos! Here, there, in note-books, in loose sheets, in small blocks, lines after lines written in red ink. It was a great shock. Sri Aurobindo was not interested in having any version printed, he never thought that that would be something to publish. The links and connections shooting with arrow-marks up and down the epic battle-field. A genius or a God in labour! Such being the mode of procedure, it could not but come as a surprise to hear from his mouth that he was so impatient to get it over. Not only that impatient, but that unflagging will for perfection, not even then. On the contrary, close repetitions of ideas and words sounded like obvious flaws in the compact intensity of this massive structure. Those who have carefully gone through these two cantos have not failed to notice this apparent defect. "What has happened? What has gone wrong? Why has it happened? Was it illness?" All my questions. At last after many detours and ups and downs in the far-flung journey, the goal was in sight. What veritable rock of resistance these two cantos proved to be! One who had pursued a strenuous life and was so full of strength, stamina and fervour, thought and vision in the dictated cantos on such subjects as Nirvana, as if the very goddess Saraswati had settled in his throat, was halted even by the pebbles of punctuation! As, at last, the cantos were full stop the last chapter of the first book was completed. A sense of satisfaction burst upon his lips and he said, "Ah, it is finished! How well I remember that smile, as if after a long strenuous journey in failing strength one had finally reached one's station! And yet it was not the cantos that were left, it was the second question. "The Book of Death and the Euplogete. "Ah, that? We shall see about that later on," he answered, in a calm and contented tone. But I was not contented at all, for many repetitions at the end of the work which he had never hurriedly added made me believe that he wanted to give us some more weighty advice. But I decided that it was wiser to reserve judgment and wait for the revision to take place. Surely these flaws would not escape our eagle-vision. It was much later during the agonising moments of night—enveloped consciousness that what had struck me as flaws and repetitions came forcefully with a new significance:

A day may come when she must stand unhelped on a danger brink the world's ruin and here.

* * *

In that tremendous silence lone and lost
Cry not to heaven, for she alone can help.
She only can save herself and save the world.

Are these not his last and his last injunctions? and how? The emptiness slowly melted away and in its place shone his Right Hand, the dauntless boon-giver the Mother.

The expected revision never took place; for, along with the close of the two cantos, came the sickness, there was no indication of any signs of recovery. But there were times other possibilities crossed our fertile brains. Or could it be the reappearance of the disease? That was another query. But all our efforts were baffled, we could not penetrate that armour of remoteness. He was so near, yet had none for us. ..."
Sri Aurobindo: “I am here, I am here!”

Continued from page 2.

from an astrologer the effect that Sri Aurobindo would be subject to a grave danger which may even threaten his life. We simply laughed at the idea, but he said, “Will you enquire what exactly he has written? I feel that he has caught some truth.” “What nonsense!” was my immediate reaction. I am an avowed astrologer of Calcutta, whose prediction about Sri Aurobindo had all come true and who had said that death was fixed for Sri Aurobindo at the age of 63 but that if by yogic action Sri Aurobindo could overcome that donger he would live. It would not happen. So, you see we can’t count on it and smile. I accepted nothing as predetermined and fixed in this worldfield. Everything, in his view, is a play of possibilities and a Yogi can change these possibilities, even the destiny of others as well as his own. He predicted that his guru Aurobindo’s life and work will be, I thought, sheer folly. But his inquiry puzzled me. It was found, however, that the astrologer that had only hinted at some trivial malady. We enjoyed the fun, as a regular occasion mentioned by K. D. Sethia in his article The Passing of Sri Aurobindo.

The Darshan was now on. A vast crowd streamed forth with their offerings. At one time the question was mooted if the Darshan should not be, however, that considering the anxiety and disappointment it would cause in the hearts of the devotees, the call was responded to at the Shankaracharya, despite the discomfort and perhaps undue exertion. Everything went on well—the silence, the calm reigned in the atmosphere pervaded by the beatific Presence of the Mother and the Master. About two hours and ten minutes the throng and the rumour ran that Sri Aurobindo was not well; people in rapid succession took their blessings and beyond the horizon of their outward sight saw the Master beside the Mother in an everlastimg compassion and kindliness. The restless thought was no longer voiced forth. But soon after the Darshan, the symptoms broke down another barrier, as it were, and visibly marked a broad thrust in the advancement of the disease. The question of passing the castor no more be left aside. It was agreed; a wire was sent to Dr. Sanjay to come down at once. He had previously been warned to be ready to start, in case there was an urgent necessity.

The instrument immediately relieved the obstruction and we began to feel light-hearted. But our joy was short-lived. For in the wake of the intruding instrument came its long shadow, fever due to infection. A not uncommon feature, yet it gave us an unpleasant shock. Dr. Sanjay’s advice was that the patient should not be disturbed. The patient’s anxiety by his calm confidence. We approved him of the whole clinical development since he had last seen Sri Aurobindo. He wondered how that small insignificant speck of cloud he had noticed in the early stage could, in the period of the obstructive condition, produce all our anxieties by his calm confidence. He asked himself, “How could this Adversary gain such an unbelievable dominance against the pristine action of Sri Aurobindo’s force? He could have himself once morewards? Did he not take at all to prevent the course of the disease? Otherwise I do not see why it should develop to such an extent.” To these questions no satisfactory answer could be given. What I observed was that while our main concern had been the obstructive condition, the rapid improvement in the voice, the way of the gods and in their symbols, the disease simultaneously advancing at a slow pace; Sri Aurobindo did not pay any particular attention to it, either because he had not sufficient time or because he did not care; but it had been on the mind. I had been allowed to it advance, for reasons unknown to us, slowly and gradually till the completion of Sri Aurobindo, after which he stopped all his work and withdrew his control of the disease. That is the only explanation after this stage.

Whatever it was, Dr. Sanjay was yet optimistic and so were we of the final result. Our vigil went on, but Sri Aurobindo seemed now to be more aware of the release from the obstruction helped him towards that end. Evidently, he found the deep sleep more useful for whatever purpose he had in view than caring about the afflictions of the body. He appeared to have allowed the body to have its own actions and reactions to everything that happened. He had engaged in a more inexorable work of world-significance. The body he had assumed had served him well, and, as the Mother has said, it had suffered, endured, worked and achieved for us. Now, if it served as an impediment to the god-like sense of his movements, why should he not change it? As he did not allow the physical handicap to trouble him in his work and instead his body had been used throughout the same fire and passion, so, after the accomplishment of the work, the body had grown weary of its function and was a mere subliminal purpose. Even if this was at the expense of his own body, he took the advantage. His was not a nature to be cowed by circumstances, however adverse they might be. If he had to give in on one front, he must gain full victory on another. Even if he knew beforehand that defeat and failure would be the result, that did not stop his working an insight up to the end. “Even if I knew that my mission would fail, I would go on working till the last moment” were his words in a letter. Nishkama Karya (sacred work) of the Gita was his motto. An interesting example of which can be cited with regard to the Cripps Mission, now a matter of history. When the Mission arrived in India, Sri Aurobindo, as everybody knows, was ahead of all the big leaders to accept its proposals and even approved of a disciple going to Delhi as his envoy. But after his departure, Sri Aurobindo told us frankly that nothing would come out of it. The Mission would fail. “Then”, we said, “why have you taken this work, and smiling, ‘I have done a bit of nishkama karya.’ That was his life, both occult and overt. That is why the Adversary was always surprised by his unexpected moves. Divine Diplomat that he was, he has yet to see what was the supreme object of this highest strategy. He could not have been blind to the approach of the dark-cowled Figure. He envisaged a fight, a grim struggle and that is why he followed the same method he had always practised in his life—to be prepared in advance for any eventuality. As he had always marched ahead of time, so he kept checking every step he took with a solid foreknowledge and divine strength which passed our immediate understanding.

Now we realise the meaning of his cryptic phrases and causal remarks. Many people asked us if he had left any message, any advice as regards the work, audhans etc., before he passed away. The answer is ‘Yes’ and ‘No’. ‘No’ because, after he had withdrawn completely inwardly, he did no work, he uttered no word except in relation to the disease. ‘Yes’, because before he passed into that stage, Sri Aurobindo, as I have mentioned, was his last work, and the last seal and signature on its golden leaf were those lines which seemed to us repetitions. Repetitions they were, but now they come as the blazing revelation of the whole secret of his Yoga: Surrender.

The author could write again those prophetic lines and the sense will stand crystal clear:

A day may come when she must stand unwelcomed
On a dangerous brink of the world’s doom and here
Carrying the world’s future on her lonely breast.
Carrying the human heart in a heartless gaze
To conquer or fail on a last desperate verge.
Alone with death and close to extinction’s edge
Her single greatness in that last dire scene,
She must cross alone a perilous bridge at Time
And reach an epoch of world-destiny
Where all is won or all is lost for man
In that tremendous silence alone and lost
Of a deciding hour in the world’s fate.
In her soul’s climbing beyond mortal time
When she stands sole with Death or sole with God,
Apart upon a silent desperate height,
Alone with the heavy stars and with the moonless
As on some verge between Time and Timelessness
When being must end or life rebuild its base,
Alone she must conquer or alone must fail.
No human aid can reach her in that hour.
No armour God stand shining by her side.
Cry not to heaven, for she alone can save.
For this the silent Force, the motionless thing;
In her the conscious Will took birth in Time.
She only can save herself and save the world.

He was not in a hurry to finish the Book of Death. His principal task had been completed and hence his calm and contented smile when he reached the end of the book. What he wished to impart in that book was to be able to communicate and about what was not, he said in a leisurely fashion, “We shall see it afterwards”, knowing very well indeed what he meant. Now, that ambiguous message imparted, slowly his consciousness slipped, and he became more and more absorbed with the Medical experts will say, “It was a simple pneumonic coma.” Well, I shall quote Dr. Sanjay’s own words: “A patient who comes out of coma every one or two hours, asks for a drink, enquires about time, he must be a very strange type of coma. At least I have never come across such a type throughout my medical experience.”

Whatever might have been the type, our problem became more difficult. We had solely relied on his Force, but the result had not uplifted the house. We could go ahead with our costly tables and precious injunctions, but without the support of his spiritual force, what effect would they produce? Human as we are, we can but think of our own resources: be they good or bad, we fall back on them in our need. But how to administer such strong and powerful drugs to one who had been accustomed to any medicine for more than a half a century? It was another question that vexed us. One who had seen Sri Aurobindo at close quarters could never forget this Divine Child with a body suppliant, radiant and pure. He was a divine body, when he entered in front of the table for writing, his shapeless hands, his long delicate fingers, had not the crudity of flesh in them; they were suffused, as it were, with a white transparent light, “une blancheur éclatante”, that could like the X-ray make one see through and through. I had not seen this radiance, when he used to sit up writing or when he was in his chair, or when he was lying on the bed as if on the lap of the Divine Mother, with uncleaved shoulders and chest, the hands held together behind the head, the hands waving in a wavelike movement. The body presented the picture of a god in human guise who could not be tampered with in the ordinary human way. Tampering would be nothing but a sacrilege. But, alas, human necessity knows no law, respects no person. And we subjected
Sri Aurobindo: "I am here, I am here!"

Continued from page 3

him to all our instruments of torture with his previous sanction obtained as a gracious gesture to satisfy our mortal ignoinces. He knew that the calther would be of no avail and he emphatically ruled it out, but as we had not the insight nor the proper appraisement of the value of words when they are cast in the common language we are habituated to use, we insisted on the dangerous remedies in which we had faith and confidence.

As the disease was taking a bad turn we repeatedly asked him to use his spiritual force to cure it, since we had been taught and made to experience that behind every body, as behind every force there would be a friendly hand of help and hinder. It is the proper adjustment of these forces that brings in success. Those who can consciously or unconsciously manipulate these forces achieve success in their career. We knew that without the effective help of his being, we would be totally lost. The spiritual manifestation of the outer face manifestation of the deep-rooted trouble. But each time we questioned ed, met him with an enigmatic silence. All the same, we had no positive reason to believe that he was indifferent to the course of the malady or that he was engaged in a far more serious struggle whose issue would have greater significance at that stage for the human race than his own cure. So, as the disease was following in its downward gravity the typical picture, our-duty pointed to us our own responsibility. The advent of every dark sign and symptom was a prefiguring of our perplexed mood. As a result, we adopted all the means of saving that were available to us. But the Decree was otherwise!

At last arrived the School Anniversary on the 1st and 2nd December with its programmes of athletics and dramatics. The whole Aurobindo, busy and bustling, had its attention diverted there and nobody ever suspected that another drama—a lofty tragedy—was being enacted in those hours of Fate in the closed chambers of Sri Aurobindo. His ailment had been veiled from the gaze of the disciplined and the disease also was of such a nature as to admit of being kept a guarded secret. But now the veil was rent, for with the successful ending of the function, the symptoms took a very grave turn. The violent tide deliberately checked until this day was now allowed to break through. I say "as if", but there was no doubt that it was so, for when he was informed on the night of the 2nd that the function had terminated successfully, he remarked with a broad smile, "Ah, it is finished!" Then only he allowed the Adversary who had been held at bay to leap with fury and Sri Aurobindo plunged deeper within, snapping as it were, the last link of his physical being with the need of earth-matter.

It was the memorable 4th December—the date written for ever in letters of gold. Sri Aurobindo had totally emerged from the depths and expressed a desire to sit up. In spite of our objections, he insisted. We noticed after a while that all the distressing symptoms had magically vanished and he was once more a normal healthy person. Then he sat in the chair. The change was so sudden and unexpected that we looked at each other in sheer joy and amazement. "At last, our prayer has been heard!" This was the sentiment welling up in the silent heart of our devotion. It could not be believed! Now we were prompted to ask a fourth question: "Are you not using your force to get rid of the disease?" "No!" came the shocking reply. We could not believe our ears and got to a confirmation of our disbelief we asked again. Now no ground was left to harbour the illusion. What we heard was a word of sharp and sharp interned edge. Then we put forth the bold query: "Why not? If you don't use the force, how is the disease going to be cured?" To this he simply gave the cryptic reply: "Can't explain; you won't understand.

That is why the disease had progressed step by step, marked by three clear stages in its downward path: the completion of Swastri, the Darshan and the School Anniversary, each stage followed by a deeper and deeper in-drawn condition. It was during one of the last days that the Mother remarked, "Whenever I was there, I used to see him pulling down the Supramental Light." It was clear from this statement what Sri Aurobindo was busy with. He had shifted his gaze and concentration to something else which, to his view, must have been much more important than minding the afflictions of the body. But we had not the vision nor the comprehension; so we thought that the dew of the Light would cool our heart's thirst. But through on the one hand his curt reply had taken the last plank away, this sudden transition instilled faith and hope—"the gleaming shoulder of some god-like hope" that had uplifted us all through. It was much later when the tombstone of the Shadow that was trying to draw a premature veil upon his work. Half an hour before the fatal moment, he drank some water and bestowed on all a last glance of compassion and recognition for the service rendered and took the plunge ultimate. Even then we had not the slightest suspicion that

This was the day when Sriram must die?

The news spread around in the early hours of the morning. The reaction of the disciples can be better imagined than described. Through the husk of night one by one they came and mounted up the stairs of Heaven to see what nobody had seen before. It was not death they saw, but a resurrection, nor a withdrawal of the Nirvans but a grand repose, a death that was pulsating with power, light and beauty in every limb as if death had become immortal in the body of the King of kings. A vivid rendering of the Truth into transmuted Matter, it was no longer the body, but the golden lid which half-covered, half-revealed that Truth. Those who had the inner sight witnessed the Truth and those who had the inner ear heard in the still cove of their heart the piercing cry, "I am here, I am here!"

In that awakened consciousness we are marching forward towards the Goal the Master set before us, for which he worked to the last breath and has promised to go on working till the Goal is attained. The Mother, supreme creatrix and realizer of that Goal, is our Guide and Goddess. Enriched with all his innumerable achievements, occult and spiritual, and with the supramental Light that has automatically passed on to her she is shaping us to the mould and figure visioned by him as the future type of humanity. Any one who has visited the Aurobindo after the great Event could not but have been impressed by the will to victory that his sacrifice has engendered in every breast. Out of his Samadhi a thousand flames seem to be mounting up and, lodged in our soul, burning in an ever rejuvenating fire, while his Presence enveloping and warming with and radiating from the Mother's being and body is pervading the whole atmosphere. One can see his Presence, hear his foot-falls, his rhythmic voice, ever vigilant, devoid of the incumbrance of the physical body. One day the sacrifice will bear fruit; what he has depicted in Swastri will come true. For, what is, after all, Swastri if not the inner life-episodes of the Mother and the Master? What he had pictured in the great epic has been faithfully enacted on the world-stage. The curtain has fallen on the first part of that wonderful Drama and the sequel is being played behind it. The Fight with the last and great Adversary has not ceased; if it has ended on the earth's battlefield in an apparent failure, it is raging as fiercely in the occult planes. When at the close of the Duel, the curtain will be rolled up, we shall hear the monotonous recital of the Book of Death, we shall see materialised the Epicque on the earth-stage, and throughout the world will echo and re-echo the embodied passionate cry of Victory:

"I am here, I am here!"

1. Swastri.

2. 1952.

A MESSAGE

from

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ASIAN STUDIES
San Francisco, California

To the Mind of Sri Aurobindo, to the Mother and to you, dear Editor of "Mother India!"

I am immensely elated by your invitation to the Conference to be created the International University Centre. I would say: I feel honoured more than by any honorary degree, if I would not feel that I am speaking not for myself, but in the name of the American Academy of Asian Studies, which in a small way but with much enthusiasm seeks to help in the establishment of a higher consciousness on Earth.

I whole-heartedly and gratefully accept your invitation to be present at Pendicherry on the 24 and 25 of April, not only "in thought", but in a much deeper way. I know through the amazing experience of the last 4 months that distance does not count at all to the living spirit and that man can become intrinsically powerful if it be fed from the right source.

Glory to the International University Centre, which is creating the passion for the cause of education in the world. The Master will live in it, just as he has been the life-giving flame of our new school here.

I trust that you will always count me as one of yours.

Greetings to all!

(Signed) FREDERIC SPEICHEBERG, Ph.D., S.T.M.
Director of Indian and Tibetan Studies.

April 17, 1951.
The next level in the gnostic hierarchy is the Overmind. In the essay "Self-Realisation" and the Supermind, its power of cognition as well as its characteristic mode of action was briefly discussed. It was mentioned there that cosmic consciousness is intrinsic to this level, and that whilst in the transmarginal vision the discerning consciousness is Only and all-individuated, the Divine Being like the Static Self and His Creative and Executive Force, the Divine Stasis and Dynamis, are fused together without any one aspect annulins its contraplate, in the Overmind—where the vision is global without being integral and unitarian—they are seen as co-existing real-statues of a biune Reality. Then it was pointed out that the Overmind "at once connects and divides the the supreme Knowledge and the cosmic Ignorance," and that the Overmind veils separating Supermind from Overmind "in a screen of dissimilar luminosity." Regarding its typical mode of action and its relation to Supermind Sri Aurobindo writes: "Supermind transmits to Overmind all its realities, but leaves it to formulate them in a manner which will lead to an awareness of things which is not one of Truth and yet at the same time a first parent of the Ignorance. A line divides Supermind and Overmind which permits a free transmission, allows the lower Power to derive from the higher Power all it holds or sees, but automatically preserves the transcendental changes and passages. The indivisibility of the Supermind keeps always the essential truth of things, the total truth and the truth of its individual self-determinations clearly knit together; it maintains in them an inseparable unity and between them a close intercommunication with free and full action of each on the other, but in Overmind this integrality is no longer there. And yet the Overmind is well aware of the essential Truth of things; it embraces the totality; it uses the individual self-determinations without being limited by them: but although it knows their content, can realise it in a spiritual cognition, yet its dynamic movement, even while relying on that for its security, is not directly determined by it. Overmind Energy proceeds through an imitible capacity of separation and combination of the powers and aspects of the integral and indivisible all-comprehending Unity." This means that the Overmind knows that the real Power behind itself is the Supermind, by whose action alone can the cosmic manifestation become possible; it knows that the multiplicity exists by the Oceans of the Supermind behind, and that the Many exist by the One and the One becomes the Many without itself ceasing to be the One, but it emphasises the multiplicity and gives each Idea, each Force, each Power, a separate direction and makes it extend itself to its utmost limit and realise itself as an individual existent. The Overmind sets into action a play of diversity and divergent possibilities but is always conscious of the unity behind itself which supports it; it allows contradictory elements and tendencies but compels them to become parts of the cosmic whole and contribute to its total movement.

The dividing action of the Overmind becomes sharper and acuter as the Mind level is reached and is, as we have seen, the factor which originates so many different philosophies and religions in the Dharmas and Ideals, the Vedas and Goddesses, followed and worshipped by men. On the Overmind level, though each Idea or Force is given a separate action, it is founded upon a basis of underlying Overness—the unitarian consciousness of the Supermind supports it from behind,—but on the Mind level the ideas and forces, having been estranged from their original source, become oblivious of their cosmic inter-relatedness and oppose one another as if they were irreconcilable contradictions.

As the Overmind cognition is global and capable of seeing the cosmic totality, it can hold immeasurable truths, which seem conflicting to the mind, in a reconciling vision. Sri Aurobindo says: The Overmind is a principle of cosmic Truth and a vast and endless capacity is its very spirit; its energy is an all-dynamism as well as a principle of separate dynamisms: it is a sort of inferior Supermind,—although it is concerned predominantly not with absolutes, but with what might be called dynamic potentials or pragmatic truths of Reality, or with absolutes mainly for their power of generating pragmatic or creative values, although, too, its comprehension of things is more global than integral, since its totality is built up of global wholes or constituted by separate independent realities uniting or coalescing together and becoming one. It is thus an indivisible but basic of things and pervasive in their manifestation, but no longer as in the Supermind their intimate and ever-present secret, their dominating continence, the ever constant builder of the harmonic whole of their activity and nature.

The close relation between the problems of Being and Becoming and those of Knowledge in Sri Aurobindo's metaphysics has all along been stressed by him; it has been pointed out that the supermind is the human being has of the Ultimate Reality, man and the universe, depends upon the level and range of his being and consciousness, and that through an accent of his being and a widening and heightening of his consciousness he can apprehend greater knowledge. This fact is seen very clearly when one contacts the Overmind level, and its light and power descend into him and an overemotionalisation of the consciousness takes place. Regarding this ascension of the Overmind Sri Aurobindo writes: "When the Overmind descends, the predominance of the centralising ego-sense is entirely subordinated, lost in largeness of being and finally abolished; a wide cosmic perception and feeling of a boundless universal self and movement replaces it; many motions that were formerly ego-centric may still continue, but they occur as currents or ripples in the cosmic wide-ness. Thought, for the most part, no longer seems to originate individually in the body or the person but manifests from above or comes in upon the cosmic mind-swarms all inner individual sight or intelligence of things is now a revelation or illumination of what is seen or comprehended, but the source of the revelation is not in one's separate self but in the universal knowledge; the feelings, emotions, sensations are similarly felt as waves upon the same cosmic immensity between the atom and the whole body and responded to in kind by the individual centre of the universality; for the body is only a small support or even less, a point of relation, for the action of a vast cosmic movement. Insomuch as this is a non-separate ego but all sense of individuality, even of a subordinated or instrumental individuality, may entirely disappear; the cosmic existence, the cosmic consciousness, the cosmic delight, the play of cosmic forces are alone left; if the delight or emotion or satisfaction of the personal self was the personal mind, life or body, it is not with a sense of personality but as a field of manifestation, and this sense of the delight or of the action of Force is not confined to the person or the body but can be felt at all points in the unlimited cosmic unity which pervades everywhere.

"But there can be many formulations of overmind consciousness and experience; for the overmind has a great plasticity and is a field of multiple possibilities. In places of an uprooted and unplaced diffusion there may be the sense of the universe in oneself or as one; but there too this self is not the ego; it is an extension of a free and pure essential self-consciousness or it is an identification with the All,—the extension or the identification constituting a cosmic being, a universal individual. In one state of the cosmic consciousness there is an individual included in the cosmos but identifying himself with all in it, with the things and beings, with the thought and sense, the joy and grief of others; in another state there is an extension of being of the soul, not as an ego but as a reality of their life as part of one's own being. Often there is no rule or governance of the immense movement, but a free play of Universal Nature to which what was the personal being responds with a passive acceptance or a dynamic identity, while yet the spirit remains unobstructed and unimpeded by any bondage whatever to the universal and impersonal identification and sympathy. But with a strong influence full action of the overmind a very integral sense of governance, a complete supporting or overruling presence and direction of the cosmic impulse, which is now becoming normal or a special centre may be revealed or created overtopping and dominating the physical individual, individual in fact of existence, but impersonal in feeling and recognized by a free cognition as something instrumental to the action of a Transcendent and Universal Being. In the transition towards the supermind this centralising action tends towards the discovery of a true individual replacing the dead ego, a being who in his essence is one with the supreme Self, one with the universe in extension and yet a cosmic centre and circumference of the specialised action of the Infinite.

"These are the general first results and create the normal foundation of the overmind consciousness in the evolved spiritual being, but its varieties and developments are innumerable. The consciousness that this act is experienced as a consciousness of Light and Truth, a power, force, action full of Light and Truth, an aesthetic and sensation of beauty and delight universal and multitudinous in detail, an illumination in the whole and in all things, in the one movement and all movement, in the one direction and all directions, and in the one extension and play of possibilities which is infinite, even in its multitude of determinations endless and indeterminable. If the power of an ordering overmind gnosis intervenes, then there is a cosmic structure of the consciousness, delight, the power of the infinite existence. All spiritual experiences are taken up and become habitual and normal to the new nature; all essential experiences belonging to the mind, thought, imagination are taken up and spiritualised, transformed, so that the consciousness, delight, power of the infinite existence. Intuition, illumined sight and thought enlarge themselves; their substance assumes a greater substantiality, nos, energy, movement and action, less drawn and small, many-faceted, more wide and potent in its truth-force; the whole nature.
SRI AUROBINDO AND MAN’S SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

BY C. C. DOTT

Continued from the issue of February 21

knowledge, aesthetic, sympathy, feeling, dynamism become more catholic, all-understanding, all-embracing, cosmic, infinite.

"The overhaul change is the final consummating movement of the dynamic spiritual transformation; it is the highest possible status-dynamism of the spirit in the spiritual-mind plane. It takes up all that is in the three steps earlier—body, soul and life and Man—characterised by them and it from the largest power, adding to them a universal wideness of consciousness and force, a harmonious concert of knowledge, a more manifold delight of being. But there are certain reasons arising from its own characteristic states and function and from the fundamental meaning of that formula and is not a power for a dynamic transgression. Here in earth-life it has to work upon a cosmic formula whose basis is the entire nascent which results from the separation of the super-soul from the lower soul and this super-soul from the mind enters and becomes a part of its action; it can unite indivi
dual mind with cosmic mind on its highest plane, equating the scientific self and universal consciousness; but it cannot lead Mind beyond itself, and in this world of original Inconceivability it cannot dynamise the Transcendence; for it is the supreme self that is the supreme self-determining truth-action and the direct power of mani
festo of that Transcendence."
CHAPTER III
GURU THE TRANSFORMER
(Continued)

To emphasize the difficulty every Yogi has to face for a long time, let me venture a little further and say that the moment one gets along in Yoga, let it be ever so little, the ego is confronted with new trials at every turn inasmuch that one often feels like throwing up the sponge in despair. At such a stage, it is the Guru's direct help and selfless guidance that can lift one out of the perception of defeat and round the aching heart of the aspirant. The Guru's help can hardly be fully effective without the co-operation of the disciple who is generally too apt to rely more on miracle than on sanads. That is why it is stated in the Guru's repeated warnings he is found so prone to mistake a tonicastic passivity for the ascetic surrender. Another reason is that the soul's paradise, however ephemeral, is delectable so long as it lasts; in other words, it is delightful to be lulled to optimists with the illusory which a rather cheerful believer had once with Guru on this very point. "The mind, I think, that it must be either a miraculous Force or none. There is no miraculous Force and I do not deal in miracles". And then: "What is Sri Aurobindo's Force? If it is not a personal property of this body of mine, it is a higher Force and I am by no means without it. Of course it is the Divine Force, for there is only one force acting in the world, but it acts according to the nature of the instrument.

But, as the psycho-analyst rightly says, human beings are inseparable. For as soon as I quoted this letter for my friend's eternal edification his eyes danced with joy. "I heartily agree," he cried triumphantly, "for that is just why I adore Guruved: he will know how to act on me. Why then must I fall back upon individual effort when I can get things done more simply through the grace of the Force?" For since I have come to surrender, the Divine Force will surely act through Sri Aurobindo and transform me. "Feeling bewildered if not discontented, I appealed again to Guruved to tell us something definite is going on and not leave us hanging in mid-air. Whereupon he wrote to me:

"In the early part of sadhana—by early I do not mean a short period effort is indispensable. Surrender of course, but surrender is not a thing that is done in a day. The mind has its ideas and it takes care—never a human vital but resists surrender, for what it calls surrender in the early stages is a self-giving with a demand in it—the physical consciousness is like a stone and what it calls surrender is often no more than inertia. It is the same with those who are seeking a surrender and the psycho-analyst is very much vexed in the beginning. When the psychic awakenings, it can bring about a sudden and true surrender of the whole being, for the difficulty of the rest is rapidly dealt with and disappears. But till then effort is indispensable. If it is necessary till the Force comes flooding down in the being from above and takes up the sadhana, does it for one more and more and leaves less and less to individual effort—but even then, if not effort, at least aspiration and vigilance are needed till the possession of mind, will, life and mind is the Divine Process is completed.

But one who has not practised Yoga will be unlikely to realise the point Guruved wanted to make when he suggested that effort and surrender are interdependent. So I shall close the topic with the report of a talk which I had with him on this very point. "I have tried, Sir," he said, "and tried hard, I assure you. But the more I tried, the more I felt it was no use trying till in the end I had a brainwashing and realised that alone I could not and must take us out of the wood. So accept us—we are going with you".

Sri Aurobindo smiled and only said: "I wish you did".

What Guruved meant was simple enough. But what he implied was not quite so simple. It is not easy to tame our egos. And the task seems for a long time to go on deepening in difficulty as our egos, when scanned, reveal our innermost secrets. That is why the moment of surrender has remained all along at once the most simple and the most difficult of achievements. And that is also why one can never expect to achieve it by one's unaided effort. Either the Divine Grace has to intervene—or which is the same thing—to make a surrender to a Guru—one whom he takes to be open and more and more to the Guru's Force till the reversal of consciousness is finally accomplished. Yoga becomes difficult because, among other things, most of us find it far from easy to be simple in this age of deep specialization and cribbing about by the exchange of the essential parts of us to dominate the show and complicate the issue. But, for good or for evil, being "sons of an intellectual age" as Guruved put it, we have had to make the best of a bad bargain and endeavour to plead on. And I tried on my part even to convey my intellect to indemnify me for the loss of my simple

pleincy which was so native to my ancestors. So while on the one hand I was not only understanding Guruved when he was addressing himself to me, on the other, I wanted to have the benefit of his ready help in spite of my deep-seated mistrust even though he, in his infinite compassion, assured me again and again that he was perfectly ready "to carry me all the way" if only I would let him. But if I tell you that there was the rub: my mental resistance did not want me to sign the blank cheque, as I called it, with the result that I had to trudge on as best I could, profiting indeed by his support but not leaning too much on it. Is it any wonder that I should have, in the circumstances, found my well meekness and tolerance overcharged with the impress of the importance of the tolerance and specific directions? One could not both eat one's cake and have it. One could not very well decline the helping light and yet hope to dispel overnight the clinging darkness which caused me again and again to miss his smile of welcome as well as to misunderstand his simple enough injunctions, till once, surpassing myself in foolishness, I asked him rhetorically how I could possibly be expected to say that I wanted only to give myself to the Divine and not want Him, when I did want Him with "every drop of my blood"? Could I afford to be so audacious? I wrote grandiloquently and patted myself for having been at once upright and clever if not original and brilliant!

Finally, to force the issue, I proposed to him to be allowed to do without food. I half meant it, I suppose, though I must have dreaded the prospect as I was, still claim, an out and out normal man who never found a regime of fasting invigorating. Let me find, I thought, I was justified, "that do what I will I simply cannot accept the idea of surrendering my ego to your Lordship; since I find life meaningless without a deepening response from the Divine; and, lastly, in any case, I repeat, that I sincerely want you to give me the strength which I so badly need to be able to get round my pride—please let me know if you will now approve of my praparavachana." I save read in the lives of some Yoga that they tried it in the last resort and succeeded, even though Christ taboosed it by saying that one must not tempt God. Still if you approve I will try.

Which brought me one of his tenderer letters:

"Dilip", he wrote, "I wrote to you all that in answer to your statement about your former idea of the yoga that if one wanted the Divine, the Divine himself would take up the purification of the heart and the sadhana and give the necessary experiences. I meant to say that it can and does happen in that way if one has trust and confidence in the Divine and the will to surrender. For such a taking up involves one's putting oneself in the hands of the Divine rather than trusting to one's own efforts alone and this implies one's putting one's trust and confidence in the Divine and a progressive self-giving. It is in fact the principle of sadhana that I myself followed and it is the central part of yoga as I envisage it. It is, I suppose, what Sri Ramkrishna meant by the method of the baby cat in his image. But all cannot follow that at once: it takes time for things to arrive at it—it grows most when the mind and vital and body are quiet. What I mean by surrender was this and not anything more or less—kind, kind, very different. But I was speaking of the inner surrender.

"The core of this inner surrender is trust and confidence in the Divine. One takes the attitude "I want the Divine and nothing else. (I do not know why you should think that you can be asked to give up that—if there is not that, then the yoga cannot be done). I want to give myself entirely to him and since my soul wants that, it cannot be that I shall meet and realise him. I ask nothing but that and his action is to me to bring me to him, an action secret or open, very manifest. I do not insist on my own time and way: let him do all in his own time and way, I shall believe in him, accept his will, aspire steadily for his light and presence and joy, go through all difficulties and delay, relying on him and never giving up. Let me mind be quiet and turn to him alone and let him open to it my calm and joy. And all for him and myself for him. Whatever happens I will keep to this aspiration and self-giving and go on in perfect reliance that it will bring me to the end of the path. That is the attitude into which one must move: for certainly it cannot be made perfect at once—mental and vital movements cut across—if one keeps the will to it, it will grow in the being. The rest is a matter of practice to the guidance when it makes itself manifest—not allowing one's mental and vital movements to interfere with the nature that is done. In other methods the Divine action may be felt from (Continued on next page)

* Vowing oneself to death by fasting unless and until the bond demanded is granted.
within our realm the supreme talisman of his Yogic force without which we could at best curb to some extent our “uncontrollable desires” and incomprehensible impulses, but never find the way to changing their native movement. Furthermore, this is in no way to decry the practical value of what “transformation of nature” meant. So I used to ask Gurudev again and again for clarification. Many of these letters have been published so that those who want more light can easily profit by these explanations. All I present is the practical side of this transformation under Gurudev’s concrete help and Mother’s sleepless guidance.

I knew of course that every aspirant was expected to inhibit, or shall I say reject, the movements of his lower nature. One knows how to check impulses; but as to how I was to change them I had only the haziest notions. Once, in the thirties, I had a long talk with the late Upendranath Banerji, a quondam disciple of Gurudev. I remember his misgivings about the feasibility of transforming nature. He said to me that he had definitely “experienced” that Yoga could bring into play forces which not only made a difference but sometimes even bordered upon the miraculous. But for all that he had remained unconvinced, he added, about its ability to transform the lower nature. “Mean sense, very bottom what for that,” he said, “and if changes are brought about they can only be initiated laboriously and consol-2ated slowly by life, not Yoga.

So he was wrong. I told him to face as I gave him an account of my radically changed outlook on life. I talked about things that had appealed to me powerfully once but which appeared, after even a few years of Yoga, worse than pointless,—for instance, my career as a musician, my passion for hermit life in traveling. Many impressions, in several intellectual pursuits, my interest in engaging pastimes like tennis and so on. He gave me a very patient and sympathetic hearing and seemed genuinely interested in my change as I called it but he wanted something more convincing and concrete to go upon, like some lasting change in my life of instincts or long-standing attachments. I was silenced.

For while on the one hand I could not tell all about my private life (and no one should—except to one’s Guru), on the other I could not possibly get on without doing something more convincing and concrete to go upon. I was merely included in the series of things which Yoga cannot be done by proxy any more than love-making can. Not only that; I knew well; he was indeed a highly intelligent man; but his keen intelligence, like that of most intellectuals, demanded that spiritual truth be ultimately assayed by reason and that human intellect be convinced by data which belonged to a realm other than its own. Yet I showed him a letter which Gurudev had written to me in 1935:

> “These things should not be spoken of but kept under a cover. Even in ordinary non-spiritual actions of life one does have to exercise self-23 limitation. That is why every aspirant who has followed this arduous path has had to learn, to his bitter cost, that he can never learn enough the lesson of loyalty and reliance on the Guru’s help which without one can never hope to fare far in his path. But even though our national egoism can make it at times all but impossible for us to be schooled in the safe and simple art of turning to the Guru for help it will be untrue to say that it is only difficulties one has against all the time. Rather it is the overcoming of his famous Zur Morphology: “Every living being is not a unity but a plurality. Even when it appears as an individual, it is the reunion of beings living and existing in themselves, identical in origin, but which may appear identical and identical only in that dissimilar.

“The more imperfect a being is the more do its individual parts resemble each other, and the more do these parts resemble the whole. The more perfect the being is the more dissimilare are its parts. In the former case the parts are more or less a repetition of the whole; in the latter case they are totally unlike the whole”.

It is as a result of this eminently verifiable fact of life through personal experience that human beings have remained innumerable since the dawn of man. Not only that; with the passage of time this element, this unpredictability, grows, even as a child grows in stature from day to day till in adult consciousness every evolved being stands literally bewildered before the warring impulses in his own personality, some pulling him down, others drawing him up, with the help of his own acquired power of imagery. And when I think that I am sitting on my back and riding to the station in dam bound for, all of a sudden the mare under me will turn into a creature with uncontrollable desires and wings and run right away from me.

But few people can be as conscious as Goethe of “this multitudinousness in human personality”, far less win any clue to the supreme art of harmonising the disparate strands of our nature. Gurudev has explained this not only in his numerous letters but, what is infinitely more helpful, has placed himself in the grip of gloomy dooms. I wrote to Gurudev whether I had indeed been given to believe with the Mahatmas. Gurudev’s answer was to everybody: it is that part of the consciousness comes up which not only believes the Mahatma but is the Mahatma. Then every experience is indifferent to doubt and denial takes a back seat or goes underground. People do not know this multitudinousness in human consciousness, so they call it inscrutability in themselves or in others. But it is nothing of the kind. There are certain feelings and feelings which something in our nature holds on to with a firm grip and stubbornly or dreams only ever but cannot destroy them”.

(See “Among the Great”—American edition—p. 352-3).

SRI AURIBINDO CAME TO ME—Continued from previous page
little till I became fully alive to the magnitude of the task I was up against) that although one could act faultlessly up to a point—even nobly "sourcing delights and living laborious days"—such Millonie feats of will, every one of them, were fall short of the aim of Yoga, namely the total eradication of the impulses which bred the faults and their attendant disharmonies. To give an instance or two: I found that I could, generally speaking, restrain my temper but not help feeling irritated; or refuse tatty drinks but would relapse for the greed for地位.

The first defect I have yet to get rid of utterly. But it was the second, which I am going to write about, that gave me much more trouble—and how obstinately! I shall put it as briefly as I can. I came to the Ashram I had, naturally, to agree to the vegetarian diet, as Gurudev and Mother were both in favour of vegetarianism. I wanted, nevertheless, to eat fish and meat, especially fish which my Bengali palate simply "adored" like a toutand. So I missed it as I hardly missed anything else. I was told by some that I would get used to the simple vegetarian diet. But I did not. With my desire for fish only grew. I felt guilty, secretly, and struggled consciously against my greed. But in vain. I dreamed of fish—night after night. After eight years of Ashram life I went out for three months and found that my first love, fish, had not yet been supplanted by any other. (Uparadrish Banerji's doubt had something indeed to go upon!) I returned to the Ashram a sufferer if a wiser man. To have practiced under the guidance of the greatest of the gurus I had yet to have succumbed to my greed for such inferior pleasures the moment I went outside! But do what I would, I could not bring myself to decline whenever fish was offered to me in Calcutta and elsewhere. Again and again I had to renounce fish—and more and more, but again and again I broke it as soon as my friends and relations pressed me to take fish. To cut a long story short, my remorse was brought to a head when, in 1938, I went on eating fish at the house of my friend and host, Rajarao Dhirendra Narayana, a great-grandson of the royal palace since 1362, a great-grandson at the time a strict vegetarian under medical advice, so that I had no longer even the excuse of being tempted to eat fish in order to be social. But although my weakness made me depressed, yet I simply could not reform. I had lost all power of returning to the path and sincerely, and how it must have left me in the lurch with the consequent damage to my self-respect because I was telling others that it did not matter, even quoting scripture like the Prince of Darkness.

"I think the importance of satvik food from the spiritual point of view has been exaggerated. Food is rather a question of hygiene etc."

It was eleven years ago and I cannot clearly recall what happened on that memorable night when, after having declined to eat fish for a few days, I again succumbed. I can remember it is that it was a banquet given in my honour by the Rajarao and that the famous courtesan Firo had been requisitioned to make the banquet worthy of my host and his literary guests. I must have been pressed by these to be convivial and so I capitulated once again to the irresistible lures of alcohols and the peerless beers from the Gangas. That unforgettable night! After the great feast came the dark reaction and I felt simply ashamed of myself as never before. I tried to drown my sorrow in sleep but failed. I got up, lighted some incense sticks and prayed at the foot of a portrait of Gurudev. As I thought of him, tears coursed down my cheeks.

I do not know how to convince my readers. Probably they will simply declare that I am too ashamed to blame them for having doubt my testimony, the less because when all is said, one is often to exasperation, as I was, to have blundered, and more blundering (even magnify a molehill in a mountain) when one feels, as I do, a deep gratitude to the benefactor one pays homage to. I must confess that I wish with all my heart that others might look at the greatness of Gurudev with my eyes even as I feel a real pity for those who cannot or, rather, will not. But even when I confess to all this I cannot possibly admit that I am consciously distorting the experience I have decided to relate as simply and truthfully as I can.

I saw that night the radiant figure of Gurudev—my dream. He gave me his blessing and said: "From tomorrow you will be able to give up fish".

He vanished. I woke up in a thrill of joy. From the next day I not only gave up fish but felt no longer any hungering for it. I have indeed taken fish a few times since but never with the same relish nor consciousness of being a bondslave to my palate. Perhaps once or twice in six months I have tasted fish but what is far more convincing to me, not to mention gra
tically is the time that momentous night when I felt the thought of fish for fish. Also, shall I add that I have even last year during my protracted musical tour stayed with rich epicures and "gourmets" and sat at their tables and without any scruple enjoying fish. Also, what I have mentioned this note: "If you can really conquer a desire for good you will experience that abstinence gives you a far greater delight than yielding".

I must say I have hazarded it I might as well hazard relating what happened to a dear friend of mine, since it is impossible for me to mean, even talking. Briefly, it is like this:

He was a hard drinker, simply could not do without the bottle, day after day. I have never known him to have broken his habs of more than twenty years. And his friends and relations tried strenuously but no influence could even

*Sri Aurbindo CAME to me—Continued from opposite page

**"This letter written to a friend of mine in 1927 was printed subsequently in Vol. II of "Letters of Sri Aurbindo", Section XI.**
SRI AUROBINDO CAME TO ME—Continued from previous page

like yourself or the Mother. But then how could it help us, fearless mortals, who must take only one of two attitudes: effort or inertia. So I strained, alas, only to be told that straining could not help. And yet when X wrote he wanted to do nothing you girded at his lethargy and Mother told me that God only helped those who helped themselves! You do remind one of Krishna who enjoyed driving Arjuna mad by excoriating him to hunt with the hounds just after having counselled him to run with the hare.

He gave me a long reply to this which I need not quote in full as it has already been printed in part: I shall only quote a portion from it which was back at the time as being too personal.

He took, first, great pains to explain to me that it was not inertia which he advocated when he had discouraged tension; then he came pat to the point:

"Now as to the tension and stiffness, the Mother saw it this time in your meditation with her because she had to look for the impediment... You told her that in meditating with her you never felt conscious of anything—

and yet it ought not to be so since your receptivity was beyond doubt and you yourself say that you have always found the personal contact helpful.

Next, after stressing once more the difference between a "vital straining and pulling and a spontaneous psychic openness" he wrote:

"It is not that pulling and straining and tension can do nothing; in the end they prevail for some result or another, but with difficulty, delay, struggle, strong upheavals of the Force breaking through in spite of all. Sri Ramakrishna himself began by pulling and straining and got his result but at a cost of a tremendous and perilous upsetting; afterwards he took the minute psychic way whenever he wanted a result and got it with ease and in a minimum time. You say that this way is too difficult for you or the likes of you and it is only certified by me or the Mother that can do it. That is a strange misconception, for it is on the contrary the easiest and simplest and the most direct, and anyone can do it, if he makes his mind vital and quiet; even those who have a tenth of your capacity can do it.

It is the other way of tension and strain and hard endurance that is difficult and needs a great force of impetus. As for the Mother and myself, we have had to try all ways; follow all methods, surmount mountains of difficulties, a far heavier burden to bear than you or anybody else in the Ahran or outside, far more difficult conditions, battles to fight, wounds to endure; ways to cleave through impenetrable morass and desert forest, hostile masses to conquer, a work such as I am certain none else had to do before us.

For the Leader of the way in a work like ours has not only to bring down and represent or embody the Divine, but to represent too the ascending element in humanity and to bear the burden of humanity to the full and experience not in a mere play or limbo but in grim earnest all the obstruction, difficulty, opposition, baffled and hampered and only slowly-victorious labour which are possible on the Path.

And lastly with what solicitude and tender affection he condoled the recalcitrant:

"But it is not necessary nor tolerable that all that should be repeated again to the full in the experience of others. It is because we have the complete experience that we can show a straighter and easier road to others—if they will only consent to take it. It is because of our experience won at a tremendous price that we can urge upon you and others: Take the psychic attitude; follow the straight sunlit path, with the Divine openly or secretly watching you—if secretly, he will show himself in good time—do not insist on the hard, hampered, roundabout and difficult journey.

I do not know if any other Guru in the past ever wrote such language not only thrilling with sincerity but—in the words of Madame Gabrielle Mistral in her tribute to Sri Aurobindo—"presenting the rare phenomenon of an exposition clear as a beautiful diamond without the danger of confusing the layman." And she cogently adds: "Such foreign languages have given the Master of Pondicherry a gift of co-ordination, a clarity free from gaudiness, and a charm that borders on the magical... We have before us a prose which approximates to that of the great Eckhart, German classicist and fountain-head of European mysticism." So she rejoices: "These are indeed 'plaid tidings' that come to us: to know that there is a place in the world where culture has reached its tone of dignity by uniting in one man a supernatural life with a consummate literary style, thus making use of his beautifully austere and classical prose to serve as the handmaid of the spirit to run with the hare.

She has hit the nail on the head, for the Guru in Sri Aurobindo becomes so convincing to sceptics like myself because even when we stay opaque to his spiritual vision, he moves us, in spite of ourselves, to a partial psychic transparency by this irresistible "gift" of his crystalline experience and expression which "reaches us" at a time when we are besieged by "a petrifying materialism." *

As I read the above tribute after the passing away of Sri Aurobindo on the 5th December, last year (1950), a great sadness invaded me. Yes, I told myself, she is right. Perhaps it was this obstinate crust of scepticism even in his disciples, on whom he had showered so much love, that was partly responsible for this withdrawal! And what a love it was! It moved me to joy and melancholy when I read his burning aspiration to change the suffering earth by the light he had himself attained and yet could not fully bring down—just because we, his might-have-been beneficiaries, combated it with our deep persistent denial and would not even wholly believe that he had indeed come to us:

To change the earthly life to life divine.

And yet we asked ourselves if he had really meant it when he said:

I keep my will to save the world and man;
Even the charm of thy alluring voice,
O blissful Godhead, cannot seize and snare.
I sacrifice not earth to happier worlds.

And he was loyal to earth because he had been convinced that:

If thou and I are true, the world is true.
Although thou hidest thyself behind thy works,
To be is not a senseless paradox;
Since God has made earth, earth must make in her God;
What hides man is uncreated, uncreated.

And last, though not least, when the Godhead even invited him to:

Be one with the infinity of my power...
Be back into the power from which thou canst not, he declined, because he wanted no selfish salvation for his own self while the earthlings suffered and prayed:

Thy embrace which rends the living knot of pain,
Thy joy, O Lord, in which all creatures breathe,
Thy magic flowing waters of deep love,
Thy sweetness give me for earth and men.†

One is reminded of the great Prahlad's prayer to the Lord in the Bhagavad-

Often, O lord, the solitary
in a silence live apart
Like aliens yearning only for
their own salvation's marred art,
Obstinate to the anarchy of life,
unmindful of the vast
And varied pain whereby the earth
is sucked from centre to crust;
Who will redeem this suffering,
if thy compassion stand aside?
I ache not for salvation if
the rest in misery abide.†

* The citations in the last two paragraphs are from a tribute of the Nobel Laureate contributed to "Sri Aurobindo: Master After 1950." 1959.
† Quoted from "Savitri."—Book XI, Canto I.

To be continued
POETIC IMAGERY IN "SAVITRI"

BY RAJAKRANT MODY

(Continued)

Our world's comparison to a goal is beautifully given in the following lines:
A goal is this immense material world.
Across each road stands armed a stone-eyed law,
At every gate the huge dim sentinels pace.
A grey tribunal of the Ignorance.
An Inquisition of the priests of Night.
In judgement sit the adventurers soul,
And the dual tables end the Karnival.
Restrain the Titan in us and the God.(150)

The next image is applied to Life:
Chance she has chosen and danger for playfellows;
First met a silver-grey express,
Cradle and seat.(151)
If fate becomes a cradle, mind becomes a nursery in which Nature and Soul carry on their play:
A blindfold search and wrestle and jumbling clasp
Of a half-seen Nature and a hidden Soul,
A game of hide and seek in thriller rooms,
A play of love and hate and fear and hope
Continues in the nursery of mind.
Indoors and out with whirling rain twirls.(152)
Nature and soul play on their game of hide and seek in the nursery of man's mind, but it is equally true that,
His life is a blind-man's buff, a hide and seek.(153)

But is this play aimless or is there any purpose behind it? There may be and must be some purpose behind all these multifarious events that happen in the universe, but as yet are
only seen foolishness and force,
The secret crass of consciousness to light
Through a fertile slime of lust and battering sense,
Beneath the body's crust of thickened self
A tarry ferment working in the dark,
The turbid yeast of Nature's passionate change,
Ferment of the soul's creation out of mire.(154)
Fate is taken by life not only for cradle but also for seat. But the seat of Aswapatiy is very unique:
In the unapproachable stillness of his soul,
Intense, one-pointed, monumental, lone
Patient he sat like an incarnate hope
Motionless on a pedestal of prayer.(155)

There is a very fine image in the canto of Aswapatiy's Descent into Night:
In rejected keeps by a monotonous road
The old simple delights were left to lie
On the vesture of life's descent to Night.(156)

In those 'menacing realms' of Night, 'guarded like termite cities from the sun':
Assailed by thoughts that swarmed like spectral hordes,
A prey to the staring phantoms of the gloom
And terror approaching with its lethal mouth,
Driven by a strange will down ever down,
The sky above a comminuc of Doom,
He strove to shield his spirit from despair.(157)

Before reaching the 'large lucent realms of Mind', Aswapatiy first met a silver-grey express,
Where Day and Night had wended and were one:

A coalition of uncertainties
On a ground reserved for doubt and reasoned guess,
A rendezvous of Knowledge with Ignorance.(158)

Quite different is the picture given of Aswapatiy when he reaches the final part of his Saudas and feels the presence of the Divine Mother.

Intoxicated with veneration rain
His nature's passioning stretches flowed to her
Flashings with lightnings, mad with luminous wine.
All was a limitless sea that heaved to the moon.
A diminishing stream possessed his veins,
His body's cells awoke to spirit sense,
Each nerve became a burning thread of joy.(159)

But perhaps the most gorgeous description in the whole poem (as far published) is that in which Aswapatiy describes to the Divine Mother what he saw. Figure after figure, image after image, 'come crowding down' with the splendour of the 'marvel-ous dawn' mentioned therein. Here is the description:

I saw the Omniscient's flaming pioneers
Over the heavenly verge which turns towards life
Crawling down through the amber stairs of birth;
Forerunners of a divine multitude,
Out of the paths of the morning star they came
Into the little room of mortal life.

I saw them cross the twilight of an age,
The sun-enslaved children of a marvellous dawn,
The great creators with wide brows of calm,
The massive barrier-breakers of the world
And victors with destiny in her lists of war,
The labourers in the quarries of the gods,
The messengers of the Incommunicable,
The architects of immortality.
Into the fallen human sphere they came,
Faces that wore the immortal's glory still,
Voices that commaned still with the thoughts of God,
Bodies made beautiful by the spirit's light,
Carrying the magic weapon of the divine fire,
Carrying the Dionysian cup of joy.
Approaching eyes of a diviner man,
Lips chanting an unknown anthem of the soul,
Feet echoing in the corridors of Time.
High priests of wisdom, sweetness, might and blue,
Discoverers of beauty's subtle ways
And warriors of Love's laughing fiery floods
And dancers within veptures golden dooms.(160)

And here is a gorgeous imagery of Shiva applied to nature, reminding us of similar images of the poet Magha in his great Sanakriti poem:
A matted forest-head invaded heaven
As if a blue-throated aquatic peered
From the stone fastness of his mountain cell
Regarding the brief gladness of the days.(161)

And another image is:
The morning like a luridous seer ebon.
Which is followed closely by another exquisite image:
As if a wicket-gate to joy were there
Ringed in with voiceless hint and magic sign,
Upon the margin of an unknown world
Reclined the curve of a sus held recess.(152)

And a little farther:
Life ran to gaze from every gate of sense.(164)
And a crowing one:
_____________________________
Thy golden body.(165)

Descriptions of nature in the forest are teeming with splendour-dripping images:
I witnessed the virgins bridals of the dawn
Behind the glowing curtains of the sky,
Or vying in joy with bright morning steps
I paced along the stumbersness coasts of noon,
Or the gold desert of the sunlight crossed
Transcending great wastes of splendour and of fire.

_____________________________
I have beheld the princes of the Sun
Burning in thousand-pillared homes of light.(166)

And another equally lovely description is:
Close is my father's creopedered hermitage
Screened by the tall ranks of these silent kings,
Swayed to by voices of the hue-robed choirs
Whose chants repeated transcribed in mane's notes
The passionate coloured lettering of the boughs.(187)

And the last one:
Appareled are the morns in gold and green,
Sunlight and shadow tapestry the souls
To make a resting chamber fit for thee.(188)

And finally,
As if Love's deathless morgen had been found,
A pearl within eternity's white shell.(169)

Here we end our perusal of Sri Aurbindo's imagery in 'Savitri'.
These are only a few among the thousands of images which form
A curtain of the immeasurable
Formations of a boundless Thought and Force.(170)

And we also feel that a wakening has come to Sri Aurbindo,
As if to a deeper country of the soul
Transposing the vivid imagery of earth,
Through an inner seeing and sense.(171)

For Sri is no composition of an ordinary poet, but that of a Poet and a Seer of the Supernond chosen by the Divine for the fulfillment of the next step in the evolution of mankind.

Concluded

BOOKS IN THE BALANCE
INDIA AND THE DEMOCRATIC WORLD
FOR A DEMOCRATIC FOREIGN POLICY

(Publishers: Democratic Research Service.
Sole Distributors: The New Book Co. Ltd., Hornby Road, Bombay)
Price: Re. 1

This is the fifth publication of the Democratic Research Service, in pursuance of its object of compiling and disseminating information on democracy. In the present crucial time and the welter of changes happening under our noses the Communist threat to the whole democratic world calls for the utmost vigilance and preparedness, and all earnest efforts to carry the danger deserves encouragement from every corner. That the Democratic Research Service is a live body is amply evident from the number of publications it has brought out in such a short space of time.

The book under review is a small collection of some of the speeches delivered by prominent Members of the Indian Parliament just after the Chinese Communists invaded Tibet in utter disregard of India’s repeated requests to the Chinese Government to do something against such a step. All the speeches are marked by calm and clear thinking and a studied sobriety—something highly commendable, in view of the fact, that our politicians are just novices in the Democratic art. The first speech is by Prof. N. G. Ranga. He contends that Communist China has imperialistic designs over the whole of Asia and the unprovoked invasion of Tibet is a step in that direction. He alludes to the alarming situation thus created for us; but, he, instead of rising to the occasion and taking adequate measures such as strengthening the hands of the United Nations against the aggressor Government, “go about accepting, admitting, and apologizing to it”. Prof. Ranga in a very convincing manner goes on to explain the reason why our Prime Minister’s efforts are for the preservation of Peace are foredoomed to end in failure. The existing war is a clash between two ideologies one of which is not “tolerant of other people’s way of living and is anxious to spread the temple called ‘own strength and power.’” He therefore goes on to show that the policy of appeasement does not succeed in preventing war but only puts it off for a while and the failures of Edward VII and Neville Chamberlain in our living history bear it out amply. There is a great truth in what Prof. Ranga says because the psychological forces that are egging on the Communists to assert greater and greater power are unquenchable in their very nature. The reviewer learnt this truth from Pandit Nehru himself. In his Glimpses of World History, he again and again says, “the lust for power grows with use” and he says this not only of great conquerors but even of such an emanicipator of his nation as Kemal Ataturk.

The second speech is by Frank Anthony—a speech remarkable for its restraint and dignity, full of warm understanding and appreciation of Pandit Nehru’s standpoint. In a small way he has crystallised the nature of the Communist menace threatening our very existence. He says, “Communism works to a consistent and unchanging pattern. The first part of the pattern is a process of infiltration and subversion. The second part is the time to act, when the Communist considers the time to be ripe, it goes over to cynical, brutal and open aggression. This with its justification, that, in spite of all the wishful thinking that we may indulge in, in the eyes of Communists whether of the Chinese or the Russian variety, India will, when it suits their purpose, be right at the top of the list of victims.” He is indebted to Mr. Anthony for the useful information that he has imparted to the House, viz., “that for the past most part Tibet constitutes a vast natural airfield, hostile planes can take off from there, and if we may indulge in a metaphor, to have to cover a distance of 300 miles to bomb and destroy Delhi.” The common man in India is blissfully ignorant of the peril to which the Indian nation and the Government also, though not napping, is not fully alive to it. His speech ends with a most practical note which if heeded can pave the way for an enduring peace. He says, “What we want is this more specific collaboration in building up our defences with the only possible goal who can help to build our defences, the democracies with an industrial potential.” Certainly, that is the need of the hour. Pious wishes and appeals to nations to hitch their wagons to stars unbound by any solid strength will not deliver the goods. We must strengthen ourselves and if we are opposed to totalitarianism and stand for liberty of thought and expression, then it is incumbent on us to strengthen ourselves in collaboration with those who stand for democratic ideals and vouchsafe the right of self-determination to every nation, and we should make it clear to those who are infatuated with the lust for power that they have no hope of support in the outside world and that a further version of the U.N. Charter will mean courting unparalleled disaster for themselves.

Mr. P. Y. Deshpande has achieved a masterpiece of compression in his short and pithy speech and he has very judiciously exploited the myth of two power blocs. It is this myth which forms the cornerstone on which all our foreign policy stands, and Mr. Deshpande has with a searching analysis of the term “Power bloc” made a powerful plea for a reorientation of our foreign policy. He says, “By a power bloc I mean a group of nations each of which accepts a dictatorial central leadership of one nation. Such a group of nations can alone be called a power bloc. Look at the Soviet Bloc. Look at the way they have acted in the United Nations. You will find them uniformly voting with Russia and in no other manner. Look at the other nations in the United Nations. How have they voted? You will find that they have voted just as the Prime Minister and the Ministers would like three-fourth of the time on the merits, independently of this nation or that nation.” Mr. Deshpande whose speech winds up, at the end of the book establishes the above by undeniable facts and figures. In view of all this, we dare say that our Government can join hands with the democratic forces without any qualms of conscience, for such a step would not in the least jeopardize our independent and we need not do anything for which we may be accused of being tied to the apron strings of any powers. Mr. Deshpande is perfectly right when he says, that “there is no greater menace to human liberty in the world than Communists of the Stalinist type. Unless this fact is realised by everybody, and more so by the Prime Minister, we cannot have a dynamic and active foreign policy.”

The last speech is by Sri M. R. Mani, and also perhaps the most cogent and ably argued. The foreign policy of our Government is based on a “peace at any price” stand and that is why our Prime Minister has been advocating a policy of appeasement towards China and Russia; but, “peace,” maintains Mr. Mani, “can only come through collective security”, and there is no mistake more fatal than entertaining the idea that there are two power blocs, that both are of the same quality and level and that we can, therefore, be equally independent or detached from both.”

The efforts of the Democratic Research Service will be hailed with acclaim, in due course of time, for there is no greater threat facing the present civilization than the expansion of Communism which is marching on heedlessly like a steam-roller. India must recognise the gravity of the situation and we must strain every sinew to keep alive our spiritual heritage and keep off the crude materialism which is the bed-rock of the Communist ideology. It denies the existence of any soul or spiritual reality and its materialism is so crude and base as to crush all idealistic thought out of human existence. Much remains to be done in this direction and, with faith in human destiny success is bound to crown our efforts.

R. N. KHANNA.