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"GREAT IS TRUTH AND IT SHALL PREVAIL"

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SRI AUROBINDO'S LETTERS

(THE QUESTIONS ARE PUT BEFORE THE ANSWERS)

LITERARY VALUES AND SOME INSPIRATIONAL QUALITIES

(I feel *The Triumph of Dante* has now been sufficiently quintessenced. If it satisfies you, will you make whatever analysis is possible of its inspirational qualities?)

*These arms, stretched through ten hollow years, have brought her
Back to my heart! A light, a hush immense
Falls suddenly upon my voice of tears,
Out of a sky whose each blue moment bears
The shining touch of that omnipotence.
Ineffable the secrecies supreme
Pass and elude my gaze—an exquisite
Failure to hold some nectarous Infinite!
The uncertainties of time grow shadowless—
And never but with startling loveliness,
A white shiver of breeze on moonlit water,
Flies the chill thought of death across my dream.*

*For, how shall earth be dark when human eyes
Mirror the love whose smile is paradise?—
A love that misers not its golden store
But gives itself and yearns to give yet more,
As though God's light were inexhaustible
Not for His joy but this one heart to fill!*

"There are three different tones or pitches of inspiration in the poem, each in its own manner reaching inevitability. The first seven lines up to 'gaze' bear as a whole the stamp of a high elevation of thought and vision—height and illumination lifted up still farther by the Intuition to its own inspired level; one passage (lines 3, 4) seems to me almost to touch in its tone of expression an Overmind seeing. But here 'A light, a hush... a voice of tears' anticipates the second movement by an element of subtle inner intensity in it. This inner intensity—where a deep secret intimacy of feeling and seeing replaces the height and large luminosity—characterises the rest of the first part. This passage has a seizing originality and authenticity in it—it is here that one gets a pure inevitability. In the last lines the intuition descends towards the mental plane with a less revelatory power in it but more precise in its illumination. That is the difference between sheer vision and thought. But the poem is exceedingly fine as a whole; the close also is of the first order."

(14-9-36)

(I am drawn to Dante especially by his conception of Beatrice which seems to me to give him his excellence. How would you define that conception?)

"Outwardly it was an idealisation, probably due to a psychic connection of the past which could not fulfil itself in that life. But I do not see how his conception of Beatrice gives him his excellence—it was only one element in a very powerful and complex nature."

(10-7-32)

(Would you call Dante a mystic poet? What is usually his plane of inspiration? And what about Milton? Both the poets have a metaphysical background and a strong religious fervour.)

"I don't think either can be called a mystic poet—Milton not at all. A religious fervour or a metaphysical background belongs to the mind and vital, not to a mystic consciousness. Dante writes from the poetic intelligence with a strong intuitive drive behind it."

(18-10-36)

(You have distinguished five kinds of poetic style—the adequate, the effective, the illumined, the inspired, the inevitable. The first four can have their own inevitableness, but the fifth is a pure inevitability, something indefinable. How would you class Dante's style? It has a certain simplicity mixed with power which suggests what I may call the forceful adequate—of course at an inevitable pitch—as its definition. Or is it a mixture of the adequate and the effective? A line like—"E venni dal martirio a questa pace"—is evidently adequate; but has this the same style—

*Si come quando Marsia traesti
Della vagina delle membre sue?†)*

"The 'forceful adequate' might apply to much of Dante's writing, but much else is pure inevitable; elsewhere it is the inspired style as in the last lines quoted. I would not call the other line merely adequate; it is much more than that. Dante's simplicity comes from a penetrating directness of poetic vision, it is not the simplicity of an adequate style."

(3-11-36)

(I don't think Virgil would be classed by you as a psychic poet and yet what is the source of that "majestic sadness" and that word-magic and vision which make his verse, more than that of almost any other poet, fill one with what Belloc calls the sense of the Unknown Country?)

"I don't at all agree that Virgil's verse fills one with the sense of the Unknown Country—he is not in the least a mystic poet, he was too Latin and Roman for that. Majestic sadness, word-magic and vision need not have anything to do with the psychic; the first can come from the Higher Mind and the noble parts of the Vital, the others from almost anywhere. I do not mean to say there was no psychic touch at all anywhere in Virgil. And what is this Unknown Country? There are plenty of Unknown Countries (other than the psychic world) to which many poets give us some kind of access or sense of their existence behind, much more than Virgil. But if when you say verse you mean his rhythm, his surge of word-music, that does no doubt come from somewhere else, much more than the thoughts or the words that are carried on the surge."

(31-3-32)

(I think what Belloc meant in crediting Virgil with the power to give us a sense of the Unknown Country was that Virgil specialises in a kind of wistful vision of things across great distances in space or time, which renders them dream-like and invests them with an air of ideality. He mentions as an instance the passage (perhaps in the second book of the *Aeneid*) where the swimmer sees all Italy from the top of a wave. I dare say—

*Sternitur infelix alienum vulnere coelumque
Adspicit et dulces moriens reminiscitur Argos‡*

as well as

Tendebantque manus ripae ulterioris amore§—

belong to the same category. To an ordinary Roman Catholic mind like Belloc, which is not conscious of the subtle hierarchy of unseen worlds, whatever is vaguely and remotely appealing—in short, beautifully misty—is mystical, and "revelatory" of the native land of the soul. Add to this

* "He came from that martyrdom into this peace."

† "As when he pulled Marsyas out of the scabbard of his limbs."

‡ "Unhappy, he fell by a stranger's wound and looked at the sky and, dying, remembered sweet Argos."

§ They stretched their hands for love of the other shore" (Flecker's translation).

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that Virgil's rhythm is exquisitely euphonious, and it is no wonder Belloc should feel as if the very harps of heaven were echoed by the Mantuan.

He couples Shakespeare with Virgil as a master of (to quote a phrase of Arjava's) "earth-transforming gramarye." The quotations he gives from Shakespeare struck me as rather peculiar in the context: I don't exactly remember them but something in the style of

Night's tapers are burnt out and jocund day...

and of Dawn standing tip-toe upon "yonder western hill" seems to give him a wonderful flash of the Unknown Country!

He also alludes to the four magical lines of Keats about Ruth "amid the alien corn" and Victor Hugo's at-least-for-once truly delicate, unrhymed passage on the same theme in *Le Légende des Siècles*. I wonder if you recollect the passage: its last two stanzas are especially enchanting:

*Tout reposait dans Ur et dans Jérémadeth;
Les astres émaillaient le ciel profond et sombre;
Le croissant fin et clair parmi ces fleurs de l'ombre
Brillait à l'occident, et Ruth se demandait,*

*Immobile, ouvrant l'oeil à moitié sous ses voiles,
Quel dieu, quel moissonneur de l'éternel été
Avait, en s'en allant, négligemment jeté
Cette faucille d'or dans le champ des étoiles.**

What do you think of them?)

"If that is Belloc's idea of the mystic, I can't put much value on his Roman Catholic mind! Shakespeare's lines and Hugo's also are good poetry and may be very enchanting, as you say, but there is nothing in the least deep or mystic about them. Night's tapers are the usual poetic metaphor, Hugo's *moissonneur* and *faucille d'or* are an ingenious fancy—there is nothing true behind it, not the least shadow of a mystical experience. The lines quoted from Virgil are exceedingly moving and poetic, but it is pathos of the life plane, not anything more—Virgil would have stared if he had been told that his *ripae ulterioris* was revelatory of the native land of the soul. These sentimental modern intellectuals are terrible: they will read anything into anything; that is because they have no touch on the Truth, so they make up for it by a gambolling fancy." (1-4-32)

(I have written somewhere that Virgil's world-famous line—

Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt—

which you too have praised and considered an Overhead inspiration of the highest, can have the meaning we generally read into it only if the line is taken in isolation from its context. This phenomenon is an interesting one as illustrating how great poetry sometimes works, the inspiration bringing forth effects that are not always an organic part of the passage in which they occur. I am sure you recollect the passage where this line stands:

*"Quis jam locus," inquit Achates,
"Quae regio in terris nostri non plena laboris?
En Priamus! sunt hic etiam sua praemia ludi,
Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt..."*

A recent translator, A. Rushton Fairclough, Englishes it thus: "What land," cried Achates, "what tract on earth is now not full of our sorrow? Lo, Priam! Here, too, virtue has its due reward; here, too, there are tears for misfortune and mortal sorrows touch the heart." I should render the main part: "Here too there is reward for honour, there are tears for earthly things and mortal fortunes touch the heart." In any case, the significance of your phrase—"the touch of tears in mortal things"—summarising that line of Virgil's is not directly present, though I am sure a conscious artist like Virgil must have known the profound suggestion his line would have when detached from its companions. And, by the way, how would you hexametricise the line in English? I have two versions, one more literal than the other:

- (1) *Tears are in all things and touched is our heart by the fate of mortals.*
- (2) *Haunted by tears is the world; on our heart is the touch of things mortal.*

Which do you fancy?)

"The context of Virgil's line has nothing to do with and cannot detract from its greatness and its Overhead character. If we limit its meaning so as to unify it with what goes before, if we want Virgil to say in it only, "Oh yes, even in Carthage, so distant a place, these foreigners too can sympathise and weep over what has happened in Troy and get touched by human misfortune," then the line will lose all its value and we would only have to admire the strong turn and *recherché* suggestiveness of its expression. Virgil certainly did not mean it like that; he starts indeed by stressing the generality of the fame of Troy and the interest taken everywhere in her misfortunes but then he passes from the particularity of this idea and suddenly rises from it to a feeling of the universality of mortal sorrow and suffering and of the chord of human sympathy and participation

which responds to it from all who share that mortality. He rises indeed much higher than that and goes much deeper: he has felt a brooding cosmic sense of these things, gone into the depth of the soul which answers to them and drawn from it the inspired and inevitable language and rhythm which came down to it from above to give this pathetic perception an immortal body. Lines like these seldom depend upon their contexts, they rise from it as if a single Himalayan peak from a range of low hills or even from a flat plain. They have to be looked at by themselves, valued for their own sake, felt in their own independent greatness. Shakespeare's lines upon sleep—

Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast

Seal up the ship-boy's eyes and rock his brains

In cradle of the rude imperious surge?—

depend not at all upon the context which is indeed almost irrelevant, for he branches off into a violent and resonant description of a storm at sea which has its poetic quality, but that quality has something comparatively quite inferior, so that these few lines stand quite apart in their unsurpassable magic and beauty. What has happened is that the sudden wings of a supreme inspiration from above have swooped down upon him and abruptly lifted him for a moment to highest heights, then as abruptly dropped him and left him to his own normal resources. One can see him in the lines that follow straining these resources to try and get something equal to the greatness of this flight but failing except perhaps partly for one line only. Or take those lines in Hamlet—

Absent thee from felicity a while

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain.

They arise out of a rapid series of violent melodramatic events but they have a quite different ring from all that surrounds them, however powerful that may be. They come from another plane, shine with another light: the close of the sentence—"to tell my story"—which connects it with the thread of the drama slips down in a quick incline to a lower inspiration. It is not a dramatic interest we feel when we read these lines; their appeal does not arise from the story but would be the same anywhere and in any context. We have passed from the particular to the universal, to a voice from the cosmic self, to a poignant reaction of the soul of man and not of Hamlet alone to the pain and sorrow of this world and its longing for some unknown felicity beyond. Virgil's

O passi graviora, dabit deus his quoque finem

Forsan et haec olim meminisse juvabit†

is only incidentally connected with the storm and wreck of the ships of Aeneas; its appeal is separate and universal and for all time; it is again the human soul that is speaking moved by a greater and deeper inspiration of cosmic feeling with the thought only as a mould into which the feeling is poured and the thinking mind only as a passive instrument. This applies to many or most of the distinctly Overhead lines we meet or at least to those which may be called Overhead transmissions. Even the lines that are perfect and absolute, though not from the Overhead, tend to stand out, if not away, from their surroundings. Long passages of high inspiration there are or short poems in which the wing-beats of some surpassing Power and Beauty gleam out amidst flockings of an equal or almost equal radiance of light. But still the absolutely absolute is rare: it is not often that the highest peaks crowd together.

"As to the translations of Virgil's great line I may observe that the English translation you quote repeats the 'here, too' of the previous line and so rivets his high close to its context, thus emphasising unduly the idea of a local interest and maiming the universality. Virgil has put in no such rivetting, he keeps a bare connection from which he immediately slips away: his single incomparable line rises sheer and abrupt into the heights both in its thought and in its form out of the sustained Virgilian elegance of what precedes it. The psychological movement by which this happens is not at all mysterious; he speaks first of the local and particular, then in the penultimate line passes to the general—"here too as everywhere where there are human beings are rewards for excellence", and then passes to the universal, to the reaction of all humanity, to all that is human and mortal in a world of suffering. In your prose translation also there are superfluities which limit and lower the significance. Virgil does not say 'tears for earthly things', 'earthly' is your addition; he says nothing about 'mortal fortunes' which makes the whole thing quite narrow. His single word 'rerum' and his single word 'mortalia' admit in them all the sorrow and suffering of the world and all the affliction and misery that beset mortal creatures in this transient and unhappy world, *anityam asukham lokam imam*. The superfluous words bring in a particularising intellectual insistence which impoverishes a great thought and a great utterance. Your first hexametric version is rather poor; the second is much better and the first half is very fine; the second half is good but it is not an absolute hit. I would like to alter it to

Haunted by tears is the world and our hearts by the touch of things mortal.

But this version has a density of colour which is absent from the bare economy and direct force Virgil manages to combine with his subtle and

Continued on opposite page

* "All were asleep in Ur and in Jeremadeth; the stars enamelled the deep and sombre sky; the thin clear crescent shone in the West among these flowers of the darkness, and Ruth, standing still and gazing through her half-parted veils, asked herself: 'What god, what reaper of the eternal summer has thrown, while going home, this sickle of gold in the starry field?'"

† First line: "Fiercer griefs we have suffered; to these too God will give ending" (Sri Aurobindo's translation).

Second line: "All this, perchance, in the future will gladden the heart to remember."

“SAVITRI” AN EPIC

BY A. B. PURANI

Continued from the issue of January 5

How the spirit and the vision of Sri Aurobindo in *Savitri* moves in the regions of the Superconscient and how some of the symbols and modes of expression come out of the creative power as organic parts of a living process can be seen from lines like the following in the description of Aswapathy's wanderings in the dark world of Falsehood, the world where the Mother of Evil gives birth to her sons of Darkness:

Companionless he roamed through desolate ways

Where the red Wolf waits by the fordless stream. (p. 209)

This reminds one of the Vedic verse:

Aruno ma sakrit patka yantam dadarsha hi.

Once the red wolf saw me walking on the path. (V. 105-18)

The red wolf is the symbol of the powers that tear the 'being', that suddenly fall upon it to destroy it. They are persistent, destructive, cruel, unscrupulous powers of the lower Darkness. Sri Aurobindo in his expression has made the symbol more effective, improving spontaneously upon the original in the alchemy of his poetical process by the image of "fordless stream." In the original hymn there is only "path". The "fordless stream" brings in the needed element of danger and difficulty on the path of the aspirant when he has to cross this occult region.

He does the same with several Vedic symbols which he employs. For instance, consider the line—

Its gold-horned herds trooped into earth's cave-heart. (p. 221)

It indicates the descent of the "gold-horned" Cows—symbolising the richly-laden Rays of Knowledge—into the Inconscient of the earth,—its "cave-heart." Generally, in the Vedas the action is that of breaking open the Cave of the Inconscient—the earth—and releasing the pen of Cows—the imprisoned Rays of Light—for the conscious possession by the seeker. Here is how a Vedic hymn speaks about it:—"They drove upwards, the luminous ones,—the good milch-cows, in their stone-pen within the hiding cave." (IV. 1.30.) Or, take another, similar phrase—"By a mind seeking the Rays—cows,—they rent the firm massed hill which encircled and repressed Shining Herds; man, desiring, laid open the strong pen, full of Ray-Cows by the divine Word." One sees here the process reversed and Sri Aurobindo's vision lays open the original act of involution of the Light into the darkness of the Inconscient.

The growth of the divine potentialities in man is spoken of in the Veda as the growth of a Child. Sri Aurobindo takes the symbol straight and employs it thus—

There the God-child lies on the lap of Night and Dawn. (p. 34).

The idea is that through the state of ignorance that is Night and through the state of awakening that is Dawn—through the alternations of the two—the God-child in man attains its growth. Ignorance is not thus something anti-divine. It contributes to the growth of the Divine in man. This certainly reminds one of the hymns which runs as follows:—

Two are joined together, powers of truth, powers of Maya—

They have built the Child and given him birth and they nourish

his growth. (X.5.3)

In *Savitri* the symbol has been made more clear and effective by the word "God-child".

About the rise of the Many from the One, Sri Aurobindo says,

The Sole in its solitude yearned towards the All. (p. 296)

In another context, he speaks of

The seed of Spirit's blind and huge Desire (p. 39)

to explain the rise of the many. He reminds us of the Taittiriya Upanishad (2-6), "He desired, 'May I be many'."

The omnipresence of the Divine, not merely as an abstract principle but as a living Reality, finds expression in a concrete and convincing image as in the following lines:—

And garbed in beggar's robes there walks the One. (p. 154)

It is similar to a passage in the Shvetashvatar Upanishad, "Old and worn, Thou walkest bent over a staff" (IV. 3.4). The basic idea of the Self perceived in all and all perceived in the Self finds similar expression both in *Savitri* and the Isha:—

Where all is in ourselves, ourselves in all. (Savitri p. 102)

The Self in all existence, and all existences in the Self. (Isha—6)

There is also a similar passage in the Gita which speaks of the same truth.

The mystic Self that is present in all but is hidden is spoken of by

Sri Aurobindo as

A larger self

That lives within us, by ourselves unseen (p. 45).

There are many passages in the Upanishads about the presence of this mystic Self, sometimes in the cave of the heart, sometimes as merely hidden. The Katha (III.12), for instance, says: "This secret self, present in all beings, does not shed its light, is not apparent".

The Gita describes the condition of the sage: "That which is Night to all the beings, is that in which wakes the man who controls the self; that in which the creatures awake is to the awakened sage the dark Night". (2.69).

The change that comes over the consciousness of Aswapathy as a result of his awakening to the inner Light is compactly described in *Savitri* as "a grand reversal of Night and Day," which conveys the same idea as the verse of the Gita.

When the secret Presence of the Divine in the heart begins to manifest itself it becomes, in the words of the poet, "a living image seated in the heart" (p. 45), no longer hidden and working indirectly but overt and working directly. There is in the tone of expression a similarity to the verse of the Gita: "The Lord abides in the heart of all beings". (XVIII.61).

So also, the two lines referring to the original Transcendent One—

He was there before the elements could emerge,

Before there was light of mind or life could breathe. (p. 56)—

are similar to some in a Vedic hymn—

That One lived without breath...

There was nothing else, nor aught beyond it. (X. 120)

The identity of the Two who are One is expressed in the following:

He is the Maker, and the world he made,

He is the vision, and he is the seer;

He is himself the actors and the act,

Of mortal life for immortality. (p. 65)

At first it looks rather like a philosophical statement to our intellect but really speaking, in the context of the poem where the poet speaks of the whole cosmos as the figure of the Transcendent One and sees the process of the creation of duality from the original Identity, each of these lines adds an aspect and a colour to the apparent self-division of the One. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad expresses it thus:

"It is not a second or other than, and separate from, himself that he sees, speaks to, hears, knows" (IV. 3.23). While describing the spirit of man struggling in this world, apparently without success, the Seer penetrates behind the appearance and sees the deeper significance of the struggle and says that in spite of all appearances to the contrary,

His is a search of darkness for the Light,

Of mortal life for immortality. (p. 65).

This vision echoes the well-known aspirations of the Brihadaranyaka:

Lead me from darkness to Light

From death to immortality. (I. 3.28).

The One as the basis of the multiple expression is beautifully figured in Canto 1 of Book II where the silence of the Eternal sees its own Universal Power building up the whole cosmos with all its innumerable elements, including all subjective experiences, which fall into "a single plan" and become "the thousand-fold expression of the One" (p. 88). The Shvetashvatar speaks in a similar vein: "The One fashions one seed in many ways" (VI.12). That *Savitri* touches the same supra-rational and supernal regions of the Infinite can be seen from many passages. We shall only here touch upon one or two, which in their similarity to the Upanishadic utterances are striking:

For not by Reason was creation made

And not by Reason can the Truth be seen. (P. 234)

Or,

Where judgment ceases and the word is mute. (p. 32)

Or,

But mind too falls back from a nameless peak (p. 237)

Or,

Not by thinking can its knowledge come. (P. 237)

Or,

But thought nor word can seize eternal Truth. (P. 251)

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unusual turn of phrase. As for my own translation—"the touch of tears in mortal things"—it is intended not as an accurate and scholastic prose rendering but as a poetic equivalent. I take it from a passage in *Savitri* where the mother of Savitri is lamenting her child's fate and contrasting the unmoved and unfeeling calm of the gods with human suffering and sympathy. I quote from memory,

*We sorrow for a greatness that has passed
And feel the touch of tears in mortal things.
Even a stranger's anguish rends my heart,
And this, O Narad, is my well-loved child.*

In Virgil's line the two halves are not really two separate ideas and statements; they are one idea with two symmetrical limbs; the meaning and force of 'mortalia tangunt' derives wholly from the 'lacrimae rerum' and this, I think, ought to be brought out if we are to have an adequate poetic rendering. Three capital words, 'lacrimae,' 'mortalia,' 'tangunt,' carry in them in an intimate connection the whole burden of the inner sense; the touch which falls upon the mind from mortal things is the touch of tears, 'lacrimae rerum.' I consider therefore that the touch of tears is there quite directly enough, spiritually, if not syntactically, and that my translation is perfectly justifiable." (29-11-46)

"SAVITRI", AN EPIC—Continued from page 3

This is similar to the Katha's

This knowledge is not to be attained by reason, (I. 2.9.)

or,

There the Mind does not reach, nor the word.

The spiritual truth conveying the logic of the Infinite is contained in the following lines:—

Each soleness inexpressibly held the whole. (P. 294)

It made all persons fractions of the Unique,

Yet all were being's secret integers. (Ibid.)

The Isha opens with a similar Mantra:—

"This is perfect, so is That perfect; from the Perfect what arises is perfect; deducting the Perfect from the Perfect the Perfect alone remains."

The passages cited here are by no means exhaustive but they serve to show the affinity of content and the revelatory and inspired character of the expression. In the Vedas and the Upanishads the same Overhead lightnings break forth revealing the universe in so different a light from that of the intellect that it has remained for mankind a new world of spiritual experience to which it has aspired from the dawn of its history. The lightning has revealed sometimes the higher regions of Solar Light, the regions of golden light or Truth, at times the moon-lighted worlds of infinite Delight, at times deep chasms of the Darkness of the Inconscient and the whole world of teeming cosmic life. *Savitri* is like a vast band of lightnings steadied into the poetic empyrean, illuminating the cosmos from end to end, from the deepest and the darkest Night of the Nescience to the highest heights of the Transcendent Divine, revealing the double ladder of divine dynamics, the ladder of Descent of the Divine and the ladder of ascent of the human soul. It points to a culmination in the descent of the Divine into the earth-consciousness and the consequent transformation of the earth-nature into the divine nature. And, as K. D. Sethna in his book, *The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo*, says, "The expression is organic to the sight and consequently carries an authentic and convincing power." Thus, to quote Sethna again, "Sri Aurobindo stands as the creator of a new Vedic and Upanishadic age of poetry."

We shall close this section with an apt passage from the same critic.

"To create a poetic mould equally massive and multiform as *The Life Divine* for transmitting the living Reality to the furthest bounds of speech—such a task is incumbent on one who stands as the maker of a new spiritual epoch. Without it he would not establish on earth in a fully effective shape the influence brought by him. All evolutionary influences, in order to become dynamic *in toto*, must assume poetic shape as a correlate to the actual living out of them in personal consciousness and conduct. In that shape they can reach man's inner being persistently and ubiquitously over and above doing so with a luminous and vibrant suggestiveness unrivalled by any other mode of literature or art. But scattered and short pieces of poetry cannot build the sustained and organised *weltanschauung* required for putting a permanent stamp upon the times. Nothing except an epic or a drama can, moving as they do across a wide field and coming charged with inventive vitality, with interplay of characters and events. Nor can an epic which teems with ultra-mental realisations be wholly adequate to its aim if it does not embody these realisations in ultra-mental word and rhythm. Hence, *Savitri* is from every angle the right correlate to the practical drive towards transformation by India's mightiest Master of spirituality in his Ashram at Pondicherry. Next to his own personal working as Guru on disciples offering themselves for a global remoulding of their lives, this poem that is at once legend and symbol will be the chief *formateur* of the Aurobindonian age. Out of its projected fifty thousand lines about twelve only are said to be ready yet in final version,* but even that number is enough to give it a central place, for the whole length of *Paradise Lost* is exceeded and in no other art-creation so continually and cumulatively has inspiration the lightning-footed goddess, 'A sudden messenger from the all-seeing tops', disclosed the Divine's truth and beauty:

*Even was seen as through a cunning veil
The smile of love that sanctions the long game,
The calm indulgence and maternal breasts
Of Wisdom suckling the child laughter of Chance,
Silence, the nurse of the Almighty's power,
The omniscient hush, womb of the immortal Word,
And of the Timeless the still brooding face,
And the creative eye of Eternity.
From darkness' heart she dug out wells of light,
On the undiscovered depths imposed a form,
Lent a vibrant cry to the unuttered vasts,
And through great shoreless, voiceless, starless breadths
Bore earthward fragments of revealing thought
Hewn from the silence of the Ineffable.*

* * *

Sri Aurobindo in his *Future Poetry* wrote the following lines about the epic as a poetical form and its possibilities in modern times:—

"The epic is only the narrative presentation on its largest canvas and at its highest elevation, greatness and amplitude of spirit and speech and movement. It is sometimes asserted that the epic is solely proper to primitive ages when the freshness of life made a story of large and simple action of supreme interest to the youthful mind of humanity, the literary epic an

* "Savitri", as it stood when Sri Aurobindo passed away, totals about 25,000 lines.

artificial prolongation by an intellectual age and a genuine epic poetry no longer possible now or in the future. This is to mistake form and circumstance for the central reality. The epic, a great poetic story of man or world or gods, need not necessarily be a vigorous presentation of external action: the divinely appointed creation of Rome, the struggles of the principles of good and evil as presented in the great Indian poems, the pageant of the centuries or the journey of the seer through the three worlds beyond us are as fit themes as primitive war and adventure for the imagination of the epic creator. The epics of the soul most inwardly seen, as they will be by an intuitive poetry, are his greatest possible subject, and it is this supreme kind that we shall expect from some profound and mighty voice of the future. This indeed may be the song of the greatest flight that will reveal from the highest pinnacle and with the largest field of vision the destiny of the human spirit and the presence and ways and purpose of the Divinity in man and the universe".

Now in the light of *Savitri* before us it is clear that Sri Aurobindo was anticipating his own work in these words. And who can say that he has not amply fulfilled those anticipations?

From what we have written about the relationship which *Savitri* bears to Vedic and Upanishadic content and manner, one might perhaps be led to think that *Savitri* is something very much of the past and may have no bearing on the present age. This will be a grave mistake because to have similarity of content and manner with the Vedas and the Upanishads is not at all to be antiquated or obsolete. These ancient writings deal with perennial problems of life and in that sense they are as modern as the most modernist expression. Besides, Sri Aurobindo in spite of his long retirement from the outside world has not ceased to be constantly in contact with the contemporary living and thinking to which he himself has contributed in no small measure. He has kept himself abreast of all the movements of progress in every line of cultural activity. *Savitri* dealing with the entire expanse of evolution from the dark Nescience to the supreme levels of the Superconscient, covering all problems of fundamental importance touched by the intellect of man and dealing with every aspect of mystical living, could not naturally be supposed to be shut up in some obsolete and narrow vision, however it may be of the past dawns of humanity. As it contains a rich variety of style and subject matter the modern element naturally comes in as a most spontaneous and organic element. This is as one should expect, because the whole wisdom of *Savitri* is not other-worldly; it does not turn away from the life on earth. In the words of Mr. Sethna, Sri Aurobindo "outdoes the ancient scripture in the aspiration to suffuse and transform earth's life with the golden Immortal the Rishis saw everywhere pressing for manifestation. And in his care to get the aching externals into harmony by some power from within, his concern about the poor unfulfilled trivialities that are divorced from the deep springs of our consciousness, he outdoes also the modernism of Eliot no less than Jung." We shall here show from a few quotations how this modernism has become an organic part of his creative faculty, so much so that a reader of *Savitri* if he wants to enter into the deepest spirit and all the rich overtones and suggestive aura which surrounds the poetical form of expression should have his mind fully alive and alert to all the progressive movements of present-day humanity. He will find that the author at times brings not only "the sperm and gene" and "plasm and gas" but also images and figures from all over the world and every field of cultural activity to serve his purpose. Even the famous Churchillian phrase of the second world war gains an entry: "Behind his vain labour, sweat and blood and tears". The unrolling of the cosmic panorama finds an apt image in the Japanese rolls of painting, "a kakemono of significant forms". And how far the latest scientific advances have become assimilated in his poetic genius can be seen from the revealing way in which, under the intense flame of inspiration, he utilises this advance of material science to concretise, to objectify a spiritual reality. While speaking about "the Godheads of Little Life", he speaks of Aswapathy having "plunged his gaze into the siege of mist" of the lower vital and then,

*As when a searchlight stabs the Night's blind breast
And dwellings and trees and figures of men appear
As if revealed to an eye in Nothingness,
All lurking things were torn out of their veils
And held up in his vision's sun-white blaze. (B.II.5. p. 138).*

Even Einstein's relativity and De Sitter's cosmological researches find an echo in "parent of an expanding universe", (p. 141) and while dealing with the formation of Matter the reader will need to have some familiarity with the latest theory of the electrical constitution of matter. The poet speaks of—

*An ocean of electrical energy
Formlessly formed its strange wave-particles
Constructing by their dance this solid scheme,
Its mightiness in the atom shut to rest;
Masses were forged or feigned and visible shapes;
Light flung the photon's swift revealing spark. (B.II.5. p. 142).*

We gave above the effective use of the simile of searchlight. In the same way, television has found its utility in this grand spiritual vision of Sri Aurobindo. While speaking of "the Glory and Fall of Life" (Book II. Canto. 3) he introduces us to the beings of the higher vital plane, living in

"SAVITRI", AN EPIC—Continued from page 4

an independent vital world constituted entirely differently from our gross material earth. Says he:—

*As through a magic television's glass
Outlined to some magnifying inner eye
They shone like images thrown from a far scene
Too high and glad for mortal lids to see.*

These lines almost lay bare the process of occult vision by which a man is able to see the subtle worlds. The process of television gives to it a great sense not only of concreteness but of a convincing reality by bringing to the doubting physical mind an activity of scientific invention which seems to render the impossible possible. The suggestion is that if television can make distant objects visible and near, why should not there be an inner faculty of sight capable of a similar function with regard to inner worlds? In another context also (Book II. Canto-7), Sri Aurobindo speaks of the Dark Beings that "came televisioned from the gulfs of Night". In his supreme art he can turn even the illegal process of smuggling to a divine advantage in his creation. Dealing with "The Paradise of the Life-Gods" (Book II. C.9) he speaks of Aswapathy's thrilling experience as follows:—

*His earth, dowered with celestial competence,
Harboured a power that needed now no more
To cross the closed customs-line of mind and flesh
And smuggle godhead into humanity.*

The vision at times daringly explains to our mind the creation of the physical world from the supra-physical. In lines like the following:—

*Proton and photon served the imager Eye
To change things subtle into a physical world.*

(B. II. 10. P. 22).

There is "quantum" and "robot" and "atomic parcellings of the infinite" and "a thinking body from chemic cells" (P. 145). There is even a reference to the breaking up of the atom when he speaks of "The Kingdoms of Godheads of the Little Mind",—

*And Nature's plastic and protean change
And, strong by death to slay or to create,
The riven invisible atom's omnipotent force.*

(B. II. 10. p. 232).

While speaking of the higher planes of consciousness above the mind he takes advantage of the scientific image by the spontaneous alchemy of his vision and gives us the convincing line—

Above in a high breathless stratosphere. (B. II. 10. p. 235).

Even the last war and some of the latest means employed by the air-arm have been marvellously woven into the texture of this vast spiritual vision. While speaking of the first breaking of the spiritual dawn, the awakening to the divine possibilities of life, he says:

*Almost that day the epiphany was disclosed
Of which our thoughts and hopes are signal flares.*

We know that flares are dropped by fighter-planes at night to light up or indicate the path to the target to the bombers that follow: the dark ignorance of humanity which is like the night is a fit-setting for the image—our thoughts and hopes have no final importance but are useful only as indications of the way towards which the spirit of man has to move. This whole psychological vision of man's life, its relative importance, and a whole world of suggestion connected with it are here packed in a single line. So also when Aswapathy moves in the high "stratosphere" of the Super-conscious, Sri Aurobindo again employs the strategy of the last war to serve his poetic vision. And so concrete and effective is the use!

*As far as its self-winged airplanes could fly,
It reconnoitred vistas of dream fate.*

Extending the same image he works it out into a vision of a spiritual mili-

tary operation:—

*Apt to conceive, unable to attain,
It drew its concept-maps, and vision-plans
Too large for the architecture of mortal Space.* (P. 236).

In some places, there is such a blending of an old Vedic image and one based upon modern scientific advance that one hardly notices the transition. In the same breath he speaks of

*The troglodytes of the subconscious mind,
Ill-trained slow stammering interpreters* (p. 147),

and

*Mid an obscure occult machinery,
Captured the mystic Morse whose measured lilt
Transmits the message of the cosmic Force.* (P. 148).

The first part of this refers to the cave-dwelling Panis of the Veda and the latter deals with the mystic Morse code which transmits the messages of the cosmic Force. As for mathematics, there is—"Necessity's logarithmic table", and "the calculus of destiny" and "the recurrent decimal of events", but most staggering is his use of mathematical technique when he succeeds in conveying a spiritual reality, as for instance:

*It made all persons fractions of the Unique,
Yet all were being's secret integers.* (P. 294).

This may be said to be the most mathematical way of saying that each being is a portion of the Divine, and all is the Divine. In his hands "multiplication's sum" becomes "rapturous", and there are "the recurring decimals of eternity."

There is also a film-world of images caught in "imagination's camera". Travelling through "the Kingdom of Little Life" (Book II, Canto 4) the awakened eye of the witness consciousness does not merely see the huge waste of material and effort involved in the process of evolution but observes in it "the secret crawl of consciousness to light" through

*The turbid yeast of nature's passionate change,
Ferment of soul's creation out of mire.*

The awakening of consciousness to Light through the "fertile slime of lust" and sense by the fermentation brought about by Nature's passion to create a soul has been so aptly imaged with a whole world of suggestion of the transformation of one substance into quite another with a set of new undreamt of and intense qualities as the result of a chemical process!!

He refers to "unprovisioned cheques on the Beyond" signed by man's religion practising fraud upon the credit-bank of Time, and there appears also the "cowled fifth-columnist" who comes as "thought's guide." We meet with not only the bank and all the multiple activities of modern life in this great epic of the human spirit which deals with the realms of eternal Light as yet unattained by humanity, but also the "Inconscient's magic printing-house" where the "formats of the primal Night are torn" and the "stereotypes of ignorance" are "shattered". Again, life is a "wide world kindergarten of younger souls".

The quotations we have given are by no means exhaustive but they will serve to show the universal range of the creation which is *Savitri*. A cosmos of multiple worlds acting and re-acting upon the grown consciousness of the earth is seen moving towards higher planes of being unreachd by man and in that grand vision of the future destiny of man the whole of human life with all his multifarious activities is caught in a totally different value. Nothing is left out as unimportant. The most ultra-modern elements find their proper place in this complex and integral vision. *Savitri*, even as a poem, would require its reader, as one can see from the quotations, to have a wide range of acquaintance with the latest advances in almost every branch of human culture.

IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

There will be no further issue of "Mother India" as a Fortnightly.

From February 21, 1952, "Mother India" will commence its fourth year, not as a Fortnightly but as a Monthly. The new edition will be in a handy though substantial magazine form.

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THE MYSTICAL AND THE MISTY

AN ANSWER TO SOME QUERIES ABOUT SRI AUROBINDO

By K. D. SETHNA

A reader from abroad has asked for a clarification of certain points *apropos* of an article in *Mother India* of July 14, 1951. He writes:

"I read in Prithvisingh's *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother*: 'Sri Aurobindo's decision to leave his own body does not invalidate the truth of his teachings.' I would like to hear, in clear and understandable words, what is meant by 'Aurobindo's decision to leave his own body'. Death does not depend on our decision unless we commit suicide. Was this the case with Aurobindo? If so, how did he do it, and how would it be reconcilable with his words (quoted on page 2 of *Mother India*): 'Death must not be feared, but neither should death or permanent ill-health be invited.'"

"Further, Prithvisingh writes, 'His last act of Grace was to keep his body intact for several days.' What is the sense of these words? After death the body immediately begins to decay and cannot be kept intact by any act of grace. Was something applied to the body so as to keep it intact for several days?"

"Equally un-understandable are Prithvisingh's words concerning Aurobindo and the Mother: 'It is the same consciousness divided into two for purposes of the play'. The 'same' consciousness cannot be divided into two. This sentence simply makes no sense and no amount of play or *Lila* will add any sense to it."

"I should like to have a lucid reply from you, not one couched in words of mist and clouds."

This reader from abroad is no scoffer and he belongs to the rank of Sri Aurobindo's admirers. His inquiry is of one who is interested in spiritual things and it represents the difficulty and perplexity of many sincere minds both in the West and the East. We may, therefore, take some trouble over the clarification he desires of what he considers puzzling obscurities and we consider to be nothing more than non-expository declarations.

But clarification here must not be supposed to have in view a perfect intellectual lucidity such as is possible in matters with which the human mind has been familiar for centuries. Spiritual things do not belong to the surface of life as lived at present. God is not evident to the ordinary senses with which we function: even our own souls are not to us a certain knowledge. We have instinctive beliefs about them, which to some people are automatically convincing, but as soon as we start thinking and reasoning we find ourselves in what our reader would call "mist and clouds." Of course, the words we use can be either precise or vague, our manner of argument can be pointed or rambling and involved: "mist and clouds" can come from the kind of words we employ as well as from the kind of thoughts that are behind words, and we should do our best to be clear in these respects, but when the very subject is of a range of being beyond the common we cannot hope for statements absolutely disinfected of the mysterious or even the miraculous.

Even in the realm of modern science we have passed far beyond ordinary lucidity. Not that the ideas of what is called classical or Newtonian physics were in themselves axiomatic: absolute space, for instance—an utter omnipresent void which is yet a substantial stationary entity determining and affecting measurements of physical processes—is hardly a very clear idea. Neither is the force of gravitation which acts instantaneously, requires no medium for its passage and cannot be interfered with by any intervening object. But they seemed to agree roughly with our experience of the man-sized world and with the familiar deliverance of our senses: they thus acquired a spurious lucidity. With the advent of Einstein this lucidity disappeared: a "curved" non-euclidian four-dimensional continuum of fused space and time is "mist and clouds" with quite a vengeance. So too is the world of quanta in which we are asked by Böhr to choose between non-causality in space and time or causality without them! Even the fact that no mechanical model can represent now the ultimate processes of physical Nature strains the understanding immensely.

All this is really as it should be, for when we get down to the infinitesimal or stretch our minds towards the infinite we break out of the world to which we are generally accustomed. The pure mathematician may cope in his own way with the basic problems of the physical universe, but his way is most abstract and seems to our day-to-day intelligence utterly removed from reality. The pure mathematician himself knows that the extremity of abstraction to which he is driven is due to a tremendous mystery baffling the senses and yielding only a series of provisional algebraical equations of a most complicated kind.

If the physical universe, the more we probe it, becomes so mysterious and challenges both imagination and conception, surely supra-physical or spiritual phenomena cannot be brought before the tribunal of the ordinary outward-going mind. Their nature, processes and laws, their possibilities, actualities and necessities are different from what is familiar to normal human experience. Either there is no spiritual reality and then we need not bother about Sri Aurobindo at all, or else there is such a reality and then we must expect it to exceed our usual imagination and conception even more than do the fields of relativity theory and quantum theory.

This does not mean that we can make no intelligible statements about it or that a systematic presentation of aspects of it is impossible. But lucidity or clarity here cannot be of the same type as when we deal with familiar physical or psychological things. It can only apply a logic proper to the subject-matter in hand and show certain ideas as following consistently from certain basic concepts.

Our reader says: "Death does not depend on our decision unless we commit suicide." First of all, the terms "death" and "suicide" are relevant only to one who knows no state of existence apart from the material body. A Yogi in the full sense is precisely one who has, to say the least, transcended the physical body-formula. Mystical experience brings to light several "sheaths" other than the physical. The Yogi is awake in them at the same time he lives in the latter, and he can at any moment put his body in a state of trance and move out in them. Death, in the common connotation, is to him merely a permanent leaving of the physical sheath so that, unconnected with the subtle sheaths, the physical loses its support and vitality. Inasmuch as this support is lost, there is a death unlike the temporary departures the Yogi usually makes from his body. But inasmuch as the Yogi, even when not making these temporary departures, lives beyond the body and knows an inner independence of it, the terms "death" and "suicide" cannot have for him the meaning ordinarily attached to them. And he certainly has the power to die whenever he wishes: death does depend on his decision. He may not be able to prolong his life indefinitely, but he can indubitably cut it short at any time—either by withdrawing into his subtle sheaths or else by withdrawing beyond all sheaths into the formless Atman and Brahman, the essential and infinite spiritual Self-hood or Being-hood.

As for Sri Aurobindo, he was not only a Yogi in the highest sense known to the past: a *Mukta*, a liberated soul. He was also a Yogi in a new sense by virtue of wide-awake possession of what is called the Supermind. The Supermind is the creative Truth-Consciousness, the divine harmony of unity in diversity in which the perfect truth of all manifestation resides, both singly and innumerable, as Lord of the universe as well as the universe's in-dwelling Godhead. By the Supermind's integral realisation the mind, the life-force and even the body would become divinised, fulfilling Nature's evolutionary labour and establishing on earth a perfect individual and collective existence manifesting in Time ever-new riches of the inexhaustible Infinite. When Sri Aurobindo passed away, the Supermind was in process of being established in his body. This means an extraordinary power over normal physical nature's activity—a power to keep off disease and ward off death. The absolutely automatic immunity would come only with the total establishment of the Supermind in the body, the absolute transformation or supramentalisation of all bodily functions, but a capacity to sustain and prolong the body indefinitely could be there even before. Whatever signs of age and whatever physical ailments might appear would be because of a sanction of the conscious will in order to meet every difficulty facing human nature and to cope with it by actual acceptance of it: unless this is done there can be no complete evolutionary conquest significant for the race. Whether the final physical difficulty—the death of the form—is met by coming to the verge of death or by going through the whole experience of dying—this is decided according to the need of the hour. Sri Aurobindo decided upon death in the fullest meaning. And when for the purposes of the supramental manifestation death is accepted it would not be a mere withdrawal, but an acceptance of natural factors of disease so that a real fight with them may take place and by the sacrifice of one body, in which the Supermind is supremely manifesting, a decisive absorption, as it were, occur of the force of death and the way be cleared for the removal of that force's effectivity from the partner body, the Mother, working with Sri Aurobindo. Then with that partner body as the centre a new life would radiate to all earth.

It is because of these facts that we are told: "Sri Aurobindo's decision to leave his own body does not invalidate the truth of his teachings." And the truth of his teachings is not only the words our reader quotes from him: "Death must not be feared, but neither should death or permanent ill-health be invited." The truth of his teachings is also that for a divine manifestation the Supramental Yoga aims at conquest of bodily deterioration, disease and death just as it aims at conquest of the life-force's incapacity and perversity and the mind's ignorance and egoism. What Sri Aurobindo did to his own body was not the result of a failure on his part nor of an invitation to ill-health and death for their own sakes. It was a momentous act in the drama of the supramental Yoga and various incidents before it and during it show positively its true nature. To realise this, our reader has only to study—among other things—my own article *The Passing of Sri Aurobindo*, Nirodbaran's *Sri Aurobindo*: "I am Here! I am Here!" and "Synergist's" *The Debt to Rudra*.

Once the meaning of the supramental Yoga is grasped and Sri Aurobindo's passing seen in the proper light, there is nothing mystifying

Continued on opposite page

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIA

By SISIRKUMAR MITRA

Continued from previous issue

Towards A Larger Harmony

The unity of India has yet another deep meaning, outwardly veiled, as it is, by her diversity. Why is it that so many diverse races, cultures, languages, religions, temperaments, a formidable array, should meet here? Why is it that in her outer form she should be literally a veritable world having, in and about her, every feature that Nature can create on earth?

None of the ways of Nature are without a purpose. Ages ago her children discovered the truth of India's physical oneness and worshipped her as the beating heart of the world, the creative centre from which one day would go forth not only the message of unity of all existence but along with it the supreme force to make that oneness a concrete fact in the life of mankind.

The many-sidedness of her racial and cultural life is there as the source of her strength by which she has built a grand synthesis, as amazing as fruitful. One of the mighty efforts that have characterised India's history throughout has been to evolve this synthesis of peoples, of ideas, of religions, and of various other trends and tendencies, even sharply contradictory ones, whose existence in the cultural and collective life of the country seems to have been intended by Nature so that their underlying unity might be discovered and made organic in the growth of the national soul for the larger well-being of India and the world. And has not history a glowing story to tell of India's success in this effort? The truth leaps to the eyes of even foreigners. Says C. E. M. Joad: 'Whatever the reason, it is a fact that India's special gift to mankind has been the ability and willingness of Indians to effect a synthesis of many different elements, both of thoughts and of peoples: to create in fact a Unity out of diversity.' In his *Oxford History of India* Vincent Smith hits upon the same idea: 'India beyond all doubt possesses a deep underlying fundamental unity far more profound than that produced either by geographical isolation or by physical suzerainty. This unity transcends the innumerable diversities of blood, colour, language, dress, manners, and sect.'

And this unity in the corporate life of the country has been, among other things, sustained by the whole-hearted allegiance of the people to common cultural, social and religious ideals and also by their inherent conviction that India is the temple of the Mother and that all who dwell in that temple are the children of the same Mother, which is only a symbolic way of saying that India being an embodiment of the Shakti, the Creative Energy of the Supreme, all her children are part of that Energy and one in the Mother that India is. This is the psychological secret of Indian unity in the growth of which the innate spirituality of the race has been a great

sustaining and shaping force.

While speaking of the diversity of India, Sir Fredrick Wyte points out her unity which to him is the greatest of all contradictions in India, yet so greatly a reality, and so powerful that even the Mussalman world in India has to confess that it has been deeply affected by coming within its influence. But this unity, as it is, cannot be the last word of India's collective existence, neither is it a dynamic fact in her whole being today, and it is not for this alone that India has stood through the ages. The secret of her being the play-field of multitudinous forces, favourable and unfavourable, of concord and discord, lies in the truth of a larger synthesis, a grander harmony which it is for India to discover and establish and proclaim to the world as the sole remedy for all evils that afflict mankind today, the one solution of all the perplexing problems that beset its collective life. India is indeed a vast workshop of evolutionary Nature where things are being moulded and patterned for the new world of tomorrow, the world of a new Light and a new Harmony, that will emerge out of its present chaos and darkness.

Unity has been working so far as an underlying force secretly holding together the multiplying diversities of the cultural life. Being an epitome of the earth, India possesses multifarious elements obscurely seeking a complex harmony through a tangled interaction which, to a superficial view, appears as a picturesque disorder or even a chaos belying the fundamental unity. But that India lives on while Egypt and Babylon, Greece and Rome have waned and faded out of existence testifies to the organic unity of her manifold life, which, if secret today, will emerge tomorrow, not only as an accomplished unity of cultural elements, but as the all-harmonising unity of the Spirit, triumphing over all division and separative distinctions.

The Vedic seers had the vision of the truth of this unity and harmony of the Spirit. The Seer of today has had it again, now in all the fullness of its significance for the future of India as well as for the future of mankind. The whole history of India has been, we may repeat, a process through which this ancient vision, this world-shaping historic force has motivated all the glorious expressions of her opulent creative life fitting her, stage by stage, for the reception of the Light that has been revealed today by the Master of the race. No human power but the power of this Light alone can bring about the Harmony that is for ever. And India will lead humanity towards this 'divine event'. This is the meaning of India's history, the inmost implication of the vastness and variety of her life and culture.

Concluded

THE MYSTICAL AND THE MISTY—Continued from opposite page

in Prithvisingh's sentence: "His last act of Grace was to keep his body intact for several days." The body's remaining absolutely intact for several days under even tropical conditions—and this was certified by several doctors Indian and French—had a manifold purpose, one side of which is Prithvisingh's statement that Sri Aurobindo wanted all his disciples and followers to have time to come and have the last *darshan*. We need not enter here into all the sides: the point we are concerned with is simply that such a phenomenon is completely in tune with the superhuman Aurobindonian power. The basis of this power was declared by the Mother when she announced forty-one hours after the "clinical" death: "The funeral of Sri Aurobindo has not taken place today. His body is charged with such a concentration of supramental light that there is no sign of decomposition and the body will be kept lying on his bed so long as it remains intact." It is no use saying, as our reader does, that after death the physical body immediately begins to decay and cannot be kept intact by any act of grace and that if it did not decay something must have been applied to it. Nothing was applied or needed to be applied: what happened happened naturally according to Sri Aurobindo's attainment and will and was no miracle at all from the viewpoint of the Supermind's capacity. But from the viewpoint of the ordinary mind it cannot help looking like a miracle—and that, again, is precisely what we should expect at certain phases of the Supermind's manifestation in a world of limited mind.

We come now to our reader's last puzzle. He feels that it is nonsensical or at least incomprehensible to assert that for the sake of the *lila* or world-play the same consciousness was divided into two—Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. But we are afraid that he is thinking in terms of the *Ahankar* or ego. The ego is the separative individual, a formation of Nature whose very essence is its limitation, its exclusion of others. There cannot be the same ego in two beings, for that would be a self-contradiction. But the true individual, whose distorted figure in evolving Nature is the ego and which can be realised only by overpassing the ego-cadre, is an inherent aspect of the multi-moded Spirit and is not debarred from a genuine oneness with other individuals and with the universal consciousness. Beyond the universe it has its reality in the Transcendence whose complementary manifested formulations are the universe and the individual. In a general sense we may say that the original Consciousness is a unity-

in-multiplicity and that for the purposes of the world-play the same Consciousness is divided into an infinite number of focal points. There is nothing impossible here: in fact it is the only possibility. It is also possible to have a special manifestation of a certain level or cast of divine Consciousness in two forms. We may suggest that the biological division of a species into two sexes is some kind of representation of a twofold basic reality of being. Within each of us, spiritual experience reveals a twofoldness — Purusha and Prakriti, being and becoming, self and nature. In spiritual knowledge the creative world-principle is seen to be biune—*Ishwara-Shakti*—a two-in-one put forth from the Oneness in which many-ness lies implicit. When the *Ishwara-Shakti* manifests in a special way which constitutes what we call the Avatar manifestation we can have two embodied beings serving as radiating centres of a new creative spiritual force. Intrinsically, therefore, there is no lack of sense in speaking of the same consciousness divided into two for purposes of the play. Whether Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are such a consciousness must be left to spiritual experience or intuitivised intellectual insight. One thing is clear: their joint endeavour is to bring about a radical spiritual change of the world's consciousness, an evolution of mental man into supramental man, a transformation of the human into the divine: they are the luminous parents of a new creation on earth. As such they have all the marks of an Avatar manifestation, a play of the biune *Ishwara-Shakti* in two physical bodies.

If all that we have said seems still to be merely "words of mist and clouds", then indeed mist and clouds are the very constitution of reality and all words about ultimates are bound to be misty and cloudy. Of course, our statements have been brief, they are not fully elaborated philosophical expositions, yet the leading philosophical ideas necessary are there and to find them lucid the mind must throw itself into a spiritual mood and feel the presence of a Wonder beyond the common actualities and surface concreteness of physical and psychological life. It is not called upon to renounce reason but to reason about That which is greater and subtler than the categories dictated by sense-experience and by the intellect based on it. Ceasing to make a fetish of a too apparent clarity, we must proceed by the truth of the paradox:

*They see not the clearest,
Who see all things clear.*

SRI AUROBINDO AND MAN'S SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

By C. C. DUTT

Continued from previous issue

We have already referred to the idea brought forward by the Russian Revolution — federation of free republics. A chapter is devoted here to the consideration of this idea. A recent footnote runs thus: "The component states of socialistic Russia were allowed a certain cultural, linguistic and other autonomy but the rest is illusory, as they are in fact governed by the force of a highly centralised autocracy in Moscow." But this must be read with a sentence from another footnote, "Still the principle is there and capable of development in a free future."

Hitherto both the nation idea and the State idea have been built on a physical and vital basis, i.e. on a geographical, commercial, political and military union. The earlier vital principle of racial unity remained, more or less, as a fiction. But the real principle that has brought together smaller units to form a nation has been mainly psychological, based on a common language, common culture and common interests. The nation idea and the State idea do not always coincide. Where they are in conflict it is the latter that usually prevails. The right of every natural grouping to choose its status was pushed forward a great deal after the first war under the name of self-determination, but "it has been disregarded as soon as it has served its turn." There were sordid motives behind the cry and the world saw through them.

The two rival principles—vital and psychological—have been at work in Russia. Sri Aurobindo shows how that country has never been a homogeneous nation-State like, say, France. It was a cluster of many nations grouped together under the Czar. Its only psychological aspect was a hope that it would, one day, be fused together into a nation with one language as the instrument of culture, thought and government. Such an end could only be achieved by force, and force was being constantly applied by the Czarist government (much as it was being tried by England in Ireland). If things had gone on as in the pre-war days, Russia would probably have been largely successful in the Slavonic part of her empire, but she could not have continued very long to drag Finland and Poland at her chariot wheels. But all these speculations have lost their force in the present setting. In Sri Aurobindo's words, "All these advantages have been destroyed, temporarily at least, by the centrifugal forces let loose by the Revolution and its principle of the free choice of nationalities." We have here to see clearly the difference between a purely vital and physical necessity, and a psychological and moral justification. "The Russian principle belongs, in fact," says Sri Aurobindo "to a possible future, in which moral and psychological principles will have a real chance to dominate, and vital and physical necessities will have to suit themselves to them. The Russian principle may have to struggle against immense difficulties. In the world, as it is, ideals can be imposed only if they have a strong physical backing. The Russian idealists found in their attempt to effectuate their principle that they were 'helpless before the hard-headed German cynicism' because under the new conditions they could not muster an organised and united action. But it has undoubtedly a great meaning for the future. Unfortunately, affairs in Russia are not the same as in Lenin's time, and the change takes away most substantially from the idea of adopting free agreement between different groups as a substitute for conflict. When the book was written, Sri Aurobindo said that if this idea could work itself out even within the limits of Russia, it would mean a new moral power in the world. A footnote has now been added, "The idea was sincere at the time, but it has lost its significance because of the principle of revolutionary force on which Sovietism still rests." But what is most important is that "even if it fails entirely in its present push for realisation, it will still have its part to play in a better prepared future." Sri Aurobindo next goes on to consider the conditions necessary for a free world-union.

Obviously, it must be a unity in diversity and the diversity must be founded on self-determination. The physical principle of union must be subordinated to the psychological, and union accomplished by free will and natural affinities — no compelling force or constraint should come into action. Countries as far apart as England and Canada and Australia may be unified by free will, while adjoining countries like England and Ireland, and Spain and Portugal, may stand apart. In the old days a clear and radical difference used to be made between the position of a colony like Canada and that of a dependency like India. But the present Commonwealth idea has put an end to such difference. All the units are free and the solidarity of the Commonwealth rests on this freedom.

As the world is just now, there appears to be serious difficulties in the way of a free union such as we are considering here. For, the groupings today are built on political, commercial and military considerations — considerations affecting the interests of a particular grouping. It might suit a particular State to be rich and powerful enough to bully others. But the world in general is not interested in a brigand state for the purpose of crushing it. Unfortunately the brigands are many and they are

constantly manoeuvring themselves into different positions for their own aggrandisement, regardless of the peace and safety of the world. The great problem is: how to coax a robber state to take to a more peaceful career. Of course, such brigands can be squashed, as were Kaiser Wilhelm or Fuhrer Hitler, by forming a strong combination of powers against them. But is it much good? Does not an outgoing brigand state leave in its place another quite as bad? It is bound to be so as long as egoism rules mankind. Sri Aurobindo says, "The elimination of war and the settlement of differences by peaceful means would remove the military necessity for forced unions, while the right of every people to a free voice and status in the world would remove their political necessity and advantage." These two necessities are closely bound up with each other. This interdependence of nations will have to be permanently recognised if there is to be any human unity. The economic question still remains at the present time. It is, at least, as important as the political. The economic exploitation of one nation by another, which is so large a part of the present order, would have to go if we wish to achieve human unity. If the element of rivalry and struggle is removed from the political field, at least if an honest effort is made to remove it, the economic struggle would decrease automatically. "The principle of free-world union being that of the settlement of common affairs by common agreement, this could not be confined to the removal of political differences and political relations alone, but must naturally extend to economic differences and economic relations as well."

There remains now the question of the advantage of unity to the soul of mankind, to its culture and even to its spiritual growth. The old idea we are familiar with: it was the right of a dominant race to foist its culture and language on the conquered people. That right is no longer admitted anywhere. Germany in attempting to establish it has eliminated itself for the time being. England has had to give it up in Ireland and Wales as well as in India. The attempt of the ancient Romans to Romanise their conquered peoples was largely responsible for the rapid decay of their empire. When peace and freedom have been secured to the world, man's mind and power—individual, local, regional as well as national—will flower out in the firm frame of a united humanity. As to what exact form the framework would take, we can only speculate. The dream of a world-parliament is not likely to materialise. An assembly of the present-day national type could only belong to a unitary world-state. A world-federation of the American type would also be inappropriate. Sri Aurobindo says, "Some kind of confederation of the peoples for common human ends, for the removal of all causes of strife and difference, for inter-relation and the regulation of mutual aid and interchange, yet leaving to each unit a full internal freedom and power of self-determination, would be the right principle of this unity." But this kind of unity is likely to be somewhat loose physically; what, then would prevent the inherent spirit of separativeness and strife from endangering the union? Surely not coercion! Because any use of force would strike at the very root of the fraternity that is essential to such unification. The bark of world-unity can be saved from floundering only by an inner change in man's psychology — a new development of the mind—the growth of a living religion of humanity based on the realisation of spiritual oneness.

Chapters XXXII and XXXIII deal with the growth of Internationalism, which is defined by the Master as "the attempt of the human mind and life to grow out of the national idea and form, and even in a way of destroying it in the interest of the larger synthesis of mankind." It was felt and voiced in a vague way at the commencement of the French Revolution, but it came to nothing as the Revolution followed its own narrower course. Later on, in alliance with Socialism and philosophical Anarchism it began to grow in the minds of philosophers and thinkers into a more definite form—but, still, more as an ideal than a practical proposition. Before the First War the ideal found expression in the Hague Tribunal which can undoubtedly be called a step in the right direction. Socialism was, however, discredited hopelessly in practice, in both Germany and Russia, where its victory completely annihilated individual freedom. German socialism passed away; Russian socialism survives as a national, and not an international system. "But what is the cause of this almost total bankruptcy of the international ideal under the strong test of life?" asks Sri Aurobindo. He gives an explicit reply too. "The real truth, the real cause of the failure is that internationalism is as yet, except with some exceptional men, merely an idea; it is not yet a thing near to our vital feelings or otherwise a part of our psychology." As long as internationalism is merely an intellectual ideal it cannot go far; it is only when it has grown into man's feelings, sympathies and natural habits that it would be something more than an external adjustment, than a matter of expediency. We have to wait for man's heart to be ready before a profound change can come about in world conditions.

Anyhow, the idea of humanity is certainly at work and has begun to

SRI AUROBINDO AND MAN'S SOCIO-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT —Continued from opposite page

influence our actions, even though slightly. We have to help this idea along. But, how is this to be done? The family, the clan and the tribe were natural groups rising out of vital necessity, but the nation unit has been brought about by the pressure of circumstances and environments—out of a geographical and historical necessity, and force of one kind or another has had a great deal to do with it. Force here includes resistance or reaction against force. The nation so created endured when, behind the conscious national ego, there was a nation-soul. In the absence of such a soul, nation and state flourished for a time only to disappear in a cloud of dust. What, then, of the international unity we are considering? What is there at the back of it? There is here no vital necessity. The race, as a whole, can get on well enough without this unity, so far as mere living goes. And vital satisfaction suffices for the vast majority of men who are essentially vital. There may be a small handful of thinkers and idealists who wish for other things as well, but the decision of things is with the vital majority. Geographical necessity need not be considered, as there is ample room on the earth for all. But a kind of historical necessity is real. It has arisen as the result of certain actual circumstances that have grown up in the evolution of international relations. That necessity is economic, political and mechanical, sufficient to make people think of the possibility of making some arrangement to minimise certain perils, such as the constant danger of war. The thought is there, though as yet vague and speculative.

There is, however, another power, more subtle, that we have to consider. Behind all external circumstances, there exists always "an internal necessity in the being, a will and a design in Nature itself." This is a well-known biological truth. Sub-consciously, even unconsciously, there is always "a blind will, a mute idea which contains beforehand the form it is going to create." This proposition is also psychologically true. A man is an individual unit ever emphasising his separate being; but he is also a unit driven by an inner Idea or Truth to unite himself with others of his species to form groups and aggregates ever larger and larger. If the international idea has established itself in his conscious mind, we may well expect that idea to materialise. Sri Aurobindo says, "Such a will in Nature creates for itself favourable external circumstances and happenings or finds them created for it in the stress of events." It may then be said—let us rely on this will in Nature and proceed to create a framework of the aggregate; anyhow, even by force if it must be, let us build the body, the soul will grow in it; we should not be disheartened if the body be artificial and the spirit of psychological unity ever so small; it will all come in time, as it did with the nation.

The old means of unification, conquest by one single nation, is not feasible under the present conditions. The concentration of such overwhelming power is bound to be known by other countries beforehand and they are bound to combine against its fulfilment. There is much secrecy possible in these days, at least not for long. Sri Aurobindo said, thirty years ago, that there was a greater chance, before the first Great War, of three or four large empires arriving at an understanding in order to establish complete domination over Asia, Europe and Africa. The two great world conflicts have put an end to such a possibility. So as far as human unity is concerned, the situation has undoubtedly deteriorated. On the other hand, the activities of the U.N.O. are beginning to be appreciated by the weaker nations and may, if there is no serious check, bring about a general desire in them to try and develop internationalism, in spite of the power-grabbing policy of some of the bigger nations. An artificial and external world-unity may be brought about by circumstances—in Sri Aurobindo's words, a sufficient formal unity might come into existence. But the jump is very long from this kind of make-shift arrangement to a true psychological unity. None of the great empires in the past succeeded in bringing about this essential unity. Of course, the world-empire would have this advantage that there would be no external powers to attack it. But the very absence of outside enemies, Sri Aurobindo says, "might well give greater room and power to internal elements of disintegration and ... decay." There is in human affairs an inherent tendency of exhaustion and stagnation to which such an empire would succumb after a period of progress and well-being. A break-up would then be necessary to restore vitality to mankind. The growth of a powerful psychological factor would alone be able to keep the world-empire together. We have stressed the need of a new religion of humanity but it should be understood that this religion of humanity is something above and beyond a common desire to ensure peace, prosperity and progress. For there is in man a natural tendency to compete and combat and struggle—an instinct for liberty, individual and collective, side by side with his instinct for unity. Only a religion of humanity can assure long life to the world-union, if achieved.

This religion of humanity may be either an intellectual and sentimental ideal or a spiritual aspiration which would bring about a change of heart in humanity. The intellectual and sentimental ideal is already in existence, but it has to grow in intensity and acquire a spiritual character before it can bring about an enduring unity of mankind. It has, in Sri Aurobindo's words, "to make itself more explicit, insistent and categorically imperative." Freedom, equality and unity have to be achieved and they are, we must remember, attributes of the spirit. The soul in man is, then,

to be awakened and egoism eliminated in order to establish the true religion of humanity founded on the realisation of men's inner oneness.

Chapter XXXV is the summary of all that has gone before and the last chapter is a postscript that brings the book up to date. We shall go briefly over these two chapters for our readers. A precarious and mechanical oneness of mankind can be constructed by physical and external means and possibly will be, tentatively, in a not very far-off future. But this unity can be assured only if the religion of humanity, which has already appeared in the mind of the thinker and the idealist, spiritualises itself and becomes the inner law of man's life.

There is a force of outward necessity that Nature has used in the past for building up nation-units, and she is employing the same force today for driving mankind towards the larger supranational unification. This force has not always been gentle and peaceful, for Nature has freely employed methods of cruel warfare and conquest and devastation. And it is not at all unlikely that she would force man to pass through worse tribulations to prepare the ground for universal amity. This feeling of amity has in the past brought about union as well as cemented it. But for the greater work of constructing and cementing a world-union, it has, as we have noted already, to grow more intense and take a spiritual turn. In the meantime, "Nature herself is sure to shape upheavals in such a way as to bring about her end." An eventual unification is practically inevitable. As to its ultimate form, we can but speculate. It may be a centralised world-state or a looser world-union which may take the form of a close federation or a simple confederacy of nations for the common ends of humanity. Serious objections can be brought against all the three forms. The evils of over-centralisation we have discussed often enough. A loose confederacy, on the other hand, would be more liable to a break-up. The saving power needed is a new psychological factor which would harmonise freedom with unity. Sri Aurobindo says, "The religion of humanity seems to be the one growing factor which tends in that direction." But, as he has emphasised often enough, its intellectual form is not enough, it has to be definitely spiritualised. A religion of humanity means a growing realisation that there is a secret spirit, a divine Reality, in which we are all one. Pending the growth of this realisation, man must go forward with the work of unification, even though the method employed be external and physical and intellectual.

In the post-script chapter, Sri Aurobindo briefly deals with the world-conditions of today and shows how in spite of two devastating wars the idea of human unity has moved forward steadily. In fact the two conflagrations have been of immense use in the practical development of that idea. "The League of Nations", he says, "came into being as a direct consequence of the first war, the U.N.O. similarly as a consequence of the second world-wide conflict. If the third war... does come, it is likely to precipitate as inevitably a further step and perhaps the final outcome of this great world-endeavour." Nature uses such means, apparently opposed to her purpose, in order to fulfil that purpose. Sri Aurobindo is optimistic both as to what has been achieved so far and as to our prospects in the future. There were certain initial defects in the structure of the League of Nations which the U.N.O. sought to avoid. An attempt was made, at least in principle, but that attempt, too, was not thoroughgoing and successful. A strong element of oligarchy still survived. Still, as Sri Aurobindo says, "a too hasty or radical endeavour to get rid of this defect might lead to a crash of the world edifice." A new world-wide catastrophe would probably remedy this, for Nature herself raises obstacles and again removes them to facilitate the fulfilment of her intention. But, for this, a world-State will have to be built up without exclusions and on a principle of equality.

Just at the present stage the real danger is not the defective structure of the U.N.O. but the division of the people of the earth into two bitter factions. If this division does not cease, Nature may bring on a dire cataclysm to open the world's eyes. In Sri Aurobindo's words, ominous and reassuring at the same time, "A new, a difficult and uncertain beginning might have to be made in the midst of the chaos and ruin after perhaps an extermination on a large scale, and a more successful creation could be predicted only if a way was found to develop a better humanity or perhaps a greater, a superhuman race." It is clear that humanity is not willing to stop at the nation-state. There have been innumerable attempts to go beyond it. But, so far, it has taken the form of one nation establishing its sway over others. Sri Aurobindo sums up the whole book in the following eloquent and lucid passage:

"We conclude then that in the conditions of the world at present, even taking into consideration its most disparaging features and dangerous possibilities, there is nothing that need alter the view we have taken of the necessity and inevitability of some kind of world-union; the drive of nature, the compulsion of circumstances and the present and future need of mankind make it inevitable. The general conclusions we have arrived at will stand and the consideration of the modalities and possible forms or lines of alternative or successive development it may take. The ultimate result must be the formation of a World-State and the most desirable form of it would be a federation of free nationalities."

Concluded

LOTUS-FLAME

PART IV: THE SELF-KNOWLEDGE

By ROMEN

(Continued from the issue of Dec. 5)

A new birth of puissance and of light took shape,
 A birth that knew no death or oblivion;
 Sprung out of the unmeasured womb of his Fire
 Of celestial omnipotence and sight
 That now wrapped the expanse of his soul-self
 With a glow man dare not ever gaze in the face,
 His spirit of deathless and perennial shape
 Was cradled in the immense oceans of God.
 A luminous transparent fountain in his deep,
 This flame lay covert in his heart's abyss,
 Asleep within his far subliminal depths
 Like a marvel gem of which he knew not the price
 Or like a mass of golden lightning that lies
 Buried in the breast of dark cumulus clouds,
 Now awakened by the ceaseless toil of the Blue.
 And the Light that was the peak of his Destiny
 Unseen behind the veil like a lonely act
 Prepared, rehearsed, brought to perfection's top
 By the lone protagonist in the play divine,
 Himself the actor and the act and the play,
 The audience and the stage of the plebeian globe,
 Opened suddenly its radiant fountain-soul
 To reveal a splendour blinding his lesser heights
 And gave birth to his being mateless and alone,
 The splendid kernel of all bliss and light.
 His life became a brilliant voiceless Whole.
 There came the azure mysteries of the Remote
 To house within his frame's illumined gulfs,
 To change it into jewelled profundities;
 And mirror not glooms of the lower unseen worlds
 But turn skywards to reflect the face of the Vast,
 Radiance denied by mind and life and earth.
 Climbing to greater seats of reality,
 He was reborn ceaselessly again and again.
 From one white birth of flaming plenitude
 To another iridescent heavenly birth,
 From one hushed height of puissance sheer and unbarred
 To greater altitudes of blazing might,
 From one existence of deep bourneless expanse
 To higher kingdoms of immaculate truths,
 He winged, leaving behind all sheaths and robes
 Of the crude matter's adamantine crust
 And the subtle worlds that live not by form alone
 And the life's paradise of purple harmonies,
 Worlds content in their own plays and dreams,
 And the lone universe of Self in the mind
 And the receding heavens of the ideal
 To the larger sky-lines beyond all thought and sense.
 He winged from one sphere of dazzling ecstasy
 To broader and more luminous hierarchies,
 Flying through rapt oceans of hush and poise
 To higher seas of profound gold-brilliant calm.
 Like a marvel phoenix born for ever anew
 From its own pyrogenous deathless seed,
 His myriad births were brightening steps of fire
 That ascended the titan summits of the Unknown--
 From the dull and dubious humanity's eve
 To the ampler vastness and the boundless span
 Till reached were his wide self's god-golden seat.
 Bound no more by the illusion of the hour,
 Chained no more to the engulfing veil of space,
 Absolved from mortal doom's relentless Law,
 He reached the apex of the Ultimate.
 Tied no more to the Vortex of the base
 And its obscure motion's blind gloomward dive,
 He was now a topless deity of the sun
 Holding the sceptre of the Supreme's command
 And the regalia of the Absolute.
 In him lay the undying and the unborn,
 In him slept vast and dreamless ecstasies;
 His heart was now a natural sapphire-fount,
 A bright calyx encasing the gem-bud of light,
 Where found all thought and vision ample room.
 His mute fathomless spirit grew sky-immense
 To house the eternal and the permanent.
 In him gleamed the wide endless timelessness.
 He held the Truth-ray matchless and unique

In his depths like sparkling fire-golden wine,
 Ravished and drunk was his great spirit prone,
 An offering to the altar-blaze of that Truth;
 His rising being of the earth sacrificed
 Himself to his own peak's unvestured Self.
 It was the lone homaging to the Alone;
 The soul adoring the eternal Soul;
 The flame singing the anthem of the Flame.
 Motionless, invisible were now his instruments;
 A puissant silence that gazes ever aloof
 On time and world's ceaseless march like a sea-tide
 Clutched his entire mould in raptured embrace
 And he fronted the vast face of the Unseen,
 The great face of the Unknowable and the Beyond.
 There at last climbing the zenith of his climb
 He found his own immense and shadowless Self;
 The fallen self unioned with his topless Being,
 The nameless, motionless unassailable Soul.
 He became one with his own divinity's peak.
 Not a time's wayfarer came he to the top,
 But reached his eternal sanctuary of poise
 Like a god reaching his heaven infinite.
 Forgetting for a while all that he was,
 He faced his own immensities' solitudes;
 Became aware of his sun-potency unknown
 That lay buried in the caverns of nescience.
 Touched by the light of the sapphire altitudes,
 His hidden godhead awoke within his breast;
 His secret source arose out of its sleep;
 His covert omnipotence opened its lids
 And grasped the total range of mortal space.
 All his hymns and paeans of enchantment ceased;
 All the celestial wonder and the heights
 Stopped like a marvel orchestra of the sea;
 Mute fell the surge and billows of his mind;
 The adoration-flames leaped forth no more.
 For one had he grown now with the Wonderful's heart.
 One with sky, one with heaven, one with God.
 He grew from the questionable infant divine
 To that unveiled, unmasked divinity;
 From the worshipper of the Empyrean Flame
 He became the measureless sempiternal Fire;
 A wave of the unthinkable ocean of sleep,
 He became the universe and its spirit-soul;
 The power that moves, the will that creates and builds,
 The law that guides man's errant destiny
 And the hush that is alone and is above
 All things in sheer height of omnipotence;
 And he became the golden king of kings.
 But self-rapt trance and cogency were not all
 That now pervaded his godhead's spirit immense,
 Not only power and calm illimitable
 But beatitude and rapture without end
 Came and became his heaven's co-habitants.
 Voyaging sole mid the granite seas of gloom,
 Travelling unaided through the turmoil of birth
 And rising nude, companionless to the Peak
 Of his vast Being's limitless sun-core,
 He discovered a face of wallless diamond-grace
 With a grandeur-form of effulgence and of love,
 A shape that had no human counterpart,
 A visage of unimaginable ecstasy:
 She was the nameless deity of the worlds,
 The imperial creatrix of the universe,
 A white Regent whose power gripped the worlds
 Of all creation with her light and love
 In the name of the one topless Magnificence.
 Seated above in omniscient will and calm,
 It was She who guided all his works and plans;
 It was She who helped him in his ascent and soar,
 Remaining ungrasped behind his thoughts and deeds;
 The very motive of his birth and descent
 Into the soil's furrowless oblivion.
 It was She who was the yearning of his heart,
 The will to find a panacea of eternal sight
 And remove the ailing humanity's ills and wounds;
 The mind that soared; the spirit that craved for ever,

Continued on opposite page

HINTS ON THE ART OF SEEING

By Dr. R. S. AGARWAL

The mind plays an important part in the art of seeing. The eye receives the images of objects like a camera and the mind interprets these images. What we see is the interpretation of the retinal images by the mind. For example, look at the white centre of the "O" and compare the whiteness of it with the whiteness of the margin of the paper; note that the white centre appears whiter than the margin. In fact it is of the same shade of white as the margin but it is seen whiter. This is because the mind interprets the image from the eye in this way.

The natural function of both eye and mind is effortless like that of other sensory organs—ear or nose. We do not make any effort to hear or, to smell, similarly the eye performs its function. So, when the function of the eye and mind is natural, without effort on the part of the person, the art of seeing is perfect but if their function is carried out with an effort due to any reason, the art of seeing is disturbed. When the art of seeing is perfect, the eye adjusts its focus correctly at different distances, far and near, and the mind is able to interpret the correct image of the eye perfectly. If the eye is out of focus or if the mind is under a strain owing to any cause, seeing becomes defective. If focussing is incorrect for the distant as usually happens in short-sight or myopia, seeing is defective for the distant. If focussing is imperfect for reading as is usually in old age, seeing is imperfect for the near. If focussing is bad both for the distant and the near, as is usually found in hypermetropia, astigmatism and other eye diseases, seeing is bad both for the distant and near.

The eye is a miniature camera and it adjusts its focus at varying distances like a camera. We adjust the camera by moving its body forward and backward to get the correct focus. The eye also, like the camera, adjusts focus, by a change in the length of the eyeball. In one respect, however, there is a great difference between the eye and the camera. The camera plate is equally sensitive in every part; while the retina of the eye has a point of maximum sensitiveness, and every other part of the retina is sensitive in proportion as it is removed from the point of maximum sensitiveness. This point of maximum sensitiveness is called the *macula lutea* in medical terms. This point is the seat of clearest vision. As we move away from this spot, the acuteness of visual perfection rapidly decreases. The eye with normal sight, therefore, sees best one part of everything it looks at and everything else worse in proportion to the shifting of the image from the point of maximum vision. For example, look at the right-hand corner of a book and note that it appears more distinct than the other corners. Therefore, the normal eye sees only that part of the thing best on which it fixes itself and the other parts of the thing not so well. This quality of the eye is called central fixation.

In the art of seeing, central fixation is very important. When the eye possesses central fixation, the art of seeing is perfect, the eye is at rest and can be used indefinitely without fatigue. Central fixation is perfect when the eye is able to regard any small point better than another such point placed by its side.

Loss of central fixation means imperfect seeing and, when it is habitual, leads to all sorts of abnormal conditions and is at the bottom of most eye troubles. By improving central fixation the art of seeing is improved, but the limits of improvement depend upon the degree of central fixation. The benefits of central fixation in the art of seeing are so great that I am unable to set any limits to its possibilities and the subject merits further investigation. Anything which strains the mind will affect the eyes; or anything which strains the eyes will affect the mind. When there is strain of the mind and eyes, central fixation is always affected. The extent of the loss of central fixation depends on the degree of strain. The strain may be without pain and discomfort and the patient may not be aware of it or the strain may be followed by pain and discomfort.

Strain of the mind means loss of mental control, as one usually experiences in worries, anxieties, noise, fear, unfamiliar sounds, physical discomforts, restless sleep, wrong imagination etc.

Strain of the eyes means loss of central fixation as usually happens in regarding unfamiliar objects, maps, points, etc. and it is why one gets fatigued by seeing pictures or other objects in a museum. Trying to see an object as equally distinct in all its parts, or trying to see two or more objects or letters as equally distinct at one time lessens the sensitiveness of the *macula lutea*. The habit of incorrect focussing at a distance or at a near point leads to strain. Fixing the sight at one point for more than a second depresses the acuteness of vision: one can easily experience this fact by fixing the sight on a small letter in a book.

You cannot see anything with perfect sight unless you have seen it before. When the eye looks at an unfamiliar object it always strains more or less to see that object, and central fixation is thus lost and sight becomes defective temporarily. When the eye regards a familiar object, however, the effect is quite otherwise. Not only can it be regarded without strain, but the strain of looking later at unfamiliar objects is lessened.

This fact furnishes us with a means of overcoming the strain which may lower the central fixation under different conditions of life. Daily exercise in distant vision with the Snellen Test Card at about 10 feet or 15 feet distance has proved to be a very effective method to improve the central fixation and to prevent and cure errors of refraction.

LOTUS-FLAME —Continued from page 10

The life that hungered to break the ruthless chains
And the flesh that sought release in deathlessness.
Wrapping him in her glowing mantle of love
Like a child against the diurnal typhoonic rage
Of transience and time and the dark and fate:
She brought him to her haven of sapphire home,
Unmasked her golden soul to his spirit mute
And showed him the reality of his Being's core;
For she was his true hidden source behind.
Without her all his kingship was incomplete.
Estranged by the nihility of birth,
He visioned not his coeternal fire,
The Mother who fed his infant heart and life
By the milk of her white presence most divine,
The firmamental pabulum of the gods.
He sensed not her God-empowered levin blood
Flowing through his life's hungry unawakened veins
To sustain his godhead's immanent eternity.
But the dun cowl of the Hour slipped from her mien
And he beheld her Immensity at last,
Fronted the grandeur of of an aeonless face,
Bosomed the infinity of his own self,
Burned down the duality of sky and ground
And grew one with her all-enveloping love;
Her bliss and her beatitude and her power
Became his spirit's natural counterparts;
Not a vague baldachin of opal poise,
He had no need of kinship human or blind;
No urge he felt for the terrestrial bonds—
One sole shape of Aphroditic grace,
One iridescent form of the firmament
Engulfed all his being in its depths divine.
Leaving the chains of passing humanhood
He became the bond-slave of God-radiance;
Immured from the dark bacteria of desire,
The black germs of man's deathward destiny,
He entered her virgin and sun-bright domains.
Stopped here the eyeless wheel of birth and doom

At the huge gates of her turquoise tranquillity,
He communed with her deep inexpressible tongue,
The hush-born flame-raptured language of the vast,
Like a tall aerial catching the welkin-codes
And star-graphs and unseen sky-messages.
Deep, occult, cosmic and wonderful
Was her speech; measureless her accent was;
Incommensurable the ictus of her voice
And she spoke to his soul from her soul's gulfs
And he heard her sapphire-notes in his heart's hush
Like an echo of his own true godhead's voice,
A golden song with wings of fire and light.
All his mind's topaz belfry of ruby-bells
Fell silent with a burden of rapt trance.
And she spoke with her high star-white voicelessness:
"O eternal dreamer of the diamond age,
Risen to the altitude of the nameless Sleep
From the gloom-laden space of forgetfulness:
Thy hush is not all, nor thy solar-stillnesses
Thy supreme goal and thy immortal end.
Thou hast been missioned to vesture the Universe
With thy unbarred god-diademed effulgence
And open the lids of the low slumbering soil
To disclose the deathless eyes of light-souled bliss.
Missioned art thou to bring the Ultimate Ray—
Upon the ebon floor of Lethed earth
To awaken the undiscovered Source in its womb...
Descend again with thy blazing azure soul.
All my puissance and love shall lead thy path.
All my marvel presence divine shall wrap
The illimitable zodiac of thy Being.
O Unborn! O Ever-Sleepless! to dust descend."

And the Lotus-Flame, burdened with the Infinite,
Came down upon the foam-marged main of the earth;
An argosy of sky-resplendent might
Set sail to conquer the continents unknown
Of gloom and sleep and sphinx-bosomed mysteries;
A fire-boat of twin-flames on the midnight Heart.

End of Part IV

BOOKS in the BALANCE

A NEW DEAL FOR OUR UNIVERSITIES

By K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

(Orient Longmans, Bombay, Price: Rs. 4.)

Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar has shown in book after book an admirable gift of critically summing up individual books and collected works of various authors. In such summings up he intersperses his own original thoughts and ideas, and he expresses all these in such agreeable language that it is always a profitable pleasure to read his writings. In this new book of his of Universities all these characteristics are seen from beginning to end.

Quite a number of volumes have appeared in recent times on university education. Dr. Srinivasa Iyengar seems to be a bit weary of so much reporting on the subject, as he thinks that the trouble is with Man and not with the plans. Though that diagnosis is true, the probing by many individuals and committees and commissions must still be considerably helpful if one does not lose one's head in the confusing welter made by them all. Such clear analysis as is here given will serve to keep the head erect, and enquiries from a hundred points of view must be not only useful but also necessary in so important a subject as this.

University education is of the utmost importance at any time, whatever short-sighted and falsely practical people may say. Those who come out of the universities will be the power stations to spread the best light and energy throughout the country. Attending to university education is, in other words, attending to the very root of the intellectual well-being of the country. In the case of India today special thought and attention are necessary on account of the newly won independence and its innumerable consequences. Hence any careful study of this question of vital national importance calls for the eager attention of all people, and besides, as Dr. V. S. Krishna says in his Foreword, "In a world in which there is a rapid development of knowledge and the relevant social and political factors are continually changing, there should be a periodical review of the structure and functioning of universities."

Dr. Iyengar has wisely limited the scope of his book to the functioning of the university; since he does not attempt a big volume. But he does glance at all the important aspects of university education. He even refers to the original idea of the university and expresses it in the fine phrase, "Adventure in the fellowship of learning", since the basic idea of university education is the production of culture by the association of teachers with teachers, teachers with students, and of students with students. It is now recognized that education should be not merely literary or scientific, but should through various channels and in many directions fertilize the entire field of national life and progress. Education thus demands varied attention and has to help towards earning the bread, living a useful life in society, and developing the full personality of man. As Lord Lindsay pointed out long ago, "education in science and in the humanities must go together," and the whole thing has to be closely integrated with the life of the society.

How extensive education has to be when so conceived may be seen from Professor Bonamy Dobree's scheme of general education. He says it should consist of the study of: 1. the physical structure of the world—physics and astronomy; 2. man, his evolutionary status—biology; 3. human history; 4. history of human ideas and institutions—anthropology, psychology; 5. ideas and ideals—philosophy and religion; 6. literature, music and the plastic arts. This extensive view of education is found also in the Radhakrishnan Report where it is recommended that each student should take in the course of his life at the university ten to twelve general education courses. Whether such extensive courses be considered as too ambitious or not it cannot be gainsaid that for a real university education which is to develop the full man it is essential that the spirit, the intellect and the body of the student should be cultivated. Hence in any study of university education it is necessary that religious education, general education, professional education and physical education should be discussed. Dr. Iyengar has given some space to all these except physical education, though it must be said that he seems content with stating the problems and summarizing what has been said on them by Commissions and authors. But even that well done, as by him, helps towards an understanding of the problems and possibilities.

It is in discussing the details regarding the functioning of the university that this author is at his best. Practical experience and the study of many

writers have come to his aid, and he has touched on some of the most important things that should be attended to for the effective functioning of a university. Many consequences follow from the admission into a university of students that are really not qualified for the studies there. All the dragging down of standards now seen everywhere follows from this. The nature of the lectures, even the nature of the syllabuses, the library and laboratory work, the examinations, and all other activities of the university are vitiated by the indiscriminate admission of students to university courses for which they are not fit. The wastage of which this author complains—of failures extending to fifty or sixty or more per cent—may perhaps be the least of the evils. Hence, in spite of democracy and the influence of unthinking politicians and unlettered plutocrats and society leaders a firm policy is necessary with regard to admissions. Not only in the interests of the university but also in the interests of the unfit students themselves this is necessary. Bifurcated courses with informed advice and direction by university and government experts will have to be provided to make this really effective and servicable.

Allied to the admission of large numbers is that of the repetition of lectures in classes divided into batches. Naturally a Lecturer who repeats his lectures cannot be expected to show much enthusiasm when he is merely repeating. It is an admitted fact that one main purpose of lectures is the imparting of the lecturer's enthusiasm to the student. In these days of libraries and mass production of books there is not the same need for teachers to explain things as in the medieval times. But the need still remains of evoking enthusiasm in young people for various subjects of study; and where is the enthusiasm in the dull repetition of a lecture? Admissions to colleges must therefore be necessarily cut down, and the teachers must be chosen not merely for their scholarship but for their evident enthusiasm and capacity to pass on that enthusiasm.

Another important point connected with the functioning of the university is the need for keeping different classes distinct and separate. The practice of joint lectures for the junior and senior classes, and for Pass and Honours classes should be avoided. The mixing up of students of different standards cannot but be harmful from many points of view. There are again different objectives for pass courses, honours courses, and research courses. The distinctions between all these are of great importance.

Apart from all these there is the very important question of the language to be used in universities. There can be no difference of opinion about the language to be used in the lower classes; it is unnatural to use anything but the mother tongue. But on account of historical circumstances the language question in the university is complicated. English has been the medium for so many years, and the proficiency of the lecturers in the language is satisfactory. A sudden change over, it is generally recognized, must be harmful. We have heard about the undernourished war babies, and their life-long handicaps. But they were only physically so. The undernourishment of the mind that will follow a too early giving up of English in colleges will starve the mind and show its evil consequences in many spheres for generations together. The change over from English is inevitable; but it has to be done cautiously and gradually if the grave consequences of intellectual starvation are to be avoided. Dr. Iyengar has some very sensible things to say about the place of English in our universities.

While a great part of the book is devoted to university ideals and principles the author has not neglected to turn his attention to the question of the salary and position of university teachers, the finances of the university, and the organization of university authorities. In the discussion of all these subjects the learned author has made careful use of the views expressed in the Sadler Commission Report, the Sargent Report, the C. R. Reddy Report, and the Radhakrishnan Report. For a comprehensive account of university education and the live problems connected with higher education in India at the present time no more useful and readable book of the same size has been published here. Its great merit is that it focusses attention in due proportion on the various problems of modern university education.

P. L. STEPHEN

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