SRI AURIBINDO’S LETTERS

(LITERARY VALUES AND SOME INSPIRATIONAL QUALITIES)

(The questions are put before the answers)

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

(14-9-36)

(You have distinguished five kinds of poetic style—the adequate, the effective, the illuminated, the inspired, the inevitable. The first four can have their own inevitability, 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 Maresia trenta
Dellaagna delle navi emerge vese?

“The forceful adequate” might apply to much of Dante’s writing, but much else is pure inevitable; elsewhere it is the inspired style 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.”

(31-3-35)

(I don’t think Virgil would be classed by you as a poetic 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 Bellac 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 psyche; 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 psyche 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-magic, that does no doubt come somewhere else, much more than the thoughts or the words that are carried on the surge.”

(31-3-35)

(I think what Bellac meant in crediting Virgil with the power to give us a sense of the Unknown Country was that Virgil specializes 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—

Sternusse inferno aliis aequum volvere coelumque
Adpectit et dulces eburnae remissinsecus Argoct

as well as

Tendebantque manus rapae uterius amore

belong to the same category. To an ordinary Roman Catholic mind like Bellac’s 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

“e. g. when he pulled Mar ceus out of the mouth of his limbs.”

“Unhappy, he fell by a stranger’s wound and looked at the sky and,
dying remembered sweet Argoct.”

“Then 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 Bellon 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 Aristotle's) "earth-transforming grammar." 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 tapesties are burnt out and jocund day..." and of Dawn standing tip-toe under "yonder western hill" seems to give him a wondrous glimpse 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-one truly delicate, unhistorical passage on the same theme in Le Legende des Siecles. I wonder if you recollect the passage: its last stanzas are especially enchanting:

Tout reposait dans Ur et dans Jeremabeth; Les astres émouillaient le ciel profond et sombre; Les parfums des fleurs d'or et d'épice mêlées à l'ombre Brillait à l'occident, et Ruth se demandait, Immobile, ouvrait l'œil à moitié sous ses voiles, Quel dieu, quel moineau de l'âme était Avoir, en s'avançant, n'agissant pour rien Cette faucille d'or dans le champ des étoiles.*

What do you think of them?

"If that is Bello's idea of the mystic, I can't put much value on his Roman Catholic mind! Shakespeare's and Hugo's are also good poetry and may be very enchanting, as you say, but there is nothing in the least deep or mystic about them. Night's tapestries are the usual poetical metaphor, Hugo's moiseauan and fausse d'or are an ingenious fancy—there is nothing true behind it, not the least dash of a mystical experience. The lines quoted from Virgil are exceedingly moving and poetic, but it is paths of the life plane, not anything more—Virgil would have stared if he had been told that his ripe silvernity was revealed by the native land of the soul. These 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." (1-34)

"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 it occurs. I am sure you recollect the passage where this line stands:

"Quia juss locus, inquit Achates."

Quae regio in terris nostris non plena laboris? En Priamus! sunt hic etiam su praemias ludii. Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt..."

A recent translated version fails to convey the thought: "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 passage as a 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 hexametrise 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 mortal things. 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, we want Virgil to say in it only, "Oh yes, even in Carthage, so as to ring true, these are tears for earthly things and mortal fortunes touch the heart.""

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"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 emphasizing unduly the only idea of the universal. Virgil has put in no such rivetting, he keeps a bare connection from which he immediately skips: 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 and 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; mortal things mortal."

"All were asleep in Ur and in Jeremabeth: the stars assembled the deep and somber sky: the thin clear crescent gone in the West among these flowers of the darkness, and, Ruth, standing still and gliding through her half-pared veil, this celestial summer has thrown, while going home, this sickle of gold in the starry field!"

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** First line: "Fiercer griefs we have suffered; to these God will give ending." (Sri Aurobindo, "What is the Beatific Vision?"

Continued on opposite page
How the spirit and the vision of Sri Aurobindo in Savitri moves in the regions of the Superconscious 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 Evl gives birth to her son of Darkness:

"Companionless he roamed through desolate ways Where the red Wolf scours by the fordless stream." (p. 269)

This reminds one of the Vedantic verse:

"Auro me saubri patam samadavah hi. Once the red wolff saue 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 to destroy it. They are persistent, destructive, cruel, unceasing 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."—In the Vedas the lair is that of breaking open the Cave of the Inconscient—the earth—and releasing the pan 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 two-pan within the hidden cave." (IV. 1.39). 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 Rare Cow by the moon." One sees here the same weapon used and Sri Aurobindo's vision lays open the original set of invocation 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 the 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 hymn which runs as follows—

"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 correspondence 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 garnered in beggar's robes there walks the One." (p. 154)

It is similar to a passage in the Savitri Sutradhar 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 Ishâ—

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

The Self is all existence, and all existences are 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 lies 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 the man who controls the self, that in which the creatures awake is to the awakened sage the dark Night" (XII.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. 46), 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 ought beyond it." (X. 129)

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 the Lord of all the pillars 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 "Transcendent World" one 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 Brihadranyaka Upanishad expresses it thus:

"It is not a second or other thing, and separates from himself, that he seems, 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 for darkness for the Light, Of mortal life for immortality." (p. 65).

This vision echoes the well-known aspirations of the Brihadranyaka:—

"Lead me from darkness to Light From death to immortality." (I. 32).

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 Shvetashvatara speaks in a similar vein: "The One fashions one seed in many ways" (VI.12). That Sri Aurobindo touches the same supra-rational and supra-real 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 wit 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, "But thought nor word can seize eternal Truth." (p. 251)

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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 ‘mortals’ tangunt’ derives wholly from the ‘lacerae rerum’ and this, I think, ought to be brought out if we are to have an adequate poetic rendering. Three capital words, ‘lacerae,’ ‘mortalis,’ ‘tangunt,’ carry in them an intimate connection the whole burden of the inner sense of the touch which falls upon the mind from mortal things is the touch of tears, ‘lacerae 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)
This is similar to the Katha's
This knowledge is not to be attained by reason, (1.29.)
or,
There the Mind does not reach, nor the word.
The spiritual truth conveying the logic of the Infinity is contained in the following lines—
Each solenees inexpressibly held the whole.
(P. 284) It was to bring fractions of it, it fell, and admittance for reasons.
Yet all were being her'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;
edification in the Perfect is what remains.
This indeed is the Perfect and all else and all that 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 lighting has appeared in so different a light that a light of some 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 lighting has revealed sometimes the higher regions of Solar Light, the regions of golden light or Light, at times the moon-lighted worlds of infinite Delight, at times deep shades of the Darkness of the Inconsistent and the whole world of 'teeming cosmic life. Savitri is a vast band of lightnings steadied into the poetic empyrean, illuminating the cosmos from end to end, from the deepest to the highest heights of the Transcendent Divine, revealing the double ladder of divine dynamics, the ladder of ascent 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. Sethana in his book, The Poetic Genius of Sri Aurobindo, says, "The expression is organic to the sight and constantly carries an authentic and convincing power." Thus, to quote Sethana again, "Sri Aurobindo stands as the creator of a new Vedic and Upanishadish age of poetry.

We shall close this section with an apt passage from the same critic.
"To create a poetic would equally massive and multiform as The Life Divine for transmitting the living Reality to the farthest 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 it.

All evolutionary influences, in order to become dynamic in totum, 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 unsuited by any other mode of literature or art. But scattered and short pieces of poetry cannot build the sustained and organised sanatana-sahajam 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 bears upon its ultra-material realisation be wholly adequate to its aim if it does not embody these realisations as a whole and as a total.

Hence, Savitri is from every angle the right correlate to the practical drive towards transformation by India's mightiest Master of spirituality in his Ashton at Pandicherry. Next to his own personal work as Aurobindo is the organic one for a global remoulding of their lives, this poem that is at once legend and symbol will be the chief forma-
tur 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 righteous effort, for the cause of the light,歌等迪 Lostra is exceeded and in no other art-creation so continually and cumu-
latively has inspiration the lighting-footed goddess, 'A sudden messenger from the all-seers' touched, disclosed the Divine's truth and beauty: Even as seen through a casing of maya,
The smile of love that sanctions the long game,
The calm indulgence and maternal breasts
Of Wisdom suckling the child laughter of Chance,
States and States of the All-Saviour'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 imprinted a form,
Lent a vibrant cry to the untested ecstasy,
And through great shoreless, voiceless, streakless breaths
Beastward fragments of revealed thought
Heaven from the silence of the Incessible.

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 canvass and at its highest elevation, greatness and amplitude of spirit and speech and movement. It is a story that can only be properly to primitive ages when the freshness of life made a story of large and simple

* "Savitri", as it stood when Sri Aurobindo passed away, totals about 20,000 lines.
an independent vital world constituted entirely differently from our gross material earth. Says he:

As through a magic television’s glass
They show 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 mind 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 chasm customary line of mind and soul
And smuggle godhood 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—

Protons and photons served the inner Eye
To change things subtle into a physical world.

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

There is “quantum” and “robot” and “atomic parings of the infinite” and “a thinking body born from chemical 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 stay or create,
The risen invisible atom’s omnipotent force.


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 is a high breathless stratosphere.


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 flowers.

We know them shut up 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 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 reenacted vistas of dream fate.

Extending the same image he works it out into a vision of a spiritual military 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 trisulapatha of the subconscious mind,
Fil-learned slow stammering interpreters (p. 147),

and

Mid an obscure occult machinery,
Captured the mystic Morse whose measured lift
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 mist.

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 “unprovoked cheques on the Beyond” signed by man’s religion practices fraud upon the credit-banks 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 Life as yet unattained by humanity, but also the “Incognizant’s magic prying-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 unreached 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.

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THE MYSTICAL AND THE MISTY
AN ANSWER TO SOME QUERIES ABOUT SRI AUROBINDO

By K. D. SETHNA

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 plans or psychological structures. We can only apply a logic proper to the subject-matter in hand and show certain ideas as following continually 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 that death is a material body. A Yogi in the full sense is precisely one who has, to say the least, transcended the physical body-formula. Mystical experience has 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 sheaths so as to be unconnected with the subtle sheaths, the physical loses its support and vitality. Inasmuch as this support is lost, this 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, leaves beyond the body and is on an inner independence of it, the terms "death" and "suicide" cannot have for him the same 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, of course, prolong his life indefinitely, but he can in any case cut it short at any time—either by withdrawing into his subtle sheaths or by withdrawing beyond all sheaths into the formless Atman and Brahman, the essential and infinite spiritual Selfhood or Being-hood.

As for Sri Aurobindo, he was not only a Yogi in the highest sense known to the past: a Vaishnavite, a Hedonist, a mystic. 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, and into which and into which we are continuously awake 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-nicher 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 avoid 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 sheaths, and that too not within the body, but a capacity to sustain and prolong the body indefinitely could be there even before. Whatever the relation 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 seen or the spiritual desire. Yogi has 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, would 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 the partner body as the new vehicle of life the Yogi is born.

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 this, our reader has truly to study. As for the other things—my own article The Passing of Sri Aurobindo, Nirodbaran's Sri Aurobindo: "I am Here! I am Here!" and "Synergists' The Debt to Rudra.

Once the meaning of the supramental Yoga is grasped and Sri Aurobindo's past seen in the proper light, there is nothing mystifying.
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 and traditions exist, yet without much strain they should live together? 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 beauty and without being moved by the beauty of her heart, 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 characterized 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 communities has been intended by Nature so that their underlying unity might be discovered, and be manifest in the growth of the character and 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 future may bring, 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 thought and of peoples: to create in fact a Unity out of diversity.’

In his history of India, Vincenzo Florio has described the ‘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 convictions of the value of every human being. They governed and taught, 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. It is that the growth of which the innate spirituality of the race has been a great

in Prithivisingh’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 unusually difficult circumstances was an impossible event. According to Prithivisingh, several doctors Indian and French—had a manifold purpose, one side of which is Prithivisingh’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 was explained 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 minds.

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 life or world—puriy a physical life—we should divide India into two—Aurobindo and Mother. But we are afraid that he is thinking in terms of the Akanor 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 separation of the self from a self in a self-evident contradiction. But the true individual, whose distorted figure in evolving Nature is the ego and which can be realized only by the ego, is an inherent aspect of the multi-modulated Spirit and is not debunked from a genuine one-person and universal individuality with the universal consciousness. Beyond the universe it has its reality in the Transcendent whose complementary manifest formations are the universe and the individual. In a general sense we may say that the original Consciousness is a unitary-sustaining and shaping force.

While speaking of the diversity of India, Sir Fredrick Wytte points out her unity which to him is the greatest of all contradictions in India, a condition which is, he says, a very powerful that should exist 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 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 for the world and is a mine of gold and pattern. 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 epiphenomenon 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 underlying 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-uniting force of the Spirit, triumphing over all division and separative distinctions.

The Vedics saw 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 motif all the glorious expressions of her opulent creative life fitting herself to the men of her time and the world of her place. And today joy 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 immanent impulsion of the vastness and variety of her life and culture.

The Mystical and the Misty—Continued from opposite page

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 in the psychic past of the world a reality of being. Within each of us, spiritual experience reveals a twofold—Purusha and Prakriti, being and becoming, self and nature. In spiritual knowledge the creative world-principle is seen to be one—Iswar-Shakti—a two-in-one put forth from the Oneness in which many-ness lies implicit. When the Iswara-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 endeavours is to bring about a radical spiritual change of the world’s consciousness, an evolution of 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 bluie Iswara-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 arguments have been partly constructed, as we say, on the basis of various expositions, yet the leading philosophical ideas necessary here are and to find them lucid the mind must throw itself into a spiritual mood and feel the presence of a Reader beyond the common actualities and surface concretisations 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 it is to be brothered with a rush of 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 development of this idea. A recent footnote runs thus: "The component states of socialistic Russia are allowed, such human culture, national 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 qualified with another footnote: "Still the principle is there and capable of development at a future time."”

Hilberto 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 a psychological, but not 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 state 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, one culture, one thought and government, by which goal it 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 charriot wheels. But all these speculations have lost their force in the present setting. In Sri Aurobindo's words, "All these advantages have been more than offset by the centrifugal forces, by the stress of 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, but not to an actual, 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 old days a state could 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 of States that would 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 brigades 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 a more peaceful career. And the answer in the majority of cases, as squared were, as Kaiser Wilhelm or Fuhrer Hitler, by forming a strong combination of powerful nations 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 egotism rules the world, for it is the only motive. Sri Aurobindo says, "The desire of eliminating war and the settlement of differences by peaceful means would remove the military necessity for forced unions, while the right of everyone 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 and the power of determining the nature and quality of life and culture has become another form of power. The principle of the international 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 found its culture and language on the conquered people. That right is no longer admitted anywhere. Germany in attempting to establish it has diminished 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 the Roman Empire. When peace and freedom have been reached in 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 dreams 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 psychologically. It would lack that spirit of separateness and strife from endangering the union? Surely not! Exorcism! Because any use of force would strike at the very root of the fractiousness that is essential to such unification. The birth 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. And in the form of Socialism it found a vague form — but still, more as an ideal than a practical proposition. Before the First World the ideal found expression in the Hague Tribunal which can really be called a step in the right direction. Socialism was, how ever, 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 the present rupture 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 of the pacifist men, merely an ideal and not a fact; it is not merely an idea, but it is a fact, it is a part of one's feeling or otherwise a part of our psychology." As long as internationalism is merely an intellectual idea it cannot go far; it is only when it has grown into man's feelings, sympathies and natural habits that it would be maintaining more than an existent, though slender, decency. 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
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 natural necessity but forced and forced by 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, then, the state is a time only to dissipate the cloud of dust. What, then, of the international unity we are considering?

What is there at the back of it? Is there no vital necessity. The race, as a whole, can get on well enough without this unity, so far as mere living is concerned; but where survival is for the vast majority of the people, 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" that is in the nature of things, in Nature itself, a well-known biological truth. Sub-consciously, even inconsciously, 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 what he hopes to be, his life is what he desires. A nation is what it is driven by an inner idea or Truth to unite with others of its 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 emerge as a separate being; but this is something 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, would have been a much 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 far as human understanding and human action, that idea is deteriorating. 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 powers. It is the policy of some of the great 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 enable vitality to mankind. The fear of a powerful psychological factor would alone be able to keep the world-empire together. We have stressed the need of a fresh religion of humanity but it should be understood that this religion of humanity is something above and beyond a common desire in peace, progress and prosperity. For there is in man a natural tendency to compete and to struggle—an instinct for liberty, individual and collective, side by side with his instinct for unity. Just the religion of humanity can assure long life to the world-empire, if such an empire is to be.

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 for it to be useful for 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 union of mankind can be the natural and spontaneous result of historical necessity 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 life of the individual.

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 and again removed these cruel weapons of catastrophe 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, perhaps. Scallic inevitability. It may be a centralised world-state or a looser world-union which may take the form of a close federation or a simple confederation of nations for the common ends of humanity. Serious objection to be brought against it is that 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 fresh and older forces, to bring into being "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 every one of us is. Pending the growth of this realisation, man must go forward with the work of unification, even though the methods 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 disasters the human unity has moved forward steadily. In fact the two catastrophes have been 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-endavour." Nature uses such means, apparently opposed to her purpose, in order to fulfill that purpose. Sri Aurobindo is 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 aid this, for in breaking it, it would also remove 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 the error. After all, 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 indications about 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-as-present, even moving into consideration of many real and possible 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 conclusion 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 the nations."

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 limit, no bound,
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 gleam, a glory, a glow in the face,
His spirit of deathless and perennial shape
Was clad 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 toll of the Blue.
And the Light that was the peak of his Destiny
Unseen behind the veil like a lonely act
Prepared, rehearsed, brough the moment's top
By the last 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 rapture suspense-
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 gulf,
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 boundless expanse
To higher kingdoms of immaculate truths,
He winged, leaving behind all shreds and robes
Of the crude matter's adamasin crust
And the subtle worlds that live not by form alone
And the life's paradise of purple harmonies,
Worlds extant in their own plane of dreams,
And the lone universe of Self in the mind
And the reeding 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 aerpler vastness and the boundless span
Till reached were his wide self's god-golden seat.
Bemused no more by the illusion of an hour,
Chained no more to the engulphing 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 command
And the regalia of the Adept.
In him lay the undying and the unborn,
In him slept vast and dreamless ecstasies;
His heart was now a natural sulphureous-found,
A bright alcyon encausing the gem-band 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 homing 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 gaves ever abroad.

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 Unknownable and the Beyond.
There at last climbing the zenith of his climb
He found his own immense and shadowless Self;
The fallen self united with his topless Being,
The nameless, nameless 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 heart's infinite.
Forgetting for a while all that he was,
He faced his own immenities' solitude;
Became aware of his sun-potency unknown
That lay buried in the caverns of nescence.
Touched by the light of the sulphure 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 psalms 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 been 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 Rapsynas 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 illuminable
But beatitude and rapture without end
Came and became his heaven's co-habits.
Voyaging sole mid the granite seas of gloom,
Travelling unabashed through the turmoil of birth
And rising untried, 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 creatix 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.
Seat'd above in omnipotent 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 soul'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 but a mere interpretation of 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 more brilliant. 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 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 sensitivity, and everywhere else the retina is sensibly in proportion as it is removed from the point of maximum sensitivity. This point of maximum sensitivity is called the macula lutea in medical terms. This point is the seat of clearest vision. As we move away from this point of maximum sensitivity it becomes more and more defective. The eye with normal sight, therefore, sees best one part of everything it looks at and everything else in proportion to the shifting of the image from the point of maximum vision. For example, look at the right-hand corner of a building. It will appear more 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 effort or strain. 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 convinced that 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 two or more objects or letters 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 futea. The habit of incorrect focusing at a distance or at a near point leads to a rapid decrease in the sensitivity 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 straines 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 10 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
At the huge gates of her transcendental tranquillity, He communed with the deep inexpressible tongue, The hush-born flame-ruptured language of the vast, Like a tall aerial catching the welkin-codes And star-graphs and unseen sky-messages. Deep occult, cosmic was the word, Was her speech; measureless her accent was; Inconceivable the itus of her voice And she spoke to his soul from her soul's gulls And he heard her sighs-notes in her 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 Fall 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 spase 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 unharshed god-diademed effulgence And open the bds of the low slumbering soul To disclose the deathless eyes of light-souled bliss. Missioned art thou to bring the Ultimate Ray— Upon the ebon floor of Lotherd earth To awaken the undiscovered Source in its womb... Descend again with thy blazing azure soul. All my puissance and love shall lead thee to the path. All my marval presence divine shall wrap The immolable 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-minstrel strain of the earth, An argosy of sky-repelndant midnight

End of Part IV
Dr. K. R. Srinivasas Iyengar has shown in book after book an admirable gift of critically summing up individual books and collected works of vari-
sus authors. In such summings up he interposes 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. Srinivasas Iyengar seems to be a bit wary of so much
reporting on the subject, as he thinks that the trouble is with the world
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, what-
ever 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 resources 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
grace 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
students, 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 atten-
tion 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 an education has to be when so conceived may be seen from
Professor Bonamy Dobree's scheme of general education. He says it is to
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. familiar 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 Radha-
krishnam Report where it is recommended that each student should take in
the course of his life at the university at least twelve generations or the
three 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, pro-
fessional education and physical education must be considered. Dr. Iyengar
has given some space to all these except physical education, though
it must be said that he forms content with the general premises 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 prob-
lems 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 im-
portant things that should be attended to for the effective functioning of a
university. Many consequences follow from the admission into a univer-
sity of students that are really not qualified for the studies there. All the
teaching and studying down of standards proceeds in the same way. The
techers are vitiated by the indiscriminate admission of students to university courses
for which they are not fit. It is all obvious; in 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 un-
thinking 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. This is necessary.
Bifurcated courses with informal advice and direction by university and
government experts will have to be provided to make this really effective and
serviceable.
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 re-
 mains of evoking enthusiasm in young people for various subjects of study,
and where is the enthusiasm in the dull repetition of a lecture? Admis-
sions 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 univer-
sity 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, honors 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 lan-
guage 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 circum-
stances 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 recog-
nized, must be harmful. We have heard about the undernourishment of
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 to English is inevi-
table; 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 univer-
sities.
While a great part of the book is devoted to university ideals and prin-
ciples the author has not neglected to turn his attention to the question of
the salary and position of university teachers. Not only 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 focuses attention in
due proportion on the various problems of modern university education.

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