The Supramental is a truth and its advent is in the very nature of things inevitable...

I believe the descent of this Truth opening the way to a development of divine consciousness here to be the final sense of the earth evolution.

SRI AUROBINDO

A new light shall break upon the earth,
a new world shall be born: the things that were promised shall be fulfilled.

SRI AUROBINDO

TRANSLATED FROM THE MOTHER'S
"Prayers and Meditations."
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THE ADVANCEMENT OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>Sri Aurobindo</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINITE REASON ATD THE INFINITE</td>
<td>Sri Aurobindo</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL SCIENCE</td>
<td>Sri Aurobindo</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE MIND AND ITS ENLIGHTENMENT</td>
<td>Sri Aurobindo</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOW THOUGHTS ARE FORMED</td>
<td>Sri Aurobindo</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SILENT MIND, THOUGHT-WAVES, INTUITIONS</td>
<td>Sri Aurobindo</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“ABSOLUTE POETIC PERFECTION”</td>
<td>Sri Aurobindo</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“OVERHEAD POETRY” (LETTERS)</td>
<td>Sri Aurobindo</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILLION: BOOK VII (THE BOOK OF THE GODS)</td>
<td>Sri Aurobindo</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Quantitative English Hexameters)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students' Section</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE MOTHER'S TALKS: SPECIALISATION</td>
<td>Nolini Kanta Gupta</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AN INTRODUCTION TO 17TH CENTURY ENGLISH LITERATURE</td>
<td>Nathaniel Pearson</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN INDIA</td>
<td>K. D. Sethna</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMAN ASPIRATION</td>
<td>Manju Gupta</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Unknown is not the Unknowable; it need not remain the unknown for us, unless we choose ignorance or persist in our first limitations. For to all things that are not unknowable, all things in the universe, there correspond in that universe faculties which can take cognisance of them, and in man, the microcosm, these faculties are always existent and at a certain stage capable of development. We may choose not to develop them; where they are partially developed, we may discourage and impose on them a kind of atrophy. But, fundamentally, all possible knowledge is knowledge within the power of humanity. And since in man there is the inalienable impulse of Nature towards self-realisation, no struggle of the intellect to limit the action of our capacities within a determined area can for ever prevail. When we have proved Matter and realised its secret capacities, the very knowledge which has found its convenience in that temporary limitation, must cry to us, like the Vedic Restrainers, "Forth now and push forward also in other fields."

If modern Materialism were simply an unintelligent acquiescence in the material life, the advance might be indefinitely delayed. But since its very soul is the search for Knowledge, it will be unable to cry a halt; as it reaches the barriers of sense-knowledge and of the reasoning from sense-knowledge, its very rush will carry it beyond and the rapidity and sureness with which it has embraced the visible universe is only an earnest of the energy and success which we may hope to see repeated in the conquest of what lies beyond, once the stride is taken that crosses the barrier. We see already that advance in its obscure beginnings.

Not only in the one final conception, but in the great line of its general results Knowledge, by whatever path it is followed, tends to become one. Nothing can be more remarkable and suggestive than the extent to which modern Science confirms in the domain of Matter the conceptions and even the very formulae of language which were arrived at, by a very different method, in the Vedanta,—the original Vedanta, not of the schools of metaphysical philosophy, but of the Upanishads. And these, on the other hand, often reveal

1 Other is That than the Known; also it is above the Unknown.—Kena Upanishad. 1.3.
2 Rig Veda. 1. 4. 5.
their full significance, their richer contents only when they are viewed in the new light shed by the discoveries of modern Science,—for instance, that Vedantic expression which describes things in the Cosmos as one seed arranged by the universal Energy in multitudinous forms.\(^1\) Significant, especially, is the drive of Science towards a Monism which is consistent with multiplicity, towards the Vedic idea of the one essence with its many becomings. Even if the dualistic appearance of Matter and Force be insisted on, it does not really stand in the way of this Monism. For it will be evident that essential Matter is a thing non-existent to the senses and only, like the Pradhana of the Sankhyas, a conceptual form of substance; and in fact the point is increasingly reached where only an arbitrary distinction in thought divides form of substance from form of energy.

Matter expresses itself eventually as a formulation of some unknown Force. Life, too, that yet unfathomed mystery, begins to reveal itself as an obscure energy of sensibility imprisoned in its material formulation; and when the dividing ignorance is cured which gives us the sense of a gulf between Life and Matter, it is difficult to suppose that Mind, Life and Matter will be found to be anything else than one Energy triply formulated, the triple world of the Vedic seers. Nor will the conception then be able to endure of a brute material Force as the mother of Mind. The Energy that creates the world can be nothing else than a Will, and Will is only consciousness applying itself to a work and a result.

What is that work and result, if not a self-involution of Consciousness in form and a self-evolution out of form so as to actualise some mighty possibility in the universe which it has created? And what is its will in Man if not a will to unending Life, to unbounded Knowledge, to unfettered Power? Science itself begins to dream of the physical conquest of death, expresses an insatiable thirst for knowledge, is working out something like a terrestrial omnipotence for humanity. Space and Time are contracting to the vanishing-point in its works, and it strives in a hundred ways to make man the master of circumstance and so lighten the fetters of causality. The idea of limit, of the impossible begins to grow a little shadowy and it appears instead that whatever man constantly wills, he must in the end be able to do; for the consciousness in the race eventually finds the means. It is not in the individual that this omnipotence expresses itself, but the collective Will of mankind that works out with the individual as a means. And yet when we look more deeply, it is not any conscious Will of the collectivity, but a superconscious Might that uses the individual as a centre and means, the collectivity as a condition and field. What is this but the God in man, the infinite Identity, the multi-

\(^1\) Swetaswara Upanishad. VI. 12.
tudinous Unity, the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, who having made man in
His own image, with the ego as a centre of working, with the race, the collective
Narayana,\(^1\) the \textit{visvamanava}\(^2\) as the mould and circumscription, seeks to express
in them some image of the unity, omniscience, omnipotence which are the self-
conception of the Divine? “That which is immortal in mortals is a God and
established inwardly as an energy working out in our divine powers”\(^3\). It is
this vast cosmic impulse which the modern world, without quite knowing
its own aim, yet serves in all its activities and labours subconsciously to fulfil.

But there is always a limit and an encumbrance,—the limit of the material
field in the Knowledge, the encumbrance of the material machinery in the Power.
But here also the latest trend is highly significant of a freer future. As the out-
posts of scientific Knowledge come more and more to be set on the borders that
divide the material from the immaterial, so also the highest achievements of
practical Science are those which tend to simplify and reduce to the vanishing-
point the machinery by which the greatest effects are produced. Wireless tele-
graphy is Nature’s exterior sign and pretext for a new orientation. The sensible
physical means for the intermediate transmission of the physical force is re-
moved; it is only preserved at the points of impulsion and reception. Eventually
even these must disappear; for when the laws and forces of the supraphysical
are studied with the right starting-point, the means will infallibly be found for
Mind directly to seize on the physical energy and speed it accurately upon its
earrand. There, once we bring ourselves to recognise it, lie the gates that open
upon the enormous vistas of the future.

Yet even if we had full knowledge and control of the worlds immediately
above Matter, there would still be a limitation and still a beyond. The last
knot of our bondage is at that point where the external draws into oneness with
the internal, the machinery of ego itself becomes subtilised to the vanishing-
point and the law of our action is at last unity embracing and possessing multi-
plicity and no longer, as now, multiplicity struggling towards some figure
of unity. There is the central throne of cosmic Knowledge looking out on her
widest dominion; there the empire of oneself with the empire of one’s world;\(^4\)
there the life\(^5\) in the eternally consummate Being and the realisation of His
divine nature\(^6\) in our our human existence.

(From \textit{The Life Divine})

\(^1\) A name of Vishnu, who, as the God in man, lives constantly associated in a dual unity
with Nara, the human being.
\(^2\) The universal man.
\(^3\) Rig Veda. IV. 2. 1.
\(^4\) \textit{Svarajya} and \textit{Samrajya}, the double aim proposed to itself by the positive Yoga of the
ancestors.
\(^5\) \textit{Sarokya-mukti}, liberation by conscious existence in one world of being with the Divine.
...An inconclusive play is Reason’s toil.  
Each strong idea can use her as its tool;  
Accepting every brief she pleads her case.  
Open to every thought, she cannot know.  
The eternal Advocate seated as judge  
Armours in logic’s invulnerable mail  
A thousand combatants for Truth’s veiled throne  
And sets on a high horseback of argument  
To tilt for ever with a wordy lance  
In a mock tournament where none can win.  
Assaying thought’s values with her rigid tests  
Balanced she sits on wide and empty air,  
Aloof and pure in her impartial poise.  
Absolute her judgments seem but none is sure;  
Time cancels all her verdicts in appeal.  
Although like sunbeams to our glow-worm mind  
Her knowledge feigns to fall from a clear heaven,  
Its rays are a lantern’s lustres in the Night;  
She throws a glittering robe on Ignorance.  
But now is lost her ancient sovereign claim  
To rule mind’s high realm in her absolute right,  
Bind thought with logic’s forged infallible chain  
Or see truth nude in a bright abstract haze.  
A master and slave of stark phenomenon,  
She travels on the roads of erring sight  
Or looks upon a set mechanical world  
Constructed for her by her instruments.  
A bullock yoked in the cart of proven fact,  
She drags huge knowledge-bales through Matter’s dust  
To reach utility’s immense bazaar.  
Apprentice she has grown to her old drudge;  
An aided sense is her seeking’s arbiter.  
This now she uses as the assayer’s stone.  
As if she knew not facts are husks of truth,  
The husks she keeps, the kernel throws aside.  
An ancient wisdom fades into the past,  
The ages’ faith becomes an idle tale.
God passes out of the awakened thought,
An old discarded dream needed no more:
Only she seeks mechanic nature's keys
Interpreting stone-laws inevitable
She digs into Matter's hard concealing soil,
To unearth the processes of all things done.
A loaded huge self-worked machine appears
To her eye's eager and admiring stare,
An intricate and meaningless enginery
Of ordered fateful and unfailing chance:
Ingenious and meticulous and minute,
Its brute unconscious accurate device
Unrolls an unerring march, maps a sure road;
It plans without thinking, acts without a will,
A million purposes serves with purpose none.
And builds a rational world without a mind.
It has no mover, no maker, no idea:
Its vast self-action toils without a cause;
A lifeless Energy irresistibly driven,
Death's head on the body of Necessity,
Engenders life and fathers consciousness,
Then wonders why all was and whence it came.
Our thoughts are parts of the immense machine,
Our ponderings but a freak of Matter's law,
The mystic's lore was a fancy or a blind;
Of soul or spirit we have now no need:
Matter is the admirable Reality,
The patent unescapable miracle,
The hard truth of things, simple, eternal, sole.
A suicidal rash expenditure
Creating the worlds by a mystery of self-loss
Has poured its scattered works on empty space;
Late shall the self-disintegrating Force
Contract the immense expansion she has made:
Then ends this mighty and unmeaning toil,
The Void is left bare, vacant as before.
Thus vindicated, crowned, the grand new Thought
Explained the world and mastered all its laws,
Touched the dumb roots, woke veiled tremendous powers;
It bound to service the unconscious djinns
That sleep unused in Matter's ignorant trance.
All was precise, rigid, indubitable.
But when on Matter's rock of ages based
A whole stood up firm and clear-cut and safe,
All staggered back into a sea of doubt;
This solid scheme melted in endless flux:
She had met the formless Power inventor of forms;
Suddenly she stumbled upon things unseen:
A lightning from the undiscovered Truth
Startled her eyes with its perplexing glare
And dug a gulf between the Real and Known
Till all her knowledge seemed an ignorance.
Once more the world was made a wonder-web,
A magic's process in a magical space,
An unintelligible miracle's depths
Whose source is lost in the Ineffable.
Once more we face the blank Unknowable.
In a crash of values, in a huge doom-crack,
In the sputter and scatter of her breaking work
She lost her clear conserved constructed world.
A quantum dance remained, a sprawl of chance
In Energy's stupendous tripping whirl:
A ceaseless motion in the unbounded Void
Invented forms without a thought or aim:
Necessity and Cause were shapeless ghosts;
Matter was an incident in being's flow,
Law but a clock-work habit of blind force.
Ideals, ethics, systems had no base
And soon collapsed or without sanction lived;
All grew a chaos, a heave and clash and strife.
Ideas warring and fierce leaped upon life;
A hard compression held down anarchy
And liberty was only a phantom's name:
Creation and destruction waltzed in armed
On the bosom of a torn and quaking earth;
All reeled into a world of Kali's dance.
Thus tumbled, sinking, sprawling in the Void,
Clutching for props, a soil on which to stand,
She only saw a thin atomic Vast,
The rare-point sparse substratum Universe
On which floats a solid world's phenomenal face.
Alone a process of events was there
And Nature's plastic and protean change
And, strong by death to slay or to create,
The riven invisible atom's omnipotent force.
One chance remained that here might be a power
To liberate man from the old inadequate means
And leave him sovereign of the earthly scene.
For Reason then might grasp the original Force
To drive her car upon the roads of Time.
All then might serve the need of the thinking race,
An absolute State found order's absolute,
To a standardised perfection cut all things,
In society build a just exact machine.
Then science and reason careless of the soul
Could iron out a tranquil uniform world,
Aeonic seekings glut with outward truths
And a single patterned thinking force on mind,
Inflicting Matter's logic on Spirit's dreams
A reasonable animal make of man
And a symmetrical fabric of his life.
This would be Nature's peak on an obscure globe,
The grand result of the long ages' toil,
Earth's evolution crowned, her mission done.
So might it be if the spirit fell asleep;
Man then might rest content and live in peace,
Master of Nature who wants her bondsman worked,
The world's disorder hardening into Law,—
If Life's dire heart arose not in revolt,
If God within could find no greater plan.
But many-visaged is the cosmic Soul;
A touch can alter the fixed front of Fate.
A sudden turn can come, a road appear,
A greater Mind may see a greater Truth,
Or we may find when all the rest has failed
Hid in ourselves the key of perfect change.
Ascending from the soil where creep our days,
Earth's consciousness may marry with the Sun,
Our mortal life ride on the spirit's wing,
Our finite thoughts commune with the Infinite.

(From Savitri: Book II, Canto X)
PHYSICAL SCIENCE
SRI AUROBINDO

Science is not a statement of the truth of things, but only a language expressing a certain experience of objects, their structure, their mathematics, a coördinated and utilisable impression of their processes—it is nothing more. Matter itself is something (a formation of energy perhaps?) of which we know superficially the structure as it appears to our mind and senses and to certain examining instruments (about which it is now suspected that they largely determine their own results, Nature adapting its replies to the instrument used) but more than that no Scientist knows or can know.

* * *

Even the truth of physical things cannot be entirely known, nor can the right use of our material existence be discovered by physical Science and an outward knowledge alone or made possible by the mastery of physical and mechanical processes alone: to know, to use rightly we must go beyond the truth of physical phenomenon and process, we must know what is within and behind it.

* * *

... The distinctions made by the intellect and the classifications and practical experiments of Science, while perfectly valid in their own field and for their own purpose, do not represent the whole or the real truth of things, whether of things in the whole or of the thing by itself which we have classified and set artificially apart, isolated for separate analysis. By that isolation we are indeed able to deal with it very practically, very effectively, and we think at first that the effectiveness of our action proves the entire and sufficient truth of our isolating and analysing knowledge. Afterwards we find that by getting beyond it we can arrive at a greater truth and a greater effectivity.

The isolation is certainly necessary for first knowledge. A diamond is a diamond and a pearl a pearl, each thing of its own class, existing by its distinction from all others, each distinguished by its own form and properties. But each has also properties and elements which are common to both and others which are common to material things in general. And in reality each
does not exist only by its distinctions, but much more essentially by that which is common to both; and we get back to the very basis and enduring truth of all material things only when we find that all are the same thing, one energy, one substance or, if you like, one universal motion which throws up, brings out, combines, realises these different forms, these various properties, these fixed and harmonised potentialities of its own being. If we stop short at the knowledge of distinctions, we can deal only with diamond and pearl as they are, fix their values, uses, varieties, make the best ordinary use and profit of them; but if we can get to the knowledge and control of their elements and the common properties of the class to which they belong, we may arrive at the power of making either a diamond or pearl at our pleasure; go farther still and master that which all material things are in their essence and we may arrive even at the power of transmutation which would give the greatest possible control of material Nature. Thus the knowledge of distinctions arrives at its greatest truth and effective use when we arrive at the deeper knowledge of that which reconciles distinctions in the unity behind all variations. That deeper knowledge does not deprive the other and more superficial of effectivity nor convict it of vanity. We cannot conclude from our ultimate material discovery that there is no original substance or Matter, only energy manifesting substance or manifesting as substance,—that diamond and pearl are non-existent, unreal, only true to the illusion of our senses of perception and action, that the one substance, energy or motion is the sole eternal truth and that therefore the best or only rational use of our science would be to dissolve diamond and pearl and everything else that we can dissolve into this one eternal and original reality and get done with their forms and properties for ever. There is an essentiality of things, a commonalty of things, an individuality of things; the commonalty and individuality are true and eternal powers of the essentiality: that transcends them both, but the three together and not one by itself are the eternal terms of existence.
From the beginning of my correspondence I had been asking Sri Aurobindo a good number of questions about the nature of the mind and the right way of turning it towards the higher light and truth. The reason for doing this was not a wish to develop my immature mind; as a matter of fact, I did not quite know the reason myself till the correspondence was over. I just asked because I was somehow moved to do so. But as time passed I realised that in my sadhana the mind was to be the chief instrument—not a purely intellectualised mind moving about within its own limited boundaries, but a mind plastic and receptive to the higher truth and able to act under its impulsion, and also open to the psychic behind.

As my mind began to develop with Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's help, the answers to my letters began to be more and more brief. At first this came as a shock, but later I understood that Sri Aurobindo wanted me to try and solve my own questions about my sadhana and send him the solutions only for verification. For a time I did not quite appreciate this kind of mental growth, which deprived me of his interesting and valuable replies. I remonstrated a little; he soothed me finally by making me understand that in the spiritual field the true development of the mind lies not in its restless questionings and wanderings amidst ideas, but in its capacity to remain calm and find the truth which lies beyond itself, and that the higher it penetrates, the more illumined it becomes.

N. D.

Self: Is the intelligence a higher seat of consciousness than the intellect (Buddhi) or is it one of the faculties of the mind, like imagination or memory?

Sri Aurobindo: Intelligence is not a seat—it is a general word for the total action of the thinking mind or sometimes for its essential action.

(14-9-1933)

Self: What is the function of the intelligence?

Sri Aurobindo: That of observing, thinking, understanding, discriminating, initiating thought, will and action.

(14-9-1933)
Self: On what level can Imagination find out the Truth?

Sri Aurobindo: What Truth? Imagination is a power of the mind and supplies the mind with formations which may be true or not. It is not the business of the imagination to find out whether they are true—that is the work of other powers.

(30-8-1933)

Self: What other powers?

Sri Aurobindo: Any powers whose business it is to seek for or reveal or discover the Truth—from mental discrimination or intuition to Supermind. All I meant was that Truth-finding is not the business of Imagination which imagines all things, conceives all possibilities, but does not tell us which of them is true.

(4-II-1933)

Self: What is the proper function of the intellect? Is it helpful in Sadhana?

Sri Aurobindo: Its function is to reason from the perceptions of the mind and senses, to form conclusions and to put things in logical relation with each other. A well-trained intellect is a good preparation of the mind for greater knowledge, but it cannot itself give the Yogic knowledge or know the Divine—it can only have ideas about the Divine, but having ideas is not knowledge. In the course of the sadhana intellect has to be transformed into the higher mind which is itself a passage towards the true knowledge.

(22-8-1933)

Self: When does the intellect become an obstacle to the higher realisation?

Sri Aurobindo: When it wants to judge things for itself instead of submitting to a higher light.

(27-8-1933)

Self: Can any of the various thoughts that pass through the mind prove at times useful to one's sadhana?

Sri Aurobindo: Not the ordinary random thoughts. If it is an idea or perception with light in it, then it can be of use.

(27-8-1933)

Self: What is the difference between a physical thought and a thought of the mind proper?

Sri Aurobindo: The field is different and the capacity.

(27-7-1933)
Self: How to distinguish the thoughts and actions of the mind, vital and physical? Are not the vital’s thoughts and actions derived from desire or ego?

Sri Aurobindo: Yes, from some vital movement. Vital thought expresses vital movements, the play of vital forces—It does not think freely and independently of them as the thinking mind can do. The true thinking mind can stand above the vital movements, watch and observe and judge them freely as it would observe and judge outside things. In most men however the thinking mind (reason) is invaded by the vital mind and not free.

(25-7-1933)

Self: Does the thinking mind need some guidance in order to stand above the vital and watch and judge?

Sri Aurobindo: No. It can do it in its own right. It is its function to think, observe, discover and judge.

(27-7-1933)

Self: If the intellect judged impersonally would it not be always right?

Sri Aurobindo: To judge impersonally does not necessarily mean to judge rightly—it only give a greater chance of being right.

(27-8-1933)

Self: I have a “Meccano”. A thought came that I should offer it to the Mother as there was no time left for me to make steamers and aeroplanes from it. But soon followed another thought that I was still young and should use it and ought to send the Model Book to the Mother and ask her to select models for me to make and show her. Again, on returning from the pranam, I decided to send the whole set, but only after the Model Book had got bound properly and its stand repainted. I am much confused by these conflicting thoughts. What is the truth in them? How to pick out the correct thought at once? Please give me a clear answer. Finally I have decided to offer the “Meccano” to you.

Sri Aurobindo: These are merely different thoughts trying to represent different sides of a question. For the human thinking mind there are always many sides to everything and it decides according to its own bent or preference or to its habitual ideas or some reason that presents itself to the intellect as the best. It gets the real truth only when something else puts a higher light into it—when the psychic or the intuition touches it and makes it feel or see.

(16-6-1933)
Self: Before the psychic being takes hold of the Adhar, which part governs our mind, vital and physical?
Sri Aurobindo: Usually it is the Mind (buddhi) that governs the rest as best it can.

(12-9-1933)

Self: When the Buddhi governs the Adhar (mind, vital and physical) does the Mother’s Force work through the Buddhi?
Sri Aurobindo: Not necessarily—if the Buddhi is surrendered or open to the Mother, she works through it. If it is ignorant and closed to her, the mental Nature (Intelligence) works through the Buddhi.

Self: What would be the right activity of the Buddhi when it opens or surrenders itself to the Mother?
Sri Aurobindo: The right activity of the buddhi is always to observe, discern, discriminate, understand rightly and give the right direction to the vital and the body. But it does it imperfectly so long as it is in the Ignorance; by opening to the Mother it begins to get the true light and direction. Afterwards it is transformed into intuition and from intuition to the instrumental action of the overmind or the supermind Consciousness.

(14-9-1933)

Self: How does the Buddhi begin to open or surrender to the Mother?
Sri Aurobindo: By recognising its own ignorance and aspiring for light and transformation.

(16-9-1933)

Self: Can it by itself have the right activity or must it be enlightened by the higher consciousness to do so?
Sri Aurobindo: If it is trained, it can act rightly within its limits,—but that does not give the higher Truth.

(24-12-1933)

Self: What is the true activity of the psychicised intellect?
Sri Aurobindo: To see and judge things in their inner or spiritual truth, not merely in their external appearances.

Self: When the mind becomes one with the psychic, does it cease to deal with its own mental world?
Sri Aurobindo: No. The mind becomes psychicised, but it remains the mind and not the psychic.

(27-7-1933)
Self: Once you had written, "It is either the mind or the psychic that controls the vital or both the mind and the psychic together". Why should the psychic control the vital together with the mind? I thought, the psychic being is sufficiently powerful.

Sri Aurobindo: Why should the mind be left out of the action? How is the mind to be spiritualised if the psychic refuses all association with it? Or what is the mind there for if it is not [to] be used as an instrument by the soul?

(26-7-1933)

Self: In the course of the Sadhana what happens to the mental world of one's own? When one surrenders completely how can one keep anything as one's own?

Sri Aurobindo: The Truth comes down into the mind and a world of Truth is created there.

(31-8-1933)

Self: When the mental world finds that what it had accepted was not true, should it not reject it and accept what was true?

Sri Aurobindo: It should do so, but it is not always so easy as that. There is much unwillingness and resistance.

(31-8-1933)

Self: When the mind has discovered that what it had received was not true, why should there be any unwillingness and resistance in its rejecting it?

Sri Aurobindo: Your question presupposes that the mental cares only for the truth and does not prefer its own opinions. Most minds have not that desire for the truth.

(3-9-1933)

Self: Why does something that happened come to one's consciousness in a representation that changes the form of it instead of giving the fact?

Sri Aurobindo: Where? In the mind? The mind does not record things as they are, but as they appear to it. It catches parts, omits others; afterwards the memory and imagination mix together and make a quite different representation of it.

(25-8-1933)

Self: Why do we sometimes fail to remember certain things even though we try our best to recollect them?

(7-8-1933)
Sri Aurobindo: It is the nature of the physical consciousness to forget.

Self: My memory is very weak and dull. How to set it right?
Sri Aurobindo: By training it to remember, practice (abhyasa).
(6-8-1933)

Self: While trying to remember the Mother during the intellectual work I cannot pay sufficient attention to what is read or written. Why is this so?
Sri Aurobindo: Because your consciousness is not wide enough to contain many things at a time.
(8-8-1933)

Self: By this time it is possible for me to remain conscious of the Mother during my physical work unless I become careless. Now I feel that it is time I became aware of Her presence during intellectual activity also. How to start doing it?
Sri Aurobindo: By developing double consciousness, one that reads and writes and one that watches and receives the inspiration or is in contact with the Divine.
(7-8-1933)

Self: How to develop this double consciousness?
Sri Aurobindo: It has to develop by a widening of your consciousness.
(8-8-1933)
HOW THOUGHTS ARE FORMED*

**SELF:** What is the function of Manas?

**SRI AUROBINDO:** To sense things and react mentally to objects and convey impressions to the Buddhi etc. (11-9-1933)

**SELF:** What is the place of the Manas in the scheme of our Sadhana?

**SRI AUROBINDO:** I don’t use these terms myself as a rule—they are the psychological phraseology of the old Yoga. (12-9-1933)

**SELF:** What exactly is the relation between the Manas and the Chitta?

**SRI AUROBINDO:** The Chitta is the general stuff of mental consciousness which supports Manas and everything else—it is an indeterminate consciousness which gets determined into thoughts and memories and desires and sensations and perceptions and impulses and feelings (chittavrtti). (12-9-1933)

**SELF:** Is it not true that at times Chitta takes something from the general Nature and then determines it into thoughts, desires etc?

**SRI AUROBINDO:** It is both ways—The Chitta receives these things, gives them for formation to the vital and mind and all is transmitted to the Buddhi, but also it receives thoughts from the Buddhi and turns these into desires and sensations and impulses. (14-9-1933)

**SELF:** You say “The Chitta receives these things, gives them for formations to the vital and mind and all is transmitted to the Buddhi.” Does it mean that the Chitta does not give formations to anything but that the mind or the vital does it?

**SRI AUROBINDO:** The Chitta is the consciousness out of which all is formed, but the formation is made by the mind or vital or other force—which are, as it were, the instruments of the Chitta for self-expression. (17-9-1933)

**Self:** When the Chitta sends things to the mind and the vital for formation, is it they that are responsible for the formation made and not at all the Chitta?

* From Sri Aurobindo’s Letters to Nagin Doshi.
HOW THOUGHTS ARE FORMED

SRI AUROBINDO: There is something in the Chitta that either lends itself or subtly determines the formation.

SELF: What does your word “subtly” mean here?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not openly or precisely or in such a way that you can say—the Chitta has done this or that and the vital the rest.

(22-9-1933)

SELF: Has not the Chitta to cease catching influences at random from outside?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, certainly, but as its whole business is to receive from above or below or around it cannot stop doing it, it cannot of itself determine what it shall or shall not receive. It has to be assisted by the Buddhi, vital will or some higher power. Afterwards when the higher consciousness descends it begins to be transformed and capable of an automatic rejection of what is not true or right or divine or helpful to the growth of the divine in the being.

(14-9-1933)

SELF: When the vital will helps the Chitta, does it do so as freely and impersonally as the Buddhi?

SRI AUROBINDO: In the ordinary control by the Buddhi or vital will there is no need of impersonality.

(16-9-1933)

SELF: Can one distinguish between the thoughts, desires, sensations, impulsions etc. coming to the Chitta from outside and those coming from the Buddhi?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes. But the Chitta does not receive desires and sensations from the Buddhi. It takes thoughts from the Buddhi and turns them into desires.

(15-9-1933)

SELF: Unless the Chitta is enlightened the desires cannot be expected to be transformed fundamentally. Is it not so?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

(16-9-1933)

SELF: If the enlightenment can come without any personal and hard labour (that is, by the descent of the higher consciousness), so much the better. But in such a case, should one abandon the attempt of observing and wait only for the higher descent?

SRI AUROBINDO: No. By observing you prepare the fitness of the mind for the descent.
MOTHER INDIA

SELF: When the Chitta receives thoughts, desires etc. not from the Buddhi, but from outside, does it keep them as they come or does it change them?

SRI AUROBINDO: There is always or generally at least a modifying reaction in the Chitta—except when it simply receives and stores without passing over to the instruments.

(22-9-1933)

SELF: In some sect or school of Yoga it is said, "In order to do Yoga one should make the Chitta still." In our path, is it not better to transform the forms of the Chitta so that gradually the Chitta turns more and more towards the Divine and abandons its old stuff?

SRI AUROBINDO: The question is whether you can transform it without making it still.

(13-9-1933)

SELF: The Manas may cease conceiving but how does it stop perceiving?

SRI AUROBINDO: It can perceive passively and silently—that creates no vibration and does not break the silence.

(25-9-1933)

SELF: You say, "The Manas can perceive passively and silently without creating any vibration." But, is not the present Manas in the habit of forming ideas as soon as it sees the objects? How can it then hold the silence?

SRI AUROBINDO: I was not speaking of the present state of the Manas, I believe.

(26-9-1933)

SELF: Is there any connection between the Chitta and the Subconscient?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

(23-9-1933)

SELF: What sort of connection?

SRI AUROBINDO: The same as with any part of the being—there is a subconscient part of the Chitta which keeps the past impression of things and sends up forms of them to the consciousness in dream or else keeps the habit of old movements and sends up these whenever it finds an opportunity.

(24-9-1933)

SELF: Is it the Chitta which supplies our mechanical mind with the recurrent rounds of thoughts?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes.

(25-9-1933)

SELF: May I know the nature of thoughts, desires and impulses? How and why do they come into men?

SRI AUROBINDO: This is a thing one feels: one cannot say more than what everybody knows. As for how these come, they come as movements of universal
Nature, taking form in the person if they are admitted, just as other natural forces move about in waves or currents and take form or act for particular purposes in a suitable receptacle.

SELF: You wrote to me the other day that X’s thought and desire may have taken form in my dream. How can a thought or desire of another person take form in my dream?

SRI AUROBINDO: Why not? People’s thoughts are passing into each other’s mind always during the waking state even, without their knowing it, why not in dream also? (29-7-1933)

SELF: If one gives full and constant assent to the Mother’s working, how can the attempt of other beings to enter into one succeed?

SRI AUROBINDO: If you give consent to the Mother’s working alone, then it cannot.

It is not always an attempt. One receives the thoughts and feelings of the others without any attempt or intention of theirs, because they are in the atmosphere. (31-7-1933)

SELF: Is it good for a sadhaka to become conscious of others’ thoughts passing into his mind? (29-7-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: It is always better to be conscious rather than unconscious.

SELF: If one is unconscious of others’ thoughts, wouldn’t they come and pass away leaving no trace behind?

SRI AUROBINDO: Not at all. If you don’t know how they come you take them for your own and they have much greater force. (30-7-1933)

SELF: The thoughts that have entered, before one has become aware of them, first stay near the outer consciousness only. And if one does not reject them and allows them to come in, then only can they reach the inner consciousness and affect one. Is it like that? (30-7-1933)

SRI AUROBINDO: They come in of themselves. If you are not aware of them before they have entered how can you either allow or reject them?

SELF: Is it true that no one has his own thoughts? Either they come from the lower nature—from people—or from the higher mind?

SRI AUROBINDO: All comes from Nature of which people are a part—but they are called ours because they receive a particular form, arrangement or combination in our own minds. (31-7-1933)

SELF: All the thoughts that are passing into one’s mind do not stay there. Some pass away invisibly leaving no trace but others stay there and work. Do they not stay because of the response of some part of the being? If nothing responds to them, how can they stay there any longer? (31-7-1933)
SRI AUROBINDO: It is not a conscious response. It is only when the thoughts rise to the surface, that the conscious mind is aware of them and accepts them—but it accepts them with the idea that they are its own thoughts.

SELF: Sometimes I think that I am able to reject some (wrong) thoughts before they enter into me. Generally the thoughts enter directly into the inner consciousness and then they express themselves in the outer being, so that we feel as if they were just getting in from the outer world.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the case with people who do not watch and see. But if you see or feel them entering from outside, then it is from there that they are coming. (1-8-1933)

SELF: In which condition can one be conscious of one’s thoughts and desires before they enter?

SRI AUROBINDO: When one has got out of one’s limited physical personality and the consciousness is spread outside. (26-7-1933)

SELF: To keep the thoughts out of the system, is it not the preferable way that one should become indifferent and aspire to the Mother?

SRI AUROBINDO: You can do it in that way—provided the thought does not get hold of you through your inattention. (1-8-1933)

SELF: Is it true that what we receive from the general Nature has no definite form, but is a particular kind of force. How is the force changed so as to make us feel it as a thought, sensation or impulse?

SRI AUROBINDO: One can not only receive a force, but an impulse, thought or sensation. One may receive it from others, from beings in Nature or from Nature herself if she chooses to give her Force a ready-made form of that kind. (17-11-1933)

SELF: Cannot a thought be a guide to us by ceasing to follow its own exclusive satisfaction?

SRI AUROBINDO: What thought? The mental thought can never be more than a partial and ignorant guide. (24-9-1933)

SELF: What is the function of the physical thoughts?

SRI AUROBINDO: They are concerned with physical things, ordinary external experiences, habitual thought and action. The physical mind looks at these things from a superficial point of view, taking things as they seem and dealing with them in what appears to it to be a practical ordinary way. (28-7-1933)

SELF: When the mind is psychicised the thoughts that come from the lower forces would change themselves into divine thoughts. Correct?

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, or fall off and come no more. (28-7-1933)
SILENT MIND, THOUGHT-WAVES, INTUITIONS
SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO: I wrote everything I have written since 1909 in that way, i.e. out of or rather through a silent mind, and not only a silent mind but a silent consciousness...

MYSELF: But the trouble is, that the mind finds it difficult to believe that a vacancy can be filled up all of a sudden without any kind of thinking.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the silliness of the mind. Why should it be impossible to fill up a vacancy? It is easier for things to come into an empty space than into a full one. The error comes from thinking that your thoughts are your own and that you are their maker and if you do not create thoughts (i.e. think), there will be none. A little observation ought to show that you are not manufacturing your own thoughts, but rather thoughts occur in you. Thoughts are born, not made—like poets, according to the proverb. Of course, there is a sort of labour and effort when you try to produce or else to think on a certain subject, but that is a concentration for making thoughts come up, come in, come down, as the case may be, and fit themselves together. The idea that you are shaping the thoughts or fitting them together is an egoistic delusion. They are doing it themselves, or Nature is doing it for you, only under a certain compulsion; you have to beat her often in order to make her do it, and the beating is not always successful. But the mind or nature or mental energy—whatever you like to call it, does this in a certain way and carries on with a certain order of thoughts,—haphazard intellectualities (excuse the barbarism) or asinintities, rigidly ordered or imperfectly ordered intellectualities, logical sequences and logical inconsequences, etc., etc. How the devil is an intuition to get in in the midst of that waltzing and colliding crowd? It does sometimes,—in some minds often intuitions do come in, but immediately the ordinary thoughts surround it and eat it up alive, and then with some fragment of the murdered intuition shining through their non-intuitive stomachs they look up smiling at you and say “I am an intuition, sir”. But they are only intellect, intelligence or ordinary thought with part of a dismembered and therefore misleading intuition inside them. Now in a vacant mind, vacant but not inert (that is important) intuitions have a chance of getting in alive and whole. But don’t run away with the idea that all that comes into an empty mind, will be intuitive. Anything, any blessed kind of

* (From the Correspondence with Nirodharan)
idea can come in. One has to be vigilant and examine the credentials of the visitor. In other words the mental being must be there, silent but vigilant, impartial but discriminating. That is, however, when you are in search of truth. For poetry so much is not necessary. There it is only the poetic quality of the visitor that has to be scrutinised and that can be done after he has left his packet—by results.

MYSELF: You have seen, I think, Prithwisingh's poem. Its very first line was hovering over my mind—I let it go, not thinking much of it, but he has obviously caught it! Many times similar instances have occurred. How is one to explain this?

SRI AUROBINDO: There is no difficulty about explaining. You are as naive and ignorant as a newborn lamb. That is the way things come, only one does not notice. Thoughts, ideas, happy inventions etc., etc. are always wandering about (in thought-waves or otherwise) seeking a mind that may embody them. One mind takes, looks, rejects—another takes, looks, accepts. Two different minds catch the same thought-form or thought-wave, but the mental activities being different make different results out of them. Or it comes to one and he does nothing, then it walks off, saying "O this unready animal!" and goes to another who promptly annexes it and it settles into expression with a joyous bubble of inspiration, illumination or enthusiasm of original discovery or creation and the recipient cries proudly, "I, I have done this". Ego, sir! ego! You are the recipient, the conditioning medium, if you like—nothing more.

26-10-1935

MYSELF: This silent mind you speak of seems to be a result of Yoga. I don't suppose thinkers and philosophers usually write from a silent mind.

SRI AUROBINDO: Of course; the ordinary mind is never silent.

No, certainly not. It is the active mind they have; only of course they concentrate, so the common incoherent mentalising stops and the thoughts that rise or enter and shape themselves are coherently restricted to the subject or activity in hand. But that is quite a different matter from the whole mind falling silent.

MYSELF: If thoughts come like that, why is there a difference, sometimes a great difference, between the thought-substance of one person and that of another?

SRI AUROBINDO: First of all these thought-waves, thought-seeds or thought-forms or whatever they are, are of different values and come from different planes of consciousness. And the same thought substance can take higher or lower vibrations according to the plane of consciousness through which the thoughts come in (e.g. thinking mind, vital mind, physical mind,
subconscient mind) or the power of consciousness which catches them and pushes them into one man or another. Moreover there is a stuff of mind in each man and the incoming thought uses that for shaping itself or translating itself (transcribing we usually call it), but the stuff is finer or coarser, stronger or weaker etc., etc., in one mind than in another. Also there is a mind-energy actual or potential in each which differs and this mind-energy in its recipience of the thought can be luminous or obscure, sattwic, rajasic or tamasic with consequences that vary in each case.

**Myself:** But there are chances of getting drawn into quagmires by any blessed idea; how is one to pick out the right intuition?

**Sri Aurobindo:** *Experientia docet*—experience is the doctor. Also the habit of intuitivising if it is honestly done develops a discrimination that begins to know how to sort the sheep from the goats or the demis and semis and semi­demis from the real thing. By honestly I mean without ego or *parti pris*.

**Myself:** As for the ego—why can’t I pride myself on being an instrument, a medium?

**Sri Aurobindo:** No, you can’t—or if you do, you’ll make an unblessed mess. Why should the chisel pride itself because the sculptor uses it? He could just as well have used another and it would have done as well. But anyhow the point is that the ego brings a lack of poise and lack of receptive honesty and meddles with what is received.

28-10-1935

**Myself:** How does one have this “receptive honesty”? Is it by trying to have an inner silence and calm, and stopping all thoughts, as you point out in your letter?

**Sri Aurobindo:** That is the first condition, but not the whole process. I told you that one could not safely take whatever comes as the intuition and I gave you the reasons.

**Myself:** What I try to do now is to make my mind silent and wait for something to come.

**Sri Aurobindo:** Umph! But how are you sure that what sits up is not a mental suggestion?

**Myself:** And what has ego to do with all this? What one has to do is to remain just silent; and this is true for writing poetry as well as for prescribing medicines to patients.

**Sri Aurobindo:** Ego interferes in a general way—most of course in choosing medicines—and many ways, e.g. inviting pseudo-intuitions which flatter the ego. Also it may interfere when a mistake has been made and prevent you acknowledging it or even call in more pseudo-intuitions to justify and back up the original error. Innumerable are the tricks of the ego. Also,
MOTHER INDIA

if you feel yourself becoming intuitive, rightly or wrongly intuitive, (more so if it is wrongly), then a too strong ego may develop in you megalomania and then you are gone. So don't justify ego.

MYSELF: I understand that Intuition will be one of the outstanding features of your Supramental creation; we will only have to shut the eyes and come off with an illumined intuition and cry out “Eureka!” The result will be epoch-making discoveries, inventions, etc., etc. By Jove! What a grand period it will be!

SRI AUROBINDO: Good Lord, no! At least not till you live in the gnostic Intuition as your ordinary consciousness. So long as you are only receiving all sorts of things from everywhere, you will have to be on the qui vive to see that you don't make a pseudo-intuitive fool of yourself.

MYSELF: By the way, do not things like poetry, music, art, help the aspiration of the soul?

SRI AUROBINDO: They are first in life a preparation of the consciousness—but when one does Yoga they can become a part of the sadhana if done for the Divine and by the Divine Force. But one should not want to be a poet for the sake of being a poet only, or for fame, applause etc.

ON DESCARTES

(Nirodvaran: I have three letters of yours before me, and all three require some elucidation. I think and think, but can't get anywhere. Perhaps you will say, “Make the mind silent!” But Descartes says, “Je pense, donc je suis.”)

SRI AUROBINDO: Descartes was talking nonsense. There are plenty of things that don't think but still are—from the stone to the Yogi in samadhi. If he had simply meant that the fact of his thinking showed that he wasn't dead, that of course would have been quite right and scientific.

9–9–1935.
“ABSOLUTE POETIC PERFECTION”

(From a Letter by Sri Aurobindo)

(In the already published letter of Sri Aurobindo’s, entitled “Greatness and Beauty in Poetry”, a passage relating to certain lines quoted by the correspondent was omitted because it required those numerous lines to be mentioned. We are giving here the omitted passage and the quotations, together with some immediately relevant matter from the published piece. The correspondent’s question may be summed up: “I am sending you some lines and passages as candidates for absolute poetic perfection in diverse manners and on various levels, overhead or otherwise. At least some of the poets themselves—Pindar, Horace, Shakespeare of the Sonnets—felt that they had touched the absolute. But you have said that quality of substance does have a say in a full computation of poetry: the poetry of the ‘Iliad’, ‘Prometheus Bound’ or ‘Oedipus the King’ gives greater poetry—greater even in beauty because of the greater intrinsic beauty of its substance—than that of the Anacreonic Odes. I do admit a scale in the beauty of word and rhythm according to substance and plane: such a scale cannot leave in the literal sense a single unconditioned absolute. And yet do we not feel an identity of supremacy vis-à-vis lines dissimilarly ‘substanced’ and ‘planed’? How then are we to conceive these equal summit-intensities of poetic beauty that seem possible everywhere?”)

As to the doubt you have expressed, I think there is some confusion still about the use of the word “great” as distinct from the beautiful. In poetry greatness must, no doubt, be beautiful in the wider and deeper sense of beauty to be poetry, but the beautiful is not always great. First, let me deal with the examples you give, which do not seem to me to be always of an equal quality. For instance, the lines you quote from Squire do not strike me as deserving supreme praise. There is one line “on rocks forlorn and frore” which is of a very high beauty, but the rest is lofty and eloquent poetry and suggestive of something deep but not more than that; above all, there is a general lack of the rhythm that goes home to the soul and keeps sounding there except indeed in that one line and without

1 After the second sentence in the first paragraph—p. 138. Letters—Series III.
2 And that aged Brahmapootra
Who beyond the white Himalaya
Passes many a lamuscery
On rocks forlorn and frore,
A block of gaunt grey stone walls
With rows of little barred windows
Where shrivelled young monks in yellow silk
Are hidden for evermore.

(J. C. Squire)
such a rhythm there cannot be the absolute perfection; a certain kind of perfection there can be with a lesser rhythmic appeal but I do not find it here, the pitch of sound is only that of what may be described as the highly moved intellect. In the lines from Dryden the second has indeed the true note but the first is only clever and forcible with that apposite, striking and energetic cleverness which abounds in the chief poets of that period and imposes their poetry on the thinking mind but usually fails to reach deeper. Of course, there can be a divine or at least a deified cleverness, but that is when the intellect after finding something brilliant transmits it to some higher power for uplifting and transfiguration. It is because that is not always done by Pope and Dryden that I once agreed with Arnold in regarding their work as a sort of half poetry; but since then my view and feeling have become more catholic and I would no longer apply that phrase, —Dryden especially has lines and passages which rise to a very high poetic peak, —but still there is something in this limitation, this predominance of the ingenious intellect which makes us understand Arnold's stricture. The second quotation from Tennyson is eloquent and powerful, but absolute perfection seems to me an excessive praise for these lines,—at least I meant much more by it than anything we find here. There is absolute perfection of a kind, of sound and language at least, and a supreme technical excellence in his moan of doves and murmur of bees. As to your next comparison, you must not expect me to enter into a comparative valuation of my own poetry with that of Keats; I will only say that the "substance" of these lines of Keats is of the highest kind and the expression is not easily surpassable and, even as regards the plane of their origin it is above and not below the boundary of the overhead lines. The other lines you quote have their own perfection; some have the touch from above while others, it might be said, touch the overhead from below.

But what is the point? I do not think I have ever said that all overhead poetry is superior to all that comes from other sources. I was speaking of great-

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1 In liquid burnings or in dry to dwell
   Is all the sad variety of hell. (Dryden)

2 Well is it that no child is born of thee;
   The children born of thee are sword and fire,
   Red rum and the breaking up of laws. (Tennyson)

3 The moan of doves in immemorial elms
   And murmur of innumerable bees. (Tennyson)

4 Above the reason's brilliant slender curve,
   Released like radiant air dimming a moon,
   White spaces of a vision without line
   Or limit
   Solitary thinkings such as dodge
   Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
   Then leave the naked brain. (Sri Aurobindo)

5 The original Greek of:
   Beyond Gadeira none may pass into the gloom of the west. (Pindar)

(Footnote continued on next page)
ness and said that greatness of substance does count and gives a general superiority; I was referring to work in the mass and not to separate lines and passages. I said, practically, that art in the sense of perfect mastery of technique, perfect expression in word and sound was not everything and greatness and beauty of substance of the poetry entered into the reckoning. It might be said of Shakespeare that he was not predominantly an artist but rather a great creator, even though he has an art of his own, especially an art of dramatic architecture and copious ornament; but his work is far from being always perfect. In Racine, on the other hand, there is an unfailing perfection; Racine is the complete poetic artist. But if comparisons are to be made, Shakespeare’s must surely be pronounced to be the greater poetry, greater in the vastness of its range, in its

The original Greek of:

Thou that hast thy seat in the kindled eyes of boys and maidenly eyes. (Pindar: “Prayer to Beauty”)

...nec tibi earum
Jam desiderium rerum super insidet una.
(And now no longer does any yearning for these things come over thee.) (Lucretius)

But that two-handed engine at the door
Stands ready to smite once and smite no more.
(Milton)

Amara e noia
La vita, altro mai nulla; e fango è il mondo.
And tedium is life, nought else the world is filth.) (Leopardi)

Oh le mer vient mourir sur une plage endorme.
(Where the sea comes to die on a shore asleep.) (Alfred de Musset)

Inebriate of air am I
And debauchee of dew,
Reeling through the endless summer days
From inns of molten blue.
(Emily Dickinson)

Rapt thoughtless, wordless into the Eternal’s breast.
(Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
When not for certainties in this our life!
(Meredith)

And I know nothing but this body, nothing
But that old vehement bewildering kiss.
(Yeats)

A mind for ever
Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone.
Let the wild
Lean-headed eagles yelp alone
The cuckoo shouts all day at nothing
In leafy dells alone.
(Tennyson)

O she doth teach the torches to burn bright!
(Cover her face; my eyes dazzle; she died young.
Tel qu’en lui-même enfin l’éternité le change.
(Eternity changes him at last to his real self.)
(Mallarmé)

A rose-red city half as old as time?
It is His will that overarches all,
His sentinel love broods o’er the universe.
(D. K. Roy)
abundant creativeness, in its dramatic height and power, in the richness of his inspiration, in his world-view, in the peaks to which he rises and the depths which he plumbs—even though he sinks to flatnesses which Racine would have abhorred—and generally a glory of God’s making which is marvellous and unique. Racine has his heights and depths and widenesses, but nothing like this; he has not in him the poetic superman, he does not touch the superhuman level of creation. But all this is mainly a matter of substance and also of height and greatness in language, not of impeccable beauty and perfection of diction and rhythm which ought to rank higher on the principle of art for art’s sake.

That is one thing and for the sake of clarity it must be seen by itself in separation from the other points I put forward. The comparison of passages each perfectly beautiful in itself but different in their kind and source of inspiration is a different matter. Here it is a question of the perfection of the poetry, not of its greatness. In the valuation of whole poems Shelley’s *Skylark* may be described as a greater poem than his brief and exquisite lyric—“I can give not what men call love”—because of its greater range and power and constant flow of unsurpassable music, but it is not more perfect; if we take separate lines and passages the stanza “We look before and after” is not superior in perfection or absoluteness to that in the other poem “The desire of the moth for the star”, even though it strikes a deeper note and may be said to have a richer substance. The absolute is the absolute and the perfect perfect, whatever difference there may be in the origin of inspiration; but from the point of view of greatness one perfection may be said to be greater, though not more perfect than another. I would myself say that Wordsworth’s line about Newton is greater, though not more perfect than many of those which you have put side by side with it. And this I say on the same principle as the comparison between Shakespeare and Racine: according to the principle of art for art’s sake Racine ought to be pronounced a poet superior to Shakespeare because of his constant and impeccable flawlessness of word and rhythm, but on the contrary Shakespeare is universally considered greater, standing among the few who are supreme. Theocritus is always perfect in what he writes, but he cannot be ranked with Aeschylus and Sophocles. Why not, if art is the only thing? Obviously, because what the others write has an ampler range, a much more considerable height, breadth, depth, largeness. There are some who say that great and long poems have no true value and are mainly composed of padding and baggage and all that matters are the few perfect lines and passages which shine like jewels among a mass of inferior half-worked ore. In that case, the “great” poets ought to be debunked and the world’s poetic production valued only for a few lyrics, rare superb passages and scattered lines that we can rescue from the laborious mass production of the artificers of word, sound and language.

*Sri Aurobindo*
"OVERHEAD POETRY"

(At the instance of several readers we are publishing for the first time, together with some relevant matter already published, the detailed appraisals by Sri Aurobindo of some poems by an inmate of the Ashram who was aspiring to write, with the Master's spiritual influence and critical guidance, what the latter had called "overhead poetry": that is, poetry whose inspiration is caught from the spiritual planes above the mental intelligence as well as above the various other levels—inner-mental, psychic, vital, subtle-physical—from which inspiration, mystic no less than non-mystic, can derive. The appraisals, with further elucidatory remarks from elsewhere interwoven in a few places and appended in one, are quoted because they serve by their many-sided analysis to educate us in discriminating from mental poetry the overhead afflatus and in distinguishing the several grades of it which have been designated by Sri Aurobindo as Higher Mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind. With regard to the quality of poems such as reproduced here, two points have to be noted. As Sri Aurobindo himself once said in a letter, "the poetic (aesthetic) value or perfection of a line, passage or poem does not depend on the plane from which it comes, but on the purity and authenticity and power with which it transcribes an intense vision and inspiration from whatever source." At the same time, his pronouncement in another letter must be remembered: "Naturally, the lower planes cannot express the Spirit with its full and native voice as the higher planes do unless something comes down into them from the higher planes." To this we may add from a third letter: "The sense of the Infinite and the One which is pervasive in the overhead planes...can be expressed indeed by overhead poetry as no other can express it.")

CONSUMMATION

Immortal overhead the gold expanse—
An ultimate crown of joy's infinity.
But a king-power must grip all passion numb
And a gigantic loneliness draw down
The large gold throbbing on a silver hush.
Nought save an ice-pure peak of trance can bear
The benediction of that aureole.
MOTHER INDIA

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO:

"It is very fine—it is the Higher Mind vision and movement throughout, except that in the fifth line a flash of Illumination comes through. Intense light-play and colour in this kind of utterance is usually the Illumined Mind’s intervention."—"The Higher Mind is the first plane where one becomes aware of the Self, the One everywhere and knows and sees things through an elevated thought-power and comprehensive mental sight—not illumined by any of the intense or upper lights but as in a large strong and clear daylight."—"A divine power, measure, dignity is its most frequent character."

In the first version submitted, the second line had run:

An ultimate crown of inexhaustible joy.

Sri Aurobindo remarked about that line:

"It is strong and dignified, but it impresses me as too mental and Miltonic. Milton has very usually—in ‘Paradise Lost’—some of the largeness and rhythm of the Higher Mind, but his substance is, except at certain heights, mentally—mentally grand and noble. The interference of this mental Miltonic is one of the great stumbling-blocks when one tries to write from ‘above’."—

"Milton’s architecture of thought and verse is high and powerful and massive, but there are usually no subtle echoes there, no deep chambers: the occult things in man’s being are foreign to his intelligence,—for it is in the light of the poetic intelligence that he works.”—

"The poetic intelligence...is the mind and its vision moving on the wings of imagination akin to the intellect proper but lifted above it. The Higher Mind is a spiritual plane, this is not. But the larger philosophic and the larger poetic intelligence are nearer to it than the ordinary intellect and may receive its influence....Classical poetry is fundamentally a poetry of the poetic intelligence. But it may be suffused and modified by other influences—generally through some infiltration from the Inner Mind which communicates some tinge of a higher afflatus to the poetic intelligence, sometimes through a direct uplifting.”—

"The Inner Mind can get the reflection of the higher experience or, of course, by descent in yoga the higher realisation can come down into the lower planes....But...the Higher Mind is itself a spiritual plane and...one who lives in it has naturally the realisation of the Self, the One everywhere. The Inner Mind has not that naturally, but it can open to it; all the same, between the reflected realisation in the mind and the automatic realisation in the spiritual mental planes there is a difference.”

Distinguishing the general mode and the typical turn of the Inner Mind’s poetry from those of the Higher Mind’s, Sri Aurobindo wrote of a poem: “Not from the Higher Mind—for there a high-uplifted thought is the characteristic—but probably from some realm of the Inner Mind where thought and vision are
“OVERHEAD POETRY”

involved in each other—that kind of fusion gives the easy felicity that is found here.”

FIRST SIGHT OF GIRNAR

Strange with half-hewn god-faces that upbear
A listening quietude of giant caves,
The prisoner eternities of earth
Have wakened in this purple loneliness.

Each granite block comes cloven to the eye
As if the blue voice of the Unknowable
Broke through its sleep: like memories left behind
Of some enormous sculpture-cry of soul
The rocks reveal their shattered silences.

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO:

“A very fine poem—Illumined Mind throughout very perfectly expressed.”—
“The outflow of the Illumined Mind comes in a flood brilliant with revealing words or a light of crowding images, sometimes surcharged with its burden of revelations, sometimes with a luminous sweep....There is a substitute for the expression of the Higher Thought, the Illumination, the pure Intuition giving great or brilliant results, but these cannot be classed as the very body of the higher consciousness....Shakespeare’s poetry coruscates with a play of the hues of imagination which we may regard as a mental substitute for the inspiration of the Illumined Mind and sometimes by aiming at an exalted note he links on to the illumined overhead inspiration itself as in the lines I have more than once quoted:

Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
Seal up the shipboy’s eyes and rock his brains
In cradle of the rude imperious surge?

But the rest of that passage falls away in spite of its high-pitched language and resonant rhythm far below the overhead strain. So it is easy for the mind to mistake and take the higher for the lower inspiration or vice versa.”

In connection with the Illumined Mind an interesting possibility, poetic and mystic, is pointed out by a comment of Sri Aurobindo’s on another piece by the author of First Sight of Girnar:

“It is certainly very original and expresses with great force the spiritual experience. A very fine poem—most of it being in substance from the Illumined Mind but its rhythm belongs to the poetic intelligence, strong and clear-cut
but not with the subtle or large inner tones of the overhead music. It is a very luminous and powerful image.”

Sri Aurobindo indicates another possibility in his comment on a poem:

“Very fine—language and rhythm remarkably harmonious, teres totusque rotundus—the expression very felicitous and embodying exactly the thing seen. Source is poetic intelligence drawn back into Inner Mind and lifting towards the overhead planes from which it receives its vision and substance and a certain breath of subtlety and largeness.”

Comparing the poetry of the Inner Mind with that of the Illumined, he writes elsewhere:

“There are many kinds of vision in the Inner Mind....A certain spontaneous intensity of vision is usually there, but not of that large or rich sweep or power which belongs to the Illumined Mind; moreover, it is more subtle and fine and has not the wideness which is the characteristic of the planes that rise towards the Overmind.”

About the poetry of the psychic plane and that of the Illumined Mind and of the overhead levels in general he writes:

“The turn of the psychic is different from that of the above-head planes; it has less of greatness, power, wideness, more of sweetness, delicate beauty, beauty of emotion also, fine subtlety of true perception, an intimate language, etc.—Arnold’s expression ‘sweetness and light’ can very well be applied to the psychic as the kernel of its nature. The spiritual planes, when they take up these, give them a wider utterance, powerful audacity, strength and space.”

—"...Of the combination of the psychic and the Illumined Mind powers... here is an example that could not be bettered:

If Thou desirest my weak self to outgrow
Its mortal longings, lean down from above,
Temper the unborn light no thought can trace,
Suffuse my mood with a familiar glow,
For ’tis with mouth of clay I supplicate:
Speak to me heart to heart words intimate,
And mould Thy formless glory turn to love
And mould Thy love into a human face.”

“I consider they can rank—these eight lines—with the very best in English poetry.”

“At present you write, as you do other things, too much with the brain, the mere human intelligence. To get back from the surface vital into the psychic and psychic vital, to raise the level of your mental from the intellect to the Illumined Mind is your need both in poetry and in Yoga. I have told you already that your best poetry comes from the Illumined Mind, but as a rule it either comes from
"OVERHEAD POETRY"

there with too much of the transcription diminished in its passage through the intellect or else is generated only in the creative poetic intelligence. But so many poets have written from that intelligence. If you could always write direct from the Illumined Mind—finding there not only the substance, as you often do, but the rhythm and language, that indeed would be a poetry exquisite, original and unique. The intellect produces the idea, even the poetic idea, too much for the sake of the idea alone; coming from the Illumined Mind the idea in a form of light and music is itself but the shining body of the Light Divine.”

POOL OF LONELINESSES

I have become a secret pool
Of lonelinesses mountain-cool,
A dream-poise of unuttered song
Lifted above the restless throng
Of human moods’ dark pitchers wrought
Of fragile and of flawful thought.
Now never more my tunes shall flow
In moulds of common joy and woe;
But seraph hands reveal wide jars
Cut from the solitudes of stars
And stoop across the sky to fill
The perfect shapes of their calm will
With musical obedience
From my pellucid time-suspense;
And in their crystalline control
Of heaven-mooded ecstasy
Carry the waters of my soul
Unto God’s sacred thirst for me!

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO

“It is a very fine poem. It comes from the intuitive plane—belonging to the Intuition proper which brings with it a sort of subdued inspiration—I mean inspiration of the more quiet, not the more vivid kind and a great felicity of language. The meaning is not obscure but deep enough to make one reflect before getting the whole of it.”—

“The poetry of the Illumined Mind is usually full of a play of lights and colours, brilliant and striking in phrase, for illumination makes the Truth
vivid—it acts usually by a luminous rush. The poetry of the Intuition may have a play of colour and bright lights, but it does not depend on them—it may be quite bare, it tells by a sort of close intimacy with the Truth, an inward expression of it. The Illumined Mind sometimes gets rid of its trappings, but even then it always keeps a sort of lustrousness of robe which is its characteristic."

"The Intuition is usually a lightning flash showing up a single spot or plot of ground or scene with an entire and miraculous completeness of vision to the surprised ecstasy of the inner eye; its rhythm has a decisive inevitable sound which leaves nothing essential unheard, but very commonly is embodied in a single stroke."

"The pure Intuition...is different from the mental intuition which is frequent enough in poetry that does not transcend the mental level."—"Dante writes from the poetic intelligence with a strong intuitive drive behind it."

"What you are writing now is overhead poetry—before you used to write poems very often from the intuitive mind—these had a beauty and perfection of their own....The intuitive mind, strictly speaking, stretches from the Intuition proper down to the intuitivised inner mind—it is therefore at once an overhead power and a mental intelligence power. All depends on the amount, intensity, quality of the intuition and how far it is mixed with mind or pure. The inner mind is not necessarily intuitive, though it can easily become so. The mystic mind is turned towards the occult and spiritual, but the inner mind can act without direct reference to the occult and spiritual, it can act in the same field and in the same material as the ordinary mind, only with a larger and deeper power, range and light and in greater unison with the Universal Mind; it can open also more easily to what is within and what is above. Intuitive intelligence, mystic mind, inner mind intelligence are all part of the inner mind operations."

MADONNA MIA

I merge in her rhythm of haloed reverie
By spacious vigil-lonelinesses drawn
From star-birds winging through the vacancy
Of night's incomprehensible spirit-dawn.

My whole heart echoes the enchanted gloom
Where God-love shapes her visionary grace:
The sole truth my lips bear is the perfume
From the ecstatic flower of her face.
COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO:

"I think it is one of your best. I could not very definitely say from where the inspiration comes. It seems to come from the Illumination through the Higher Mind—but there is an intuitive touch here and there, even some indirect touch of 'mental Overmind' vision hanging about the first stanza.

"There are two ranges of Overmind which might be called 'mental' and 'gnostic' Overmind respectively—the latter in direct touch with Supermind, the former more like a widened and massive intuition."

"The Overmind thinks in a mass; its thought, feeling, vision is high or deep or wide or all these things together: to use the Vedic expression about fire, the divine messenger, it goes vast on its way to bring the divine riches, and it has a corresponding language and rhythm."—"The mantra (not necessarily in the Upanishads alone) as I have tried to describe it in The Future Poetry is what comes from the Overmind inspiration. Its characteristics are a language that says infinitely more than the mere sense of the words seems to indicate, a rhythm that means even more than the language and is born out of the Infinite and disappears into the Infinite and the power to convey not merely some mental, vital or physical contents or indications or values of the thing it speaks of, but its value and figure in some fundamental and original consciousness which is behind them all."—

"Lines from the highest intuitive mind-consciousness, as well as those from the Overmind, can have a mantric character—the rhythm too may have a certain kinship with mantric rhythm, but it may not be the thing itself, only the nearest step towards it."—

"To get the Overmind inspiration through is so rare that there are only a few lines or short passages in all poetic literature that give at least some appearance or reflection of it."

THE TRIUMPH OF DANTE

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

1 In some qualification of this statement it may be mentioned that, concerning the time when Madonna Mia and the subsequent poems had been commented upon, Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1946: "At that time I hesitated to assign anything like Overmind touch or inspiration to passages in English poetry or other poetry and did not presume to claim any of my own writing as belonging to this order." Later, several lines in the world's poetry which he had once hesitated about were adjudged by him to be directly from the sheer Overmind.
MOTHER INDIA

The shining touch of that omnipotence.
Ineffable the secreties 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 smile 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!

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO:

“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.¹ 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.”

¹ The phrase “pure inevitability” is to be understood in reference to the various kinds of style which, apart from the various sources or planes of inspiration, have been distinguished by Sri Aurobindo in his critical writings: the adequate, the effective, the illumined, the inspired—each capable of inevitability in its own line—and the pure inevitable which escapes all labels of classification. We may note here that about Dante’s own style Sri Aurobindo has written: “The ‘forceful adequate’ might apply to much of Dante’s writing, but much else is sheer inevitable, elsewhere it is the inspired style. Dante’s simplicity comes from a penetrating directness of poetic vision, it is not the simplicity of an adequate style.”
VITA NUOVA

Haloed by some vast blue withheld from us,
Her pure face smiles through her cascading hair:
Like a strange dawn of rainfall nectarous
It comes to amaranth each desert prayer.

Beyond themselves her clay-born beauties call:
Breathing the rich air round her is to find
An ageless God-delight embracing all,
The mute unshadowed spaces of her mind.

Across both night and day her secrets run,
For even through our deepest slumberings
We hearken to an embassy of the sun
And stir invisible of rapturous wings.

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO:

"A very fine poem. The second stanza is the finest; in the two others the first line strikes very deep. The lines that reach the highest and widest are the third and fourth of the middle stanza. Lines 1, 7, 8, 9, come from very high and express a vision the full significance of which can only be realised by spiritual experience. Line 1—Illumined Mind taken upwards by a wide intuitive inspiration. Lines 7, 8—I am inclined to ascribe them at their source of vision to an intermediate plane which is not Overmind itself but may be called the Overmind Intuition.\(^1\) You are right about the second line—'The mute unshadowed spaces of her mind'; it is one of the finest you have written and is absolutely authentic and true. Both lines have a strong revelatory power. Line 9—Intuition."

NO MORTAL BREATH

No mortal breath you bring us: love divine
Makes your whole countenance a silver call
To meet an unviewed vast of spirit-hush.

\(^1\) In another place Sri Aurobindo analyses these lines as being "Intuitive with Overmind touch" and differentiates this touch as that of "Overmind proper" and not of "mental Overmind". Some gnostic light not belonging to mental Overmind seems therefore to be present in Overmind Intuition here, but mixed with an inferior power. An unmixed presence of it would be in lines sheer from Overmind and a less mixed one in those in which, within a context where the touch of Overmind Intuition in some lines is spoken of, the touch of Overmind is discerned. We may add that in one letter Sri Aurobindo distinguishes four planes of Overmind: mental Overmind, Intuitive Overmind, true Overmind and supramentalised Overmind.
MOTHER INDIA

Far in the mystic vault your home is hung:
We turn our faces to your planet soul
And all infinity weighs upon our eye
Its plumbless sleep. O light unwithering,
O star-bloom mirrored in a lake of earth,
Remember that your roots suck the pure sky!
Dream not the brief and narrow curves of clay
Limit your destiny of pristine power—
A throne amid ecstatic thrones that rule
A loneliness of superhuman night.

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO:

"Very fine all through both in language and rhythm—the last part, except for the closing line, is not so near the absolute as the first half, but all the same it is very fine and powerful. The blank verse is very good, each line has sufficient power to stand by itself, yet all combine together to make a linked whole. The basis is the Higher Mind: in the first half many of the lines (2-7) are illumined and there is even a strong influence of the Overmind Intuition. In the latter half, the same with a slighter illumination (9,10), last line again the uplifting Overmind Intuition influence."

SAVITRI

A rose of dawn, her smile lights every gaze—
Her love is like a nakedness of noon:
No flame but breathes in her the Spirit’s calm
And pours the omnipresence of a sun.
Her tongues of fire break from a voiceless deep
Dreaming the taste of some ineffable height—
A cry to clasp the one God-hush in all,
A universal hunger’s white embrace
That from the Unknown leaps burning to the Unknown.

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO:

"Exceedingly fine; both the language and rhythm are very powerful and highly inspired. When the inspiration is there, you reach more and more a peculiar fusion of the three influences, higher mental, illummed mental and intuitive, with a touch of the Overmind Intuition coming in. This touch is strongest here in the second and the two closing lines, but it is present in all except the third which is yet a very fine line indeed."
"OVERHEAD POETRY"

GNOSIS

No clamorous wing-waft knew the deeps of gold.
An eagle lost in earth-forgetfulness,
Rising without one stir of dreamy feather,
Life gains the Unmeasured through a flame of sleep—
A love whose heart is white tranquillity
Upborne by vast surrender to this Sun.
Flickering no longer with the cry of clay,
The distance-haunted fire of mystic mind
Embraces there its own eternal Self—
Truth’s burning core poised over the universe!

COMMENTS FROM SRI AUROBINDO:

"It has become by the omitted and added lines a finer poem than before. The first line had lost much of its power through being cut off from immediate connection with the eagle rising, now that it has been restored it gets its full beauty and by the change of the fourth line which is now on the same level as the preceding and following lines all these six become one piece with one power and level of inspiration: Higher Mind with some colour of Illumination and just touched by Overmind Intuition—a faultless movement of vision and colour, all welded together into a harmonious whole. The next two rise still more to an extraordinary lofty inspiration (Illumined Mind with the Overmind touch)—and present a most profoundly suggestive spiritual picture. The last two are very high up in the Higher Mind—just the right kind to form a powerful and luminous close. The ten lines make a consistently fine and admirably structured poem."

SRI AUROBINDO’S LETTER TO A READER:

"What super-excellence? as poetry? When I say that a line comes from a higher or overhead plane or has the Overmind touch I do not mean that it is superior in pure poetic excellence to others from lower planes—that X’s lines outshine Shakespeare or Homer for instance. I simply mean that it has some vision, light, etc. from up there and the character of its expression and rhythm are from there. You do not appreciate probably because you catch only the surface mental meaning. The line—‘Flickering no longer with the cry of clay’—is very fine from the technical point of view, the distribution of consonantal and vowel sounds being perfect. That, however, is possible on any level of inspiration. These are technical elements, the Overmind touch does not consist in that but in the undertones or overtones of the rhythmic cry and a lan-
MOTHER INDIA

guage which carries in it a great depth or height or width of spiritual vision, feeling or experience. But all that has to be felt, it is not analysable. If I say that the second line is a magnificent expression of an inner reality most intimate and powerful and the first line, with its conception of the fire once ‘flickering’ with the ‘cry’ of clay but now no longer, is admirably revelatory—you would probably reply that it does not convey anything of the kind to you. That is why I do not usually speak of these things in themselves or in their relation to poetry—only with X who is trying to get his inspiration into touch with these planes. Either one must have the experience—e.g., here one must have lived in or glimpsed the mystic mind, felt its fire, been aware of the distances that haunt it, heard the cry of clay mixing with it and the consequent unsteady flickering of its flames and the release into the straight upward burning and so known that this is not mere romantic rhetoric, not mere images or metaphors expressing something imaginative but unreal (that is how many would take it perhaps) but facts and realities of the self, actual and concrete, or else there must be a conspiracy between the solar plexus and the thousand-petalled lotus which makes one feel, if not know, the suggestion of these things through the words and rhythm. As for technique, there is a technique of this higher poetry but it is not analysable and teachable. If, for instance, X had written ‘No longer flickering with the cry of clay’, it would no longer have been the same thing though the exact mental meaning would be just as before—for the overtone, the rhythm would have been lost in the ordinary staccato clipped movement and with the overtone the rhythmic significance. It would not have given the suggestion of space and widthness full with the cry and the flicker, the intense impact of that cry and the agitation of the fire which is heard through the line as it is. But to realise that, one must have the inner sight and inner ear for these things; one must be able to hear the sound-meaning, feel the sound-spaces with their vibrations. Again, if he had written ‘Quivering no longer with the cry of clay’, it would have been a good line, but meant much less and something quite different to the inner experience, though to the mind it would have been only the same thing expressed in a different image—not so to the solar plexus and the thousand-petalled lotus. In this technique it must be the right word and no other, in the right place and in no other, the right sounds and no others, in a design of sound that cannot be changed even a little. You may say that it must be so in all poetry; but in ordinary poetry the mind can play about, chop and change, use one image or another, put this word here or that word there—if the sense is much the same and has a poetical value, the mind does not feel that all is lost unless it is very sensitive and much influenced by the solar plexus. In the overhead poetry these things are quite imperative, it is all or nothing—or at least all or a fall.”
ILION

(Sri Aurobindo’s poem entitled “Ilion”, published in the second volume of “Collected Poems and Plays”, is a fragment from a long though unfinished epic. Owing to the many corrections, additions and variants the manuscript is not always easy to read. But two Books are exceptions, though neither is without a few difficulties and one of them has an unaccountable gap of 68 lines due to the disappearance of the pages on which they were written. As the former—Book II—has been earmarked for publication elsewhere, we are starting here the latter: Book VI. We do not know whether Sri Aurobindo intended the present version to be final or not. But it exemplifies with both inspiration and technical verve the theory of true English Quantity, particularly as applied to the Hexameter, that he expounded at illuminating length in his essay “On Quantitative Metre” appended to “Collected Poems and Plays.” A summary statement of the principles involved is culled below from a part of the essay.

“Four rules or sets of rules can be formulated which will sum up the whole base of the theory:—

“(1) All stressed syllables are metrically long, as are also all long-vowel syllables even without stress.

“All short-vowel syllables are metrically short, unless they are lengthened by stress—or else by a sufficient weight of consonants or some other lengthening sound-element; but the mere fact of more than one consonant coming after a short vowel, whether within the word or after it, or both in combination, is not sufficient to confer length upon the syllable. Heaviness caused by a crowding of consonants affects the rhythm of a line or part of a line but does not alter its metrical values.

“Each word has its own metrical value which cannot be radically influenced or altered by the word that follows.

“(2) The English language has many sounds which are doubtful or variable in quantity; these may be sometimes used as short and sometimes as long according to circumstance. Here the ear must be the judge.

“(3) Quantity within the syllable itself is not so rigidly fixed as in the ancient languages; often position or other circumstances may alter the metrical value of a syllable. A certain latitude has to be conceded in such cases, and there again the ear must be the judge.

“(4) Quantity metres cannot be as rigid and unalterable in English as in the old classical tongues; for the movement of the language is pliant and flexible and averse
to rigidity and monotone. English poetry has always a fundamental metrical basis, a fixed normality of the feet constituting a line; but it relieves the fixity by the use of modulations substituting with sometimes a less, sometimes a greater freedom, other feet for the normal. This rule of variation, very occasionally admitted in the classical tongues but natural in English poetry, must be applied or at least permitted in quantitative metres also; otherwise, in poems of some length, their rhythms may become stereotyped in a too rigid sameness and fatigue the ear.

"No other rule than these four need be laid down, for the rest must be left to individual choice and skill in technique.

"In the basic structure of quantitative verse so arranged the three elements of English rhythm, accent, stress and intrinsic quantity are none of them excluded; all are united or even fused together. Accentual high pitch is taken up into stress; low pitch, not amounting to stress, as also slighter accentual inflexions have their place in the rhythm and the intonation but not in the metre; they are not allowed to determine the metrical quantity of the syllable on which they fall. For, in fact, unless they amount to stress, these voice inflexions do not confer length of true quantity; the quantity conferred by them in accentual verse is conventional and need not be admitted where the accentual basis is abandoned and the convention is not needed. Stress itself is admitted as a quantitative element because it constitutes, by the weight of the voice which it lays on the syllable, a true metrical length, a strong sound-value. Intrinsic quantity, which is not recognised as a metrical constituent in the traditional verse system, recovers here its legitimate place. As a result quantitative metres can be constructed which, like accentual and stress metres but unlike the abortive constructions of the classicists, can flow naturally in a free movement, a movement native to the language; for they will combine in themselves without disfiguration or forcing all the natural elements of the rhythm or sound-movement proper to the English tongue."

BOOK VII

THE BOOK OF THE GODS

So on the earth the seed that was sown of the centuries ripened;
Europe and Asia, met on their borders, clashed in the Troad.
All over earth men wept and bled and laboured, world-wide
Sowing Fate with their deeds and had other fruit than they hoped for,
Out of desires and their passionate griefs and fleeting enjoyments
Weaving a tapestry fit for the gods to admire, who in silence
Joy, by the cloud and the sunbeam veiled, and men know not their movers.
They in the glens of Olympus, they by the waters of Ida
Or in their temples worshipped in vain or with heartstrings of mortals
Sated their vast desire and enjoying the world and each other
Spored free and unscourged; for the earth was their prey and their playground.
But from his luminous deep domain, from his estate of azure
Zeus looked forth; he beheld the earth in its flowering greenness
Spread like an emerald dream that the eyes have enthroned in the sunlight,
Heard the symphonies old of the ocean recalling the ages
Lost and dead from its marches salt and unharvested furrows,
Felt in the pregnant hour the unborn hearts of the future.
Troubled kingdoms of men he beheld, the hind in the furrow,
Lords of the glebe and the serf subdued to the yoke of his fortunes,
Slave-girls tending the fire and herdsman driving the cattle,
Artisans labouring long for a little hire in men’s cities,
Labour long and the meagre reward for a toil that is priceless.
Kings in their seats august or marching swift with their armies
Founded ruthlessly brittle empires. Merchant and toiler
Patiently heaped up our transient wealth like the ants in their hillock.
And to preserve it all, to protect this dust that must perish,
Hurting the eternal soul and maiming heaven for some metal
Judges condemned their brothers to chains and to death and to torment,
Criminals scourgers of crime,—for so are these ant-heaps founded,—
Punishing sin by a worse affront to our crucified natures.
All the uncertainty, all the mistaking, all the delusion
Naked were to his gaze; in the moonlit orchards there wandered
Lovers dreaming of love that endures—till the moment of treason;
Helped by the anxious joy of their kindred supported their anguish
Women with travail racked for the child who shall rack them with sorrow.
Hopes that were confident, fates that sprang dire from the seed of a moment,
Yearning that claimed all time for its date and all life for its fuel,
All that we wonder at gazing back when the passion has fallen,
Labour blind and vain expense and sacrifice wasted,
These he beheld with a heart unshaken; to each side he studied
Seas of confused attempt and the strife and the din and the crying.
All things he pierced in us gazing down with his eyelids immortal,
Lids on which sleep dare not settle, the Father of men on his creatures;
Nor by the cloud and the mist was obscured which baffles our eyeballs,
But he distinguished our source and saw to the end of our labour.
He in the animal racked knew the god that is slowly delivered;
Therefore his heart rejoiced. Not alone the mind in its trouble
God beholds, but the spirit behind that has joy of the torture.
Might not our human gaze on the smoke of a furnace, the burning
Red, intolerable, anguish of ore that is fused in the hell-heat,
Shrink and yearn for coolness and peace and condemn all the labour?
Rather look to the purity coming, the steel in its beauty,
Rather rejoice with the master who stands in his gladness accepting
Heat of the glorious god and the fruitful pain of the iron.
Last the eternal gaze was fixed on Troy and the armies
Marching swift to the shock. It beheld the might of Achilles
Helmed and armed, knew all the craft in the brain of Odysseus,
Saw Deiphobus stern in his car and the fates of Aeneas,
Greece of her heroes empty, Troy enringed by her slayers,
Paris a setting star and the beauty of Penthesilea.
These things he saw delighted; the heart that contains all our ages
Blessed our toil and grew full of its fruits, as the Artist eternal
Watched his vehement drama staged twixt the sea and the mountains,
Phrased in the clamour and glitter of arms and closed by the firebrand,
Act itself out in the blood and in passions fierce on the Troad.
Yet as a father his children, who sits in the peace of his study
Hearing the noise of his brood and pleased with their play and their quarrels,
So he beheld our mortal race. Then, turned from the armies,
Into his mind he gazed where Time is reflected and, conscient,
Knew the iron knot of our human fates in their warfare.
Calm he arose and left our earth for his limitless kingdoms.

Far from this lower blue and high in the death-scorning spaces
Lifted above mortal mind where Time and Space are but figures
Lightly imagined by Thought divine in her luminous stillness,
Zeus has his palace high and there he has stabled his war-car.
Thence he descends to our mortal realms; where the heights of our mountains
Meet with the divine air, he touches and enters our regions.
Now he ascended back to his natural realms and their rapture,
There where all life is bliss and each feeling an ecstasy mastered.
Thence his eagle Thought with its flashing pinions extended
Winged through the world to the gods, and they came at the call, they ascended
Up from their play and their calm and their works through the infinite azure.
Some from our mortal domains in grove or by far-flowing river
Cool from the winds of the earth or quivering with perishable fragrance
Came, or our laughter they bore and the song of the sea in their paces,
Some from the heavens above us arrived, our vital dominions
Whence we draw breath; for there all things have life, the stone like the ilex,
Clay of those realms like the children of men and the brood of the giants.
There Enceladus groans oppressed and draws strength from his anguish
Under a living Aetma and flames that have joy of his entrails.
"Constancy most I love, nobility, virtue and courage;
Fugitive hearts I abhor and the nature fickle as sea-foam.
Now if the ancient spirit of Titan battle is over,—
Tros fights no more on the earth, nor now Heracles tramples and struggles
Bane of the hydra or slaying the Centaurs o’er Pelion driven,—
Now if the earth no more must be shaken by Titan horsehooves,
Since to a pettier framework all things are fitted consenting,
Yet will I dwell not in Greece nor favour the nurslings of Pallas.
I will await the sons of my loins and the teats of the she-wolf,
Consuls browed like the cliffs and plebeians stern of the wolf-brood,
Senates of kings and armies of granite that grow by disaster;
Such be the nation august that is fit for the favour of Ares!
They shall fulfil me and honour my mother, imperial Hera.
Then with an iron march they shall move to their world-wide dominion,
Through the long centuries rule and at last because earth is impatient,
Slowly with haughtiness perish compelled by mortality’s transience
Leaving a Roman memory stamped on the ages of weakness.”
But to his son far-sounding the Father high of the Immortals;
“So let it be since such is the will in thee, mightiest Ares;
Thou shalt till sunset prevail, O war-god, fighting for Troya.”
So he decreed and the soul of the Warrior sternly consented.
He from his seats arose and down on the summits of Ida
Flaming through Space in his cloud in a headlong glory descended,
Prone like a thunderbolt flaming down from the hand of the Father.
Thence in his chariot drawn by living fire and by swiftness,
Thundered down to earth’s plains the mighty impetuous Ares.
Far where Deiphobus stern was labouring stark and outnumbered
Smiting the Achaian myriads back on the right of the carnage.
Over the hosts in his car he stood and darkened the Argives.
But in the courts divine the Thunderer spoke to his children;
“Ares resisting a present Fate for the hope of the future
Gods, has gone forth from us. Choose thou thy paths, O my daughter,
More than thy brother assailed by the night that darkens o’er creatures.
Choose the silence in heaven or choose the struggle mid mortals,
Golden joy of the worlds, O thou roseate white Aphrodite.”
MOTHER INDIA

Then with her starry eyes and bosom of bliss from the immortals
Glowing and rosy-limbed cried the wonderful white Aphrodite,
Drawing her fingers like flowers through the flowing gold of her tresses,
Calm, discontented, her perfect mouth a rose of resistance
Chidingly budded ’gainst Fate, a charm to their senses enamoured.
"Well do I know thou hast given my world to Hera and Pallas.
What though my temples shall stand in Paphos and island Cythera
And though the Greek be a priest for my thoughts and a lyre for my singing
Beauty pursuing and light through the figures of grace and of rhythm,—
Forms shall he mould for men’s eyes that the earth has forgotten and mourns for,
Mould even the workings of Pallas to commune with Paphia’s sweetness,
Mould Hephaestus’ craft in the gaze of the gold Aphrodite,—
Only my form he pursues that I wear for a mortal enchantment,
He to whom now thou givest the world, the Ionian, the Hellene,
But for my might is unfit which Babylon worshipped and Sidon
Palely received from the past in images faint of the gladness
Once that was known by the children of men when the thrill of their members
Was but the immortal joy of the spirit overflowing in Nature
Wine-cups of God’s desire; but their clay from my natural greatness
Falters betrayed to pain, their delight they have turned into ashes.
Nor to my peaks shall he rise and the perfect fruit of my promptings,
There where the senses swoon but the heart is delivered by rapture:
Never my touch can cling to his soul nor reply from his heart-strings.
Once could my godhead surprise all the stars with the seas of its rapture;
Once the world in its orbit danced to a marvellous rhythm.
Men in their limits, gods in their amplitudes answered my calling;
Life was moved by a chant of delight that sang\(^1\) from the spaces
Sung from the Soul of the Vast, His ecstasy clasping His creatures.\(^2\)
Sweetly agreed my fire with their soil and their hearts were as altars.
Pure were its crests; twas not dulled with earth, twas not lost in the hazes.
Then when the sons of earth and the daughters of heaven together
Met on lone mountain peaks or, linked on wild beach and green meadow
Twining embraced. For I danced on Taygetus’ peaks and o’er Ida
Naked and loosing my golden hair like a nimbus of glory
O’er a deep-ecstasied earth that was drunk with my roses and whiteness.

\(^1\) There is some uncertainty about this word in relation to the next line which now begins with “sung” but originally did so with “Out”. Originally, “sprang” stood instead of “sang” in the first line.—Editor.

\(^2\) The manuscript has “its” as an alternative to “His” in both the places where that word occurs in this line.—Editor.
There was no shrinking nor veil in our old Saturnian kingdoms,
Equal were heaven and earth, twin gods on the lap of Dione.
Now shall my waning greatness perish and pass out of Nature.
For though the Romans, my children, shall grasp at the strength of their mother,
They shall not hold the god, but lose in unsatisfied orgies
Yet what the earth has kept of my joy, my glory, my puissance,
Who shall but drink for a troubled hour in the dusk of the sunset
Dregs of my wine Pandemian missing the Uranian sweetness.
So shall the night descend on the greatness and rapture of living;
Creeds that refuse shall persuade the world to revolt from its mother.
Pallas' adorers shall loathe me and Hera's scorn me for lowness;
Beauty shall pass from men's work and delight from their play and their labour;
Earth restored to the Cyclops shall shrink from the gold Aphrodite.
So shall I live diminished, owned but by beasts in the forest,
Birds of the air and the gods in their heavens, but disgraced in the mortal.''
Then to the discontented rosy-mouthed Aphrodite
Zeus replied, the Father divine; "O goddess Astarte,
What are these thoughts thou hast suffered to wing from thy rose-mouth
  immortal?
Bees that sting and delight are the words from thy lips, Cytherea.
Art thou not womb of the world and from thee are the thronging of creatures?
And didst thou cease the worlds too would cease and the aeons be ended.
Suffer my Greeks; accept who accept thee, O gold Dionaean.
They in the works of their craft and their dreams shall enthrone thee for ever,
Building thee temples in Paphos and Eryx and island Cythera,
Building the fane more enduring and bright of thy golden ideal.
Even if natures of men could renounce thee and God do without thee,
Rose of love and sea of delight, O my child Aphrodite
Still wouldst thou live in the worship they gave thee protected from fading,
Splendidly staturated and shrined in men's works and men's thoughts, Cytherea.''

Pleased and blushing with bliss of her praise and the thought of her empire
Answered, as cries a harp in heaven, the gold Aphrodite:
"Father, I know and I spoke but to hear from another my praises.
I am the womb of the world and the cause of this teeming of creatures,
And if discouraged I ceased, God's world would lose heart and perish.
How will you do then without me your works of wisdom and greatness,
Hera, queen of heaven, and thou, O my sister Athene?
Yes, I shall reign and endure though the pride of my workings be conquered.
What though no second Helen find a second Paris,
Lost though the glories of form to the earth, though their confident gladness
Pass from a race misled and forgetting the sap that it sprang from,
They are eternal in man in the worship of beauty and rapture.
Ever while earth is embraced by the sun and hot with his kisses
And while a Will supernal works through the passions of Nature,
Me shall men seek with my light or their darkness, sweetly or crudely,
Cold on the ice of the north or warm with the heats of the southland,
Slowly enduring my touch or with violence rapidly burning.
I am the sweetness of living, I am the touch of the Master.
Love shall die bound to my stake like a victim adorned as for bridal,
Life shall be bathed in my flames and be purified gold or be ashes.
I, Aphrodite, shall move the world for ever and ever.
Yet now since most to me, Father of all, the ages arriving,
Hostile, rebuke my heart and turn from my joy and my sweetness,
I will resist and not yield, nor care what I do, so I conquer.
Often I curbed my mood for your sakes and was gracious and kindly,
Often I lay at Hera’s feet and obeyed her commandments
Tranquil and proud or o’ercome by a honeyed and ancient compulsion
Fawned on thy pureness and served thy behests, O my sister Pallas.
Deep was the love that united us, happy the wrestle and clasping;
Love divided, love united, Love was our mover. 

But since you now overbear and would scourge me and chain and control me,
War I declare on you all, O my Father and brothers and sisters.
Henceforth I do my will as the joy in me prompts or the anger.
Ranging the earth with my beauty and passion and golden enjoyments
All whom I can, I will bind; I will drive at the bliss of my workings,
Whether men’s hearts are seized by the joy or seized by the torture.
Most will I plague your men, your worshippers and in my malice
Break up your works with confusion divine, O my mother and sister;
Then shall you fume and resist and be helpless and pine with my torments.
Yet will I never relent but always be sweet and malignant,
Cruel and tyrannous, hurtful and subtle, a charm and a torture.
Thou too, O father Zeus, shalt always be vexed with my doings;
Called in each moment to judge thou shalt chafe at our cry and our quarrels,
Often grope for thy thunderbolt, often frown magisterial
Joining in vain thy awful brows o’er thy turbulent children.
Yet in thy wrath recall my might and my wickedness, Father;
Hurt me not then too much lest the world and thyself too should suffer.
Save, O my Father, life and grace and the charm of the senses;

1 Alternative reading for the last two words: “the master”. 

48
Love preserve lest the heart of the world grow dulled and forsaken.”
Smiling her smile immortal of love and of mirth and of malice
White Aphrodite arose in her loveliness armed for the conflict.
Golden and careless and joyous she went like a wild bird that winging
Flits from branch to branch and resumes its chant interrupted.
Love where her fair feet trod bloomed up like a flower from the spaces;
Mad round her touches billowed incessantly laughter and rapture.
Thrilled with her feet was the bosom of Space, for her amorous motion
Floated a flower on the wave of her bliss or swayed like the lightning.
Rich as a summer fruit and fresh as Spring’s blossoms her body
Gleaming and blushing, veiled and bare and with ecstasy smiting
Burned out rosy and white through her happy ambrosial raiment,
Golden-tressed and a charm, her bosom a fragrance and peril.¹
So was she framed to the gaze as she came from the seats of the Mighty.
So embodied she visits the hearts of men and their dwellings
And in her breathing tenement laughs at the eyes that can see her.
Swift-footed down to the Troad she hastened thrilling the earth-gods.
There with ambrosial secrecy veiled, administering the heroes
Strong and beautiful, might of the warring and glory of armour,
Over her son Aeneas she stood, his guard in the battle.

But in the courts divine the Thunderer spoke mid his children;
"Thou for a day and a night and another day and a nightfall,
White Aphrodite, prevail; o’er thee too the night is extended.
She has gone forth who made men like gods in their glory and gladness.
Now in the darkness coming all beauty must wane or be tarnished;
Joy shall fade and mighty Love grow fickle and fretful;
Even as a child that is scared in the night, he shall shake in his chambers.
Yet shall a portion be kept for these, Ares and white Aphrodite.
Thou whom already thy Pythoness bears not, torn by thy advent,
Caverned already who sittest in Delphi knowing thy future,
What wilt thou do with the veil and the night, O burning Apollo?"
Then from the orb of his glory unbearable save to immortals
Bright and austere replied the beautiful mystic Apollo;
"Zeus, I know that I fade; already the night is around me.

¹ Two lines, written at different times, stand on the blank page opposite this line, in what
seems a reverse order:
Mystery was and a call and her bosom a fragrance and peril
Veiled were her breasts from desire: the curve divine of her lashes
But one does not know whether they were meant to replace the line in question, for the sign
indicating replacement has been written and then cancelled out.—Editor.
Dusk she extends her reign and obscures my lightnings with error. Therefore my prophets mislead men's hearts to the ruin appointed, Therefore Cassandra cries in vain to her sire and her brothers. All I endure I foresee and the strength in me waits for its coming; All I foresee I approve; for I know what is willed, O Cronion. Yet is the fierce strength wroth in my breast at the need of approval And for the human race fierce pity works in my bosom; Wroth is my splendid heart with the cowering knowledge of mortals, Wroth are my burning eyes with the purblind vision of reason. I will go forth from your seats and descend to the night among mortals There to guard the flame and the mystery; vast in my moments Rare and sublime to sound like a sea against Time and its limits, Cry like a spirit in pain in the hearts of the priest and the poet, Cry against limits set and disorder sanities bounded. Jealous for truth to the end my might shall prevail and for ever Shatter the moulds that men make to imprison their limitless spirits. Dire, overpowering the brain I shall speak out my oracles splendid. Then in their ages of barren light or lucidity fruitful Whens the clear gods think they have conquered earth and its mortals, Hidden God from all eyes, they shall wake from their dream and recoiling Still they shall find in their paths the fallen and darkened Apollo.” So he spoke, repressing his dreadful might in his bosom, And from their high seats passed, his soul august and resplendent Drawn to the anguish of men and the fierce terrestrial labour. Down he dropped with a roar of light invading the regions, And in his fierce and burning spirit intense and uplifted Sure of his luminous truth and careless for weakness of mortals Flaming oppressed the earth with his dire intolerant beauty. Over the summits descending that slept in the silence of heaven, He through the spaces angrily drew towards the tramp and the shouting Over the speeding of Xanthus and over the pastures of Troya. Clang of his argent bow was the wrath restrained of the mighty, Stern was his pace like Fate’s; so he came to the warfare of mortals And behind Paris strong and inactive waited God’s moment Knowing what should arrive, nor disturbed like men by their hopings.

(To be continued)
Students' Section

THE MOTHER'S TALKS
(TO THE CHILDREN OF THE SCHOOL)

SPECIALISATION

You must extend, enlarge, enrich your mind. It must be full of thoughts and ideas. It must be stored with the results of your observation and study. It must not be a "poor mind", a mind, that is to say, that has not many ideas nor the capacity of reasoning and argument. Your mind must be capable of thinking of many different things, gathering knowledge of different kinds, considering a problem from many different sides, not following only a single line or track: it must be somewhat like a Japanese fan opening out full circle in all directions.

You have, for example, several subjects to learn at school. Well, learn as many as possible. If you read at home, read as many varieties as possible. I know you are usually asked and advised to follow a different way. You are to take as few subjects as possible and specialise. Yes, that is the general ideal: specialisation, to be an expert in one thing. If you wish to be a good philosopher, do philosophy only; if you wish to be a good chemist, do only chemistry; and even you should concentrate upon only one problem or thesis in philosophy or chemistry. In sports you are asked to do the same. Choose one item and fix your attention upon that alone. If you want to be a good tennis player, think of tennis alone. However, I am not of that opinion. My experience is different. I believe, there are general faculties in man which he should acquire and cultivate more than specialise himself. Of course, if it is your ambition to be a Monsieur or Madame Curie who wanted to discover one particular thing, to find out a new mystery of a definite kind, then you have to concentrate upon the one thing in view. But even then, once the object is gained, you can turn very well to other things. Besides, it is not an impossibility in the midst of the one-pointed pursuit to find occasions and opportunities to be interested in other pursuits.
From my childhood I have been hearing of the same lesson; I am afraid it was taught also in the days of our fathers and grandfathers and great grandfathers, namely, that if you wish to be successful in something you must do that only and nothing else. I was rebuked very much because I was busy with many different things at the same time. I was told I would be in the end good for nothing. I was studying, I was painting, I was doing music and many other things. I was repeatedly warned that my painting would be worthless, my music would be worthless, my studies would be incomplete and defective if I had my way. Perhaps it was true; but I found my way had its advantages also—precisely the advantages I was speaking of at the outset, namely, it widens and enriches the mind and consciousness, makes it supple and flexible, gives it a spontaneous power to understand and handle anything new presented to it. If, however, I had wanted to become an executant of the first order and play in concerts, then of course I would have had to restrict myself. Or in painting if my aim was to be one of the great artists of the age, I could have done only that and nothing else. One understands the position very well, but it is only a point of view. I do not see why I should become the greatest musician or the greatest painter. It seems to me to be nothing but vanity.

But it is a very natural and spontaneous movement in man to change from one work to another in order to maintain a kind of balance. Change also means rest. We have often heard of great artists or scholars seeking for rest and having great need of it. They find it by changing their activity. For example, Ingres was a painter; painting was his normal and major occupation. But whenever he found time he took up his violin. Curiously, it was his violin which interested him more than his painting. He was not very good at music, but he took great pleasure in it. He was sufficiently good at painting, but it interested him less. But the real thing is that he needed a stable poise or balance. Concentration upon a single thing is very necessary, I have said, if one aims at a definite and special result; but one can follow a different line that is more subtle, more comprehensive and complete. Naturally, there is a physical limit somewhere to your comprehensiveness; for on the physical plane you are confined in respect of time and space; and also it is true that great things are difficult to achieve unless there is a special concentration. But if you want to lead a higher and deeper life, you can command capacities which are much greater than those available to the methods of restriction and limitation belonging to the normal consciousness. There is a considerable advantage in getting rid of one's limits, if not from the point of view of actual accomplishment, at least from the point of view of spiritual realisation.
AN INTRODUCTION TO 17th CENTURY ENGLISH LITERATURE

(From lectures on the History of English Literature given by Mr. N. Pearson to the First Year Literature Class)

Much has already been written on the abrupt change that took place in English literature from the comparatively short period, but very rich and intense outburst, of the Elizabethans, to the literature of the early 17th century. But as far as I am aware no writer has explained this abrupt change from the viewpoint of the organic development of English literature, as Sri Aurobindo has outlined it in his book “The Future Poetry”. And this is my excuse for dealing with this subject from this new angle, or at least giving a few general indications in that direction.

Let us first be clear what the organic development of English literature means. By studying the historical development we find that English literature has more or less followed the evolutionary curve, it has taken what we might call a natural course of development rather its being a spontaneous growth. It did not begin with the revealing word, or symbolical image, as some of the ancient literatures had done, but with the very outward physical expression from which it laboured upwards, in a parallel way to the evolution of man himself. From the rough beginnings in Anglo-Saxon poetry it reached the height of its first phase, the external expression, some centuries later in Chaucer, after the language had attained a certain stability by the fusion of its diverse elements. After Chaucer we begin to see the first impact of the European renaissance on English literature, which bringing with it a heightened sense of man and of human power had the effect of stirring the vital impulse, and brought forth the second important phase in the literature,—namely the expression of the life-spirit. This was a profuse though intense phase, that reached its height in the Elizabethan writers, and particularly Shakespeare.

It was after Shakespeare had poured out the diversity and richness of the life-spirit in an amazing display of dramatic poetry, that a new phase in the literature was ready to open. For the Elizabethan profusion had after all only been a one-sided development; it had scarcely touched the vast mental and intellectual resources of which the classical Greek and Roman literatures had shown the possibilities to some extent. By the beginning of the 17th century the reaction...
against the excessive expression of the life-spirit had already begun; and this reaction was soon to centre itself around the appearance of the English Bible, which effectively quenched the fire and curbed the wantonness of the Elizabethan spirit. It was a happy coincidence that this event occurred almost simultaneously with the end of Shakespeare’s dramatic career, so that the original English Bible of 1611 inherited the wealth of verbal expression that had been brought into the language by the Elizabethan venturers. But equally important was the fact that the English Bible also brought into the literature the full impact of the Hebraic spirit which then began to mingle with, and submerge for a time, the classical learning that was already being assimilated by the practical English temperament. Thus after Shakespeare’s exit, from the end of the first decade of the 17th century, the intellectual reaction now began to show itself strongly in English literature, with the Hebraic spirit predominant over the Hellenic.

Before indicating some of the immediate results of this swing towards a conscious intellectual expression, it may be as well to note one more important point that Sri Aurobindo indicates to be characteristic of the development of English literature. This is the personal and individual achievement of the English writer,—particularly the poet, to whom Sri Aurobindo chiefly refers. The result has been a venturing into new and untrdden fields; and in this way the natural organic growth, or the underlying urge in the literature, has found its fullest expression through individuals, and particularly in those who have given themselves wholly to the expression of whatever is highest or greatest in the spirit of their times. We see this most clearly in the individual achievements of such writers as Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, as well as the poets of the Romantic Revival. This individuality has produced a unique feature in English literature, namely that the literature has increasingly become more open to the expression of a universal urge, being not tied to any national traditional expression. This is a significant factor in the present day when English literature is no longer a literature written exclusively by Englishmen (though Englishmen still must take the lead). As the English language becomes more widespread in its usage, so the literature is opening itself to the direct expression of higher individual attainments, even spiritual ones,—following the evolutionary line of man’s development. And in this respect Sri Aurobindo has shown the potentialities of the language at its highest, where it becomes the illumined word itself.

Let us revert now to the 17th century literature, and see it from this broader standpoint, rather than the strictly national view which has been the prevalent attitude. Firstly we find that the predominating change was a swing from the non-religious literature of the Elizabethans (man as the centre of the universe), to a growing sense of religious expression through literature, (of God as the cen-
AN INTRODUCTION TO 17TH CENTURY ENGLISH LITERATURE

tre). This, as already noted, was due to the entry of the Hebraic spirit, which itself was centred around a personal relation with God; and this became a predominant note in 17th century literature. The principal figure in the beginning of this movement is John Donne, and he is soon followed by George Herbert, Henry Vaughan, Richard Crashaw and Thomas Traherne; and even we might include Robert Herrick, who though a pure Jonsonian lyricist, also shows how strong a current this turn to religion was. The second development which runs parallel with the first, issued from the Puritan movement which reached its height towards the middle of the 17th century. The principal writer here is John Milton, who was followed closely by Andrew Marvell and John Bunyan. This biblical influence, however, which dominated both the personal religious expression and the Puritan spirit alike, had even before the end of the century become thoroughly assimilated and absorbed into the national life; and by this time a new phase in the literature had begun to open up.

Whereas the literary critics of the past diagnosed the change in the early 17th century as being “metaphysical” in nature, modern criticism tends to refer to the change more exactly as a divorce of feeling from thought. This latter, which indicates the separation of thought as a distinct element apart from feeling or sensibility, seems to come nearer to Sri Aurobindo’s interpretation of the situation. For this shunning of feeling or sensibility is highly characteristic of pure intellectualism. Here Donne is the chief figure who shows the change most clearly in its beginnings; while Milton, with his rigid exclusion of passion from reason, shows the development in its most mature form. By the time the century had reached its close, reason had already been firmly enthroned as the central deity in English literature.

Although it is true that this outburst of religious poetry in the 17th century shows an increasing tendency, or at times yearning, towards mysticism (as we pass from Herbert to Vaughan, and from Vaughan to Traherne), yet it never quite breaks itself free from the intellectual bias which was its starting point. The mind was as yet gripped by the intensely personal biblical conception of God, such as we find it in the Hebrew Psalms and Prophets. Some of the prose works of this period, however (as for example Traherne’s Meditations), are closer to mystical expression than the poetry. I take mysticism to mean unitive experience as distinct from religious experience which this 17th century poetry really is. It never quite reached that true inner identity or oneness with God. Mystical poetry in English literature had to make a new beginning,

1 After Herrick, the other pure lyricists of the 17th century—Thomas Carew, John Suckling, and Richard Lovelace—lacked the real individuality to be outstanding figures in the literature. Though fashionable in their day, they represent more the superficialities of their time, rather than the deeper currents we are considering.
over a century later, when the poetry itself had taken a wider sweep above the intellect.

The real pinnacle of the intellectuality of 17th century literature,—at least in the poetry—is reached in Milton’s epic *Paradise Lost*, which embodied, like a cathedral in stone, the height of that intellectual severity and austerity. One of the characteristic features of this intellectual development was its gradual narrowing and limitation of the mind to one central point. Thus, in Milton, his whole conception of man and the universe came to centre itself around man’s fall from his original grandeur. It was a dwelling on the past rather than on the future possibilities and redemption of man, and hence on this point alone was a very one-sided conception. In conformity with the orthodox view of his day, the cause of man’s fall was seen to lie in his original sin. But as we see it now, sin or error was not the cause, but rather a significant feature of man’s condition after the ‘fall’. In *The Life Divine* Sri Aurobindo gives a very illuminating interpretation of the biblical legend, which can serve as a basis in our study of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. In Sri Aurobindo’s words, the fall of man “is his deviation from the full and pure acceptance of God and himself, or rather of God in himself, into a dividing consciousness which brings with it all the train of the dualities, life and death, good and evil, joy and pain, completeness and want, the fruit of a divided being. This is the fruit which Adam and Eve, Purusha and Prakriti, the soul tempted by Nature, have eaten. The redemption comes by the recovery of the universal in the individual and of the spiritual term in the physical consciousness. Then alone the soul in Nature can be allowed to partake of the fruit of the tree of life and be as the Divine and live for ever.”

We have to remember that Milton was writing strictly from the Protestant standpoint and although his theme appears somewhat antiquated to modern eyes accustomed to the scientific view of the universe, we have to see his epic in its own setting, and as expressing the spirit of Milton’s own time and mode of thought. It is only after we have seen the theme from Milton’s point of view, and at the same time tried to see something of the truth behind, that we can take a correct perspective of it, and accept it as the work of art it is, from our own changed standpoint.

To get the correct perspective of a literary work, as a work of art, is the first step in our assessment of it. This means seeing the theme first against its proper background, so that the level of its thought forms the basis for an impartial judgement. The way is then clear to study it from the aesthetic and structural point of view, which I feel should be an important part of our study of literature. The first step here has been to free ourselves from the contro-
versial issues regarding meaning, and also to eliminate as far as possible personal feelings on the subject, all of which obscure the true assessment of the literary work we are trying to judge. We should then be able to devote our attention to three major aspects: the form and structure of the work, its style, and the language used. I submit that these aspects, studied in themselves against a background of the historical development, will yield us more positive returns, as well as a greater understanding of the literature and its inherent possibilities, than our entering into any of the barren controversies regarding the thought, subject-matter or possible meanings of a work, that abound in literary criticisms. Form and structure will give us a good indication of the traditional development of the literature, as well as its connection with other literatures. A study of the style will show us the personal characteristics and the particular contribution of each writer to the development of the literature. And lastly a study of the verbal elements and constructions will give us an insight into the way the existing language was used, and particularly show us the widely varied potentialities inherent in the language, with an eye to present possibilities as well as past usage. By this systematic study we gather the full import and meaning of a work more fully than if we had pursued that import and meaning as an end in itself.

It is a good sign that modern criticism is tending towards an impartial assessment of literature, and particularly basing itself on a more serious consideration of language, form and structure. These are steps towards a fuller understanding; but what is yet of equal importance is that our whole aspect of literature should be primarily based on a wider perception of the setting, which includes the connection between literary works and their background. And this is an essential beginning for any proper estimation and assessment of literature.

NATHANIEL PEARSON
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN INDIA

(We are reproducing an editorial from "Mother India" published five years ago which drives home certain truths which are often not realised.)

India's decision to remain a member of the Commonwealth in spite of being an independent sovereign Republic has given a new lease of life amongst us to the English language. Until recently English was apt to be regarded as the remnant of a foreign imposition, an inappropriate growth in the way of an authentic indigenous literature. Today it seems an appropriate and desirable link between us and the group of English-speaking nations with whom we have formed a voluntary association: it has become the medium of a larger existence in which we have elected to share. This is all to the good—especially as America with whom we shall have more and more to deal is English-speaking. But we shall be underestimating the significance of the English language in India if we think that it is only a valuable means of promoting our political, economic and technological interests in the democratic world. English is, above all, an immense cultural asset. And it is such an asset not simply because it renders available to us magnificent countries of the mind, but also because it renders possible to us the most magnificent expression of our own soul.

The first impulse, vis-à-vis this statement, will be to cry, "Absurd paradox!" and to follow up with the question: "Can India really take to the English language as an instrument of her Indianness and make her utterance in it anything more than an exotic curiosity?" The answer, surely, cannot be given with a facile pointing out of the great increase in the number of Indians who talk and write fair English. The answer can only be given by seeing whether there is what Galsworthy termed "flower of author". Disclosure of the inmost individuality through the subtlest potentialities of the language: this is "flower of author". Such "flower" need not be in one particular style as opposed to others. Simplicity and complexity, plainness and richness, urbany and intense vibrancy—all these can equally allow it. Can we affirm that, in any style whatever, "flower of author" is possible in English-writing India as something more than a rare, almost accidental, growth? Yes, we can. For two reasons.

What is called Indianness possesses as one of its main characteristics a power of multifold assimilation arising from a many-sidedness, a globality, in the unique penchant that is the Indian genius. The Indian genius is, of course, best described as spiritual; but it is not spiritual in a narrow way: it is an urge of synthesis of a hundred approaches to the Eternal, the Infinite,
the Divine. Not only does it spiritualise everything in the long run: it also spiritualises everything without depriving any term of its own essential quality. It annuls nothing by the transforming change it induces: it induces the change by raising all things to their own hidden heights of Supernature, as it were—heights at which they are most authentically themselves by being spiritual, by being facets of the Divine, the Infinite, the Eternal. Wonderfully synthetical and assimilative, it can also embrace and Indianise the quality of any race, the force of any culture; hence it can make both the mind and the movement of the English language part of its activity. This mind and this movement do not confront it as utterly foreign: they come to it striking sympathetic chords in its multi-rhythmmed heart. That is the first reason why “flower of author” in English can be an Indian growth drawing not unnaturally or accidentally its nourishment from the soil of the Indian soul.

The second reason is the character of the English language itself. No other modern language is so varied in mentality, so diverse in turn. It is a fusion of many strains—the Celtic, the Roman, the Saxon, the Teuton, the French, the Italian have mingled in it, and the Greek soul and the Hebrew soul have also coloured it. As a result, it is an extremely plastic and versatile instrument capable of being expressive of numerous types of consciousness. No wonder it does not have any marked tradition of persistent mood or manner—as, for instance, French has; no wonder, too, it is notable for countless idiosyncrasies: and no wonder, again, it has proved so adequate a medium for every innovation in outlook and in-look, whether it be the adventurous imaginative gusto of the Renaissance, the gorgeous oriental religiosity of Hebraism, the passion and wonder and Nature-feeling of the Romantic Movement, the vague poignancies and dim wizardries of Celtic paganism. The synthetical and assimilative Indian genius meets in the English tongue a multiplicity and pliancy of temper and tone which give that genius all the more chance of taking hold of this tongue for living self-expression.

There is no doubt that “flower of author” is, for Indians, possible in English. This does not, of course, imply possibility for all and sundry. Such possibility is not there for Indians in even the indigenous languages: every Indian is not a literary master. And, where English is concerned, it is quite to be expected that “flower of author” should be less common than in those languages. But to maintain that Indian utterance in English can only be an exotic curiosity and never an organic unfolding of genuine Indianness is to indulge in a sweeping superficiality. What now remains to be shown is that true Indian utterance in English is more than just possible and that it can be in quality finer and greater than in any language spoken by Indians today. This is the supreme paradox we have to elucidate—and if we can elucidate it we shall have dealt the death-blow to all efforts by our educationists to
minimise the importance of English in our cultural self-expression.

English is unquestionably the most highly developed of modern languages both by virtue of the large variety of racial and psychological strains in it and by virtue of the extraordinary crop of poets in English history. Poetry is the sovereign power of all language: where poets of high quality abound there the language reaches the highest development, especially when the language itself has immense potentialities. No student of the world’s literature will dispute that England stands head and shoulders above other modern countries in poetry. Neither in modern Europe nor anywhere else do we find such a poetic galaxy as Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, Francis Thompson and Yeats. If we may add from those to whom English was native outside England, there is the free-verse giant, Whitman. In consequence of the intensely inspired impact of poets like these, the versatile English language has acquired a unique capacity for strangely suggestive effects—the super-subtle phrase, the packed visionary phrase, the phrase of indefinable intonation. Even in prose the unique capacity has its play and, within the less daring terms proper to prose, English still surpasses all modern languages, including those of India herself, in the immediacies and intimacies of intuitive speech. If this is so, then English is bound to be most valuable to the genius of a country which is not only synthetical and assimilative in the extreme but also spiritual to the nth degree; for, a speech with extraordinary potentialities of strangely suggestive effects suits most the magic, the mystery, the depth, the sudden and sublime revelatory reach of the spiritual consciousness. English promises, therefore, to be the expressive body par excellence of our true soul.

What adds to our conviction about this promise is the fact that the strangely suggestive potentialities of English have already been pressed into service of the spiritual consciousness by English writers themselves. Herbert’s religious simplicity at once piquant and passionate—Crashaw’s rich sensuousness kindling into ecstatic devotion—Donne’s nervous intricate power troubling the Inscrutable—Vaughan’s half-obscure half-bright straining beyond thought into mystical vision—Wordsworth’s profound contemplative pantheistic peace—Blake’s deeply delicate radiance—Coleridge’s glimmering occultism of the weird and the haunting—Shelley’s rainbowed rapture of some universal Light and Love—Keats’s enchanted luxuriance, through allegory and symbol and myth, in the Sovereign Beauty that is Sovereign Truth—Patmore’s pointed polished ardour of the intellect for “the unknown Eros”—Francis Thompson’s colourful heat of response to “the many-splendoured Things”—Gerard Manley Hopkins’s quiver and flash of aspiration within a God-dedicated discipline—Yeats’s bewitched echo to the Immortal Loveliness in its world-wandering—AE’s crystalline contact with superhumanly populated twilights within and
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN INDIA

divinely inhabited dawns above—all these quickenings of the spiritual consciousness, together with the American Whitman's dynamic delight under the touch of a Cosmic Life, are already present in English and have turned it to what may be called Indian uses. Doubtless, the uses are still somewhat elementary in comparison to what the Indian genius has achieved in the ancient Sanscrit of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita. But the fact stands that English lends itself as the fittest body to this genius with an actually accomplished functioning, however initial, along our own national soul-trend. Hence, if we are to fulfil that trend, the most natural no less than the most desirable act on our part is to find voice in English.

Not that the indigenous languages should be neglected. They must be developed. But English at present comes to us with a face of supreme destiny. And what that destiny is can be seen even now. For, even now, before our very eyes, it is being wonderfully worked out. A band of Indian poets remarkably gifted are uttering in English the mystical experience with an intense fidelity and felicity, and at their head is one of the greatest figures of the contemporary world and he has banished all shadow of doubt regarding the destiny we have spoken of. Sri Aurobindo has given the world what is at once the finest and grandest literary achievement of modern India and the deepest and highest articulation of Indian spirituality today—the epic with which he was occupied in the spare hours of a Yogi and which grew to over twenty-five thousand lines: Savitri, a Legend and a Symbol. In Savitri, we have proof as ample as we could wish that, while our vernaculars more easily provide us with footholds for climbing beyond commonplaces into the revelatory intensities of literature, English alone enables at present the soul of India to attain the absolute peak of self-expression.

And from that peak the soul of India will communicate, to the whole Commonwealth and to all America and to whatever country is in touch with them, the harmonious rhythms of its own greatness. Far and wide, by means of English, the Indian genius will spread the word born from the occult immensities that are the luminous source and support and goal of its unique history. Embodied in this language by India, Inspiration

With her lightning feet,
A sudden messenger from the all-seeing tops,
will conquer the heart and mind of humanity. Not through translations from Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil or Hindi—beautiful and powerful instruments of truth though they may prove—but directly through the tongue that was Shakespeare's and is now Sri Aurobindo's, the peoples of the earth will most vividly know India as the creative bride of the Divine and as the mighty mother of a new age which shall justify the light on man's upward face.

K. D. Sethna
HUMAN ASPIRATION

(AN ESSAY BY A FIRST YEAR STUDENT BASED ON LECTURES GIVEN BY PROFESSOR DAS GUPTA ON SRI AUROBINDO’S “LIFE DIVINE”)

Since remote antiquity man has been seeking ceaselessly for God, to arrive at perfection and truth, to enjoy unmixed bliss and immortality. Even the long periods of scepticism could not suppress altogether his constant aspiration.

Today he has gained victory to a considerable extent over external Nature; yet it has not satisfied his hunger for “God, Light, Freedom and Immortality.” But man’s aspiration is in contradiction to his present state of imperfection. His aspiration can be realised in life only by an individual revolutionary method or by a slow evolutionary process.

To make an animal and egoistic consciousness know, possess, and be identified with the Divine, to transform obscure physical mind into full Supramental light, to inundate the momentary satisfaction of human life which is subject to pain and suffering with the flood of peace and self-existent bliss, to establish a boundless freedom in a world that seems to be a tangle of mechanical necessities, to discover and realise immortal life in a body subjected to death and constant mutation, and last of all to manifest God in Matter is Nature’s ultimate aim in her terrestrial evolution. The physical intellect, however, considers that the present state of consciousness has reached its maximum possibility of development. Therefore his ideal becomes a contradiction of his present state of consciousness and life. But contradictions, we see, are a part of Nature’s machinery—she always seems to work through opposites.

But there is no real inconsistency in Nature’s plan and purpose; she seeks harmony through discord. Man’s practical and animal part may rest satisfied with the discords of life but it is impossible for his fully awakened mind to bypass them.

The conformity of dynamic life with an inert Matter is Nature’s first problem, and its solution would be immortality in the body. The reconcilment of conscious mind and will with an inanimate Matter and semi-conscious life is Nature’s another evolutionary problem, and its solution would be an animal consciousness possessing Truth and Light and also omnipotence derived from the direct and perfected Knowledge.
HUMAN ASPIRATION

Life has evolved out of Matter and mind out of life; but there must be some reason behind this evolution. The reason is not far to seek if the Vedantic solution is accepted. According to the Vedanta, life is already involved in Matter and mind in life. “In essence Matter is a form of veiled life, life a form of veiled consciousness.” If this is true, then it is quite possible that a higher consciousness may be involved in mind and pressing forward to emerge, and man’s urge for a divine perfection may be the mechanism through which Nature is working out the emergence, and thereby trying to manifest God in man. The animal is a laboratory in which she has worked out man and man too may well be a living laboratory in which she is working out the Superman in collaboration with man.

Nature wills to manifest herself or to reveal what lies hidden in her depths. For that purpose she must complete the full course of evolution and cannot halt en route.

If it be true that Spirit is involved in Matter and that manifested Nature is in essence identified with God, then it is practicable for man to realise God upon earth.

The problem is that in this animal body dwells an immortal Reality; a single Universal Consciousness manifests itself through limited minds and divided egos; above all manifestation there is a Transcendental Being which is beyond time and space, yet out of which time and space are born; it is quite possible for a human being to experience that higher Reality here below. This is his inherent belief and his intuitive Knowledge.

Normal logical thought persuades man to keep aside all these problems, as no solution has yet been found for them, and concentrate instead on the problems of daily life.

If Nature is trying to effectuate this emergence of a higher consciousness, it would be unwise for man to resist its impulse; on the contrary, he should try to cooperate with it. To resist it would mean the refusal to work in conjunction with “the secret, mightier will of the Great Mother.” Man should accept this truth and keep up the undying flame of aspiration that the Mighty Mother has kindled in the core of his heart.

Although this light ‘works with intermittent glancings as if from behind a veil’, yet with the help of this light he will discover the true goal of his existence.

MANJU GUPTA
“Neither you nor anyone else knows anything at all of my life; it has not been on the surface for men to see.”

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