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Sraddhā



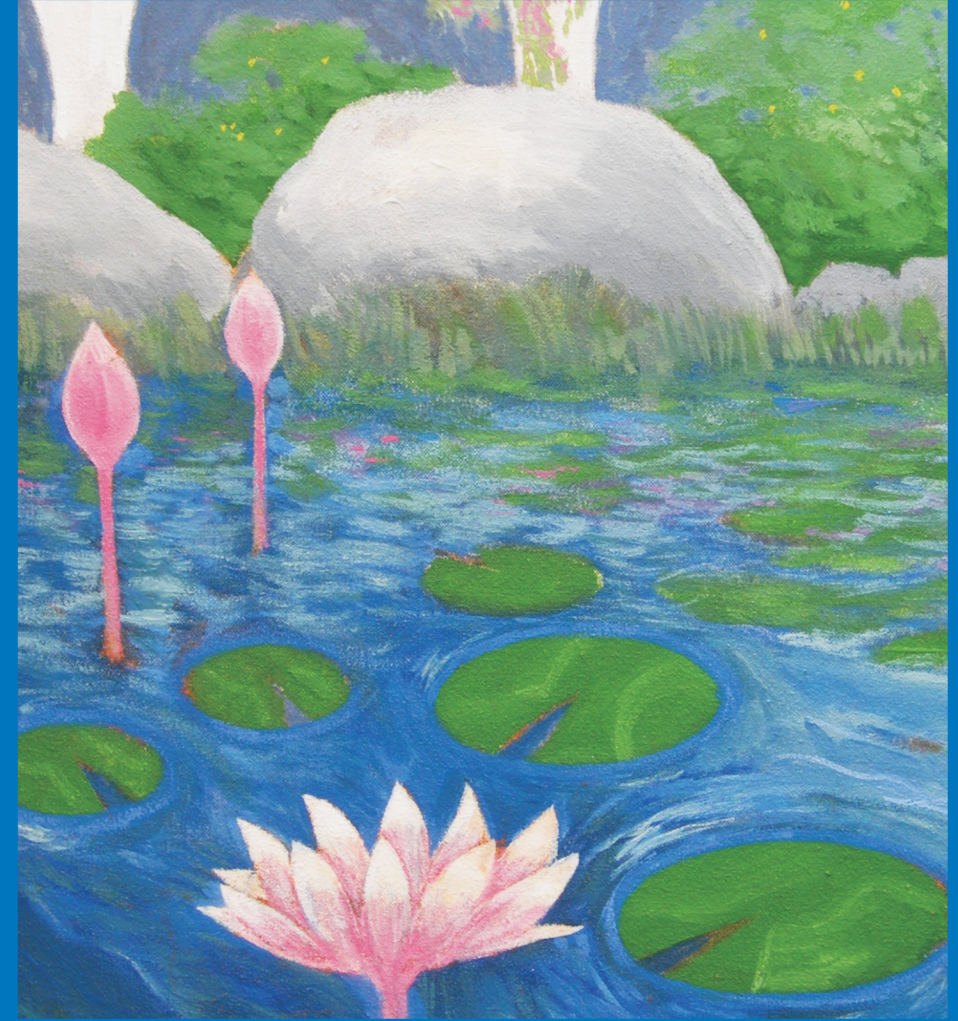
श्रद्धा



(Vol.7No.1)

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Courtesy : Nirmal Sethia Charitable Trust

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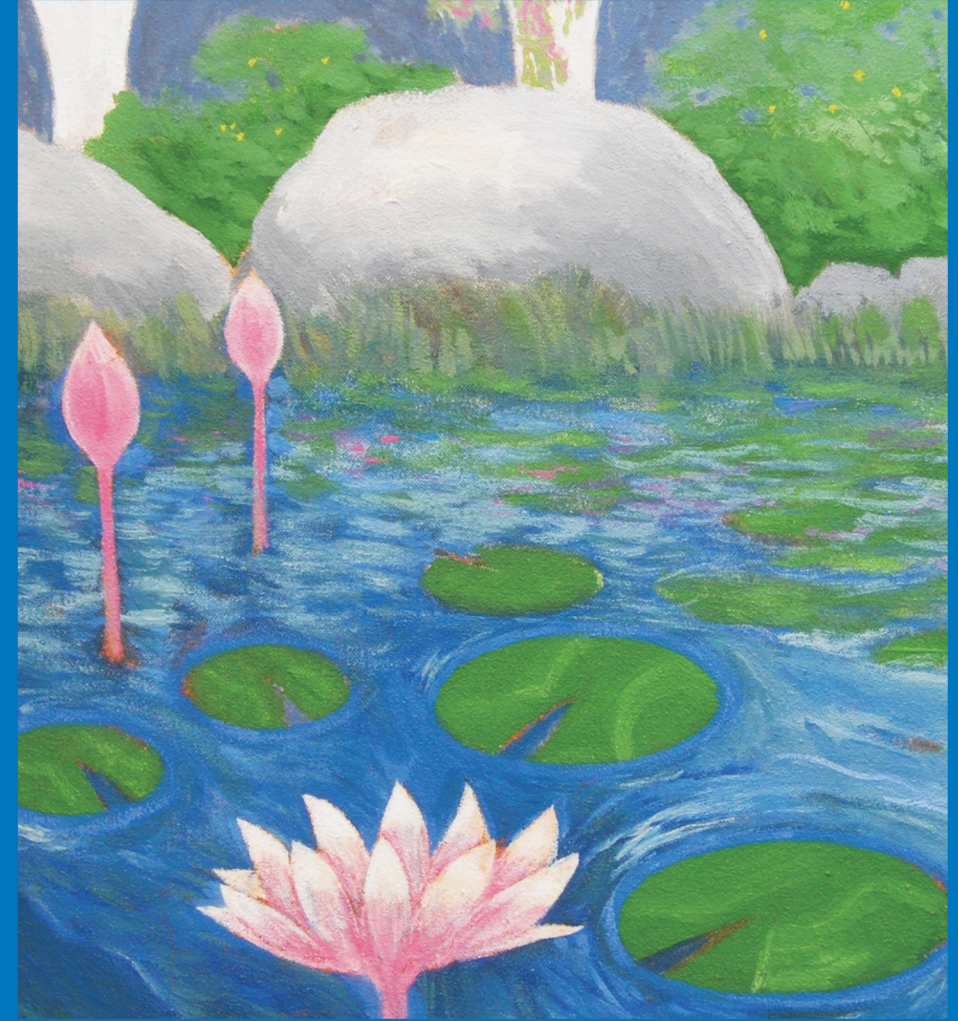
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"I have always held and said that India was arising, not to serve her own material interests only, to achieve expansion, greatness, power, and prosperity ... but to live also for God and the world as a helper and leader of the whole human race."

— Sri Aurobindo

Śraddhā

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Editorial

Of all the leaders who played a defining role in the Indian National Movement and helped to give it a definite shape and direction, the one who remains the most misunderstood, the least talked about and the most ignored is Sri Aurobindo. Yet his influence on his contemporaries, many of them senior in age and experience, and most notably among the youth of the country, was the most considerable and most outstanding. This was acknowledged by luminaries like Bepin Chandra Pal, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Rajpat Rai, Brahmabandhav Bandopadhyaya, Tagore, C R Das and many others, and nearer our times by stalwarts such as K M Munshi, Nani Palkhivala, Dr. Karan Singh. More recently, no less a person than the former Prime Minister of India, Shri Atal Vihari Vajpayee, in his reflections in his Independence speech in 2004, explicitly and emphatically made the point that India's greatness was destined for much higher goals than her mere independence. He quoted an extract of Sri Aurobindo's message for India's Independence on August 15, 1947 which says:

"I have always held and said that India was arising, not to serve her own material interests only, to achieve expansion, greatness, power, and prosperity — though these too she must not neglect, — and certainly not like others to acquire domination of other peoples, but to live also for God and the world as a helper and leader of the whole human race."

The Prime Minister went on to say that "This, I believe, is the quintessence of India's work, now and in the future." He dared to say that which no other world leader would dare say, that which no other leader could even conceive of.

There is the common perception that Boycott was something that was invented by Gandhi. This is not true. It was Sri Aurobindo who first put forward a complete theory of Boycott and advocated an economic, national, educational, judicial and an administrative boycott. With each negative boycott, he had a

positive plan as well. He laid down clear and specific guidelines for setting up Swadeshi, a national education system, national arbitration courts, national organisation for self-government; his vision was indeed a rare combination of remarkable idealism and practical programme of action taking care of all the nitty-gritties of organisation. Again he was the pioneer to give the trumpet call for *poorna swaraj* or complete independence for India.

There is still some idle speculation as to why Sri Aurobindo through whom "the disarmed and emasculated millions spoke with defiance and pride to the civilised world in the strength of their new found self-confidence and hope", who was "the Prophet of Renascent India, the Tribune of the people, the Quarter-Master General of the Nationalists" (KR Srinivasa Iyengar) should suddenly disengage himself from politics and depart for Pondicherry. Critics and detractors cavil at this departure terming it contemptuously as an "escape", not caring to read what he has said unambiguously in one of his statements.

'I did not leave politics because I felt that I could do nothing more there; ... I came away because I did not want anything to interfere with my Yoga and because I got a very distinct *ādeśa* in the matter. I have cut connection entirely with politics, but before I did so I knew from within that the work I had begun there was destined to be carried forward, on lines I had foreseen, by others, and that the ultimate triumph of the movement I had initiated was sure without my personal action or presence'.

At a later period speaking of himself in third person, he had the greatness and humility to say that he "was compelled to recognise that the nation was not yet sufficiently trained to carry out his policy and programme ... he saw that the hour of these movements had not come and that he himself was not their destined leader".

It is important to note that politics was not the end of his political work. Even during his revolutionary period, his writings in the *Bande Mataram* anticipate the philosophy we have come to associate with the sage of Pondicherry. In July 7, 1907 he writes in *Bande Mataram* '... the next stage in the human progress is not a material but spiritual, moral and psychical advance that has to be made...'. There is thus no disjunction between Sri Aurobindo's ideas as a political revolutionary in the early decades of this century and the philosophy represented in *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Hyman Unity*. Another remarkable feature of Sri Aurobindo's ideal is that unlike most revolutionaries who love to talk about their own country, Sri Aurobindo placed India's freedom in the larger

context of the destiny of the human race. He said ‘ ... India must have *Swaraj* in order to live for the world, nor as a slave for the material and political benefit of a single purse-proud and selfish nation, but a free people for the spiritual and intellectual benefit of the human race’. To devote himself with an undivided attention to this arduous task in the service of his Motherland, he left for Pondicherry to hew out the path for a divine humanity.

‘... No other philosopher of the age or perhaps at any time in human history has presented to the world such a comprehensive plan for the regeneration of human society and for the emergence of a contented and creative international order which would not only preserve the individuality of nations but also guarantee the freedom of individuals within the nations’. (Dr. RK Dasgupta)

To conclude, let us turn once again to the luminous utterances succinctly enunciated by Nolini Kanta Gupta (Nolini).

Sri Aurobindo in his stride was always transgressing and overflowing the borders; he was a revolutionary, an iconoclast, for nothing short of the supreme and complete integral truth satisfied the urge of consciousness in him ... It was this secret ultimate truth that overshadowed, brooded over all the stages and steps and occupations he passed through ... this urge towards the supreme reality ... lent a special character to all his *karma* This ... did not mean for him a rejection of the domains passed through: it is a subsuming ... , uplifting the narrower, the lower status, integrating them into the higher’. (*Collected Works*, vol.5, p.5)

Our grateful thanks to Editors, *Mother India*, for permitting us to reproduce the paper by Divakar and Sucharu, which was first published in its monthly in March 1992. Our gratitude to our friend, Ananda Reddy for readily granting us leave to reprint the article by Beloo Mehra which appeared in the journal, *New Race*, in vol.xii – ii, Apr 2011. We are specially grateful to the Clear Ray Trust, the sole copyright holder of all the writings of Amal Kiran, for allowing us to reprint the article by KD Sethna (Amal Kiran) *India the Secular State* which first appeared in *Mother India* in 1949-50. We express our thanks to Editors of *Mother India* for their permission as well. We acknowledge with gratitude to *Srinwantu* (English version) for reprinting the articles by Santosh Krinsky and RK Dasgupta. Our special thanks to the Sri Aurobindo Managing Trust for its permission to reproduce

- extracts from the Mother’s *Collected Works*, vol. 13, Section on India
- “ “ Nolini Kanta Gupta’s *Collected Works*, vol.5, p.5
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in Śraddha , August 2013 – April 2014		

श्रद्धावाँल्लभते ज्ञानं

Śraddhāvāṃl labhate jñānam

Who has faith.he attains knowledge

—Gita IV. 39

On India

Mother

The Soul of India is one and indivisible. India is conscious of her mission in the world. She is waiting for the exterior means of manifestation.

* * *

India is not the earth, rivers and mountains of this land, neither is it a collective name for the inhabitants of this country. India is a living being, as much living as, say, Shiva. India is a goddess as Shiva is a god. If she likes, she can manifest in human form.

* * *

It is only India's soul who can unify the country.

Externally the provinces of India are very different in character, tendencies, culture, as well as in language, and any attempt to unify them artificially could only have disastrous results. But her soul is one, intense in her aspiration towards the spiritual truth, the essential unity of the creation and the divine origin of life, and by uniting with this aspiration the whole country can recover a unity that has never ceased to exist for the superior mentality

* * *

Let the splendour of Bharat's past be reborn in the realisation of her imminent future with the help and blessings of her living soul.

* * *

India must be saved for the good of the world since India alone can lead the world to peace and a new world order.

* * *

The future of India is very clear. India is the Guru of the world. The future structure of the world depends on India. India is the living soul. India is incarnating the spiritual knowledge in the world. The Government of India ought to recognise the significance of India in this sphere and plan their action accordingly.

* * *

The future of India is luminous in spite of its present gloom.

* * *

India *ought* to be the spiritual leader of the world. Inside she has the capacity for the moment there is still much to do for her to become actually the spiritual leader of the world.

There is such a wonderful opportunity just now!

* * *

Let India work for the future and set the example. Thus she will recover her true place in the world.

Since long it was the habit to govern through division and opposition.

The time has come to govern through union, mutual understanding and collaboration.

To choose a collaborator, the value of the man is more important than the party to which he belongs.

The greatness of a country does not depend on the victory of a party but on the union of all parties.

Hidden Meaning of the Veda

Vedic View of Sacrifice – Part II

(Continued from the previous issue)

Santosh Krinsky

Having described Agni, the priest who is called to lead and guard the human sacrifice, and guide man to the divine fulfilment, we now meet in the eighth rik, the prayer of the Rishi for these powers which we have been describing to become active in his being and bring about the intended consummation. The conditions of the activity of these divine powers are thereby set forth: "let our chariot be always in front;" "let our clear and strong word overcome all that thinks the falsehood." The chariot is the vehicle, the human instrument, which carries the soul forward on its journey. It is to be active in the divine work and not neglected. The Rishi wants to continue striving and remain at the forefront of the battle and the journey. Characteristically the Rishi relies on the Word of the Truth to overcome the word of the falsehood. The *Mantra* is of supreme importance. The *Mantra* is the Word of Power, which has the power to direct our thoughts, emotions, vital energies, physical life. The normal consciousness is open to many divergent "words" and is carried away in manifold directions by these words. The Rishi prays that his concentrated *mantra*, the Word of Truth, will be able to overcome these normal divergent tendencies and gather the consciousness around the Truth. We may note that this importance laid on the word of power, the "clear and strong word" of this *rik*, has been recognised and accepted by all the lines of Indian yoga in their later development and has been made into a subtle and powerful science by the practitioners of the Tantras, both in India and in Tibet. The Rishi, recognising that ultimately the fulfilment is not a human achievement, but a divine manifestation in the human instrument, states that the gods should "know for us, know in us that truth." This development of knowledge is brought about by increasing the speech "that finds and utters it." The Truth-Word, the *Mantra*, "leads the consciousness to the truth and then expresses that truth."

The next *rik* takes up the problems of the Rishi in moving along this journey to the Divine Truth; that is, the opposition of forces hostile to the endeavour. Once recognised, these forces must be removed from the path or neutralised, so the Rishi calls upon this inner flame to protect and defend the spiritual movement. The inner flame must confront and battle with all the opposing tendencies of the being, characterised here as "the powers that stammer in the speech and stumble in the thought, the devourers of our power and our knowledge who leap at us from near and shoot at us from afar." It will be helpful to examine the nature of these opposing powers as described by the seer.

The Rishi has set forth basically two categories of powers which oppose. The first are the powers of ignorance and limitation, what we may call the defects of the human instrument evolving out of the subconscious levels. The second are powers which are consciously hostile to the divine work, who try to overcome the striver and destroy the sacrifice. Thus, the Rishi mentions "powers that stammer in the speech and stumble in the thought", obviously powers of limitation, wrong thought and incomplete expression. This is certainly a wholly different order of difficulty than that posed by the "devourers of our power and our knowledge who leap at us from near and shoot at us from afar." These "devourers" are beings and forces, fully conscious and intentional, who feed on the human's energies. Their action saps the Will and the Strength of the sacrificer. They attempt to disrupt and destroy, and in so doing, they act suddenly and swiftly when the seeker leaves even the slightest gap in the armour. Thus, they "leap at us from near". At other times, even when the seeker remains cautious, they remain vigilant and within striking distance to take advantage of the smallest mistake. Thus "they shoot at us from afar." Should they succeed in disturbing the consciousness from this distance, then they move in to devour the seeker and destroy the positive energies being developed in him. Agni is prayed to remove these opposing and limiting powers and thereby make "the path of the sacrifice a clear and happy journeying."

The next three *riks* take up the thread of the immediately preceding one, and indicate the energies and powers of Agni to overcome the opposition and limitations posed, both by the human incapacities and the conscious hostile forces. Agni is shown in a violent, destructive form, instilling fear into all beings. The destructive form is meant to remove opposition, however, and is beneficial to the Rishi. Sri Aurobindo, in his book *The Mother*, has given a description of the action of Mahakali which fits perfectly to the description given in the present *riks* by the Rishi to show the action of Agni to remove opposition:

"There is in her an overwhelming intensity, a mighty passion of force to

achieve, a divine violence rushing to shatter every limit and obstacle. All her divinity leaps out in a splendour of tempestuous action; she is there for swiftness, for the immediately effective process, the rapid and direct stroke, the frontal assault that carries everything before it. Terrible is her face to the Asura, dangerous and ruthless her mood against the haters of the Divine; for she is the Warrior of the Worlds who never shrinks from the battle. Intolerant of imperfection, she deals roughly with all in man that is unwilling and she is severe to all that is obstinately ignorant and obscure; her wrath is immediate and dire against treachery and falsehood and malignity, ill-will is smitten at once by her scourge." (Sri Aurobindo, SABCL, Vol. 25, p.28)

We also find similar descriptions of the action of the Divine Shakti to remove the opposition of hostile forces in the *Devi Mahatmyam*. Here also, the Divine force puts on a violent and destructive aspect, not directed at the seeker, but directed against the hostile or opposing powers, while creating fear, awe and wonder in the minds of even the seers and gods, because of the overwhelming intensity being manifested.

With this general understanding of the three *riks*, it would still be valuable to examine the statements therein a little more closely for the insight we can gain about the actual detailed action of Agni in this role of warrior on the divine path. One very important insight is expressed in *rik* 10 where the seer says: "thou rushest upon the forests of life, on its pleasant trees that encumber thy path". The forests symbolise the manifold desires of the life, and the trees are noted as being "pleasant", indicating that these are the pleasant desires that keep man occupied and distracted from the divine pursuits. For this reason, they are said to encumber the path. Even pleasant and harmless desires become obstacles to the divine journey and they too must be offered into the fire so that the being is ready and receptive to receive the advent of the higher powers who come at the call of Agni to the sacrifice. We may note in passing that "they who wing in the skies", birds in the physical world, are actually thoughts in the mental world, when we keep in mind that the sky of the Vedic seers represents the mental world. When the violent action of Agni comes to destroy the opposition to the sacrifice, even the seeker is set out of balance by the intensity and the violence being manifested. One further note is that we can also see here evidence of some of the actual psycho-physical results of certain lines of practice, such as in the Hatha Yoga, where there come at times tremendous rushes of Sound when certain levels open. These are not figurative statements but actual transcriptions of experience and we can see the similarity here of the experience of Kutsa Angirasa of the overwhelming physical sound which filled the

consciousness. We can find numerous similarities in the extant yogic literature between this experience of the Rishi and the action of the forces of yoga in the inner being.

That this is the actual operation taking place can be clearly seen by *rik* 12 where the inner significance of this sudden and overwhelming violent action is declared: "This dread and tumult of thee, is it not the wonderful and exceeding wrath of the gods of the Life rushing down on us to found here the purity of the Infinite, the harmony of the Lover?" These are the same results sought in yoga, the same results discussed by Sri Aurobindo in *The Mother*, the same results explained in the *Devi Mahatmyam*, "the purity of the Infinite" and the "harmony of the Lover." It is necessary, in order to have room in the being for these new and higher forces to act, that all lower motives, desires, drives, all opposing thoughts and will be excised completely. This process is violent and swift when the divine forces come into action. This experience can take the form of a vast conflagration, a universal destruction, an overwhelming power, and the seer even trembles under the impact of this vision and the action of this force. Thus, the Rishi prays "be gracious, O thou fierce Fire, let their minds be again sweet to us and pleasant." We see this same reaction in the mind of Arjuna when he was granted the vision of the Universal Form in the eleventh chapter of the *Gita*: "I have seen what never was seen before and I rejoice, but my mind is troubled with fear. O Godhead, show me that other form of Thine; turn Thy heart to grace, O Thou Lord of the gods, O Thou abode of this universe. I would see Thee even as before crowned and with Thy mace and discus. Assume Thy four-armed shape, O thousand-armed, O Form universal." (*Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter 11, Slokas 45-6)

Sri Krishna reassumes his normal human image and "assuming the desired form of grace and love and sweetness consoled the terrified one." (*Gita*, 11, 50) The words and images of the Vedic Seer harmonise perfectly with the images of the *Gita*. Both describe a similar overwhelming experience of powerful divine action to remove opposition and prepare the nature for the advent of the divine forces. The Rishi undergoing such an experience is struck with wonder and awe and he prays: "God art thou of the gods, for thou art the lover and friend; richest art thou of the masters of the Treasure, the founders of the home, for thou art very bright and pleasant in the pilgrimage and the sacrifice." Arjuna under the force of the similar experience also extols Sri Krishna with similar emotions: "O Thou Infinite, O Thou Lord of the gods, O Thou abode of the universe. .. Thou art the ancient Soul and the first and original Godhead and the supreme resting-place of this All." (*Gita*, 11, 37-38) These passages from the *Gita* are expressed in some of the most sublime poetry and carry the urgency

of immediate inspiration, indicating the power and directness of the experience which gave rise to this expression.

Having come through the violent action of the Divine Will breaking the limitations and obstacles, the Rishi is now able to move into states of consciousness filled with Peace, Bliss, Beatitude, divine states which are the result and effect of the sacrifice and the object of the journey. Thus the Rishi states: "This is the bliss of him and the happiness." The seeker reaches Agni's "own divine house" which in other passages of the Veda is revealed to be the Solar World, the Wide World, symbolising the wider illumined levels of consciousness beyond the mental level normal to the human being. From its "own house", Agni is able to radiate fully the divine power of consciousness. There it is "lit into its high and perfect flame." Once again we are reminded that the adoration is "by our thoughts". We continue to offer the thoughts, with love and adoration, to that divine flame. We offer the "wine of our delight." The divine force responds to this offering of love and "then it lavishes its deliciousness, then it returns in treasure and substance all that we have given into its hands." The consummation of the sacrifice is effected, the seeker has offered up all he is and all he has to the divine. The divine has responded by uplifting and transforming all that is offered and returning them for their fulfilment in action in the world. This is the mystic sacrifice extolled by the Rishi which has its comparisons in the mystic poetry of every age and every religion. The Rishi sums up the action of the sacrifice when he again lauds Agni with the following words: "O thou infinite and indivisible being, it is thou ever that formest the sinless universalities of the spirit by our sacrifice." The fruits of the sacrifice are effected in the consciousness, and there is absolutely no hint here of any request for material rewards.

Finally, the Rishi sums up his laud of Agni by again indicating the nature and action of the god: "thou compellest and inspirest thy favourites by thy happy and luminous forcefulness, by the fruitful riches of thy joy.... thou art the knower of felicity and the increaser here of our life and advancer of our being. Thou art the Godhead!"

Thus we have seen in this hymn of Kutsa Angirasa, a very complete and exhaustive description of the Vedic Sacrifice as a movement in consciousness. The Rishi began the hymn by giving to us a description of Agni, the priest of the sacrifice, the Flame of the sacrificial action. The method of bringing this divine flame into action is next set forth, and the personal effort required is explained. The action of the flame both in the individual and in the cosmos is described. The contact with the higher divine powers is next set forth and then the Rishi enters a discussion of the powers which oppose or limit the action of the sacrifice. The next step which follows logically is the action of the divine forces of the

sacrifice to remove these limiting and obstructing powers and clear the path for the upward movement of the consciousness. Finally, the consummation and fruits of the sacrifice are described and Agni is lauded in his true nature. We have seen here a very logically organised, step-by-step exposition of the Vedic sacrifice in its mystic, inner, esoteric sense without any veil of material or ritual symbols intervening. The Rishi has given us a very clear and straightforward view of the inner movements of the consciousness, the action of the sacrifice and the results thereof. There can be no more doubt that the Veda is to be understood as a manual of sadhana, a spiritual and psychological text filled with explicit instruction and description of actual inner experience which has been confirmed in the mystic and yogic traditions of all ages and in all parts of the world. What Kutsa Angirasa has revealed to us directly can also be found under a veil of symbols in the hymns of the other Rishis. The thought-substance, the vision, the images are the same, only clothed in varying language according to the nature of the individual seer expressing the experience.

Culmination of the Vedic Sacrifice : Mitra-Varuna

The Vedic Rishis, in their esoteric symbolic language, give us a very consistent sadhana to be followed. Hymn after hymn, seer after seer, invoke the gods in the prescribed order and open to the experiences in consciousness which those gods can vouchsafe to the seeker. First Agni is called the illumined Will, the Flame of Aspiration, to make the human being seek after something higher, to direct the thoughts and the energies towards the divine fulfilment. Thereafter, Indra, the illumined Mind Power becomes active, along with his helpers, subordinate mental energies or mentalised life-energies, to make the process of the sadhana develop thoroughly through the application of enlightened intelligence. It is at this point that we begin to see hymns calling upon Mitra and Varuna to effect their powers in the seeker. What are the characteristics of Mitra and Varuna and how can their inner truth shed light on the significance of the Vedic sacrifice? These are the questions which we shall be taking up in the present chapter.

We may fruitfully start from an examination of several hymns to Mitra-Varuna found in the fifth Mandala. V.66 opens with the following verse: "O mortal who awakenest to knowledge, call to thee the two godheads who are perfect in will and destroyers of thy enemy. Direct your thoughts to Varuna of whom Truth is the form and to the great Delight." This *Rik* immediately gives us insight into the nature of these two gods. "Truth is the form" of Varuna, and he is "perfect in will" and "destroyer of thy enemy." In other passages we learn that Varuna is the lord of the wideness. If we correlate these facts with certain

experience of yoga, we see immediately the connection between Varuna and the wideness experienced in the levels of the being above the mind, and we shall see, in our examination of the nature of Varuna, that indeed, he represents the powers of consciousness in the wideness beyond the thinking mind.

This same verse indicates that the nature of Mitra is the "great Delight." We shall understand the meaning of this presently. Before we move on, it is interesting to note that these two gods are invoked by the "mortal who awakenest to knowledge." Until the mortal awakens and is receptive, he is unable to invoke these gods or experience their presence in his consciousness. This prerequisite is fulfilled by the action of Agni and Indra, and it is for this reason that we call for Agni to bring these gods into action.

The effect of the action of Mitra-Varuna is set forth in the second *Rik* of this hymn: "For it is they who attain to the undistorted force and the entire mightiness. Then shall thy humanity become as if the workings of these gods; it is as if the visible heaven of light were founded in thee." This *Rik* describes an experience common to the various psycho-physical yogic practices of both the Hatha and Raja Yogas as well as the Tantras. The experience of the mind being flooded with Light, "as if the visible heaven of light were founded in thee" is a cardinal experience of yoga. Mitra-Varuna, resident at the heights of the being, in the solar world, *Swar*, are of the nature of light and wideness and they bring these characteristics to the seeker who is able, through receptive invocation, to open to their action in his own being. Again it is characteristic that their force is "undistorted", indicating the Truth-Force working in its own original power without dilution by the actions of the mind, life and body at their lower level of vibratory response. Sri Aurobindo refers to this level of consciousness as the Supramental, and he states on many occasions that the Force active at that level is the Truth-Force, Consciousness converted into Will without distortion or diminution, immediately and totally effective and direct. This is the "entire mightiness" referred to in the *Rik*. Clearly a psychological result is called for in the *Rik*, when it states: "Then shall thy humanity become as if the workings of these gods." No lesser result is called for by the Rishi than the transformation of the human being and consciousness into the workings of the gods of the Supramental World, *Swar*, consisting of Pure Light and Effective Force of Truth. Certainly this is no call for material prosperity or other mundane ends. We have here in very clear language, the aspiration to rise beyond the limitations of the human life and consciousness to the wide, pure and dynamic levels of consciousness which await man in his journey or pilgrimage of conscious growth.

This same character of the hymn is continued and in the 4th *Rik* we come across the following: "Then indeed, O transcendent godheads, you conquer die

seer-wisdoms by the full flooding of the illumined discernment; you perceive knowledge for these human creatures by a perception in which the judgment is purified." The seer wisdoms are attained by the "full flooding of the illumined discernment." Once again we are led to the experience of a Lightning of the mind and giving Vision or Divine Sight to the recipient of the Light. The mind, normally ineffective or limited because of distortions both of its own powers, and due to limitations imposed by its involvement with the life energies and the physical instrument, becomes freed and purified under the action of this light and this purified judgment power is able to discern true knowledge.

The Rishi prays for the fulfilment of his aspiration in the final *Rik* of this Sukta as follows: "When, O Mitra, you have your far-voyaging vision and we are the illumined seers, may we arrive in the effort of our journey to a self-empire spread out widely open and governing its multitudes." Sri Aurobindo has given us the explanation of this *Rik* when he states: "*Svārājya* and *Sāmrājya*, perfect empire within and without, rule of our inner being and mastery of our environment and circumstances, was the ideal of the Vedic sages, attainable only by ascending beyond our moral mentality to the luminous Truth of our being, the supramental infinities on the spiritual plane of our existence." (*On the Veda*, 1956, p.593, footnote1) It is appropriate that Mitra and Varuna, the Lords of Wideness and Delight, residing in these supramental levels of existence, are called upon to effect the fulfilment spoken of here.

Other hymns also must be reviewed to establish the nature of these two gods. Mandala V, Sukta 62 has some very interesting insights to reveal to us. The hymn starts with a description of an experience couched in somewhat obscure symbolic language: "By the Truth is veiled that ever-standing Truth of yours where they unyoke the horses of the Sun; there the ten hundreds stand still together; That One, — I have beheld the greatest of the embodied gods." (V.62.1) Let us see if we can unravel the clues present in the verse to ascertain its meaning. "By the Truth is veiled that ever-standing Truth". The ever-standing Truth must be the eternal, immutable, supreme Truth, unchangeable and permanent. That is clear. The Rishi declares that this eternal Truth is "veiled" "by the Truth." We are reminded powerfully of the verse of the *Isha Upanishad* which states: "The face of the Truth is covered with a brilliant golden lid; that do thou remove, O Fosterer, for the law of Truth, for sight." (I.U. 15) Here the Truth is "covered", or we may say, to use the language of the Veda "veiled". What veils this Truth is a "brilliant golden lid". Might this not be the Truth veiling the Truth? Sri Aurobindo has explained this in his commentary on the Upanishad. He describes the action of Surya, the Sun of Truth, and states that: "His rays are the thoughts that proceed luminously from the Truth, the Vast, but become

deflected and distorted, broken up and disordered in the reflecting and dividing principle, Mind. They form there the golden lid which covers the face of the Truth." (*The Upanishads*, Sri Aurobindo, p.67, footnote 1) This golden lid therefore, is of the Truth, as the rays derive from the Truth. They are however, distorted in the receiving medium and therefore create a veil or covering over the Truth. We could say, then that the Truth is veiling the Truth. This understanding would also explain the concept of Maya which we find in the later philosophical and Vedantic writings. The Truth, according to the Mayavadins, is eternal and unchanging. This Truth is veiled or covered over by the action of the intellect in non-discriminating the eternal from the ephemeral. The action of the Truth-Existence which makes possible this delusion is called "Maya", which is actually the potent energy of the Absolute, playing into forms, while still composed of, as its basis, the eternal unchanging Reality. Sankara's *Quintessence of Vedanta* gives us some insight into this view: "The absolute Brahman is ever-existent, non-dual, and subject to no kind of change. It is devoid of adjuncts, is not affected by anything, and is not subject to anything. Brahman is pure and is of the nature of bliss. As there is nothing lacking for Brahman, there is nothing to be achieved which would fill the want. Therefore Brahman is not a means to an end; it is ever the one non-dual Reality." (*Quintessence of Vedanta*, Sankaracharya, translated by Swami Tattwananda, Sl.770) This sloka gives us an understanding of the "ever-standing Truth" referred to in the Veda. A little later, Sankara gives a more detailed explanation: "That Supreme Truth, the One ultimate Reality, it is That which is of the nature of existence, consciousness and bliss. As Brahman knows neither old age nor death, That alone is the eternal truth, and these words of mine, which proclaim it, are true." (772) This is the eternal truth discussed by the Veda. Sankara also gives us insight into the way this eternal Truth is covered over in our intellect in the following passage: "There is a veil of ignorance that envelops all sentient beings. This veil of ignorance, in its aggregate aspect, is dominated by sattwa. It gives us only a reflex of pure consciousness. It pervades all, from ether to the aggregate of gross bodies, together with their effects." (710) Here Sankara has explained the workings of Maya to produce the "veil" over the Truth. This "veil", it must be noted gives us a "reflex of pure consciousness." This explanation is similar to Sri Aurobindo's description which we cited above. Thus, even this "veil of ignorance" is ultimately of the nature of Truth, and therefore, the Veda can say that the Truth is covered by a truth. That this is a proper understanding is seen from sloka 782 of *Quintessence of Vedanta*: "With the dawning of right knowledge, even that which was perceived in a state of delusion would be found to be none other than the Atman. In all this wide world there is nothing real other than the Atman."

Thus, the covering veil of ignorance is ultimately of the nature of Truth, and could be vividly symbolised as a "brilliant golden lid" covering the unchanging eternal Reality. Sankara and Sri Aurobindo are in fundamental agreement on this point, as Sankara explains: "It is only the delusion of the intellect that superimposes various objects upon it." This, the veil of Maya, is the brilliant golden lid, the truth covering the Truth, and the passages of the Upanishad and the Veda become clear. The process described in the two passages to reach the ultimate truth, is further explained by Sri Sankaracharya as follows: "As a result of the dawning of the supreme knowledge, when the veil of *avidya* is rent asunder, in all the levels of consciousness, that power of veiling the supreme Being, which was but the product of ignorance, also ceases to function." (799) The result is explained further: "When the adjuncts merge in the supreme Brahman, which is reflected in them, what remains finally is the light of pure consciousness. That is the light of the supreme Brahman, which alone had been reflected in all of them." (804)

How this process is to be effected, which was the ultimate goal of the Rishi, to attain to true Knowledge, is described in the Upanishadic passage, which gives a little more detail of the methods than the particular Vedic passage we are reviewing. The Upanishad states: "Marshall thy rays, draw together thy light; the Lustre which is thy most blessed form of all, that in Thee I behold." The rays are spread out and form a golden lid or veil over the eternal, immutable and unchanging Truth. The Rishi prays that these diverse rays be gathered together in the consciousness to form a mass of Light. When the rays are drawn together, the distorting veil is withdrawn and one obtains the vision of the Truth in its supreme form; thus, "the Lustre which is thy most blessed form of all, that in Thee I behold." This discussion gives us now the key to understand the Vedic *Mantra*: "where they unyoke the horses of the Sun; there the ten hundreds stand still together; That One, — I have beheld the greatest of the embodied gods." We can see now that this passage is intimately related to the Upanishadic vision cited above. The marshalling of the rays in the Upanishad relates to the standing together of the ten hundreds. The result of both is the same, the vision of the supreme Form of the Truth. We may now note, in furtherance of the theme of this chapter, that this action, and this Supreme Form of Light, falls within the domain of Mitra-Varuna, the guardians of the Light, residing in the Vast Solar World of the Truth. We have gone into this extended review in order to shed light on the nature and action of these gods.

The second *Rik* of this hymn continues the description of Mitra-Varuna along the lines we have been discussing. "That is the utter vastness of you, O Mitra and Varuna; there the Lord of the movement milks the herds of his stable

radiance by the days. Lo, you twain swell all the streams of the Blissful One and your one wheel moves in their path." First we must note that the "vastness" is a constant and unvarying characteristic of Varuna, found throughout the Veda. We have already explained the significance of this vastness, the wide realm of the Truth, beyond the mental levels of consciousness. This corresponds to the yogic experience of rising beyond the limited mental being into a wideness, an infinite expanse. Another interesting observation concerns the "one wheel", which Sri Aurobindo explains in his footnote to the translation of the hymn: "The unified movement, when the lower wheel of the Sun is struck away; the inferior truth is taken up into the unity of the higher truth from which it now seems to be separate in its motion." Once again, through the action of Varuna, the marshalling of the rays of the Ignorance (the inferior truth), the apparent separateness of the world from the Divine is removed, the ultimate form of truth in the form of the supreme Light is seen, and the inferior working is taken up by the higher working, and the unity of the manifestation is revealed.

Although the remainder of this hymn has interest for us in a general way, it will not be appropriate to go into each *Rik* at this time as it goes beyond the scope of our present inquiry. We would however take particular note of one more *Rik* of this hymn to summarise our examination on this point: "To that home whose form is of the gold, whose pillars are of the iron, in the breaking of the Dawn, in the uprising of the Sun you ascend, O Varuna, O Mitra, and thence you behold the Infinite and the Finite." It is significant to our thesis that the Veda now makes use of the image of the form of gold, since its close relation to the *Isha Upanishad* and the references there to the "brilliant golden lid" are made even more clear. Mitra and Varuna ascend and make manifest their action to the seer in the breaking of the Dawn and the rising of the sun. They are, as stated earlier, solar powers residing in the luminous world of *Swar*, "that home whose form is of the gold", with gold symbolising the Truth-consciousness. When the Light of Knowledge from this supreme world becomes active, Mitra and Varuna are able to behold the "Infinite and the Finite." The Vision of Truth is essentially a power of true understanding and discrimination. When one arises to the levels of the supramental world, and from there views the manifestation, one can see all the levels as a unity and at the same time see the forms of the manifestation for what they are. One becomes conscious, thus, of both the Infinite and the Finite, without, however any conflict or contradiction arising. It is to be noted that the *Isha Upanishad* makes this same point when it says: "He who knows That as both in one, the Knowledge and the Ignorance, by the Ignorance crosses beyond death and by the Knowledge enjoys immortality." (I.U.11) It is characteristic of Varuna that in the wideness

of those higher realms which are his home, he brings to the aspirant, the sacrificer, the true knowledge which overcomes the veil of the inferior Truth (maya) and unifies both the higher and the lower knowledge in one integrated view.

This is the profound goal of the Vedic Seers, as described by them time and time again in the hymns. The object of sacrifice is to reach these realms of Light and Truth, to manifest that Truth in the being of the Rishi and to go beyond Ignorance to an integrated Vision of the Reality and an intimate realisation of the Divine upholding, manifesting and sustaining the Worlds. In the hymns to Mitra-Varuna, specially signified as the guardians of the Light, we can easily recognise this noble and supramundane goal of the Rishi's aspirations.

(Concluded)

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The Mundaka: Chapter III: Section I

The Art and Science of Living

Alok Pandey

Having given us bright hints regarding the Science of Brahman, the means to arrive at it, this great and wonderful Upanishad now imparts to us the Art and Science of living through which we can arrive not only at the highest realisation of the One Reality, that is Brahman, but also lead a life of fulfilment in the world, not struggling and maimed as we lead now. Have we not been already and repeatedly told that “All this is the Brahman?”

The very first thing to understand is that though this Reality is One, it manifests itself in two poises, – one that binds It to Its own works, the other that is luminous, free, above. This it does with the help of a beautiful image, the image of two birds sitting on the same tree.

1. Two birds, beautiful of wing, close companions, cling to one common tree: of the two one eats the sweet fruit of the tree, the other eats not but watches his fellow.

2. The soul is the bird that sits immersed on the one common tree; but because he is not lord he is bewildered and has sorrow. But when he sees that other who is the Lord and beloved, he knows that all is His greatness and his sorrow passes away from him.

The image of two birds sitting upon the same tree is a well-known image taken from this Upanishad. The tree is the tree of life, of creation, or the many-hued, many-branching activities and movements of Nature. The bird is the soul. There are two possible poises that the soul can take in its relation to nature. The first and common pose is that of the soul-in-ignorance wherein, moved by the desire for the fruit, it experiences the dualities of pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow. Even when the fruit is sweet as is given in the image (and

indeed there is a joy in creation that the soul experiences through all the ups and downs), yet this is sooner or later followed by the contrary experience of bitterness when the fruit is over and the craving returns. Each joy of life drags a sorrow at its feet, each success is tinged with the foreboding and apprehension of a future failure, each happiness that nature offers opens upon a causeway to pain. Like light and shadow, the twin dualities hold man’s soul a captive in its ambiguous net.

Until tired of this endless game of a swinging pendulum we turn within and upward and discover that other poise, – the Lord, the Master of Nature and Life who deals with all things as a detached witness. He does not abandon the tree to fly off elsewhere. Dwelling within the many-hued foliage of Nature, the Lord remains yet untouched as the lotus blooming in the mud and mire or the dew-drop floating on the surface of a leaf. Thus He enjoys all things without the clinging bondage that accompanies our enjoyings. So too we must enjoy life, perched upon the tree of creation, dealing with the varied activities of life but with our gaze inwardly fixed upon the Divine beloved. We would then be in the world but not of the world.

The soul that has thus discovered the Master and seen the Lord, is freed from all grief and sorrow. All that it loved and longed for, its craving for pleasure and joy and satisfaction and peace is now discovered within in its relation with the Master, the sole eternal Beloved who dwells within the heart of all things. To use another image we may say that the *Jiva*, the self in us, is stationed between Brahman, the eternal Reality and Prakriti or Nature. As long as it is turned towards Nature, it is tossed by the waves of life towards the heights of glory and abysses of despair that follow in its wake. It believes itself a creature of the mud meant for a day’s careless use by ambiguous powers. He labours and struggles for momentary gains and transient happiness. But turning inwards it discovers the Lord and knows itself no more as the slave and vassal of Nature but a part and parcel, a portion of and one in being with the Lord of Nature. He need not crave anymore or strive to possess and save the fruits from adverse chance. He delights in the play as a non-doer even while engaged in everything. He does not run after this or that object of desire because he is the Lord and all that he needs comes to him as gifts of Nature. This brings true contentment, inner peace and an abiding joy.

3. When, a seer, he sees the Golden-hued, the maker, the Lord, the Spirit who is the source of Brahman, then he becomes the knower and shakes from his wings sin and virtue; pure of all stain he reaches the supreme identity.

Note that the Upanishad regards virtue too as a load or a bond of ignorance

that prevents the free expanse and flight of the soul. How does it shake off this bondage? Naturally, it must find a lever outside the zone of Ignorance in which it is caught. All its present faculties are covered and coloured by Ignorance and cannot free it. The bird is trapped as it were in the cage of Nature, even if it be a cage of virtues, or the *sattvic* nature. But when it has the vision of the Lord, the Brahman, the Supramental Home of Truth, stainless and pure, then the soul too becomes pure of all virtue and vice. Of course in a sense it was always pure but the dust of ignorance was covering its wings. That is shaken off and the soul realises and recognises its true nature and realises its oneness with the Lord and thereby, like Him becomes free and pure.

In other words instead of trying to cleanse the stains of sin one by one with the soap of virtue we should strive instead to draw closer to the supreme Truth and Light and Love for indeed that is what we are in our deepest Self. Once we discover thus our true identity the false ego-self simply withers away finding no more support in our consciousness. Both virtue and vice and all other dualities born of the ego dissolve away by the growing Light of Truth within us.

4. This is the life in things that shines manifested by all these beings; a man of knowledge coming wholly to know this, draws back from creeds and too much disputings. In the Self his delight, at play in the Self, doing works, — the best is he among the knowers of the Eternal.

Quite naturally when we know Him thus then all limited views that locate and limit Him in narrow frames of time and space or another drop away from us. Not only are we freed from the duality of virtue and vice which are an ignorance of the vital nature but also from creeds and cults which are the ignorance of our mental nature that tries to cut the One Integral Whole, the Infinite and the Eternal, into bits and parts, convenient to one's beliefs and non-beliefs. He is in everything and everywhere. All philosophies, cults and creeds are attempts by the limited mind to define the indefinable. They are all partial and hence limited aspects of the Eternal. Knowing thus, the heart of the knower finds Peace. He has broken free from the vain disputings of the mind and dwells in the wideness of the Higher Consciousness.

Further, the Upanishad reminds us that this Peace is not a passive Peace but a dynamic one and accompanies the knower in His works as well. This Knowledge is not dependent upon any withdrawal from works as that would be a conditional state but informs and permeates the works as well. Expecting nothing from the world since the knower of Brahman finds the delight within his very Self, he is ever at peace and engaged in works. Such is the highest state,

the state in which the highest Knowledge and Works are reconciled and synthesised. Among the knowers of the Eternal, the Upanishad even seems to place these as the very best who are ever engaged in works, no more for the sake of their personal egoistic satisfaction, but for the sake of the Self and Its delight in creation.

5. The Self can always be won by truth, by self-discipline, by integral knowledge, by a life of purity, — this Self that is in the inner body, radiant, made all of light whom by the perishing of their blemishes the doers of askesis behold.

How to find that self and arrive at this widest Self-knowledge? The Upanishad gives us a number of ways. We have already been told about the concentration in the heart upon the mystic syllable OM. Now the Upanishad reveals us to the secret of arriving at this Knowledge in life itself. The method is the practice of Truth, self-discipline, a life of purity and integral knowledge.

The path of discovering the Truth must be paved by truth itself. We live in falsehood and breathe falsehood. Hypocrisy becomes for man a way of life and therefore he deviates more and more from the truth of his being. But the practice of truth demands a great austerity, an askesis that goes beyond any mere physical discipline. It means that we remain conscious in all our dealings with the world. It also means that we remember our goal always and act and speak in a way as to take us nearer to the goal. It is not a mere moral or religious purity that is being spoken of here but the purity that comes and grows by the practice of truth in our life. This practice slowly liberates us from the trappings of the outer consciousness and appearances in which we are presently caught and thereby reveals to us the radiant body of Truth that lies hidden in the inner being and behind the appearances of the world.

This truth is an integral Truth, not a truth of our limited opinions, beliefs and narrow formulas and views but a Truth vast and infinite that sets us free. It is an integral Truth that is operative in every sphere of life and action. The integral knowledge also implies that we have to discover and practise and apply it in every sphere of life, not just in our self-discovery but also in our dealings with the world. This is the askesis enjoined upon the sadhaka, not a running away from life, not a shaving off of the head and donning an ochre robe, but a shaving off of the ego, a dropping off of the past and the robe of purity and truth.

6. It is Truth that conquers and not falsehood; by Truth was stretched out the path of the journey of the gods, by which the sages winning their desire ascend there where Truth has its supreme abode.

What follows next is a powerful exhortation, as if a voice were commanding us and not just telling us a sublime secret. The note rings clear and loud that despite all that we may have known so far from our limited field of experience, it is Truth that has the final victory and not falsehood. Of course this rather well-known but little understood revelation from the Upanishad has to be taken in conjunction with the other slokas. This indeed is true of all such revelatory writings. There is a tendency in the modern mind to quote from the scriptures piecemeal. Not that such partial quoting has no value. Each sloka is also a stand alone in its own right. Yet for the fullness of the meaning the total context or the total picture is to be taken. Thus the Truth that is being spoken of here, the Truth whose victory is being vouchsafed is not our temporal and relative truths, not legal, social, moral or religious truths, not truths as we see and understand in our present state of Ignorance, but the Truth that lies in the ‘golden sheath’ beyond the Mind, stainless and pure. This Ultimate Reality, Truth supreme that has built the worlds is bound to eventually emerge victorious in creation and man, despite all the oppositions and illusions created in its path, despite the distortions and perversions created in our understanding by the mind. The gods obey it and with the power of Truth these worlds come into being. Therefore man must walk the path of Truth even as the sages of old, the path that opens before us when we shun desire and the seeking after pleasure and momentary comforts. Desire leads us away from the straight path of Truth, it clouds us and obstructs the path. It brings in attachment, preferences, inequality and all the rest that distorts our perception and knowledge and action and will. The way of Truth is therefore the path of detachment from all these coats that cover and colour the truth of our being. Truth in speech, truth in feeling, truth in action and eventually truth in our entire life and being is the way to the great Victory.

7. Vast is That, divine, its form unthinkable; it shines out subtler than the subtle: very far and farther than farness, it is here close to us, for those who have vision it is even here in this world; it is here, hidden in the secret heart.

Desire keeps us tied to the surfaces of life; it holds us back to the outposts of ignorance where we are tossed towards every side and rush at each appearance. But Truth dwells deep within and we have to free ourselves from

the gross, the limited, the narrow, the superficial, the surface appearances so as to be able to discover the Truth that is vast enough to hold all creation; subtler than the subtle, yet close, very close if we had the vision to see. Truth is everywhere, within us and within the world. But to discover It we must dive deep into the very heart of things, at the core and centre of our being and of creation. Once again we are being hinted that the seat of truth is in the depths of the heart and it is by concentrating in the deeper inmost heart that we can discover the truth of our being.

8. Eye cannot seize, speech cannot grasp Him, nor these other godheads; not by austerity can he be held nor by works: only when the inner being is purified by a glad serenity of knowledge, then indeed, meditating, one beholds the Spirit indivisible.

The Truth of things, this Self of self is subtlest of the subtle and hence It cannot be seized with our gross senses, nor even by the subtle powers of various godheads. No human effort or austerity can help us behold that Glory of glories. It is only when our inner being has been made quiet, without disturbances and turbulence, calm with the peace that comes through true Knowledge that one may behold, through meditating upon ‘That’, the indivisible Spirit. Division is falsehood, Unity is Truth since Truth is an indivisible whole. When we take out one part of it and cut it off from the rest, then we necessarily turn this little figure of truth into a falsehood. This has been the bane of exclusive religions and one-sided ideologies, doctrines and cults and sects that have led to so much inequity and violence. But when one has the vision of Truth one is above these vain disputings, as we have already been told, since one sees all things as part of the One indivisible whole.

9. This Self is subtle and has to be known by a thought-mind into which the life-force has made its fivefold entry: all the conscious heart of creatures is shot through and inwoven with the currents of the life-force and only when it is purified can this Self manifest its power.

Two more luminous hints are being given to us in our search for Truth, for the One Reality behind the universe. First, we have been told that the Reality, the Self of self is subtle and hence the crude powers of our physical and vital mentality cannot seize it. Not by the physical mind heavily dependent upon the gross senses and not by the emotional and vital mind full of petty sentiments, crude passions and wild imaginations can the Truth be found. The power that

must go to find Truth must be a subtle power freed from the clutch of the gross material world and its powerful grip. Such a power is the thought-mind, the mind that can discern and discriminate, the mind that has overpowered the desire-element and controls the fivefold movements of *prana* rather than being controlled by it.

The second interesting hint is that the life-force in us, the vitality is not be suppressed or maimed or destroyed but refined, uplifted, purified. It is the feeder energy of all creation. Without it we cannot arrive at the great Goal. It is the current that energises everything and without the force of life, even tapasya would not be possible. What is, however, needed is a mastery and control; the life-force in man is like an unbridled fire that often destroys the house it inhabits. This fire has to be tended and gradually brought first under the control of the luminous parts of our mind. Next it has to learn to be subservient to the Self, the Spirit. Only then can we discover the fullness of life, and the full powers of the Self emerge and manifest in and through us.

10. Whatever world the man whose inner being is purified sheds the light of his mind upon, and whatsoever desires he cherishes, that world he takes by conquest, and those desires. Then, let whosoever seeks for success and well-being approach with homage a self-knower.

What follows next is something unexpected. Having told us that we have to purify our vital nature and transcend desires to know the Truth, we are given an interesting secret. It is this that when the mind has been purified of all that is gross and ego-driven, refined from all that is low and ugly and obscure, such a mind arrives not only at Self-knowledge but becomes also a Power. Such a mind commands the world-forces in such a way that whatsoever it desires that is fulfilled and to whatever domain it turns itself, that it conquers easily.

It is indeed a cryptic verse. But when we see it in totality then it yields its meaning. It is understood that such a person is freed from all gross movements and crude passions and desires. And yet he lives in the world and its necessities. He has to battle the forces of various orders so as to sustain himself and those who depend upon him. The Upanishad has declared right at the beginning that the true Self-Knowledge is not something that cuts us off from the world, and along with it a whole part and aspect of the Divine working. It rather reveals to us the inner sense and meaning of the world, –‘Knowing which all else is known’, for indeed ‘That has become this’. But a knowledge that does not have any power to change is a vain knowledge. It may be useful for an individual escape into the Beyond but it is of little value to the world and our existence here.

Therefore the Upanishad declares boldly that Self-Knowledge not only brings the knowledge of all else but also the Power over all else. It brings a mastery over world-forces so that all that one needs to lead a full and healthy and happy life comes naturally and effortlessly. One has no more to strive and struggle for it. Therefore is this Self-knowledge not just an idealist’s abstraction but also the most practical Wisdom of life. Hence the Upanishad closes this movement with the great advice that whosoever really desires success and well-being must approach a Self-knower. That is the royal road towards self-fulfilment rather than the constant agitation in which we are engaged that invariably bears mixed fruits for us.

In fact this last verse completes the movement initiated by the first one, – on the one side a life caught up between pleasure and pain, joy and grief engaged in eating the fruits while, on the other hand, perched upon the same tree, the life one with the Lord and Master of creation, a life of Peace and Delight where grief and sorrow enters not.

When a man runs after desires, he always finds that the real fruit he cherishes through it, that is happiness, peace, power invariably escape and elude him. But when he turns his back upon desires and engages in a life of purity and Self-knowledge then desires run after him and fill him with success and all else that he may need for his well-being. Sri Aurobindo reveals this subtle law of the mighty game of life. It is Delight that has gone into creation and nourishes its roots. It is delight that has taken here this ambiguous form of an ever insatiable desire. In fact when we pursue desire, we are, in reality, trying to capture delight, unknowingly though through this and that object. But our very straining and striving is a movement of the ego. All that we need to do is to stop chasing it and it will be there, right there, within and around us, everywhere and in everything:

Delight, go down and give it strength to live!
O Ether, change! O Breath of things, grow full
Of the perpetual whirl! Break out, O Fire,
In seas of magic colour, infinite waves
Of rainbow light! Thou, liquid element,
Be sap, be taste in all created things
To please the senses. Thou, O solid earth,
Enter into all life, support the worlds.
I send forth joy to lure the hearts of men,
I send forth law to harmonise and rule.
And when these things are done, when men have learned

My beauty, My desirability, My bliss,
I will conceal Myself from their desire
And make this rule of the eternal chase,
“They who abandon Me, shall to all time
Clasp and possess; they who pursue, shall lose.”
(Sri Aurobindo: *Kama*, SABCL, vol.5, pp.80-81)

Wealth and fame and success naturally flee from the man who pursues them; he breaks his heart or perishes without gaining them; or if he gains them, it is often after a very hell of difficulty, a very mountain of toil. But when a man turns his back on wealth and glory, then, unless his past actions forbid, they come crowding to lay themselves at his feet. And if they come, will he enjoy or reject them? He may reject them — that is a great path and the way of innumerable saintly sages but you need not reject them, you may take and enjoy them. How will you enjoy them then? Not for your personal pleasure, certainly not for your false self; for you have already abandoned that kind of enjoyment in your heart; but you may enjoy God in them and them for God. (Sri Aurobindo: SABCL, Vol. 17, p.454)

Gitanuvachan

Second Series
(Chapters XI & XII)

Srimat Anirvan

Question:

‘The Great Lord of Yoga’ *Mahayogeswar* had shown Arjuna his Universal Form. What is yoga-wealth or ‘*Bibhuti*’? Why *Mahayogeswar* and not only *Yogeswar*? What is ‘*Divya Chakshu*’ or celestial eye? Why the Divine cannot be perceived with terrestrial eyes? Does it mean a different kind of organ or this very human eye can see differently? Individual effort cannot bring the divine vision within our perception. Grace has to work. In that case does Grace discriminate according to worth of the recipient?

Answer:

‘*Bi-bhuti*’ is a Vedic term, meaning that the One has become all these variations. ‘*Bibhuti*’ is the becoming of One into Many. ‘*Purusha eve idam Sarvam*’ – Purusha has become all these. There is another word connected with *bibhuti* in the Veda. That is ‘*sambhuti*’ or Entire Becoming. *Vak*, the daughter of Ambhrin, has used that term to indicate her universal expansion. *Ishopanishad* tells us about *asambhuti* (Non- Becoming), which is higher than *sambhuti*. The inter-related connection between the three can be better explained with the help of a simile. *Asambhuti* is like the colourless sky, *sambhuti* is the solar sphere in that sky and *bibhuti* the scattered rays of the sun. The assembly of many is nothing but the *bibhuti* of One. The Supreme Shakti or the Source in the form of *Mahad Brahman*, that is holding all manifestations (14/4) is *sambhuti* and *asambhuti* is the Supreme Consciousness and shelter of that Shakti.

Bibhuti is a term used in the yoga philosophy also. Its other name is ‘*siddhi*’ or ‘*siddhai*’ in colloquial term. If the scattered consciousness can be controlled within and channelised towards oneness, by Law of Nature, there appears a vibration of supernatural power. That is called *bibhuti* too. In the Gita that has

been hinted at as well.

But the Lord is eternally established in yoga. In him *bibhuti* and *sambhuti* are absorbed in *asambhuti* – all are together and simultaneous. So for him, *bibhuti* is not just a symptom – it is creation – ‘*visarga*’ (8/3), where he resides in his fullness everywhere. In his own words, ‘I reside deep in the heart of all’ (15/15) This is the characteristic of divine yoga or *Mahayoga*. During the course of his sadhana, a practitioner yogi might get a glimpse of this divine *bibhuti* or supernatural power, but he can never attain the power, though a proficient or a *siddha* yogi might attain some enjoyment of the divine play. But even he can never attain the divine Shakti. The divine yoga (*Mahayoga*) is expressed in creation as well as in dissolution. But the expression of yoga *bibhuti* of even a master of yoga (*Yogeswar*) is in the partial expression of power at one section of creation. He is same with the Lord only in ‘Renunciation of universal affairs’. Hence though a *yogeswar*, he can never be the *Maha Yogeswar* or the Supreme Lord of Yoga.

Another name for *Divya Chakshu* is *Prajna Chakshu*. Ordinary eyes are just organs called ‘physical eyes’ with very limited power. With mechanical help, the power can be enhanced but the limitation of vision remains it see only the worldly thing as an object. That can never be a vision of Shakti, *bhava* or consciousness.

A vision by ‘*Divya Chakshu*’ is essentially one ‘grasped by Intelligence beyond senses’ (6/21). Yet it is not a vision with closed eyes like a dream. Arjuna did not see the Universal Form in a trance. His total absorption in the divine Being brought a complete change in his ability and power of vision even in his naked eye. This is the ‘spiritual seeing’ (*chinmoy pratyaksha*) mentioned in the Veda.

This cannot happen without showering of power and bliss from above. And such receptive beings are few and far between. Arjuna was totally aware of that and said, ‘If you think I am capable of seeing’ (11/4). To see the divine Form with naked eye it is imperative to be blind of them. That is called the ‘Yoga of restraint of propensities’ (*vrittinirodh*). And in the background of that Void a new power of vision emerges that sees him within (6/21). Then that power spreads even in the physical eyes. That belongs to a very high level of existence. Not everyone can rise up there. Yet, even then, one does not repent, for the ecstasy of the inner vision fills the heart and overflows all around.

Question:

Is Universal Form a form of condensed effulgence or one of expansion? Since the sun cannot be looked at, is it possible to tolerate the ‘rays of the

thousand suns’ by the physical eye? Was that the reason for conferring the divine sight by the Lord? Arjuna had said, ‘I am seeing all devas in your divine body’ (11/15). Did Sri Krishna’s body disappear? Yet, did Arjuna not see the Universal Form in the body of Sri Krishna transformed into *Virat* holding each and all?

Answer:

The light from a lamp, controlled at the flame, spreads everywhere. Hence the form of condensed effulgence is simultaneously condensed as well as pervasive all over. A physical eye cannot stand the radiance of even a single sun, but a divine eye can and if its power is generated to the physical eye, that too becomes capable. But as I have mentioned before, that does not happen to everybody.

The form of Sri Krishna did not disappear during the appearance of Universal Form. He himself had said, ‘Here, in One, see today the whole universe established in my Body’ (11/7). And again had asked Arjuna to look at whatever ‘has not been seen before and all other wonders’ (11/6).

The whole thing cannot be explained without self-contradictory language. It is like seeing the whole ocean in a single drop of water. This is an impossibility to the practical intelligence, because, practical vision consists of seeing objects one after another arranged in the space. Two things cannot occupy the same space. Unless one goes beyond this divided vision, one cannot understand the mystery of ‘Here in One is established the whole universe’.

The vision of Universal Form is not only a vision of objects. It is a vision of the object, its *bhava*, shakti and consciousness all together. The form of Sri Krishna that Arjuna saw with divine eyes was simultaneously a physical form (*martya tanu*), *bhava* form, (*bhava tanu*), form of Pure Existence (*sattwa tanu*) and Formless (*Atanu*). Physical form can be seen outside and the *bhava tanu* in the heart. But both of them are becomings. In *sattwa tanu*, the Becoming is condensed in Being – not in outer space but in inner space. This is hard to conceptualise. The Purusha mentioned in the *Mandukya Upanishad* as ‘One who is the condensed form of *Prajna*, the source and Lord of all’ is verily the One having *sattwa tanu* residing in the state of *sushupti*. Unless one realises the soul-power at the level of *sushupti samadhi*, one cannot realise the mystery of *sattwa tanu*.

Yet, this is not the end of his forms. Even beyond this *sattwa tanu* is his *Siva tanu* or formless Existence, where flashes the lightning of ultimate possibilities, which has ‘never been seen before’ (11/6). Yet which might create a craving for Arjuna to ‘see’ (11/7).

According to the Vedic science, *atman* and *tanu* (body) are one and so is outer space and inner; according to *Taittiriya Upanishad*, the outer space is the becoming of Atman (2/1). The human form of the Divine as well as his lordship of the universe and his supreme aspect all are held together here (9/11). The smallest of the small and the largest of the large, time and space are same here; it is like seeing of a huge tree in a seed and the seed in a huge tree simultaneously. And this seeing is beyond physical or mental vision. As long as there remains the prejudice of ordinary sensuous or mental vision, that seeing is not possible. It is only possible if one can ascend to One from Many and descend from One to Many with self-knowledge and firm faith in Oneness. Hence the seeing of Universal Form is born out of Yoga. The one who is seeing is the yogi and the One who is showing is the great Lord of yoga.

Yet the vision of Universal Form by Arjuna is not in its totality like the Universal Form depicted in the *Purusha Sukta* of the Veda. It is partial here. The form of Time as the Destroyer of all with the imminent battle of Kurukshetra in the background is more prominent here.

Question:

Everyone enters into the mouth of Time, the Destroyer. It is the ego of a doer that says, 'I have fought and slain'. Actually, 'They are already slain by Me, oh, Savyasachi, just be an instrument' (11/33). Again, the Lord is the Protector as well as Time, the Destroyer. Why then there is the ego of doership in a human being? Does being as an instrument verify the truth that we have no power of our own to fulfil the will or work of the Divine?

Answer:

We have to remember that the vision of the Universal Form by Arjuna is in adherence to the *Bibhuti Yoga*. At the end of the *Bibhuti Yoga*, the Lord has said, 'Wherever in the universe there is any expression of glory, wealth or power, know that to be a part of my Vigour (10/41). Here is described the ascending order of creation which has been described as 'ascension' in the Veda; its movement is from matter towards consciousness – as per *Aitareya Aranyaka*, the gradual opening of higher knowledge. Gradual process indicates a relation with Time. Like spreading of light, time has an innate conscious growth. But that growth of consciousness happens in a material body and matter breaks again and again to prepare itself to hold the flow of consciousness. This breaking up of matter is what we call death. Therefore death is nothing but another aspect of Time.

The Universal Form shown to Arjuna by Vasudeva has two aspects. In one,

Time is the means to uplift consciousness. Hence it has a perpetual flow towards the Eternal like the uninterrupted flow of a river to the ocean. Arjuna has given a vivid description of that from sloka 15 to 20. This is the endless power of the Universal Form without beginning, middle or end (11/19). This aspect of Time is all-encompassing and inconceivable due to its eternal nature and to the limited human consciousness a source of agony (11/20). Just side by side with the eternal aspect of the Universal Form is His transient aspect. Giving a colourful and vivid description of that, Arjuna is asking, 'Who art Thou, fierce and terrible and what do you intend to do here' (11/31)? The Lord answered, 'I am Time the Destroyer. As vessels of consciousness I create physical forms from Me and in the same way I wind them up within Me once they lose their purpose. That is what I am going to do at Kurukshetra now' (11/32).

The protagonist of Kurukshetra, from behind the screens, is Time the Destroyer. No one involved in the great battle could initiate any action by himself, though immersed in the foolish egoism of doership (3/27), all were thinking that choice of fighting depended on their decision. In reality the war was inevitable and happened by the Will of God for the purpose of the Time. Even if Arjuna had not participated in the war, yet it would have taken place. He could not have saved anyone by staying away. (11/32). He had marched towards it step by step directed by his sense of duty. Led by temporary illusion, even if he had retraced his steps now, he would not have been able to stop the flow of action. On the other hand there would have been a great inner loss.

A great mystery of *Karma Yoga* is hidden here. That should be well understood. The universe is moving not according to our personal desire but by the 'Will of an Eternal Purusha, who is the Keeper of immortal *dharma*'. We might realise the truth of that immortal *dharma* if we can give up the self-made concept of *dharma* and *adharma* like 'eternal *dharma* of race and clan' (1/42) and transform ourselves to be fit instruments in his hands (18/59-62,66). Then the intelligence that we work with changes to the intelligence beyond good and bad that descends directly from him (2/50,10/10). Then 'verily He is pervading all, and all our propensities are ensued from him'. With this concept all our regular personal actions performed according to our *swabhava* transform into his worship. And that becomes the ultimate attainment of goal for a *Karmayogin*.

This is the concept of instrumental doer or appointed doer. This concept is tarnished by darkness of ignorance in a lower mind. If only he, residing in the heart of each being, out of infinite mercy, lights the lamp of knowledge (10/11), the *jiva* gets rid of egotism as a doer. For that, first of all one has to see non-action in action and action in non-action and thus realising the totality of action learn to be a non-doer (4/18). After that comes the instrumental doer and

eventually after attaining *sadharmya* (14/2) the yogi earns the merit to be the divine worker (4/9).

Question:

‘Thou art *Akshara*, *Sat*. *Asat* and That whatever is beyond’ (11/37-38). Would you please give the mystic explanation of these two slokas?

Answer:

‘Thou art the *Akshara Purusha*’, etc. are the depiction of the reality of Universal Purusha. Purusha has three aspects – transcendental, cosmic and personal or with form (9/11). Arjuna is seeing him in form. This is clearly indicated by the usage of the pronoun ‘thou’. The adjective *akshara* again clearly indicates his supreme state (8/3). The *Akshara Purusha* has again two aspects. In positive aspect he is *Sat* and in negative aspect he is *Asat*. There is no conflict between the two in the state of *vijnana*. The conflict arises in our mind. The Veda too has said, ‘in the supreme state there exists *Sat* as well as *Asat*’. In the language of a philosopher, ‘He is Indescribable – beyond *Sat* and *Asat*’. Therefore ‘*Tat param yat*’ – That which is beyond *Sat* and *Asat*. This Transcendental One has become Purusha, whom the Veda has described as ‘The Purusha with thousand heads’ and all. The nature of Purusha is essentially Consciousness. The Vedic name attributed to him is ‘Deva’. He is ‘*Adideva*’, meaning the source of universal gods or the entire consciousness. From Him originates Time or the urge to create. Hence He is ‘*Purana*’. This original Godhead (*Adideva*) is not only the ultimate source of all but He has become all this; ‘The Purusha verily is all this’.

And herein lies his cosmic aspect. Essentially being One, he has become Many and resides in the heart of every individual as *antaryamin*; that is why consciousness is flowing in each *jiva*; that is why man questions and says, ‘we want to know him, who is residing in the depth of the cave of our hearts’. Hence he is ‘*Vedya*’ – to be known. The journey of our *vidya* finds its goal and refuge in His supreme state. Hence He is our ‘*parama dhama* – the ultimate Abode. Once we reach there, we find all our *vidya* is nothing but the lustre of his *prajna*. Yet all our *vidya* cannot express him; he expresses himself and it is his expression that takes the form of *vidya* in us. What is he in reality? Only he knows. And we know only as much as he makes us know. Hence he is the ‘*Vetta*’ – the Knower.

All these happen inside. But so we see him outside as well – as Infinite and All-Pervading in the universe. This is to see him with conscient vision (*chinmoy pratyaksha*) in his the Universal Form.

Question:

Absence of the concept of majesty of the Divine makes us think of him as an ordinary human being. After seeing the Universal Form the proper sense of divine majesty and lordship awakened in the heart of Arjuna. Earlier Arjuna used to think of Sri Krishna merely as his friend (11/41). Though there was the sweetness of relationship, but it was at the mundane level. Was not the dullness of day to day feelings removed after the vision of the Universal Form?

Answer:

The foundation of spiritual experience is the knowledge of his glorious majesty. Smallness cannot go away without a sense of vastness. To become vast by knowing vast is the same as attaining *sajuja* (sameness) with the Divine and that is the destiny of man. This is the initial aspect. But there is another deeper aspect as well. That is in the mutual relationship between the small and the Vast.

Vast is Brahman or *Bhuma* or Purusha. And small is nothing but a specific manifestation (*bibhuti*) of the Purusha or in other words his Prakriti. The Lord has mentioned about His two Prakritis in the Gita. One is lower and the other higher (7/4-5). Essentially the lower is of impure existence the higher of pure existence. The aim of every sadhaka is to clarify the dullness of lower nature and bring out the higher instead.

The Veda has called the higher Nature that is manifested in the *jiva* in various names; *maddhata* (one who consumes the honey of life), *pippalada* (one who consumes the tasty fruits of life), the smokeless radiance of the size of the thumb and so on; and the Gita calls it, ‘Verily My part that has become *jiva* in the manifested world from the very beginning’ (15/7). The Lord has a sweet relation with it. On worldly relationship of servitude (*dasya*), friendship (*sakhya*), affection (*vatsalya*), and love (*madhur*) we find some reflection of that. The sadhana of love or ‘*pranaya*’ (11/41) attributes all these feelings on the Divine.

But one has to remember that the feelings attributed to the Divine are in no way the same as worldly feelings. In the worldly feelings there is the dullness of limitation but in the Divine there is none.

In the words of the Veda, ‘It is established on the realisation of the majesty of Atman that can be attained by the purification of senses.’ That is why Narada said that had the Gopis not loved Krishna by being vast with the complete realisation of Krishna’s majestic vastness, their love would not have been a love towards the Divine, that would be merely love of one *jiva* towards another. In other words, there has to be a sense of *sajuja* in the depth of the heart,

ascension of consciousness from this world to beyond and then only it is possible to taste the supra-physical relationship. Otherwise every mother could be called Yashoda or every extra-marital affair *Braja Prem*.

Being humble to the Vast is the foundation of ascension of consciousness. Humility silences the lower nature and the higher flourishes. In that flourished higher nature there emerges divine feelings or feelings of *sajujya* (oneness) with the Divinity. As a result, the limited ego either totally meets dissolution or it transforms. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, ‘The saline doll melts as it enters the ocean. But if it consolidates and becomes stone hard, then it does not.’

The first one can be interpreted as the transformation of the saline doll into the ocean. It did not remain a doll any more. In the second one, it is the ocean that became a doll by consolidation of the salt. Both have ocean as the background. And ocean is vast, ocean is majestic. Both take one at the zenith of experience.

But prior to the supreme experience comes a condition of in-between. Arjuna is in that state now. At the worldly level, Arjuna, without realising the greatness of Sri Krishna and considering Him as an ordinary being, has looked down upon him (9/11); in abject ignorance had addressed him as ‘Oh Krishna, Oh Yadava, Oh my friend’. But all of these are not ignorance, there is love too. Truly he considered Sri Krishna as his friend (11/41). That much is the sweetness of relationship but plebian due to lack of knowledge of his greatness.

The Universal Form brought out the majesty of the Divinity and roused awe in Arjuna. The impurity of lower consciousness sunk down by the tremendous blow. Ego crushed down and emerged humility. ‘What have I done? I have jeered at you, insulted you. Forgive me’ (11/42).

‘Yet this is also true that I love you. So long I have loved you as a friend. Today I love you not only as a friend, but as a son loves his father, a beloved loves her lover. Like a father, like a friend, like a loved one, oh my All, won’t you accept me?’

Vrindavan is peeping through Kurukshetra in this avid longing of Arjuna. In Vrindavan the extreme sweetness of the manifested higher Nature has appeared as the beloved of the Lord. Clinging on to the awe aroused by the Universal Form, the same sweetness flashed in the heart of Arjuna, indicating *Bhagavat* after Gita, which describes the highest excellence of the human activities of Sri Krishna. In spite of his male identity, Arjuna is feeling himself as the beloved of the Lord. This is the most unique transformation of self-nature in spiritual life. In reality the higher Nature of the Divine has been manifested in the world both as male and female in Kurukshetra as well as in Vrindavan. Kurukshetra is the outer field of the divine activity. There his higher Nature expresses herself as Arjuna and Draupadi (aka Krishna and Krishnaa). Both are dear friends of Sri

Krishna and both are His ‘instruments’ in the battle of Kurukshetra. Here is the expression of his majesty and power. Again the same higher Nature blooms with ultimate sweetness in Vrindavan as male in the form of a cowherd boy during day in pastures and fields and as female in form of a Gopi during night in *Rasasthali*. Lordship has melted in sweetness there. The feeling of awe comes naturally, not reproved but assimilated. Indeed, in supreme state, lordship and sweetness are not contradictory to one other, they are, rather, interdependent and inseparable.

Question:

Manifested, Unmanifest or Universal – the Lord can show any of his aspect at his Will. Grace is the root of all. He can control or materialise his universal or ‘*chaturbhuj*’ form at any moment. He can make it possible for a *jiva* to visualise him as *Kshara*, *Akshara* or *Purushottama*. Hence surrender seems to be the only refuge. Shouldn’t Arjuna be the ideal for mankind? I think the correct path is to receive the blessings of Sri Krishna by following the guidance of Arjuna.

Answer:

The Upanishad speaks of two aspects of Brahman – Manifest and Unmanifest. As Unmanifest, He is beyond universe and inexpressible. In the Gita, we find three aspects of manifestation – human form (11/51), *chaturbhuj* form (11/46) and eternal universal form (11/51). Among these, Arjuna is aware of his human form in day to day life though unaware of the hidden truth. This is the ‘own form’ of Vasudeva – his naturally charming Self (11/50). The *chaturbhuj* form in reality, is Lord Vishnu holding conch-discus- mace- lotus (11/46). This is the form of *Ishta* received through meditation and is in between his human and universal forms. ‘Like that’, ‘like there’, ‘by that’ – these epithets indicate that in normal condition even, Sri Krishna flashed in Arjuna’s mind in that form. Off and on he might have thought ‘This Person is not merely my friend Yadava Krishna – he might be That’. This form of reality (*tattva rupa*) is beyond senses but accessible to intelligence – not totally inconceivable. But his universal form, particularly ‘Here established in One see the whole Universe’ – the unique and supreme form of the Lord of Yoga (11/7,8,9,3), is really inconceivable. Nobody can see or perceive that unless with infinite kindness he gives the divine vision. The same applies to his inexpressible unmanifest aspect. From this we can discover some general rules regarding the vision of forms. The same rule applies to Guru too because in Gita Sri Krishna is *Shasta* or Guru and Arjuna the disciple.

The sadhana starts with the adoration of human form perceptible to senses. This is conducive to day to day conception. At that time, we do not know nor do we understand his majesty or glory properly, but we love him. This is the love of lower nature. Hence it is mixed with impurity, which is removed only with the knowledge of reality. Once we understand the reality of the human form I love, the form perceptible by pure intelligence comes out of the depth and carries us beyond the senses. Thus starts the control of higher Nature over the lower.

This can be achieved by one's own effort. But this is not the end of seeing all the aspects of the Divine. The medium of perceiving the reality is definitely intelligence and intelligence can take us a long way. Yet it cannot reach the concept of Purusha. Intelligence might see Purusha from its standpoint – as a glimpse but not from his standpoint – as an effulgence.

Though the vision of effulgence is not within the scope of intelligence, yet that can happen only due to the single-minded concentration of *buddhi*. From single-mindedness comes absorption in That which results in gradual disappearance of the veil of I-ness and fosters a sense of void. Then there is no 'me' or 'I'. The whole being becomes effulgent with him. This is the bliss of the divine vision. I see him only because he is showing himself in and out, in the moments of waking, in dreams and in dreamless sleep. I see him as the embodiment of absolute Mercy as well as the Terrible; as Immortality as well as Death; as sum of all dualities as well as beyond dualities. This is the vision of his universal form – vision of Time across eternity '*saswatibhya samabhya*'.

This is one vision of the Immeasurable as the universal form (11/46). In continuation to this is another Immeasurable vision as inexpressible Unmanifest. There 'neither the sun shines nor does moon or stars. All brightness comes out of his effulgence. From his radiance everything else shines'. That too is seeing but not with eyes, nor with *buddhi*, not even with the condensation of higher knowledge, and definitely not with one's own effort. He only shows his form of the supreme Blue beyond all darkness and again *sees* It as our eyes.

So far is the ascending order. Again it is his Grace that brings down his immutable, universal and real (*tattva*) forms in descending order and condenses all in his human form. Then we see him '*ihaiva deha*' (in this very body). We have not only the vision of sun in every spark, but the vision of the simultaneous radiance of thousand suns (11/12).

This vision brings extreme happiness with awe as well as extreme distress with fear (11/45). In utter supplication we cry out, 'I can't take it any more. Be propitiated. Please show me your *tattva rupa* – your serene human form.' (11/46,51)

The vision beyond *buddhi* and the ability to bring that vision down here both

are possible and can happen but only by showering of Grace. But Grace is not whimsical and haphazard, she is harmonious. She is ever ready to shower upon us yet she has to wait, wait for us to ascend. We cannot feel the presence of her till our mind becomes free and empty of ego. 'I am not there – only You are' – love is the essence of this kind of surrender and that is the ultimate meaning or goal of all created beings. All outer means of sadhana, be it *swadhyaya* (study of scriptures), *yajna* (sacrifice), *tapas* (askesis) and *dana* (offering) – all aim towards that (11/53, 18/5). But no outward means of sadhana can bring him to us. It is love and love only that can bring the beloved to the devotee.

The seed of love was in Arjuna too, though at the mundane level and covered with error. But Arjuna is his aid to fulfil the divine work, an instrument for re-establishing *dharma*. Hence he himself removed all his confusions and conferred upon him the divine vision by lighting the lamp of knowledge and love in his heart (9/10,11;11/47,48,53,54)

The reflection of Arjuna's life, with both light and shade, is in our life too. Vasudeva and Arjuna, Naryana and Nara – are the two poles of the same reality of Purusha. We get reference from Panini that at one time the worship of the pair of Vasudeva and Arjuna was very much prevalent in India.

Question:

'Oh Arjuna, only with one-pointed devotion, one is able to know me as I am. Oh slayer of enemies, thus knowing and seeing me in reality, he can enter in me' (11/54). What is the deeper meaning of this sloka? 'Knowing', 'seeing', 'entering' – I would love to know the significance of each of them. The Lord has told us the way to receive him in full in the last sloka of eleventh chapter, isn't it? 'Doing my work', 'me as All', 'my devotee', 'without attachment', 'without enmity' – would you please give simple explanations of these expressions?

Answer:

'*Aham evam vidha*' – I am like this – he has already explained what he is like. He is with a human form, cosmic form and he is formless. In the eleventh chapter, Arjuna saw the human form as cosmic. Like the undercurrent of ocean, this vision has a tremendous pulling power which wants to submerge all forms into void. There comes a pull to all concepts of forms and it seems as if even the very root of existence is shaking. Inevitably that creates a fear and the scriptures have termed that as 'fear of *moksha*'. That feeling represents an extreme anxiety to be saved from the attack of Time. We do already have a

colourful and rich description of that from the utterance of Arjuna (11/24,25,45)'.

Not everybody returns after seeing this form of destruction. His is to see him not as Immortality but as Death and Destruction as well, like Nachiketa's meeting with Vaivasvat Yama. Whoever comes back 'being free from the mouth of Death' does not do so of his own accord but by his Will, his Grace. Here lies the scope for one-pointed devotion. This you have to understand properly.

Death or Destruction is the destiny of all creatures. Arjuna has given a description of that at the very onset (11/21,26-30). Everyone is afraid of destruction and tries to push it back with folded palms, but cannot. Only the *jnani* welcomes it uttering "so be it" (11/21). Even he enters destruction by his own choice. This is the path of *nirvana* or non-return. Of my own accord, I am jumping into the void and along with it even the last wish is dissolved. Who, then, would come back?

Yet, if anyone does come back, he does not do so out of his own will, choice or ability, but by the will of the other. It is the same will that pulled him to the path of dissolution to start with. One can jump into void without giving any recognition to the supreme Will. At that point the traveller is all alone. But on his return journey, he is not alone any more. He never had any desire to start with. If he had, he would not have reached the supreme Being. Who, then, turned him back? Then comes the realisation of the *paramatman* beyond *atman* and this realisation is the seed of *bhakti*. Pure Knowledge leads to dissolution and with *bhakti* is the coming back from the dissolution to enjoy spiritual play with the Divine here, in this material world. Hence *bhakti* fulfils *jnana*. This way one sees him from both sides and knows him in totality.

There are three steps of having him in totality. One is the 'knowledge' of Reality, another 'seeing' the Reality and eventually 'entering' the Reality. There is a difference in the depth of each realisation. *Jnana* or knowledge is the mental belief. The Gita has counted mind as one of the senses (15/7). Hence *jnana* does not belong to the area beyond senses. Vision of Reality is an intellectual belief. Intelligence or *Buddhi* is above mind. The Gita has ascribed a specific meaning for that which is of the same category as '*pratibodh*' or '*bodhi*' of the Veda. *Buddhi* is a divine gift (10/10-11). Intellectual vision of Reality may belong to any of the two categories – to see Him as *ishtadeva* within one's heart or to see his cosmic form both inside and out in the world (11/46).

After this vision of universal form 'entering' him – is like the pull of the undercurrent of ocean I have mentioned earlier. As a result comes *sajuyya* or total absorption (*tanmay*). Consequently is the coming back in his world by his

Will but with that total absorption in him. Coming back is after 'entering' him; therefore with one-pointed *bhakti*. Once you come back, there has to be work (*karma*) to perform; but that work is not the work for personal necessity. It is his work. Therefore it is 'without attachment'. That is divine work; that is the delight of creation (4/9,8/3). Hence there is '*rasa*' but not attachment. It is like flowering of a plant. After I come back, my work is also like that. Moreover, since I have come back to his world out of love for him, I would see his image in all. I would see everything as him. Then even in Kurukshetra I am 'without enmity' – no one is my enemy – not only among human '*nirvaira sarva bhutshu*' – without enmity to all created beings.

Yet there is Kurukshetra in front of me and I will participate in that too because I am Savyasachi – his instrument (11/33).

This sloka is applicable both for *sadhaka* and *siddha*, denotatively for *sadhaka* and connotatively for *siddha*. That is an age-old custom of ancient injunctions.

Question:

In sloka 12/2, the Lord has said that those who put their minds in him and worship him being ever united with him with absolute *sraddha*, they are his highest *bhaktas*. Who are they? For physically conscious beings it is easier to absorb their minds in '*mayi*' (Me) than in indefinite Brahman. Who should I consider as 'absorbed in Me'? Is the worship of Sri Krishna – the manifested Brahman the highest of all?

Answer:

Vasudeva Sri Krishna, who had shown the universal form in his own body to Arjuna, should be understood as '*mayi*' for the purpose of continuity of the prelude. One who is ever attached to him with supreme *sraddha*, is the highest *bhakta*. This kind of *bhakti* is the ultimate result of *jnana*. *Jnana* or knowledge has been discussed in full in the earlier chapters of Gita. The solitary *Akshar Purusha* mentioned later (15/16) is worshipped by the *jnani*, and a *bhakta* worships *Purushottama* (15/17,18).

Akshar Purusha is a part of *Purushottama*. Hence whoever worships *Purushottama*, can easily have a concept of *Akshar Purusha* as a part of the Undefined aspect of *Purushottama*.

Whether we worship him as definite or indefinite, we can never see the end of him. Beyond all our concepts and feelings he always remains as the supreme wonder (2/29).

While worshipping him as *Akshar*, we follow the path of '*neti*' (This is not the end). That is beyond all senses and acceptable only by *buddhi*. To have

him through positive path is complementary to that. That is to have him with physical, vital, sensuous, mental, intellectual and with heart – the total and complete absorption. Even Yajnavalkya, the great propagator of *netivada* of Upanishad has said that the highest absorption of Brahman is through heart.

Please note that Sri Krishna has not rejected the worship of indefinite Brahman; all He said is that it is difficult to do so as long as one has physical consciousness.

Question:

‘I rescue them from the ocean of death-bound *samsara*’ (12/6) - Who is ‘I’ here? Would you please explain each of ‘*abhyas yoga*’, ‘my *karma yoga*’, and ‘yoga of renunciation of the fruits of all work’? *Jnana* better than discipline, *dhyana* better than *jnana*, renunciation of fruits of work is better than *jnana* (12/12). What is the underlying suggestion here?

Answer:

Of course *Purushottama* is the rescuer from the ‘ocean of death-bound *samsara*’ here. Here too we have to take the note of the previous chapter. Not only the worship of *Akshara* can take us to immortality; so does the worship of *Purushottama*.

Whether it is *jnana* or *bhakti*, the basic necessity of every Yoga is to collect the mind in deep meditation. This does not happen in a day or two. The Lord has already mentioned (6/35) that it can be achieved by a prolonged practice coupled with detachment. The yoga He had mentioned at that time was pertaining to the practice of rigid discipline like sitting on an *asana* (6/10-14). But that is not possible for everybody. For them even Patanjali, the propagator of eight-fold path of yoga, has prescribed *kriya yoga* and said that with *kriya yoga* one gets the same results as with the eight-fold path of yoga.

Kriya yoga is the yoga of everyday life. It has three parts – askesis (*tapas*), study of scriptures, (*swadhyaya*) and meditation on Divinity (*iswar pranidhana*). The Gita has elaborately described the physical, verbal and mental askesis or *sattwik tapas* (17/14-17). Its fundamental result is purification of feelings and behaviour. ‘*Swadhyaya*’ has been described as constant remembrance of God (8/7,9,13), which can be pursued ever in life and even in death. Its culmination is in ‘*ishwar pranidhana*’. Here it has been described as ‘to surrender mind and concentrate intelligence in him’ (12/8). What happens to someone who does not have time enough to sit at one place and meditate on him? The Lord is telling him to follow *kriya yoga* with him as the ultimate goal. Do everything you have to do but let your mind be with him. Spend the time in

constant remembrance with pure heart. But at times that might not be possible either. I might not be able to give my mind to him and do the work mechanically. At times the work might demand the attention of my mind and intellect. The lord says, ‘If that happens, think whatever you are doing is for Me’. But even that may not be possible all the time. What if I can’t remember him all the time while busy in action? What if I forget that the work I am doing is for him? The Lord says, ‘Well, that does not matter either. Do whatever you are doing. Only do not ask for the results. Expectation of results makes the mind desirous and unsteady. Control it firmly there’.

But of course, this too is not easy. Expectation of results makes the mind fickle and let go everywhere. In order to control desire, mind has to be withdrawn inside. It has to learn to follow the one-pointed aim. In spite of being in the midst of everything, it has to be away from everything as if deeply immersed in some inner feelings. Again, this kind of meditative can be acquired only through *jnana* or the discriminative knowledge. Whatever is attracting me is not what I want. I want something deeper and profounder. But this discriminative intelligence comes out as a result of prolonged practice and discipline too.

Therefore, discipline and practice are the keynotes and basic requirements to follow any path of yoga. Our present life is the outcome of one kind of discipline. If we want another life that has to be based upon another kind of discipline. From practice mind would slowly learn to concentrate in *dhyana* (meditation) and from *dhyana* emerges *jnana* (knowledge). All outer ties loosen to a meditative mind. After that there would be no hankering for results of any work accomplished. I would then be able to say, ‘Whatever I had to do I have done, now let whatever He wants happen’. This brings peace even in the battlefield of Kurukshetra. And that is the prelude of *Bhakti*. Doing his work by being his. Being busy with action outside and immersing in the depth of divine *rasa* inside – as he is – universal doer and yet totally absorbed in his own self.

Question:

The Lord himself has given us signs of his dear devotees (12/13-19). Would you please explain them? Are not these more intimate than the traditional nine-fold method?

Answer:

The *bhakta* referred to in the Gita is *jnani*. Here, the Lord has called him ‘dear’. Elsewhere he has said that out of the four kinds of *bhaktas*, a *jnani bhakta* is always attached to him and one-pointed devotion is his particular characteristic. ‘As I am extremely dear to him, so is he to me. All devotees are great but I consider a *jnani* as my Self’ (7/17-18)

Life of such a *bhakta* is a confluence of yoga, *jnana* and *bhakti*. One of the characteristics of yoga is equality (2/48). *Bhakta* too maintains equality in happiness and sorrow (13,18), good and bad (17), honour and disgrace (18), abuse and praise (19) and in respect to enemy and friends (18). He has no expectation, does not get perturbed by anything nor does he have any eagerness to let something happen. Thus he is beyond the worldly turmoil. And because he is stationed beyond, he is as pure as the void. Yet he is not idle or lazy. He is competent in work (16) and firm in will (14). But neither does he have the egoism of a doer nor does he have attachment towards the results of the work (13). As a result he is always content with whatever he gets (19,14). In dealings with people, he has no excessive delight nor does he have intolerance, fear or anxiety. Hence he does not cause anybody's anxiety (14). He tolerates everything from everyone (13). In other words he is a self-controlled yogi. The culmination of this yoga is in *prajna* or supreme knowledge. That makes him steadfast or 'one-stationed in *prajna*' (19). His *prajna* has been sweetened by his *bhakti* (19). In absolute devotion, he has surrendered whole of his mind and intelligence to him (14). 'He has no other refuge than me' (19). This kind of *bhakta* has filled his heart with universal love and compassion. He never looks at anybody with hatred (13). The characteristics of Sri Krishna in *Mahabharata* are explicit in this kind of *bhakta*. That is why in Gita the Lord could say, 'I consider the *jnani* with one-pointed *bhakti* as my Self'.

I have earlier mentioned about the two aspects of supreme Nature of the Divine – masculine and feminine. In the *bhakta* mentioned in the Gita, we find the specific expression of masculine aspect and in *Bhagavata* came out the feminine aspect. Two aspects of the supreme nature of the Lord have been expressed in Arjuna and the *gopis*, which are complementary to each other. We find the same complements in Krishnaa (Draupadi) and the cowherd friends. These four together complete the '*chaturvyuha*'. That it is natural for one aspect to influence and take over another is clear from the utterance of Arjuna after the Universal Vision, when in spite of being a man, he experiences the feelings of a beloved towards his *ishta*, as the Vedic rishis did. The *bhakti* expressed in the Gita had been culminated in the love of *Bhagavata*. Both together form the totality of one *rasa* in the life of a *Siddha*.

(This is the end of Q/A on Chapter XI (*Viswarupa Darshna Yoga*) and Chapter XII (*Bhakti Yoga*) in the Gitanuvachan.)

End of Second Series.

(Translated from the original Bengali by Smt. Kalyani Bose, a long time devotee of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, now residing in New Jersey, USA)

The Mother image in Sri Aurobindo

(Continued from the previous issue)

Prema Nandakumar

11. The Divine Mother

The Mother image in Sri Aurobindo has many facets; but the one very familiar to the disciples of Sri Aurobindo is the Divine Mother in the epic *Savitri*. One can never have too many readings and recitations of Aswapati's adoration of the Divine Mother. Blank verse in English ceases to be the one we associate with Shakespeare and Milton and resounds in our ears like Sanskrit syllables from ancient prayers.

She is the golden bridge, the wonderful fire.
The luminous heart of the Unknown is she,
A power of silence in the depths of God;

Like the *Sundara Kanda* in *Valmiki Ramayana*, the *Book of the Divine Mother* is central to the action of *Savitri*. Both of them are roughly at the centre of the narratives. In *Savitri* this Book describes the final turn in Aswapati's yoga, leading to a vision of the Divine Mother, the promise of an avatar and even the prediction about *Savitri*'s victorious outcome of the struggle with Death. There is such mantric force in the language of all the four cantos in the Book that we fully understand the Mother's statement: "Reading *Savitri* is itself Yoga."

When we open the *Book of the Divine Mother*, Aswapati the traveller of the worlds has sounded the very depths of human experience as also traversed the Pisgah-heights of felicity. Achieving freedom from the known, he would now enter the splendours of the Unknown which is the base of Tantra Yoga. That would be the path to reach the source which is described as Unknowable. He will not rest content by his personal happiness. He has had to undertake this perilous journey for the sake of the human race. He had to slake his "spirit's sacred thirst". But how to 'connect' with the Unknowable? There had to be a

determined leap away from all that he had known, daring the dangers that might lie in wait for him before he landed on the 'other' side. In *Ramayana* we have this image in Hanuman leaping from the Suvela mountain to Lanka across the seas, and he had to face unknown dangers from the depths. Aswapati's experience is not different.

All he had been and all towards which he grew
Must now be left behind or else transform
Into a self of That which has no name.
Alone and fronting an intangible Force
Which offered nothing to the grasp of Thought,
His spirit faced the adventure of the Inane.
Abandoned by the worlds of Form he strove.

So far the travels of Aswapati on the World-stair have drawn much from Tantra, for Sri Aurobindo had contemplated upon the divine stairs of experience that one finds described in that yoga.

"It (Tantra) teaches that in this creation, apart from this world in which we live, there exist other worlds and universes in serried sequence spreading over a rising tier of Consciousness and planes. There is one Supreme Deity presiding over every thing. He does so with a gradation of his powers, personalities and emanations, vibhutis, with a hierarchy of gods and goddesses who perform the functions delegated to them, deriving their authority from the Supreme Godhead. These are posited in the various planes on the rising tier of Consciousness. These are distinct and can be distinguished by their particular forms, ornaments, weapons and retinue. The numerous devatas help man in his spiritual progress, aid him in his uphill task of reaching the summit, the Supreme Deity."

The inspiration is there, but Sri Aurobindo has deftly drawn away from the ritualism and theistic deities associated with the Tantric worship. As T.V. Kapali Sastri has rightly said, there is a parallel between the Tantric Way of gradations and Sri Aurobindo's new Synthesis but it is quite a new focus. Some of the elements have gone into the Aurobindonian yoga. Perhaps, one of these is the manner in which he took great care over the blank verse of *Savitri* that carries his message even as the Vedic risis did in perfecting the sound patterns of their mantras. Which is why Tantra is also known as *Mantra Sastra*.

But how to "connect" with the Unknowable? In Tantra we have the Mother-

image of *Lalita Tripurasundari*. Sri Aurobindo's pursuit of the Unknowable leads to such a vision, when he finds himself in a profound stillness.

A stillness absolute, incommunicable,
Meets the sheer self-discovery of the soul;
A wall of stillness shuts it from the world,
A gulf of stillness swallows up the sense
And makes unreal all that mind has known,
All that the labouring senses still would weave
Prolonging an imaged unreality.
Self's vast spiritual silence occupies Space;
Only the Inconceivable is left,
Only the Nameless without space and time:
Abolished is the burdening need of life."

But then this ought not to mean a yogic stillness with nothing more to do. Aswapati's yoga is not for his own beatitude. It is for helping mankind overcome its ills. Aswapati is not unlike the Bodhisattva ideal in Mahayana Buddhism. Here the Bodhisattva is in search of universal Enlightenment. Compassion being the base on which the Bodhisattva rests, how can he turn away from the sick, the ignorant, the hungry, the unenlightened? The Bodhisattva has a spontaneous desire to achieve transcendence only to help others.

In fact, each incarnation of the divine on earth has been to teach us this truth.

The mystery of God's birth and acts remains
Leaving unbroken the last chapter's seal,
Unsolved the riddle of the unfinished Play;
The cosmic Player laughs within his mask,
And still the last inviolate secret hides
Behind the human glory of a Form,
Behind the gold eidolon of a Name.
A large white line has figured as a goal,
But far beyond the ineffable suntracks blaze: (Ibid)

Aswapati is now standing "on being's naked edge", his will continues to be strong, and from somewhere (from within him? from without?) an assurance comes to him that the child is never left alone by the mother. Ah, "the Presence he yearned for suddenly drew close". This is not unlike the visions gained by

ever so many *tapasvins* like Dhruva in our *Puranas*. But the visions we get there are described to the minutest detail: the brilliance, the garlands, the jewels, the armour. Sri Aurobindo's description of Aswapati's experience is quite different. All traditional accoutrements are given up. It is just a short moment of a luminous flame. But this moment is enough for it transforms Aswapati totally. He has been anxious to have a vision of the Divine Mother, she has appeared but he cannot see her. Aswapati only feels a Presence. In this Sri Aurobindo was no doubt following Vyasa. In the *Mahabharata* narrative of the Savitri story, Vyasa does not give a description of Goddess Savitri at the conclusion of Aswapati's *tapasya* that had stretched on for eighteen years.

"... rising from the sacrificial flames in her splendid form she appeared in front of the King, exceedingly glad as she was, and she, the giver of the boons, spoke this way the word of benediction to the Sovereign of the Earth, Savitri to King Aswapati established in regular practices."

Vyasa's reference to the goddess as "*rupini*" (a splendid form) is given to us in Aurobindonian terms:

Across the silence of the ultimate Calm,
Out of a marvellous Transcendence' core,
A body of wonder and translucency
As if a sweet mystic summary of her self
Escaping into the original Bliss
Had come enlarged out of eternity,
Someone came infinite and absolute.
A being of wisdom, power and delight,
Even as a mother draws her child to her arms,
Took to her breast Nature and world and soul. (Ibid)

The mother image sculpted in Sri Aurobindo's writings is completed in this passage. The vision of the Mother and the total comfort the weeping baby experiences when she hugs it with tremendous love is actually happening in the inner countries of Aswapati's mind, an instance of the complete separation of his thoughts from the world outside. He had achieved this impossible task, and so the Mother comes to her child as a sweet presence of comfort. But Aswapati senses that this is indeed the Divine Mother, the fountain of all cosmic powers. This is "a being of wisdom, power and delight". Mahasaraswati, Mahakali, Maheshwari-Mahalakshmi.:

He felt a rapturous and unstumbling Force.
The undying Truth appeared, the enduring Power
Of all that here is made and then destroyed,
The Mother of all godheads and all strengths
Who, mediatrix, binds earth to the Supreme.
The Enigma ceased that rules our nature's night, (Ibid)

Now it is a mother who is all concern, love and comfort that has come to Aswapati. We can call her *Mahapremi*, for nothing in this creation escapes her guardianship. Again, it is a "recognisable" mother for the child, not one who guards by remote control. This, again, is an important feature of Tantra. The Yoga considers Adi Sankara's *Saundarya Lahari* as a powerful inspiration. It is full of enchanting descriptions about Devi. Adi Sankara says in one verse that Siva himself had given the sixty-four Tantras for mankind. But not satisfied, he gave this poem as the new Tantra since it is the personal Path of the Mother Goddess:

"Pasupati at first remained satisfied after deluding (*atisandhaya*) the world, by giving out the sixty-four Tantras, which expound practices conferring only one or another of the various psychic powers and worldly fulfilments. Afterwards, on Thy special insistence, He revealed this Thy own Tantra to the world, independent of all the others and capable of conferring all the *Purusharthas* – *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha* – on the votaries, by itself."

Sri Aurobindo did not want to give any traditional description of tinkling anklets and flower-bedecked tresses for the Supreme Mother in Savitri. What does Aswapati see? *Saguna* or *Nirguna*? Sri Aurobindo drops hints and leaves the rest to the reader, the listener, the one who meditates upon the lines in Savitri:

Suffering was lost in her immortal smile.
A Life from beyond grew conqueror here of death;
To err no more was natural to mind;
Wrong could not come where all was light and love.
The Formless and the Formed were joined in her:
Immensity was exceeded by a look,
A Face revealed the crowded Infinite. (Ibid)

Ah, the smile. Adi Sankara also describes Devi's smile in *Saundarya Lahari*: *Smita jyotsna jaalam thava vadana chandrasya*, the Devi's moon-like face is illumined with her smile. Is it a paradox to say the Formless and the Form were combined into one? Not quite so. After all Rishi Narad tells the Queen, one cannot say there is no sun because it is night. So too the Divine Mother in the aspirant's vision. How does the Divine Mother appear for Aswapati? We would get an idea from his ecstatic adoration of the Divine Mother.

India has been a yoga *bhumi* from times immemorial and performing *tapasya* to gain the vision of the Supreme has been a way of life. Even in our own times, a contemporary and admirer of Sri Aurobindo was the tapasvin, Kavyakantha Vasishta Ganapati Muni. A vision of the Divine Mother had him write the great book of prayers, *Umasahasram*. So it has been down the millennia and such spiritual visions have gifted us an immense, powerful *stotra* literature in Sanskrit as well as other Indian languages. Aswapati automatically bursts out into an adoration of the Divine Mother, summarising in a brief space the Aurobindonian Yoga which holds on to the mother image firmly. Once when I had gone to meet Madanlal Himmatsingka at Pondicherry at the Vak office, I happened to mention how my father had heard him recite these lines in Savitri. "It seems you were standing with my parents on the edge of the Nehru Road. Some remark my father made got you immediately begin reciting this passage." Immediately Madanlalji got up from the chair and stood near me, with a smile and began: "At the head she stands of birth and toil and fate ..." It was so soulful and I got up too, and stood by with folded hands. It seemed as though he was himself seeing the vision. Perhaps he did. Surely he must have, he was such a dedicated child of the Mother.

Aswapati who had gone in pursuit of the Unknowable, had come face to face with the person who contains that Unknowable too.

She is the golden bridge, the wonderful fire.
The luminous heart of the Unknown is she,
A power of silence in the depths of God;
She is the Force, the inevitable Word,
The magnet of our difficult ascent,
The Sun from which we kindle all our suns,
The Light that leans from the unrealised Vasts,
The joy that beckons from the impossible,
The Might of all that never yet came down.
All Nature dumbly calls to her alone

To heal with her feet the aching throb of life
And break the seals on the dim soul of man
And kindle her fire in the closed heart of things. (Ibid)

This is Aswapati's experience, his *anubhava*. A personal experience that is mystic can never be explained satisfactorily. The moment one tries to verbalise one's spiritual experience, the veil of *Vishnumaya* falls on the person. The result turns out to be just a negligible percentage of the original vision. The Divine Mother we see through Aswapati is a person who will help us reach a divine existence from the present human existence. That promise is lodged in us, but the rest has to come through our own personal experience. But why a mother-image in seeking to experience the Supreme? The Paramacharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham once tried to explain it:

"The Supreme has been envisioned as a female deity, the Divine Mother, since the Vedic times. *Sri Suktham*, *Durga Suktham*, hymns to Usha, to Aditi, *Ratri Suktham* and *Devi Suktham* belong to this category. Three of the 108 Upanishads (*Bhahavachopanishad*, *Tripuropanishad*, *Bhavanopanishad*) are exclusively about the Mother. Arjuna prays to Durga in the *Mahabharata*. Women in the *Bhagavata* and Rukmini too pray to the Mother for a good husband. Great sages like Hayagriva, Agasthya and Durvasa have prayed to her. Poets like Kalidasa have written innumerable hymns to the Devi."

And there is Aditi, the mother of gods. Aswapati is in search of a new creation and he has come to the Supreme who gets revealed as the creatrix Aditi, and we remain ensconced in the mother-child relationship:

All here shall be one day her sweetness' home,
All contraries prepare her harmony;
Towards her our knowledge climbs, our passion gropes;
In her miraculous rapture we shall dwell,
Her clasp shall turn to ecstasy our pain. (Ibid)

We must remember that each word used to present the Divine Mother in *Savitri* is the result of a lifetime's absorption not only in yogic literature but also in yogic practice and meditation backed by wide and deep studies in world literature. When he speaks of the Divine Mother as "the magnet of our difficult ascent", he reveals his *Mahaviswasa*, total faith in the Mother's guardianship.

T.V. Kapali Sastri, well-grounded in Tantra lore has given us an extraordinary commentary on the *House of the Spirit and New Creation* in the form of Sanskrit verses in his *Tattva-Prabha*. We are told that there are seven planes of Consciousness that start from the Supreme and may be visioned as a ladder with steps descending to the plane of Matter. Between the two are the worlds caused by the Energy of the Cosmic movement that had started from the Will-force of the Supreme, the *Vijnanamayo Mulapurusha*. Nor is this Will-force a mechanical movement:

“It issues forth from the joy, the self-delight of the Lord – and all creation takes place, indeed, from an overflow of Ananda. Nor is this creation a sudden jump from the heights of the *Mahas* downward here, but a gradual descent and the Lord Himself – for nothing is there apart from Him – enters step by step into the creation as its Soul and substance, in the course of its manifestation from Him. ‘That itself gradually entered’, says the Upanishad, *tadeva anuprāviśat*. To show that it is not a sudden jump and entry, anu is used significantly.”

Sri Kapali Sastri says the Lord remains in his abode in the Supermind and only sends forth a portion (*amīśa*) of Himself for creation and this is enough for His force to pervade all cosmic existence. That ‘*amīśa*’ is the incarnation, the magnet that has been given a visual frame by Sri Aurobindo’s pen in Aswapati’s vision.

And what is the icon for this magnet? Sri Aurobindo has shown that too: When he writes, that the prayer of all nature is to heal with her feet the aching throb of life, that includes us as well. He belongs to a culture which has revered the feet as holy from times immemorial. Even as our feet help us to cross a difficult path, the Mother’s feet helps us cross the ocean of earthly life itself. She does not take her own time to come. Once the plaintive cry of the child is heard, once we leave all our good and bad thoughts behind and think only of her and thus make the contact, the relief is instantaneous.

This prayer is as important for the Aurobindonian yoga as the *Sri Lalita Sahasranama* is for Tantra yoga. The *Sahasranama* begins, ‘Sri Mata’, ‘the Divine Mother’. Then follow the affirmations describing her like *vimarsarupini* (an explanation of the inexplicable brilliance of the Supreme), *viyat-adi-jagat-prasuh* (the Mother of Space and all else), *agraganya* (the first to appear when we are in trouble) and above all else, she is *Kalahantri*, Destroyer of Yama, alone her hands can change Time’s dragon base. She is *achintyarupa*, hers is the mystery that Night conceals. This definite statement of the place of

the Divine Mother in integral yoga is underlined by Sri Aurobindo as we come to the closing lines of ‘*The Adoration of the Divine Mother*’. We have to give up short-term longings, desires and anxieties and vote for the transformation of life itself into a divine life. For that to happen, one’s very breath must be a constant offering to the Divine Mother. No other thought can have a place in this one-pointed aspiration for the Next Future. We have a role model in Aswapati as he gets self-lost in the contemplation and worship of the Supreme:

Now other claims had hushed in him their cry:
Only he longed to draw her presence and power
Into his heart and mind and breathing frame;
Only he yearned to call for ever down
Her healing touch of love and truth and joy
Into the darkness of the suffering world.
His soul was freed and given to her alone. (Ibid)

(To be continued)

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Attainment of Immortality – Pt. II Interpretation

(Continued from the previous issue)

Debashish Banerji

Savitri, Book VII, Canto VI

This canto immediately follows upon Savitri's discovery of the soul, the passage on psychic transformation that we considered in the previous issue. Here Savitri is not allowed to rest content in the psychic realisation of a temporal eternity that she has achieved. Thus she is visited once again by the visage of Non-Being, this time even more profound, that of a cosmic death.

Once as she sat in deep felicitous muse,
Still quivering from her lover's strong embrace,
And made her joy a bridge twixt earth and heaven,
An abyss yawned suddenly beneath her heart.
A vast and nameless fear dragged at her nerves
As drags a wild beast its half-slaughtered prey; (Ibid, p.533-34)

This is an agonising fear that suddenly grasps at her from a cosmic realm, pouring its dread into her consciousness.

It seemed to have no den from which it sprang: (Ibid)

She realises that this fear of extinction does not arise from within her nor does it come from any plane of consciousness she is aware of so far.

It was not hers, but hid its unseen cause.
Then rushing came its vast and fearful fount. (Ibid)
A formless Dread with shapeless endless wings

Filling the universe with its dangerous breath,
A denser darkness than the Night could bear,
Enveloped the heavens and possessed the earth. (Ibid)

Thus Savitri is confronted by a powerful occult being that makes itself manifest as a nameless cosmic dread.

A rolling surge of silent death, it came
Curving round the far edge of the quaking globe;
Effacing heaven with its enormous stride
It willed to expunge the choked and anguished air
And end the fable of the joy of life.
It seemed her very being to forbid,
Abolishing all by which her nature lived,
And laboured to blot out her body and soul,
A clutch of some half-seen Invisible,
An ocean of terror and of sovereign might,
A person and a black infinity. (Ibid)

It appears to be an absolute of Darkness, a smothering will to the erasure of all being. We are reminded here of the cosmic power that assailed the Buddha. It is the occult origin of what Sri Aurobindo has called “the iron law of Matter” – the subjection of all embodied life to death, as a fundamental cosmic principle. In the case of the Buddha it had challenged him to produce a witness that could validate that there was anything prior to Mara, any support for the Buddha's daring to refuse it any response. Buddha had touched the earth, calling Matter itself to bear witness that his existence was prior to that of Mara; and the earth bore witness, demonstrating Matter's own knowledge of Inconscience as a provisional and not an absolute truth. Savitri will respond finally with the power of Her Divine Consciousness, an active power that will transform Death; but that will be later, when she contests the origin of this Darkness from her highest heights, her supramental Source. Here we get a preview of that encounter and Savitri's response is similar to the Buddha's – a refusal to react. As we have seen, prior to this, she has realised her psychic truth, which has brought her the knowledge of her own and all human beings' temporal eternity – the fact that death is only a hiatus in an interminable succession of lives. But now she is called upon to realise the eternity of cosmic consciousness outside of time and the death of all things. This is possible only through the spiritual or overmental realisation and the power of cosmic Dread pushes her in this direction.

The Darkness addresses Savitri telepathically through an experience of being:

A consciousness of being without its joy,
Empty of thought, incapable of bliss,
That felt life blank, and nowhere found a soul,
A voice to the dumb anguish of the heart
Conveyed a stark sense of unspoken words; (Ibid)

It projects its message into her depths. Savitri as a Shakti Avatar embodies a transcendental consciousness to which the cosmic power of Death is alien. This is why she couldn't locate this Being within herself. But having accepted the human birth, she is assailed by this power, which announces the subjection of the entire cosmos to its power and makes its entry into her inner life. That which didn't belong to her now becomes part of her. She hears in her own depths the unuttered thought that made unreal the world and all life meant.

"Who art thou who claimst thy crown of separate birth,
The illusion of thy soul's reality
And personal godhead on an ignorant globe
In the animal body of imperfect man? (Ibid, pp.534-35)

"The crown of separate birth" refers to individuation – the adaptation of an independent form of consciousness developing inter-related mechanisms of integrated survival. Can such an independent life-form achieve immortality? This would be "the crown of separate birth." Death challenges such a daring thought putting a limit to the hubris of human consciousness. He points to the pathetic imperfection of contradictory human life, made up of mental idealism coupled with animal hungers and taunts Savitri for harbouring any thought of a possible deathless divinity.

Hope not to be happy in a world of pain
And dream not, listening to the unspoken Word
And dazzled by the inexpressible Ray,
Transcending the mute Superconscient's realm,
To give a body to the Unknowable,
Or for a sanction to thy heart's delight
To burden with bliss the silent still Supreme
Profaning its bare and formless sanctity,

Or call into thy chamber the Divine
And sit with God tasting a human joy. (Ibid, p.535)

Based on the sorry incapacity of human life and the subjection of all living things to suffering and death, this Power puts forward a view of dualism, where the Creator is transcendent and impassive and has no dealings with the Creation or its creatures. Experiencing by chance a little of that transcendental quality, human beings such as Savitri may be deluded in hoping to embody that divinity, but the Supreme is silent and formless and will have nothing to do with the effervescent inconstancies of the human heart; it is only an impertinent foolishness to expect God to share in human profanity. In other words, the human world belongs to the clutch of Falsehood and of Death. The Power continues on a note that it will repeat later, pointing to itself as the supreme agent of a "blank eternal," destroying human happiness and seething life with the wisdom of a world-negating *vairagya*:

I lay waste human happiness with my breath
And slay the will to live, the joy to be
That all may pass back into nothingness
And only abide the eternal and absolute.
For only the blank Eternal can be true. (Ibid)

This is the deep shadow of Non-Being cast upon Being, assimilating all things into its original Death. It attacks Savitri's psychic realisation, and the intuitions of the soul, making the soul out to be the source of human illusions:

O soul, inventor of man's thoughts and hopes,
Thyself the invention of the moments' stream,
Illusion's centre or subtle apex point,
At last know thyself, from vain existence cease. (Ibid)

Though akin to the voice of Mara in the Buddha's case, this Power also accommodates the Buddhist idea of a vast extinction (*nirvana*) and the illusion of a soul (*anatman*), since it is subject to time, an "invention of the moments' stream". In Theravada Buddhism, it is the momentum of experiences and desires that give an illusory reality to what we call our selves, so that to posit a soul is only to mistake this stream of change for a substantial centre, like mistaking a candle flame for a stable object. Thus this Power is even more dangerous, in that it uses not only the voice of a negating Falsehood, but also the voice of a

negating Truth, or rather a half-truth, a spiritual Negation.

A shadow of the negating Absolute,
The intolerant Darkness travelled surging past
And ebbed in her the formidable Voice.
It left behind her inner world laid waste:
A barren silence weighed upon her heart.,
Her kingdom of delight was there no more; (Ibid)

The Power passes like a storm that lays waste the garden of Savitri's inner world, her power of realisation so far. It has the strength to put to doubt all her achievements and knowledge.

Only her soul remained, its emptied stage,
Awaiting the unknown eternal Will. (Ibid, p.536)

But though it has the power to numb her soul's aspiration, it cannot destroy her soul. Though it calls the soul an illusion, its reality persists, though mute.

Then from the heights a greater Voice came down,
The Word that touches the heart and finds the soul,
The voice of Light after the voice of Night:
The cry of the Abyss drew Heaven's reply,
A might of storm chased by the might of the Sun. (Ibid)

Savitri's ability to endure, to refuse reaction to the Power of Darkness, results in a vindication from the Transcendental Realm. Savitri is herself the daughter of the Sun, the supramental solar deity and thus it is her own Origin that responds from the transcendence. It is interesting to note here that unlike in the Buddha's case, where it is the earth that validates the Buddha, here it is a yet unborn transcendental Power that validates Savitri. This is because Savitri draws her strength from an interventionist Source, a new power of the Transcendence that she represents and that she is missioned finally to deploy not only to transcend but to transform Death.

O soul, bare not thy kingdom to the foe;
Consent to hide thy royalty of bliss
Lest Time and Fate find out its avenues
And beat with thunderous knock upon thy gates. (Ibid)

This higher Wisdom makes it clear to Savitri that what has addressed her is a voice of Falsehood. It also cautions her to guard her inner realisations, since there are occult forces only too eager to quench our advances towards a terrestrial Perfection. We are not called upon to invite the adversary forces into a consciousness that is still too weak, too powerless to deal with the cosmic power of Falsehood and Death. We need to protect our scanty gains wrested from the Ignorance, in our march towards the supreme heights till we can gather enough cosmic power to bear these hostile Forces. In the economy of the spiritual journey, they have their place; it is to challenge us to exceed their strength, but called too early, they will destroy our achievements. If we are prudent, they will find us at the right time. But when the Adversary powers come, we must know how to battle them. This is what the higher voice says to Savitri.

To found thy luminous kingdom in God's dark,
In the Inconscient's realm one shining star,
One door in the Ignorance opened upon light,
Why hadst thou any need to come at all? (Ibid)

It reminds her that she has a mission far greater than an individual salvation or even as an example. A personal transcendence, even such as the temporal eternity of the psychic being, is hardly why a Shakti avatar needs to come into the world.,

Thou hast come down into a struggling world
To aid a blind and suffering mortal race,
To open to Light the eyes that could not see,
To bring down bliss into the heart of grief,
To make thy life a bridge twixt earth and heaven;
If thou wouldst save the toiling universe,
The vast universal suffering feel as thine: (Ibid, pp.536-37)

The voice from Above comes with a strong validation of the meaning of Savitri's birth but with this, it also validates the experience of Darkness that came to her, since this power of Falsehood is what the entire cosmos is subject to, and it is only by making it her own experience that Savitri can fully understand the earth-experience she has come to transform.

Thou must bear the sorrow that thou claimst to heal;
The day-bringer must walk in darkest night. (Ibid, p.537)

This is a repetition of what Sri Aurobindo said about the avatars of the Ishwara in an earlier passage (Book VI, Canto 2) when he dealt with *The Way of Fate and the Problem of Pain* and referred to the symbol of Christ as an avatar:

His large identity and all-harbours love
Shall bring the cosmic anguish into his depths,
The sorrow of all living things shall come
And knock at his doors and live within his house;
A dreadful cord of sympathy can tie
All suffering into his single grief and make
All agony in all the worlds his own.
He meets an ancient adversary Force,
He is lashed with the whips that tear the world's
He wears the blood-glued fiery Centaur shirt,
The poison of the world has stained his throat. (Ibid, pp. 446-47)

This is a theme repeated also in his autobiographical poem *A God's Labour*:

He who would bring the heavens here
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthly nature bear
And tread the dolorous way.

The same is asserted here of the Shakti avatar:

If he knows not grief, how shall he find grief's cure?
If far he walks above mortality's head,
How shall the mortal reach that too high path?
If one of theirs they see scale heaven's peaks,
Men then can hope to learn that titan climb.
God must be born on earth and be as man
That man being human may grow even as God.
He who would save the world must be one with the world,
All suffering things contain in his heart's space
And bear the grief and joy of all that lives. (Ibid, p.537)

But Savitri needs not only to endure these things, but transcend them in an

inclusive cosmic consciousness:

His soul must be wider than the universe
And feel eternity as its very stuff,
Rejecting the moment's personality
Know itself older than the birth of Time,
Creation an incident in its consciousness,
Arcturus and Belphegor grains of fire
Circling in a corner of its boundless self,
The world's destruction a small transient storm
In the calm infinity it has become. (Ibid)

She must exceed the temporality of the cosmos; the galaxies must become incidents like grains of fire in the vastness of her infinite consciousness. Savitri is being asked to equate herself with this transcendental vastness, in which all suffering, even the destruction of the universe is just a small phenomenon.

If thou wouldst a little loosen the vast chain,
Draw back from the world that the Idea has made,
Thy mind's selection from the Infinite,
Thy senses' gloss on the Infinitesimal's dance,
Then shalt thou know how the great bondage came.
Banish all thought from thee and be God's void. (Ibid)

The entire cosmos is an appearance; it manifests a truth of God and yet is not the primary or absolute Truth or Reality. As an appearance, it is a selection and arrangement presented through the Real-Idea of Supermind and maintained through the conditioned adherence of the mind and the senses. Savitri is reminded of this and is asked to use this knowledge to “loosen the vast chain” – i.e. use her will to free her co-optation to this cosmic appearance. Since it is maintained through the adherence of the mind, she is asked to silence her mind – “banish all thought” – to achieve this freedom – “be God's void.” Here we see that she is being asked to embrace the Negation of the voice of Death, not as a goal, but as the necessary precondition to developing a transcendental consciousness superior to Death. This view may also represent a deeper understanding of the Buddhist *nirvana* – not as an extinction of Being, but a transcendence of cosmic becoming, subject to the Law of Mara.

Infinity's vision through thy gaze shall pierce;
Thou shalt look into the eyes of the Unknown,

Find the hid Truth in things seen null and false,
 Behind things known discover Mystery's rear.
 Thou shalt be one with God's bare reality
 And the miraculous world he has become
 And the diviner miracle still to be
 When Nature who is now unconscious God
 Translucent grows to the Eternal's light,
 Her seeing his sight, her walk his steps of power
 And life is filled with a spiritual joy
 And Matter is the Spirit's willing bride.
 Consent to be nothing and none, dissolve Time's work,
 Cast off thy mind, step back from form and name.
 Annul thyself that only God may be." (Ibid, pp.537-38)

This superior power of Truth thus asks Savitri to accept the dissolution of the cosmic appearance that she may find the Transcendental Truth, of which the cosmic Ignorance is only a mask. It tells her that this is the means for the conditions of a greater becoming to reveal themselves to her, pointing to a future divine possibility of cosmic manifestation. It ends with a powerful exhortation, almost a command, pregnant with the Divine Will, to annul her personality, painstakingly built up so far, silence her mind and enter the transcendence.

To do this, Savitri enters into the next phase of her yoga. She studies herself once more. Just as to find the psychic being she took a plunge within and entered into the depth dimension, now she will enter into the dimensions of height and width by watching from above (*udasinata*) all the movements within her and putting them to an end one by one. That is the next phase of Savitri's yoga and her movement of consciousness, at the end of which she becomes completely silent, equated with the Void.

Her consciousness looked on and took no part;
 All it upheld, in nothing had a share.
 There was no strong initiator will;
 An incoherence crossing a firm void
 Slipped into an order of related chance.
 A pure perception was the only power
 That stood behind her action and her sight.
 If that retired, all objects would be extinct,
 Her private universe would cease to be,

The house she had built with bricks of thought and sense
 In the beginning after the birth of Space.
 This seeing was identical with the seen;
 It knew without knowledge all that could be known,
 It saw impartially the world go by,
 But in the same supine unmoving glance
 Saw too its abysmal unreality. (Ibid, p.546)

Savitri becomes a cosmic witness, a pure perception; and all that is seen is only upheld by the identity of that which sees. The vast self-extension of God, which is space, is the theatre of this spectatorship and if that sight withdraws its self-extension, the universal continent of all phenomena would cease to be. This becomes Savitri's experience or her realisation and then from here she finds that her nature continues working with a certain automatism: "An incoherence crossing a firm void / Slipped into an order of related chance." Universal Prakriti works in her and she has become identified with the Purusha. Madhyamika schools of Buddhism speak of a similar condition in terms of co-dependent arising, *pratitya-samutpada*. It is interesting to note that Sri Aurobindo himself lived through a similar condition after his *nirvana* experience for about a year.

This is what gives such a ring of realisation to his description of Savitri as a vacant consciousness, without any kind of initiation which finds that nature moves independently and coherently in her:.

An impersonal emptiness walked and spoke in her,
 Something perhaps unfelt, unseen, unknown
 Guarded the body for its future work,
 Or Nature moved in her old stream of force.
 Perhaps she bore made conscious in her breast
 The miraculous Nihil, origin of our souls
 And source and sum of the vast world's events,

 Yet all was not extinct in this deep loss;
 The being travelled not towards nothingness. (Ibid, p.552)

Though she persists in this consciousness, something, maybe the stream of nature's force, or an incomprehensible protection that guards her for the future, continues to work in her. Yet gradually, a higher intuitive volition, arising from an invisible source above the mind, begins to replace the expected working of her

nature. She continues to witness this transition, one from the nature (*prakriti*) of Ignorance (*avidya*) to the higher nature (*para-prakriti*) of the Knowledge consciousness (*Vidya*). This is how the silence of her mind is made into a condition for a new operation of nature and the basis for a new superhumanity:

And when she sat alone with Satyavan,
Her moveless mind with his that searched and strove,
In the hush of the profound and intimate night
She turned to the face of a veiled voiceless Truth
Hid in the dumb recesses of the heart
Or waiting beyond the last peak climbed by Thought, —
Unseen itself it sees the struggling world
And prompts our quest, but cares not to be found, —
Out of that distant Vast came a reply.
Something unknown, unreachd, inscrutable
Sent down the messages of its bodiless Light,
Cast lightning flashes of a thought not ours
Crossing the immobile silence of her mind:
In its might of irresponsible sovereignty
It seized on speech to give those flamings shape,
Made beat the heart of wisdom in a word
And spoke immortal things through mortal lips. (Ibid, pp.552-53)

This is how the *para prakriti* begins to use her instruments of nature, preparing them to operate directly under its control.

These thoughts were formed not in her listening brain,
Her vacant heart was like a stringless harp;
Impassive the body claimed not its own voice,
But let the luminous greatness through it pass.
A dual Power at being's occult poles
Still acted, nameless and invisible:
Her divine emptiness was their instrument. (ibid, p.553)

During this transition, a “dual power” acts through Savitri — *prakriti* of *Avidya*, the ignorant nature from the lower pole and *para prakriti*, supreme conscious nature from above are both laying claim to her instruments of nature and intermingling in actions.

Inconscient Nature dealt with the world it had made,
And using still the body's instruments
Slipped through the conscious void she had become;
The superconscient Mystery through that Void
Missioned its word to touch the thoughts of men. (ibid)

Thus, this is a period when both the Inconscience and the Superconscience act through Savitri without her personal choice, her personal nature becoming the instrument of both the higher and the lower force.

As yet this great impersonal speech was rare.
But now the unmoving wide spiritual space
In which her mind survived tranquil and bare,
Admitted a traveller from the cosmic breadths:
A thought came through draped as an outer voice.
It called not for the witness of the mind,
It spoke not to the hushed receiving heart;
It came direct to the pure perception's seat,
An only centre now of consciousness,
If centre could be where all seemed only space; (ibid, pp.553-54)

What starts as a sporadic action prepares the consciousness to house the Purusha of a higher realm. At a certain point, there enters a persistent presence into the seat of pure perception. Sri Aurobindo does not specify here where this seat is; normally one associates the seat of perception with the *ajna chakra*, the centre of consciousness between the eyes. But Savitri has exceeded this mental centre. Dwelling in the silence, the seat of pure perception is now the thousand-petalled lotus, *sahasrara*, above the head. Into this centre the active presence of the Overmental or Cosmic Purusha descends. This Purusha does not belong to the divided condition of *Avidya* or Ignorance, it is the Ishwara of *Vidya*, always in union with its Shakti.

Her being, a circle without circumference,
Already now surpassed all cosmic bounds
And more and more spread into infinity.
This being was its own unbounded world,
A world without form or feature or circumstance;
It had no ground, no wall, no roof of thought,
Yet saw itself and looked on all around

In a silence motionless and illimitable.
 There was no person there, no centred mind,
 No seat of feeling on which beat events
 Or objects wrought and shaped reaction's stress.
 There was no motion in this inner world,
 All was a still and even infinity.
 In her the Unseen, the Unknown waited his hour. (Ibid, p.554)

This is the beginning of the cosmic transformation that takes place in Savitri. A higher Presence and Power enter into her being leading to a process through which the cosmic *Parashakti* will take over her body. This is the second of the three transformations spoken of by Sri Aurobindo as the completion of the supramental change.

To summarise, we have seen how Savitri encounters the second of her experiences of Darkness. After the realisation of the soul and the first or psychic transformation, she is visited by the shadow of Death once again. This time it is no longer a personal or individualised form, that attacks her through the sense of personal death but the idea of a cosmic Non-Being. In response to this, Savitri receives a summons, an *adesh* from her supreme heights to embrace this cosmic Silence, not as a finality but as a stage to a higher consciousness. She does so and as a result, her nature becomes an instrument, at first of the ignorant habitual force or *prakriti* that acts through her and then, by a higher substitution, of the overmental or cosmic *Ishwara-Shakti*. At first, it is the higher shakti that acts sporadically in her and then the Ishwara, the self or being of the power takes its station above her head, in the pure perception's seat, which is known as the thousand-petalled lotus. This will be followed by a realisation of her identity in consciousness with the transcendent and supramental purusha. This final step in the triple transformation occurs towards the end of Canto VII as Savitri sits beside the sleeping Satyavan and the new power that is active above her head becomes fully immanent in her and speaks within her heart. Through its agency she has an experience of consciousness:

But now she sat by sleeping Satyavan,
 Awake within, and the enormous Night
 Surrounded her with the Unknowable's vast.
 A voice began to speak from her own heart
 That was not hers, yet mastered thought and sense. (Ibid)

The Overmental Shakti has here become individualised, entering her heart and taking the station of the controller within, *antaryamin*. Out of this immanence

comes the experience of the overmental transformation of her nature.

As it spoke all changed within her and without;
 All was, all lived; she felt all being one; (Ibid)

Savitri bears a sudden change of experience from the Void in which she lived so long, witnessing the action of a higher force within her. Once more, all becomes alive. This reversal of consciousness opens to her again the depth dimension of the Divine Presence, now experienced at the heart of all things. This is the Cosmic Purusha revealed in the cosmos, in all its particularities. This experience parallels Sri Aurobindo's own realisation in the jail following after his *nirvana* experience a year earlier in Baroda. We have seen how his first realisation, that of the void of *nirvana*, was identical with Savitri's experience of the cosmic Void. This was followed in his case by his experience in the Alipur jail of Vasudeva Krishna, the Divine Being present in the heart of all things; this again is paralleled in Savitri's experience. All the unreality disappears and in its place there is experienced the Divine Person in all beings. This is the Cosmic or Overmind Purusha and it will exceed itself and pass into the Supramental Purusha.

The world of unreality ceased to be:
 There was no more a universe built by mind,
 Convicted as a structure or a sign;
 A spirit, a being saw created things
 And cast itself into unnumbered forms
 And was what it saw and made; all now became
 An evidence of one stupendous truth,
 A Truth in which negation had no place,
 A being and a living consciousness,
 A stark and absolute Reality. (Ibid, p.554-55)

The cosmos that we live in and experience is a construct of Overmind. Savitri realises this truth and passes beyond into its origin, where the Supermind as Creative Consciousness of the Infinite One is all that exists, multiplying itself into innumerable forms manifesting a Real-Idea. The last vestige of illusoriness belonging to a Mind-born cosmos is surpassed and a Truth creation is what Savitri experiences. This is the manifestation of the *Vidya* plane or Knowledge Consciousness, where all things know themselves as self-manifestations of the One. As the higher voice she heard after the passage of the cosmic Darkness

had indicated, beyond her experience of the Void, in which all became colourless, a new modality of expression reveals itself, an apotheosis of the partial or figural truth of the Ignorance. Yet this is the positive power of the same indecipherable reality presaged by the Void:

Yet this was the same Indecipherable; (Ibid, p.555)

The universe of separation we exist in is an appearance, which is utterly discarded and disappears as an unreality here, yet what replaces it is no longer a blank Nothingness but a rich and infinite Oneness, real and tangible to the soul's experience:

It seemed to cast from it universe like a dream
Vanishing for ever into an original Void. (Ibid)
But this was no more some vague ubiquitous point
Or a cipher of vastness in unreal Nought.
It was the same but now no more seemed far
To the living clasp of her recovered soul. (Ibid)

Now, this experience of the supramental Purusha self-multiplied in all things becomes the basis not only of her consciousness but of her nature.

It was her self, it was the self of all,
It was the reality of existing things,
It was the consciousness of all that lived
And felt and saw; it was Timelessness and Time,
It was the Bliss of formlessness and form.
It was all Love and the one Beloved's arms,
It was sight and thought in one all-seeing Mind,
It was joy of Being on the peaks of God.
She passed beyond Time into eternity,
Slipped out of space and became the Infinite;
Her being rose into unreachable heights
And found no end of its journey in the Self.
It plunged into the unfathomable deeps
And found no end to the silent mystery (Ibid)

Here we find Sri Aurobindo describing Savitri's experience in terms of the three dimensions of the Brahman, the width dimension, the height dimension

and the depth dimension experienced by her all at once. In this complete identification with Brahman, her consciousness is identified with the experience of the Supermind. This supramental or transcendental being is Brahman superior to Being and Non-Being. Sri Aurobindo puts it thus in the beginning line of his Sanskrit formulation known as *Sri aurobindopanishad*: "One and indivisible is the Brahman, Being and Non-Being are its forms, it is beyond Being and Non-Being." The cosmic silence, and the cosmic expression at the heart of all things are both its faces and powers. Sri Aurobindo continues with his moved elevated description:

She was all vastness and one measureless point,
She was a height beyond heights, a depth beyond depths,
She lived in the everlasting and was all
That harbours death and bears the wheeling hours.
All contraries were true in one huge spirit
Surpassing measure, change and circumstance.
An individual, one with cosmic self
In the heart of the Transcendent's miracle
And the secret of World-personality
Was the creator and the lord of all. (Ibid, pp.555-56)

Savitri's nature power or Shakti becomes identified with this transcendental nature power. This becomes her preparation for her third and final meeting with embodied Death by rising beyond the power of Cosmic Being in her consciousness.

Her spirit saw the world as living God;
It saw the One and knew that all was He.
She knew him as the Absolute's self-space,
One with her self and ground of all things here
In which the world wanders seeking for the Truth
Guarded behind its face of ignorance: (Ibid, p.556)

Sri Aurobindo follows this exalted passage with even more glorious lines on the epiphany of this identification with the transcendental being :

She was a single being, yet all things;
The world was her spirit's wide circumference,
The thoughts of others were her intimates,

Their feelings close to her universal heart,
Their bodies her many bodies kin to her;
She was no more herself but all the world.
Out of the infinitudes all came to her,
Into the infinitudes sentient she spread,
Infinity was her own natural home.
Nowhere she dwelt, her spirit was everywhere, (Ibid, pp.556-57)

This represents her final identification with the consciousness and power of Infinite Being.

The distant constellations wheeled round her;
Earth saw her born, all worlds were her colonies,
The greater worlds of life and mind were hers;
All Nature reproduced her in its lines,
Its movements were large copies of her own.
She was the single self of all these selves,
She was in them and they were all in her.
This first was an immense identity
In which her own identity was lost: (Ibid, p.557)

She becomes one in consciousness with the supreme transcendental Being; yet her own individual identity, the separate existence of her psychic being and her mind-life-body nature complex are submerged in the “immense identity” of the Infinite One. Out of this she will emerge with the individualised Power or Shakti of this Consciousness, which will be the third and final of her three transformations and the basis of her conquest over Death.

(DVDs of the complete series of talks are available at a price from Sri Aurobindo Bhavan, 8 Shakespeare Sarani, Kolkata 700 071. For details, please contact Arup Basu, Editor, Sraddha at 98302 58723)

(To be Continued)

My contact with certain phases of the Independence Movement

C C Dutt

Some years ago, when I wrote my memoirs, I avoided carefully all reference to my connection with subversive political activities in India. Circumstances have altered today. Neither the present Government of India nor my Master have any objections to my divulging what I know of the secret revolutionary movement during, what is called, the Swadeshi period of India's political history.

I was caught up in the vortex of revolutionary politics very early in my life. In the eighties of the last century, when I went to school, the memory of the Sepoy War was still green, and there were many people living who had a vivid recollection of the daring deeds of the Sepoys in 1857-58. Fed by these stories and by a number of now-famous patriotic odes, I made up my mind while yet a boy, to learn practical soldiering in some foreign country and then return to India to organise an armed uprising.

I left for Europe in my twentieth year ostensibly to try and get into the I.C.S. but really to go over quietly from England to Brazil in order to enlist in the army there. Before my departure, I wrote a letter to S. C. Biswas, a Bengali adventurer who had made a great name in the Brazilian army, telling him of my ambitions and praying for his help. My plan was clear. I had a hundred pounds in my hands, the amount of deposits I had to make in the Inn's of Court; this I kept ready for my travelling expenses, and arranged for my passage with Thomas Cook. But a great disappointment was in store for me. Soon after my arrival in England, I received a letter from Brazil, written on behalf of Mrs. Biswas. She told me that her husband was no more, and that she was unable to help me in any way.

I then applied for permission to appear for the Army competitive examination in England through my tutor, Mr. Wren. In a few days, the reply came. The authorities had no objection to my appearing for the examination but "Mr. Dutt should be informed that he would not be taken into Sandhurst or Woolwich even if he tops the list of successful candidates." The India Office would not

allow it. That cleared up my position as far as the regular army was concerned. But there was nothing in my way, I thought, where a volunteer regiment was concerned. I failed, at first, to get into one or two units, but was ultimately accepted by the famous Honourable Artillery Company. I was accepted by them all right, but was called upon to pay a very large amount (over £ 100) for uniforms etc. I could not persuade my people to let me have this sum, and had, consequently, to give up all hope of entering the army.

Secret Work in England

The result was that I began to concentrate on secret political work. There was no existing revolutionary organisation that I knew of, but I came into contact with a few young men of my way of thinking. This was in 1897. Generally speaking political excitement ran high. Famine and plague in India, the Poona political murders, our country being dragged into celebrating the English Queen's Diamond Jubilee — these were all things that tended to draw us into regions of dark conspiracy. And there was no lack of European tempters. Our little group was in close touch with Michael Davitt the Fenian, just out of prison, Hyndman the Socialist chief, Cunningham the Anarchist and Tom Mann, a fiery leader of the working classes. All these used to give us elaborate advice in secret with regard to political assassinations and underground work generally. Dadabhai Naoroji, for whom we had very great respect, warned us again and again not to have any traffic with these "disreputable politicians". But these men were, we were convinced, true friends of India. I shall tell a little story to show this. One day when two of us went to the Fenian leader's rooms, he said to us very solemnly, "Look here, boys. I have, on behalf of Redmond a definite offer to make to your countrymen. If you have any doubts, come with me now and he will confirm it." The offer was this: India was to have eight Home Rule party seats in the British House of Commons and pay in lieu thereof eight lakhs (rupees) a year. These eight elected Indians were bound to vote with the Home Rule party on all Irish questions and the whole Home Rule bloc undertook to support the Congress view on all Indian questions. After setting forth these terms Davitt said, "You boys had better go straight off to old Naoroji and get him to agree. Thereafter we can see Redmond". My friend and I were both mere boys and the proposal sounded to us both plausible as well as attractive. But Dadabhai dismissed us summarily saying, "I have no time to waste boys, go away". I cannot believe, even now, that Mr. Davitt hoaxed us deliberately. But it is quite possible that he had misunderstood Redmond. For a whole year or more, we moved about briskly amongst the Indians in England canvassing support for our *Nava Bharat Sabha* and its programme of a more vigorous political

campaign in India. We were received courteously by most people; but that was about all. For the moment we suggested revolutionary action, even remotely, there was a definite cooling off. Ultimately there were only five of us who on the fortieth anniversary of the Mutiny (10.5.97), met together and swore solemnly never to rest till we had freed India from the thralldom of Britain. My four friends were all excellent people, but when I actually entered into the fray under my Chief's banner, eight years later, they were no longer with me.

As far as I was concerned, the prospect of entering Government service became more and more odious every day. I begged my father to let me off this corvee and to permit me to qualify as a lawyer and a journalist. He flatly refused to listen to my proposal and called upon me to prove by passing into the I.C.S. that I had some grit. India, he said, had no use for spineless wasters. So I put my shoulders to the wheel, and got through my examination. My year of probation in England I spent in pushing forward our secret programme of work. I must have been somewhat rash, for I received a solemn warning from the India Office.

Plan to shoot Curzon

However, the period passed somehow and I returned to India wearing my badge of service, but hoping sincerely that my father would now allow me to resign and enter political life. But this he would not do. His advice was that I should see for a time if official life suited me. It did not take me long to find out that it could never be acceptable to me. But there was an undoubted compensation. I set about using my official position to carry on our secret propaganda, and had a large measure of success. The political atmosphere had become eminently favourable, thanks to Lord Curzon the Viceroy. His pomposity and vanity, along with an utter disregard for the feelings of the subject people, had disgusted everybody. His ill-advised partition of Bengal now roused millions of peaceful and easy-going people to desperate action. All this is well-known and I need not dwell on it here, except only to show how it gave me my first chance of attempting a hard well-aimed blow at the alien Government. It was proposed to shoot Curzon down during his triumphal procession at Delhi. We had among us three or four very eminent people — a great poet, a famous scientist and my father-in-law Mr. Mallik, a prominent dock-owner, besides the famous Japanese author and artist, Okakura. Suren Tagore and I were the two youngest conspirators. A youthful Bihari was selected as the instrument and equipped with a rifle. He was a stalwart man, apparently courageous, but his heart failed at the last moment. By that time, I had gone back to the Bombay Presidency. When I heard of this young Bihari Parameshwar's failure I was

put on my mettle. Curzon was then going back to England. His special train to Bombay (like all trains on that line) had to stop at a spot called the Reversing Station on the Ghats. During this stoppage a determined man could easily rush up to the saloon and take a couple of pot shots at the victim. A young Bengali volunteered for the job. I gave him a few shooting lessons with a small rifle of mine and got a blue platelayer's uniform made for him. The boy appeared enthusiastic and success seemed assured. But, somehow, I had a misgiving inside me. So I sent the boy to Sri Aurobindo (Aurobindo Babu, in those days) at Baroda to be inspected. The boy never returned to me. A couple of days later, I heard from Aurobindo Babu — Your young man is not reliable. So Lord Curzon returned home safe and sound, like so many others of his kind.

Meeting Sri Aurobindo

I met Sri Aurobindo for the first time casually on the Baroda railway platform in 1900. I introduced myself as a friend of his eldest brother and of his wife's people. He was very kind to me, and said, "Now that we are both in Gujarat, we are sure to see each other often". This is how I first met my Master, or my Chief, as I called him in those days. As a matter of fact, we did not get together for three years as I was packed off by Government to a district in the far South. I employed that period in extending the scope of my secret organisation. It had all to be done very cautiously. Still some progress had been made by the time I was posted back in the neighbourhood of Bombay city in 1903. Soon after this, emissaries, men of position, came twice to me from the central revolutionary organisation asking me to join them. I turned them down saying, "I don't think much of a secret society that discloses itself to a stranger so glibly, as you seem to be doing". I think it was early in 1904 that Aurobindo Babu came to me first at Thana (Thane) and offered to take me into his Bhavani Mandir movement. Needless to say I was beside myself with joy at being chosen by such a great man. But there was a slight difficulty. I knew nothing of Yoga, nothing at all, and the whole training of a novice in the proposed Mandir was to be based on Yogic practice. When I mentioned this to the Chief, he laughed and said, "Your aim and ours are exactly the same, why not look upon the ochre garb as a uniform!" I was convinced quite easily that by joining the temple organisation I would get greater facility for the work I had chosen for myself, not to speak of such noble guidance. The Chief and I met several times after this and I tried to make myself useful in various ways. I continued to be in the I.C.S. however, much against my grain. About this time, the Swadeshi movement, along with the boycott of British goods, gained tremendous strength all over, and I threw myself earnestly into it under the pretence that it was a purely economic affair and had nothing

to do with politics. Of course this was not true, but it served well as an excuse to me, as well as to many others. It was thrilling to come into, contact with the fire that burnt bright in the hearts of these young Swadeshi workers. I felt keenly that it was urgently necessary to organise and direct this fire. Should I throw up my mask and become a whole-time worker in the country's cause? The Chief said to me however, one day later on, "Don't be in a hurry, some people will have to remain behind to form a new line when necessary".

Bhavani Mandir Movement

When after the partition of Bengal, aggressive nationalism took the whole country by storm, there arose many impatient young people all over India (but more particularly in Maharashtra, Bengal and the Punjab) who clamoured for a virile political programme. This implied not only bold self-assertion in public, but a strenuous course of training in secret, for an armed revolt. Sri Aurobindo had made it perfectly clear to me that he advocated complete independence for India and that he was not squeamish about the method to be pursued, but up to a certain point of time he was content to let me work for the Bhavani Mandir scheme and the Swadeshi movement. I was, however, growing impatient and a few of my underground workers in Maharashtra were getting out of hand. At this juncture, Aurobindo Babu came one day to me at Thana (Thane) and took me away for the night to Bombay. His brother Barin was with him. We went to a house in Girgaum where there were no men-folk present. Soon after our arrival, when we had locked ourselves inside the parlour, the Chief turned towards me solemnly and said, "Now Charu, do you want to join us in our work? You have twice turned down our offer." I understood that he referred to the big organisation of which I had heard before. Some of my men had joined this society recently. I made up my mind very quickly and said, "I don't know whom you mean by us, and I don't wish to know them. But I shall be proud to serve under you personally, if you would have me; I am yours unreservedly and unconditionally." The exact words I have forgotten, but I spoke more or less in this strain. He accepted me without any oath or formality and I felt deeply grateful to him. At his bidding, Barin explained to me the state of things in Bengal, how the anti-partition agitation had helped towards the revolutionary movement marvellously in that province. Aurobindo Babu was categorical in his declaration that absolute freedom was his goal and the goal of the people he worked with, and this gratified me immensely as I could not possibly have agreed to the whittling down of our noble aim. There is one childish thing I still remember. When I cried out in excitement, "But you must not try for a bloodless

revolution," the Chief laughed out, "O you bloodthirsty fellow!" Barin said with a beaming face, "This is what we want".

Sri Aurobindo's work in Calcutta

Soon after this, Sri Aurobindo left Baroda and took up open political work in Calcutta. In no time, he became the acknowledged leader of the Nationalists in Bengal and through his paper, *Bande Mataram*, went on moulding public opinion, not only in his own province but all over the country. In the wider field of Indian Politics he was the trusted friend and associate of Tilak. For a while, these two, along with Lajpat Rai, were looked upon as the prophets of an imminent revolution. How overwhelming their power and prestige were, was proved to the hilt at Surat in 1907. In order to understand the apparent collapse, however, that came on a few months later, it is necessary to take note of the progress of underground politics in Bengal under the sole leadership of Aurobindo Babu. My cousin, Subodh Mallik, was his trusty associate in the open, as well as the secret, line of work in Bengal. The Chief placed a great deal of reliance on his honesty and zeal. P. Mitter, the leader of the *Anusilan Samiti* of Bengal, was likewise a faithful associate of Aurobindo Babu in that province. I myself had valuable help from him in a couple of important undertakings. Tilak and Lajpat Rai were, apparently, their own masters as far as the secret work in their respective provinces was concerned. But they were not wholly so. For, it must be remembered that there was a Central organisation existing throughout, to which all owed allegiance. In fact, it was generally believed, and rightly so, that almost all underground activities followed a fixed general plan. I shall recount a short tale to show this. Sometime in 1907, a couple of Allahabad students came to me at Calcutta and asked for a live bomb saying that they wished to use it against Hewett, their Governor. They appeared trustworthy; so I sent a bomb to Allahabad with one of our own boys. He came back, however, in a couple of days and reported that Lala Lajpat Rai had forbidden the attempt on Hewett saying that the U.P. was in his jurisdiction and he did not want any row, just then. When I informed the Chief of this, he smiled and said "Yes, that's right". He told me also that every regional leader had agreed to provide so many thousand well-drilled men, when called upon. Later on, I came into close contact with the centres of physical training in both Bengal and Maharashtra. The Bengal centres were principally branches of the *Anusilan Samiti* of P. Mitter, already mentioned. The training it gave was very efficient, and it had, at one time, a very large number of young men on its rolls. P. Mitter never claimed to be independent of Aurobindo Babu's control, but I dare say there was some rivalry and jealousy between the *Anusilan* boys and the boys under Barin's direct

leadership. I mention this because at a later period, revolutionary work in Bengal was hampered a great deal by the rivalry between two groups, calling themselves *Anusilan* and *Yugantar*. All this vanity and jealousy is a common human failing, but in times of stress, when a great leader is at the helm, it cannot do any harm. It could not in Aurobindo Babu's time and later on it could not in Chittaranjan's time.

Thakur Saheb & Savarkar

The big Central organisation of my days somehow kept its secret. The Government came to suspect its existence, but knew nothing of its personnel. They never knew who its chief, the Thakur Saheb was. In an important conspiracy case in Bengal (in which P. Mitter was principally involved) this chief's name was mentioned, that is all. We believed him to be a prince of the house of Udaipur, but it was never really known, so well was the secret kept. The organisation was, however, fast losing its grip on the younger workers. Little dynamic groups were springing up all over the country, who made their own plans and carried them out. Their local leaders, men like Chidambaram of Tuticorin and Babu Khare of Nasik, while acknowledging the authority of the centre decided on their own lines of work. I remember that in 1908, an emissary of Babu Khare came to me in Ahmedabad and pressed me to supply them with a couple of revolvers from Calcutta. Vinayak Savarkar a follower of Khare, had promised to send them weapons from Europe, but had, so far, failed to do so. The emissary, Dadhe by name, said that their need was very urgent. I wrote to Barin for revolvers but before he could do anything, the police action of May paralysed the Calcutta centre. It may be mentioned here that Savarkar did send later on some Browning automatic pistols, and that with one of them Kanhere, a young Brahmin shot Jackson, District Magistrate of Nasik.

Aurobindo's Teachings

Aurobindo Babu, ever since he had left Baroda and assumed charge of his secret organisation, acted almost entirely on his own, though there never was any lack of co-ordination between him and other regional leaders. There was one notable thing, however, which differentiated our Chief from these other leaders. Though Aurobindo Babu of those days was not generally looked upon as a great religious teacher, yet the whole basis of his political teaching was spiritual, as was apparent from the writings in his various journals — in the *Bande Mataram* and the *Yugantar* before his imprisonment, as much as in the *Karmayogin* and the *Dharma* after his release. In the little school started by him and his friend Deshpande, in the Ganganath Ashram on the Narmada and

in his now-famous Garden house near Calcutta, the boys had a basic training in Yoga, along with the teaching of various other things. Looked at from this point of view, the outlook of the Bengal revolutionary (at least, of those who were in direct contact with their Chief) was essentially different from that of his brethren in Maharashtra and the Punjab. I am speaking of the period prior to Sri Aurobindo's final departure from Calcutta. Later on, there was very little difference between one region and another in this respect. Freedom became a purely mundane affair, everywhere.

Attempts on Fuller & Fraser

With these later phases of the independence movement my connection has been but remote and indirect, and I shall say nothing about them, here, beyond this that except for a very short period of nervousness and lassitude the fire has ever burnt bright in the heart of young India; some of the latter day types I have met. They are boys of high courage and great practical ability but they lack the spiritual idealism of, say, Prafulla Chaki or even young Khudiram. I knew both these boys well. Khudiram belonged to Midnapore, a district that, later on, threw out a direct challenge to the mighty British Government by killing three successive District Magistrates. Sometime in 1906 Khudiram was arrested for seditious activities, but instead of being put up for trial, he was treated with extraordinary kindness by the big Magistrate Sahib personally, and provided by the police with cigarettes, good food, and even a female companion. Their blandishments had, however, no effect on the boy. He remained firm in his loyalty. After a longish conversation with him, we selected him, a few weeks later, for an important bit of work in East Bengal and Assam. Fuller, the Governor of that province, had made a complete pest of himself and Khudiram was sent out to Gauhati and Shillong with a revolver to put an end to his pernicious activities. But the poor boy had no luck. The police were thoroughly on their guard, and the Governor's movements were, consequently, secret and sudden and unexpected. A defeat had to be recorded, but Khudiram was promised a chance of redeeming his good name.

I was, however, feeling very uneasy. What was the true reason for these failures? Bad luck or slackness? I must stand by and see an attempt made! During the autumn of 1907, I was staying at Darjeeling for several weeks. It was the height of the season and the Governor, I was told, attended so many functions. Surely, we should be able to get at him somewhere! I did the preliminary reconnoitring myself, and observed that the Governor attended service every Sunday morning in the church near the station and that he came always on horseback accompanied by a single A.D.C. along the main Auckland Road and

then down by a narrow zig-zag ride. A bomb had arrived from Barin, and Prafulla Chaki had come up, already. I explained my plan to Prafulla. He was to stand at the head of the zig-zag with his missile and choose his own time for hurling it at the Governor as he rode down the pathway. We both felt that our plan could not fail. Yet it did. I was standing on the station platform not far from the lower end of the path, ears alert to hear the sound of the explosion overhead. But there was no noise at all and I began to feel nervous for Prafulla. Suddenly, I saw the Governor and his attendant riding up from the market side. It was unheard of, the Lat Saheb riding through the crowd and dirt of the Cart Road on a Sunday! After the Governor went into the church, I saw a couple of English policemen in plain clothes going round the building, looking carefully into every nook and corner. So, it must have been by the advice of the I.B. that the Governor had come by an almost impossible route. I met Prafulla at night and learnt from him that he had waited one whole hour for the great man and then gone home disappointed.

We planned a fresh enterprise. During the next week there was to be a one-day cricket match, the important fixture of the season between the Governor's Eleven and the Cooch Behar team. Surely Fraser would not miss such a popular function! I went the day before and inspected the place which His Honour and the elite were going to occupy. It was a little hillock at the end of the cricket ground, and the Governor's chair was to be placed right in front. The native gentry were to be accommodated under a canopy down below about 50 yards from the hillock. The night before the match Prafulla met me and I gave him final instructions. He was to stand behind me in the native guests' pavilion, and as soon as I signalled to him by hand or eye he was to rush up and throw his missile at the front seats on the hillock. Well, we waited and waited and waited till the very end of the match, but our quarry never appeared. I was thoroughly put out, but Prafulla walked calmly away with a smiling face. He was a fine fellow, probably the best we had. Pity he did not live to see his country free! He went down to Calcutta the next day. I had had my lesson, I would never again put a failure down to slackness on the part of the boys.

The attempt to smash the Governor's train on the B. N. Railway by placing a bomb on the rails also failed. The bomb exploded, but the train was not wrecked. The failure there was due to want of technical skill. The attempt to shoot Fraser down in the Y.M.C.A. Hall was frustrated by the courage and promptness displayed by an English guest, who, at great risk to himself got firm hold of the assassin's pistol. But these two attempts were immensely useful as propaganda, as assurance to our people that a secret society was working on their behalf.

Kingsford, Chaki & Khudiram

That this consideration did weigh with us often would appear from another incident also. One Kingsford was the Chief Presidency Magistrate in Calcutta in 1907. He was undoubtedly a big official, but not nearly so important as Curzon or Fuller or Fraser. Still he loomed larger in the public eye during that period and we felt that a death sentence executed on him in a spectacular fashion would hearten the people a great deal. The first attempt was made by sending a parcel, apparently of books to his address by post, the parcel being, in reality, a powerful bomb which would explode as soon as the string round it was cut. It was very well-made and there was nothing suspicious in its appearance. I had seen the thing myself. But something must have gone wrong, for, the magistrate never touched it — it was opened by expert policemen under water. Soon afterwards, Kingsford was transferred to Muzaffarpur in Bihar. We decided to make a direct attack on him in his new district, after the bustle and excitement of the Surat Congress. This attack was in fact made in May, 1908 by Khudiram and Prafulla but resulted, unfortunately, in the death, not of the magistrate, but of two innocent ladies. Two of our finest boys had to pay for this mistake with their lives. Prafulla shot himself to evade imminent arrest, Khudiram died on the scaffold.

Plot to capture Goa Fort

There was one bit of work with which I came to be associated which was certainly out of the common. It would show that, even as pioneers, our activities were not restricted to terrorism. The affair must have been planned by our big people at the centre. I came into it at a later stage. Some time towards the end of 1906 a young Maratha came to me at Thana (Thane) and stated that he had come on behalf of Mr. Mahadev Bodas, a Bombay Lawyer, who wished to see me on some important business; the business being political and of a highly confidential nature. I was nonplussed as my Chief was away in Bengal. So I said to the boy, "Mr. Bodas need not come to me until I know more about him". A couple of days later, however, the gentleman himself came to me, armed with a letter from old Dr. Deshmukh of Bombay, an intimate friend of Tilak, to the effect that the bearer Mr. Bodas was "fully trustworthy". The visitor looked very intelligent, and spoke earnestly in short crisp sentences. He stated solemnly at the outset that he had been sent to me by the highest authorities, and then proceeded to explain the business they were engaged in. It seemed that Bodas' bosses had come to an understanding with the Portuguese Government at Goa, whereby on receipt of a large sum in ready cash the Governor would hand over Goa, to India; only the matter would have to be very carefully stage-managed,

so that no blame attached to him or his government. There was to be a mock revolt of the Goa people, followed by a seizure of the fortress and the capture of the Governor's person. The money had been arranged for, and everything was ready for an apparent *coup d'état*. But what about the next step? Bodas said that his people fully realised that the British Government of India would forthwith proceed to bombard Panjim and had therefore formed a plan to checkmate them. Bodas was well-versed in International Law and explained to me that if at the critical time we could get a major Power to recognise the new government of Goa, Britain could do nothing without coming face to face with that friendly Power. I was not an expert, but it seemed reasonable enough to me. Now, where did I come in? Bodas explained to me that first France, and then Germany, had summarily refused to help in the scheme. The greatest kindness that they had promised to show was that they would not denounce the plotters to the British Government. The third Power that Bodas had approached was Russia, at that time engaged in a serious conflict with Japan. The Russian Consul had been very sympathetic. He had said, "I am sure my Government would not miss an opportunity of doing some harm to England, after the disgraceful treacherous way in which she has been helping Japan in the present war. I am referring to my Government, but they are sure to ask who are behind you in this enterprise". That is how Bodas' bosses had brought in my name. I told him that I had no objection to working with him, if he would let me know what exactly I had to do. There was just then every chance of a great naval engagement between Russia and Japan. The Consul had made it clear that the Goa plan wholly depended on the fate of Russia in that impending battle. If she won, she would certainly help India, in order to spite England. But if she lost, she would have no power to do anything. I was to see the Consul, later, and assure him that Bodas had a substantial backing. But everything came to nought, when the Japs smashed the Russian fleet in what was then known as the Shano disaster. The Consul sent for Bodas and expressed his formal regrets. But the strangest part of the whole thing was that none of these European Powers conveyed any information against us to the British. A little Ashram in Panjim was very quietly broken up, later on, by the Goa Government, and everything forgotten.

Congress: Surat Split

In the year 1907, things had come to a head both in our open work as the Nationalist Party, and in our secret activity as terrorists and revolutionaries. I was in Calcutta for several months that year and was due to rejoin my work in February 1908. I spent the whole time in soothing the boys and putting before

them various attractive plans. But no definite departure from our usual lines of work could be made till after our leaders had met together in December and considered things in detail. The Moderate Party, led principally by Messrs. Mehta, Surendranath and Gokhale had made up their minds to make a mighty effort to smash the extremists (as we were called) at Surat. This we had learnt beforehand, and our friends in Gujarat had warned us that Mehta had even ordered Lascars to be hired for the purpose of giving our people a sound hiding. A good many of us thought that we should not go to Surat at all, but hold our own separate conference at Nagpur. Aurobindo Babu was away for a short change of air. We, who were in charge in Calcutta, sent round wires to various Nationalist leaders pressing our proposal. Some like Moonjee and Chidambaran Pillai, agreed with us, but Tilak was adamant, I still remember the text of his wire,—“For heavens' sake, no split.” Shortly after this, our Chief returned from Deoghar. After looking at the various messages, he brushed aside our objections and decided in favour of Surat. So to Surat went all our leaders, determined to give the veterans a good fight. The constitutional aspect of the struggle did not touch me, but I was vitally interested in the Chief's physical well-being. So a few boys were sent to Surat with Barin. They had instructions to close round Aurobindo Babu in case there was a row. As some of these boys carried firearms, it was a very good thing that the Moderates exercised some self-control. The Congress session broke up in confusion, but our leaders had had their secret conferences and decided on a vigorous programme for the next year, both covert and overt. Barin came back early and gave us all the news. The Chief went on a tour in Western India and addressed large assemblies in the bigger towns. We, on our part, formed several plans of dynamic action for the ensuing year and awaited his return eagerly. Ordinarily we did not trouble him about details, but as there was going to be a change of strategy and technique, his sanction was essential. At last, in the third week of January, the Chief returned to Calcutta. It did not take us long to realise that he was tired out and needed rest. Moreover, in his talk, he appeared listless and absent-minded.

Maratha Yogi Lele

Subodh and Barin and I were seriously worried and told him so. Ultimately he permitted Barin to send a wire to Lele, a Maratha Yogi with whom he had spent a short while in Baroda recently. Lele arrived duly. A few days spent, quietly with him in our Villa on the river gave the Chief all the rest he needed and he came back thoroughly refreshed. He was so much like his usual alert self that he promptly brought out of his suitcase two empty bomb-shells saying with a smile, “Tilak has sent these for your inspection and approval.” This remark

gave me the opening I wanted. I said, “Friend, please don't take what I am saying amiss. I know you have much greater things to think of than bombs and pistols. But tell me, assure me, that you will look after the boys. Otherwise I shall not go back to service. There are critical times in front of us, for we have got to surge ahead.” The Chief replied with a gracious smile, “I assure you, Charu, I shall look after the boys here. But you must go back to your job. Gujarat, isn't it? Well, there are reasons why my best recruiting sergeant must be in Ahmedabad just now.” These were almost precisely his words, but I did not understand the meaning then. I did later when after the Chief's arrest the whole of Ahmedabad showed me signal honour as his friend and servant — such demonstrative honour as has fallen to the lot of but few. There are two more things that should be mentioned here. They may, of course, have been pure coincidence. The first was that Tilak was kept, at the time, in the Sabarmati Jail, only three miles from me, and that I managed to get into touch with him right under the nose of the C.I.D. The second was that the bungalow occupied by Aurobindo Babu's sergeant in Ahmedabad in 1908 became the first residence and Ashram of Gandhiji three years later. Well, let it pass.

Lele & Prafulla Chaki

I shall now go back, for a little while, to Lele's visit to the Chief in Calcutta, in January, already referred to. While there, this Yogi paid visits to the suburban garden-house, where Barin and some of the boys lived and underwent their manifold training. He saw them meditating and doing various Yogic exercises and was pleased with their progress. But one of them, Prafulla Chaki, of whom we have heard already, struck him as a remarkably apt pupil, and Lele wished to take him away and give him specialised training in Rajayoga. He spoke to the Chief about it and got the reply. “Charu is not likely to agree, speak to him,” He called me in and referred the matter to me perfectly confident, I suppose, of the result. I objected violently to Lele or anybody else taking any of our boys away. We had a short, but sharp, discussion at the end of which Lele said somewhat excitedly for a Yogi, “What is the use of killing such a promising lad! Give him to me and I shall make a Yogi of him. He has got some very great gifts.” What could I say to such a blind man! I replied, “You think that the best boys are for your Yoga, and that the worst are good enough for ours. Well, if the boy wants to go with you to safety, let him do so, we shan't raise any objection.” Barin was present there, listening to us with a weary face. I sent to fetch Prafulla. The boy came in a little while; he listened calmly to the Chief as he put the whole matter before him, and then and then, touching the Chief's feet, he replied firmly, “I do not wish to go anywhere Sir, unless you are dissatisfied with

me and want to send me away." The matter was easily settled after this. Lele left Calcutta alone. In a few days I too, bade goodbye to friends and comrades, and left for Ahmedabad. I went with a heavy heart, in spite of all that the Chief had said about the desirability of my going away.

The end of it all

In May, the debacle came. A spy, Rajani Sarkar by name, had gained admittance into the garden as a friend of one of the boys and conveyed information to the police. The police waited till the Muzaffarpur outrage had been committed, and then closed in. The Chief and a number of young men were arrested and put up for trial. The idea of a second line of defence came more or less to nought. But fresh people took up the work and carried it on. They wore different guises, uttered different slogans, but they moved forward steadfastly towards the goal. And the goal was achieved in God's own time.

As far as I was concerned, I was practically out of it all. My connection with the Chief and "with the seditious conspiracy operating all over India," was known. Three separate provincial Governors were good enough to tell me so. But I suppose they had no more evidence against me than they had against my Chief. So I got off with home internment for a couple of years and departmental punishments for another three years. But I was now a marked man and had to remain satisfied with a seat on the gallery, while others played the great game. Still, it was not quite so dull as all that. Off and on, I managed to put in a little work for the sacred cause that I had once made my own.

As I close these notes, there passes before my mind's eye a long array of those that have toiled for India's freedom. They range from wise old men like Dadabhai and Surendranath and Mehta to fiery young sparks like Khudiram and Prafulla Chaki and Jatin Mukherjee. We may, in our half-blindness, extol one lot and belittle the other. But India's Providence has made no such choice. In order to work out His end He has used all instruments ready to His hand. And He began very early. Let us not forget the pioneers, Nana Saheb and Laxmibai, Bahadur Shah and the Maulvi of Lucknow.

(Courtesy: Amrita Bazar Patrika, Puja Number, 1950)

India the Secular State (The Right Interpretation and the Wrong)

Amal Kiran (K D Sethna)

India has been declared a Secular State and the advanced elements in the country are proud of this declaration – but in a rather vague way. Nobody seems to know what are the exact implications of secularity. And quite a number of people even doubt if, except in name, India is any more secular than Pakistan who has declared herself a Muslim State with the name of Allah an integral part of the constitution. The doubt is occasioned by the fact that most of our leaders and ministers openly encourage belief in a religious order of the world.

Even Nehru, socialist though his tendencies are, honoured with his presence the occasion of the return of sacred Buddhist relics to India from abroad. Not only that, but he actually made a most humble *namaskar* to the relics, joining his palms together and bowing his head over them – a gesture almost of worship. He also affirmed recently that true religion is very precious and that its absence in what is conventionally termed religious is to be regretted. As for Sardar Patel and Rajagopalachariar and most of the Congress notables, they make no secret in public of their reverence for the teachings of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita. All of them and Nehru himself never tire of pronouncing Gandhiji's ideals and principles to be true, and everybody knows that Gandhiji's entire attitude to life was dictated by a firm faith in God, especially God as incarnated in the traditional Hindu figure Rama. If those who stand as symbols of the Government are avowedly in favour not only of a religious world-view but also of the Hindu religion, how, it is asked, can India be considered a Secular State?

Secularity Has Many Meanings

The question does not go to the root of the matter. Secularity has many meanings. In its extreme form it is defined as total indifference to and discouragement of religious concepts and practices. The Soviet State is the outstanding example of anti-religious secularity. But there can be a less positive and more non-committal form. France and the U.S.A. are not pledged in their

constitutions to any religion, but they have no hostility towards religious beliefs and bodies; they regard religion as the individual's private business and let no religious partiality mould their political conduct. Great Britain, inasmuch as the King is entitled the Defender of the Faith, implies reference not only to God but also to a particular brand of religion, and yet in actual working she is without any political bias prompted by the Established Protestant Church.

If by secularity we mean all omission of the idea of God, Great Britain is a theocratic State. If we mean lack of religious favouritism, then she is certainly secular. India is at present secular like France and the U.S.A. rather than like Great Britain. But she is very far indeed from being secular in the Soviet sense. And even as compared to France and the U.S.A., she is more secular in principle than practice, for, while there is a strong irreligious strain among the individuals who compose France and a considerable amount of scepticism among the American people, the majority of Indians are free from the agnostic attitude no less than the atheistic. Rank atheism is rare in India; agnosticism is confined to only a part of the literate population which is itself a small part of the humanity surging within our sub-continent. This is not to deny that, with a great many of our literati, religion is just a hazy background and what governs their thought and behaviour is a too-worldly utilitarianism and hedonism à la the modern West. But our finest minds are alive to the importance of the religious consciousness and the large multitude of Indians are believers. It would be more in conformity with our turn of mind as a nation if we had a constitution framed less according to the temper of the French or the American State than to that of the British. In other words, if the name "God" has a place in our constitution, we should be truer to the psychological condition of the country.

The Indian Secular Concept

The first point to be settled is: can India avow belief in God, and yet be secular? The second point is: can that belief be Hindu-coloured without vitiating secularity? India called herself secular for only one purpose: she wanted to make it clear that Muslims, Christians, Parsis, Jews and Jains living within her borders would suffer no discrimination or penalty or suppression on account of their not being Hindus and not partaking in the Hindu conventions of worship. India wished to stress political liberty and communal equality irrespective of different religious conventions: that is why she chose the designation of "secular". She never had the intention of favouring atheism and agnosticism, or of hiding the fact that on the whole her fundamental beliefs are those which constitute the core and kernel of Hinduism as distinguished from its shell and superficialities. Sometimes the inner and outer Hinduisms are joined together: in that case, the

leaders and ministers who symbolise the Government have to see, before they lend their personal support to religious occasions, that the inner is a living force and not stifled by rigid rule and uninspired ceremony. But there is nothing basically inconsistent in their reverence for religious values – even those which are closely connected with the Hindu religion as distinguished from any other. Read in its proper context, understood in its root motive, India's secular constitution does not run counter to a belief in God by the majority of the nation who are religious and whose voice is echoed in the Government. Nor does it run counter to the Government's being Hindu in essential religion, for if the majority of India follow the Hindu religion what else should we expect a representative Government to do?

In consideration of the fact that minorities subscribe to non-Hindu religions, the Hinduism of the Government must strip itself of all sectarianism, bigotry and orthodoxy and be the pure quintessence of the Hindu faith. The quintessence consists simply in the doctrine that there is an Infinite, Eternal, Perfect Being who is one yet capable of a myriad forms of manifestation, a Being whose divinity lives like a secret fire in all things and creatures and can guide and enlighten the human to unite with the divine, a Being who down the ages manifests also in a special sovereign form of spirituality which is the Avatar, the direct divine Incarnation. The Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita are all here in a seed-significance to which, under one aspect or another and with this or that qualification, the living substance of all religions held in India today can be virtually reduced.

When it comes to making this seed-significance a dynamic for man's growth out of his ignorance and incapacity into a greater poise of consciousness, Hinduism cannot help being stressed more than the other religions, for it is universally acknowledged by all who have seriously looked into the matter to have the best psychological methods of God-realisation. The Government could not be criticised for any such stress: if the minorities are ignorant of those methods they should be illuminated and if they refuse illumination they have nobody save themselves to blame for feeling slighted. To assure them of safety from sectarianism the Government can be said to have done their best so long as the constitution guarantees freedom from Hinduism's outer husk.

Let us avoid all confusion about the Indian secular concept. There can be envisaged in it neither a conflict between the secular and the religious nor the absence of religion by virtue of the absence of God's name nor the absence of Hinduism's inner meaning. The term "secular" and the omission of God's name must be taken merely to be expedients to avoid bringing up philosophical subtleties and to give no chance to the minorities to fear political and communal oppression.

When the present period of inter-communal unsettlement is over, we should not be afraid of having the word “theocracy” hurled at us, provided we take care to be different from orthodox semi-obscurantist theocracies like Spain and Eire and Pakistan.

Secularity and the Presence of Ideals

A final point to remember is that an India which sets up the ideals of liberty and quality is bound to answer why these ideals are selected. No answer short of saying that they are the true principles of life will satisfy. And once we start speaking of “truth” we are in the realm of what are termed “values” and confront the enigma of the “ought”. Why ought we to cherish liberty and equality? If we reply that they conduce to the welfare and happiness of a country, the question arises: why ought we to conduce to a country’s welfare and happiness? The “ought” is a riddle we can never read except by going beyond the world of passing facts. If there is no Law eternal behind the codes and statutes of men, a Law which men strive to embody according to their best lights, then nothing fundamentally bars the right of cunning and selfish opportunism to have full play and the only commandment is – “Thou shalt not be found out.” If honesty and other virtues are held to be the best policy in the long run, it is only because some eternal Law is on their side and the sense of it in human breasts works ultimately on their behalf. Our morals and ideals may not always image the divine depths of the eternal Law; but there can be nothing like morality and idealism without an effort or aspiration to image the depths that are divine of a Law that is eternal.

This is plain logic. And every State must either accept this logic or else forfeit all claims to attempting an ideal government worthy of allegiance. Not only the ideals of liberty and equality but all ideals whatever must imply a divine sanction when they are offered us as true. The sense of unconditional imperativeness and inherent validity, without which no “ought” exists, leads ever to a theocracy of the universe. And if India or any State wishes to escape the charge of being a monstrous monument of cynical opportunism it must be overtly or covertly theocratic. A Secular State which is indifferent to religion and yet tries to be based on true ideals is a contradiction in terms!

Secularity in the Most Appropriate and Vital Sense

If words like “theocratic” and “religious” smack of an outward credal formality, let us choose a word like “spiritual” which has a freshness and wideness and inwardness of suggestion. But let us clearly perceive the right significance of secularity. Especially a country like India cannot keep indulging in a

misinterpretation of it, for predominantly spiritual is the Indian genius. And until this character of the Indian genius is fully recognised – nay, felt in the heart and all along the blood – we shall never rise to the golden top of our bent and we shall waste the magnificent possibilities that seers like Sri Aurobindo bring us today of initiating a new world-order inspired and illumined by the divinity hidden within man.

Mention of Sri Aurobindo lays here a further shade of the right significance we should attach to secularity. One meaning of “secular” is: “concerned with the affairs of this world”; it is opposed to “other-worldly”. Spirituality in India has had two orientations: an earth-renouncing orientation and an earth-embracing one. The Aurobindonian spirituality is averse to all escapism, however sublime, and is emphatic about the need of transmuting and fulfilling earth’s life with the light of the Eternal, the Infinite, the Perfect. It can therefore be described as secular spirituality, and it is the dynamic modern *Zeitgeist*, the active temper of our time, in the finest and deepest form. As such, it illustrates the most appropriate and vital sense in which India can be faithful to her spiritual genius without either failing to be abreast of modernism or ceasing to be a Secular State.

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India's Independence and the Spiritual Destiny

R Y Deshpande

Not Hindutva but Sanatan Dharma or Integral Spirituality

There is a vociferous and strident lobby of intellectuals, of the self-righteous western brand, who persistently downgrades the traditions of India, not understanding the well-founded principles on which its society and social organisations are built. With the least perception of things it quickly equates *Sanatan Dharma* and *Hindutva*, and the Religion followed by the common Hindu people, to arrive at fallacious conclusions, without realising that that is in the very nature of things so, that the conclusions will be misleading. But what is essential to recognise is that there is a cosmic movement of evolution of consciousness taking its soul, — not only it as an individual but also as a group or collective being, — towards the possibilities of divine expression in the dynamism of life; it is to that it lends itself. That is its fundamental urge, its glory, the *raison d'être* for serving the cause of higher working. There is at times an attempt to redefine some of these terms but the formations are so fixed in the reasoning, but palpably not reasonable minds of these people, that the effort proves futile. Not that they do not understand it; they do. But there is stubbornness, an obstinacy to oppose it as a mechanism for self-defence and self-preservation. When the contact with the inner springs is absent there is always this frustrating dryness, and maybe nothing much can be done about it.

There could perhaps be an alternative term to *Sanatan Dharma* or *Hindutva* or Hindu Religion, such as 'Integral Spirituality' embracing life to lift life to spiritual heights. It could be, — if it is going to solve the problem at all. If there is the universality of the Spirit, then it is that which will be its basis for institutionalisation without becoming institutional in any constitutional framework of a fixed kind and mind. It shall derive its nourishing inspiration from its origin itself which knows the modes of time and the particularities of location. But we could as well use *Sanatan Dharma* and Integral Spirituality as synonyms. The foundation of society based on this Integral Spirituality will not be local or regional

or national, though each one will have its characteristic feature, its form and manner and style of expression and self-finding suitable to its uniqueness, its aspiration and thinking and perception, satisfying its emotional demands and giving opportunities for perfection in skill and work and labour. Quest and application of knowledge and growth of reason and faith, the fearlessness in surmounting difficulties and heroism and thrust and establishing the spirit of nobility, commerce and economics and trade and production of material wealth as power at the service of life's beautiful and harmonious instincts, science and craft and engineering and proficiency in work of whatever kind that be, of the mason or the carpenter or the farmer or the electrician or the fitter or the plumber or the cameraman, — that is the cherished expectation from an integral society in the service of common humanity. The imbalances of various kinds we witness today, such as affluence and poverty, the privileged and the underprivileged, advanced as against slow developing nations or societies, illnesses of the moneyed and the deprived, existence of superior educational facilities in some places or regions and their dearth or absence in other, availability or non-availability of natural resources, all these get further aggravated in making the division between the classes sharper. There are conflicts, external as well as internal. The treasured hope is society founded on integral spirituality will be able to attend to these aspects in a meaningful way. Add to that the deficient vocabulary we use for all situations. Many of our current terms, particularly nauseatingly misused or distorted *Hindutva* and caste system and religious rites and rituals, even morality and ethics, are historically laden with heavy ideological overtones and implications, which have no place and which must be replaced to give proper sense acceptable to the modern mind and soul. Amelioration of underprivileged is one small aspect, but the real thrust should be seen in the possibilities of the spirit's seeking expression in all our walks of life for which every occasion is an opportunity towards its fulfilment and realisation.

There is no doubt that the term '*Hindutva*' got terribly corrupted and it is better to avoid its use; it has slipped into the hands of politicians and is now dreadfully virus-ridden. Yes, we should coin another term or phrase to describe the true character of the ancient ideal that stands behind it. Could not that be the reason why Sri Aurobindo wrote whatever he had to write in English and not in Sanskrit or in any other Indian vernacular? Just imagine the kind of confusion we would have caused or created with the long historical associations of ideas and concepts entering into the connotations he has given to his terms! The whole metaphysics would have got thoroughly messed up in the hands of the traditionalists. In India, of the olden days, there was essentially a monolithic

system and people understood what it meant, and the underlying principles were taken for granted. Apart from the system, there were yogis and *tapasvins* and spiritual masters who all the while breathed into it the breath of life, spirit of the spirit; it was not a fossilised society or system. That was precisely the reason why it could not only survive the decadent times but also grow and progress in yet another richer manner. The tradition in India has been to create traditions in their positive sense.

But with the appearance of several religions and religious sects, several ethnic and civilisations coming into contact with each, hostilely clashing with each other, things have changed and today it is difficult to convey the sense of what is '*Hindutva*' to those who have fixed and superficial notions about it. In fact, that is true for all religions. Surely, today we do not want to impose the Vedic Yajna-ideal on others who have no faith in it, who have no experience that comes from it, have no perception of it — which would otherwise be as good as imposing democracy where the upbringing and the traditions are of a different kind. But where is absent that aspiring soul of man not cherishing spiritual transformation of life on earth? This is not the prerogative of the *Hindutva* alone. But let us speak in terms of Integral Spirituality itself.

The approach of Integral Spirituality in practice is universal, existing whenever and wherever there is the urge to find the truth, the seeker looking for answers in his deep quest. It could be the truth of knowledge, it could be the truth of aesthetic creation which is also beautiful, it could be the truth of perfection in all our work, it could be the truth of physical culture seeking the intuitive responses of the body itself, and so on. Today Hinduism itself is a temple in half-ruins, as Sri Aurobindo says, and it needs to be reconstructed by the realised architects and engineers of the spirit, by those who have experienced it and are living in it. Should that not happen? Our concern should be to see if we can participate in it, instead of putting our ideas based on traditional and circumscribed thought or feeling or action or science or religion or philosophy or theology or political ideology, or economics that comes from the Amartya Sens of our age. It is possible and we should do it. But let us use the term Integral Spirituality.

Vedic and Vedantic Knowledge

Vivekananda had put for himself the task of serving the poor; *daridri narayana* was his preferred god, *istadevata*. He established the Ramakrishna Order and served God the Poor, the Destitute. The Vedic ideal belonged to *Satya Yuga* and the *dharma*, the character, of the present Yuga, of the present Age of ours is of a different kind. There is also the *Dharma* of the Time, *Kala Dharma*, and the *Dharma* of the Place, *Sthana Dharma*, and the *Dharma* of

the Youth and the Household and the Withdrawn and the Renunciate. A distinction has to be made between what we call secular-social and intensely spiritual aspects, between the individual and the collective life in its double mode of existence. Ultimately of course it is the spirit which must enter into life in all its stages and all the while, as much as life open to the spirit in its greatnesses of expression. Most of our confusion arises because of mixing up of the two.

Vladimir who is a Vedic scholar at Savitri Bhavan, Auroville, puts it in a pleasingly acceptable manner:

“*Sanatana Dharma* is an establishment of the ancient Knowledge, which answers why we are here and what this Creation is about. The very characteristic of profound Vedic and Vedantic Knowledge is that it has to be lived and experienced inwardly in our daily life; and once it is lived and experienced it leads to the expression of enormous compassion and love towards all creatures, with deep understanding of their struggle towards the Truth and Perfection. Sincerity, humility, gratitude, tolerance, goodness, generosity, peace are the natural outcomes of such an experience and has nothing to do with aggressive political slogans made for some against the others. Hinduism conquers without battles, unnoticed, by its true values and qualities. It does not need a proclamation of its truthfulness, for then it can be questioned and must be proved, it needs to be true.”

Replace Hinduism by *Sanatan Dharma*, the Religion of the Eternal, lest it be misinterpreted in a sectarian manner.

In this connection let us contemplatively read the following from Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of scriptures as we have in his *Essays Divine and Human*:

What... are the standards of truth in the interpretation of the Scripture? The standards are three, the knower, knowledge and the known.

The known is the text itself that we seek to interpret. We must be sure we have the right word, not an emendation to suit the exigency of some individual or sectarian opinion; the right etymology and shade of meaning, not one that is traditional or forced to serve the ends of a commentator; the right spirit in the sense, not an imported or too narrow or too elastic spirit.

The knower is the original *drashta* or seer of the *mantra*, with whom we ought to be in spiritual contact. If knowledge is indeed a perishable thing in a perishable instrument, such contact is impossible; but in that case the Scripture itself must be false and not worth considering. If there is any truth

in what the Scripture says, knowledge is eternal and inherent in all of us and what another saw I can see, what another realised I can realise. The *drashta* was a soul in relation with the infinite Spirit, I am also a soul in relation with the infinite Spirit. We have a meeting-place, a possibility of communion.

Knowledge is the eternal truth, part of which the *drashta* expresses to us. Through the part he shows us, we must travel to the whole, otherwise we shall be subject to the errors incidental to an imperfect knowledge. If even the part is to be rightly understood, it must be viewed in the terms of the whole, not the whole in the terms of the part. I am not limited by the Scriptures; on the contrary I must exceed them in order to be master of their knowledge. It is true that we are usually the slaves of our individual and limited outlook, but our capacity is unlimited, and, if we can get rid of *ahankara*, if we can put ourselves at the service of the Infinite without any reservation of predilection or opinion, there is no reason why our realisation should be limited — *Tasmin vijñate sarvam vijñatam*. He being known, all can be known. To understand Scripture, it is not enough to be a scholar, one must be a soul. To know what the *drashta* saw one must oneself have *drishti*, sight, and be a student if not a master of the knowledge. *Atha para yaya tad aksharam adhigamyate*. Grammar, etymology, prosody, astronomy, metaphysics, logic, all that is good; but afterwards there is still needed the higher knowledge by which the Immutable is known. (pp.37-8)

A Democratic and Secular National Government

India's 1950 original Constitution proclaims and upholds the country as a sovereign democratic republic with additional stipulation of "secular" and "socialist" introduced in 1976. Perhaps more practical than fundamental considerations led to the amendments that have also given rise to debatable issues. Even as we come to the useful matter-of-fact realities of things, there are implications of a different kind. But if the actual management of the society and its physical life and resources is in the ignorant hands unsuitable for a spiritual work, then we face difficulties. At this uncertain moment of history everything seems to be governed by incompetence, it being insensitive and sedentary, with little possibility of acknowledging or promoting the ideal of Integral Spirituality, it entering into national thinking and action. The transformation motive is unknown to it. But it is the society which has to be alert about these matters and the concern of the government should be governance, it as a tool in the hands of people.

Therefore let us rather ask a question if a democratic and secular ideal can satisfy the spiritual requirement, it possibly becoming instrumental to achieve

the objective of a spiritualised society according to the criteria we have been proposing for it. The answer is obvious, that the way things stand it does not. Nor can it be the other way round, every individual of the society subscribing to the ideal of Integral Society; perhaps that 'every' might be a wrong expectation also. The gap is there, and one goes only by the *via media*. Only a practical way has to be found, practical way founded on the basics of things. More importantly, it is not that the entire humanity is waiting for the spiritual Dawn or the Vedic Usha, or the rise and flowering of the Spiritual Consciousness. That will be an erroneous belief. The Rig Veda's *here and now*, on this sacred Earth, (I.113.8.19) is a far cry and is meant only for those who are open to it, who have prepared themselves for it, are advanced on the path, have done qualifying *tapasya*. If this is so, then what happens to the rest of the people who are not aware of any *tapasya*? Yet that awakening has to come. But it is a long and painstaking work and only the few by their national *tapasya* can make them ready for it. In any case, it is unlikely to be realised in the present environmental umbrella of the Secular Democratic set-up which simply is politically or materialistically motivated. Rather one can argue that this system of governance is actively engaged in destroying the existing spiritually motivated not institutions but ideals. There are negative effects of the present formulations and one cannot ignore them.

We have to perforce think about an appropriate social comprehensive instrument to spring forth on the Earth, anywhere on its geography, and undertake the struggle on the material physical level as well. No doubt, it will be inspired and guided from the "propitious spot" though physically and geographically it might be situated in India, or else it could be anywhere in the world if that receptivity is present. If this is not going to work, then we will have to think of alternatives, they providing appropriate societal instruments in the fields of, for example, politics, economics, social organisations.

A practical choice has to be made on the strength of certain considerations such as ageless history and eternal principles of social organisation in its full operation. It can be well surmised that last several Yugas historically reported such a movement, that it existed long before, even prior to the times of the Gita, existed on this land having a propitious "spot" to support it. The question is, if it can be recovered and adapted to the present time, the eternal spirit re-expressing itself in the new *zeitgeist*.

An International Congress is scheduled to be held in Auroville during the early week of January 2010 with the theme of Spirituality beyond Religions exploring a new path to a universal cultural dialogue. The announcement says the following:

“There is an emergent trend worldwide to explore the integral momentum of spirituality. There is a growing awareness that although religious traditions continue to support ethical values, individuals need and are seeking a deeper personal understanding of the spiritual dimension. There is an urgent need to account for an experience of transcendence that is inherent in the universal human potential referred to as ‘spiritual’. The Enlightenment (*Aufklärung*) in the West, which founded the high ideal of political and social freedom for individuals in society, should now be combined with the perennial enlightenment as taught in the East to guarantee the spiritual freedom of the human being and promote the suitable evolutionary structures to support this.”

We await the outcome of deliberations with great interest, with the hope that it will be a move towards defining Integral Spirituality in terms of its immediate pragmatics.

We have been often reminded about the negative aspects of, say, *Hindutva* and religious dogmatism turning into fundamentalism, but the light that can show the way has not been found. As we shall proceed, we might have a brief look at the few major achievements pertaining to Integral Spirituality. The effort is to indicate its quality in acquiring, maintaining, nurturing and developing spiritual evolutionary knowledge to be carried into future living societies. This effort and its motivation cannot be belittled. It can as well claim that it has provided the first resources of spirituality to the entire world. Quite a gain indeed! Now it needs to be furthered.

Warren Hastings, the first colonial Governor-General of India, wrote of the *Bhagavadgita* as follows:

"These writings of the inhabitants of India will survive when the British Dominion in India have long ceased to exist, and when the sources which at once yielded of wealth and power are lost to remembrance."

It shall do much more than can be imagined.

(Reproduced with thanks and acknowledgement to the author from his own website *Mirror of Tomorrow* which is no longer existent)

Sri Aurobindo and the Indian National Movement

R K Das Gupta

In a poem written in August 1907 Rabindranath addressed Sri Aurobindo in these memorable words:

অরবিন্দ, রবীন্দ্রের লহ নমস্কার

(Aurobindo, accept the salutation of Rabindranath)

About twenty-one years later the poet visited Sri Aurobindo at Pondicherry on 16 February 1928 and he was so profoundly impressed by this meeting with the great sage that he recorded that impression in an article published in the *Modern Review*. 'I felt' the poet said in that article 'that the utterance of the ancient Hindu Rishi spoke from him of that equanimity which gives human soul its freedom of entrance into the ALL. I said to him, you have the Word and we are waiting to accept it from you. India will speak through your voice to the world, "Hearken to me". Years ago I saw Aurobindo in the atmosphere of his earlier heroic youth, and I sang to him, "Aurobindo, accept the salutation of Rabindranath". Today, I saw him in a deeper atmosphere of reticent richness of wisdom and again said to him in silence, "Aurobindo, accept the salutation of Rabindranath". These words of Rabindranath have tremendous significance for any serious study of the role of Sri Aurobindo in the Indian National Movement. Rabindranath does not make any difference between the Aurobindo of 1907 when he was in the vanguard of the Indian Revolutionary Movement and the Aurobindo of 1928 when he had become a Rishi through whom India was to speak to the world. In both the poet found one who was to him *Svadesh atmar vanimurti*, the speaker of India's Word to the Indian people and to the rest of the world. Those of us who look upon the life of Sri Aurobindo the sage as an instance of a kind of spiritual truancy from the proper duties of a nationalist and a revolutionary suffer from a gross misconception of his idea of nationalism and

revolution. The misconception is largely due to our habit of looking upon revolution from an absolutely European point of view. As the most spirited exponent of Swadeshi during the Nationalist Movement of 1905 Sri Aurobindo propounded a view of that movement itself offering to his countrymen in the process a new view of revolution which was fundamentally different from the western view of it as presented in western history and political thought. It was one of the convictions of Swami Vivekananda that politics was foreign to the genius of the Indian people and Indian civilisation. Sri Aurobindo too had the same view and one of his outstanding achievements as a political thinker is that he completely de-Europeanised his view of revolution as an instrument of political salvation. Karl Jaspers, the distinguished German existentialist, says about Mahatma Gandhi that his unique achievement as the leader of a movement for political freedom is that he raised that movement above politics. Mahatma Gandhi de-politicalised his political work on the moral plane and Sri Aurobindo expressed his profound appreciation of it when in a message after the Mahatma's martyrdom he said that 'the Light that led us to freedom still burns and will burn on till it conquers.' But Sri Aurobindo de-politicalised politics on the spiritual plane and with finer spiritual insights than Gandhi's and with his superb dialectical skill he built up a philosophy of revolution the essence of which we must first try to seize before we proceed to consider his contribution to the Indian National Movement. I say this because I have found serious historians of our national movement pathetically misjudging Sri Aurobindo's role in it. A glaring instance of such misjudgment is to be found in the second volume of Professor R. C. Majumdar's *History of the Freedom Movement in India* (1963). I have boundless respect for the late Professor Majumdar as an historian. But I think his summing up of Sri Aurobindo as a revolutionary is a gross error of judgment. 'Aurobindo, with all the great qualities of head and heart' Professor Majumdar says 'lacked the capacity of a great political leader.' The question of Sri Aurobindo lacking the capacity of a great political leader does not arise when he never meant to be a great political leader. Sri Aurobindo never assumed the leadership of the Indian Movement and never promised to bring Swaraj within a specific period. And it is indeed very strange that in support of his view of Sri Aurobindo, Professor Majumdar quotes a remark of Ramsay MacDonald who was really incapable of understanding Sri Aurobindo. In an article published in the *Modern Review* Ramsay MacDonald said about Sri Aurobindo that he 'was far more of a mystic than a politician. He saw India seated on a temple throne. But how it was to arise, what the next step was to be, what the morrow of independence was to bring — to these things he had given little thought'. To say that Sri Aurobindo was more of a mystic than a politician is indeed as absurd as to say that St.

Francis was more of a mystic than a poet. Mysticism was the essence of Sri Aurobindo's politics as it was the essence of St. Francis's poetry. And to a western politician any politics that is not Machiavellian would appear mystical in the vulgar sense of the term. And to say that Sri Aurobindo never gave his mind to how India was to arise and what the morrow of independence was to bring shows complete ignorance of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of nationalism and of revolution. Sri Aurobindo thought more profoundly and more clearly on how his country was to be regenerated and what political freedom would give her than any other Indian political thinker. He gave his country not only a philosophy of nationalism but also a precise programme of action for national salvation. If we approach that philosophy and that programme in terms of what we know of the French Revolution we fail to seize the essence of both. As a gifted student of classics at Cambridge Sri Aurobindo was acquainted with the ideals of Athenian democracy and of Roman republicanism. And as a student in England in the early nineties he obviously learnt a good deal about the British attitude to movement for Home Rule. When he matriculated from St. Paul's in December 1889 the Irish question had split the Liberal Party. What G. M. Trevelyan called the 'new creed of Empire' made even a Liberal Briton feel uneasy about Gladstone's compact with Parnell on the Irish Home Rule Issue. The year Sri Aurobindo entered Trinity College Cambridge, 1890, was the year of Parnell's fall and when he passed the first part of the Classical Tripos in 1892 Gladstone's Liberal Party came to power raising new hopes in the Irish breast. And it is important to remember that when Sri Aurobindo was contributing his series of articles *New Lamps for Old* to *Indu Prakash* in July and August 1894 Gladstone had already thrice failed to fulfil his promise of Home Rule to the Irish although his Liberal Party was still retaining its sway at Westminster. Obviously it was the British ruling classes' imperial indifference to the Irish demand for independence and the Irish determination to win that independence which prompted Sri Aurobindo to reject the politics of petition and wordy protest. In article 4 of *New Lamps for Old* he said obviously with liberal politicians like Pherozshah Mehta in his mind, that the 'men who preferred action to long speeches and appealed, ... not to the British sense of justice but to their own sense of manhood, are not at all the sort of people we have either the will or the power to imitate.' Parnell was to him an example of uncompromising nationalism and when later he repudiated the Moderates in Indian politics in his articles published in *Bande Mataram* he presented Parnell as an ideal revolutionary. 'If Srijiut Surendranath wishes to have the country solid behind him' he wrote in an article published in *Bande Mataram* on 12 December 1907 'he must be a Parnell first and not shrink from a Parnellite policy and ideals.' When Parnell died on 6

October 1891 he said about him in a poem of six lines that he was 'Most feared, most hated, hated because feared.' We can presume that when he spoke in the Indian Majlis at Cambridge in 1891 and 1892 he called the Indian Moderates friends of the British and pointed to the Irish leader as a much feared and much hated champion of freedom.

Sri Aurobindo's early political writings show his profound knowledge of the great political movements of the west and his no less profound respect for their leaders. And yet when he contemplated an Indian Revolution and an Indian Nationalism he did not look to the west either for ideas or for inspiration. For one thing Sri Aurobindo never contemplated nationalism as the highest of ideals. And this gave his concept of nationalism its unique features. In his article entitled '*The New Ideal*' published in *Bande Mataram* on 7 April 1908 he wrote that this 'ideal is that of humanity in God, of God in humanity, the ancient ideal of the *sanatana dharma* but applied, as it has never been applied before, to the problem of politics and the work of national revival. To realise that ideal, to impart it to the world is the mission of India.' So even as early as 1908, that is, in the midst of the Swadeshi Movement, Sri Aurobindo claimed a uniqueness about the nationalist ideal as he conceived it. It was a great deal more than the spirit which would only bring freedom although freedom was essential for the highest fulfilment of a nation's aspirations. And if this new ideal of nationalism was to foster a spirit of revolution that revolution must also be different from the great revolutions known to history. And Sri Aurobindo affirms it in the same article. 'No lesser ideal' he says 'will help her (India) through the stress of the terrible ordeal which she will in a few years be called to face. No hope less pure will save her from the demoralisation which follows revolutionary strife, the growth of passions, a violent selfishness, sanguinary hatred, insufferable licences, the disruption of moralities, the resurgence of the tiger in man which a great revolution is apt to foster.' So the new ideal of nationalism gives him his new ideal of revolution. Even in *New Lamps for Old* (article 7) written about fifteen years earlier he had said that 'On us as the self-elected envoys of a new evangel there rests a heavy responsibility, assumed by our own will, but which once assumed we can no longer repudiate or discard; a responsibility which promises us immortal credit if performed with sincerity and wisdom, but saddled with ignominy to ourselves and disaster to our country, if we discharge it in another spirit and another manner.' So the mystic in Sri Aurobindo the nationalist and revolutionary is as old as the time when he first proclaimed his ideal in the early nineties. He did not assume a form of mysticism when he renounced active politics to pursue the same ideal as a yogi in recluse. He set himself a nationalist and revolutionary ideal which was unique in the history of nationalism and of

revolution because he wanted both to yield a result which too was to be something unique in human history. He did not leave the battlefield in despair. He only removed the standard of his battle to a new frontier from where he could fight it with surer weapons and with greater assurance of the only victory he valued.

This ideal of nationalism which he first conceived as a religion became, after the great revelation he experienced in the Alipore Jail identical with the *Sanatan Dharma*. And he communicated the message of that revelation to his countrymen in his historic *Uttarpara Speech* delivered on 30 May 1910. 'I spoke once before', he said in this address, 'with this force in me and I said then that this movement is not a political movement and that nationalism is not politics but a religion, a creed, a faith. I say it again today, but I put it in another way. I say no longer that nationalism is a creed, a religion, a faith; I say that it is the *Sanatan Dharma* which for us is nationalism.' Sri Aurobindo's life as a sage is only a new manifestation of his life as a patriot, a nationalist and a revolutionary.

It is, however, important for us to realise that while he was working on the political scene, that is, during the first five years of the Swadeshi Movement, he had not only a philosophy of nationalism and revolution, he had a programme of political action rooted in that philosophy. That programme not only defined goals, it spelt out the steps by which those goals were to be reached indicating in the process possible alternative courses of action to be pursued in varying situations. Sri Aurobindo presented to the nation a definite plan of action which is remarkable for its precision and thoroughness and what is particularly striking about it is that the depth of its philosophical foundation is matched by the soundness of the strategies of action it lays down in clearest terms. This plan is presented in a series of seven articles published under the general title of *New Thought* in the daily *Bande Mataram* between 11-23 April 1907 and issued as a book called *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance* (1948) which included an article entitled '*The Morality of Boycott*' not published in *Bande Mataram* but produced as an exhibit in the Alipore Conspiracy Case. The whole material is now available in the first volume of the 30-volume centenary edition of Sri Aurobindo's Works.

Sri Aurobindo first wanted to create in his country a new moral climate before presenting to it a new philosophy of nationalism and a new programme which was to fulfil that nationalism. Soon after returning home after his education in England on 6 February 1893, he discovered that nationalism was then nothing more than making petitions to the British Government for a larger measure of Indian participation in the Indian administration. The Indian National Congress was then eight years old but it had not by then created any new spirit amongst the Indian people, it had not generated new sensibilities and new sentiments, any new awareness of our great past or new hope for a great future. Politics

was then but an exercise in English composition and English eloquence wherewith to convince our English masters of our fitness for positions of responsibility in the colonial government. He urged a new realisation as essential for national regeneration and we have no doubt he urged it in the speeches that he made in the Indian Majlis during his days at Cambridge, that is, between October 1890 and May 1892. We have no record of those speeches. But there is a statement in some manuscript notes dated 1890 and 1892 and included in the first volume of the Centenary edition of his Works which have great significance for a student of Sri Aurobindo's career as a nationalist and revolutionary. 'The patriot' he says in one of these brief notes 'who offers advice to a great nation in an era of change and turmoil, should be very confident that he has something worth saying before he ventures to speak; but if he can really put some new aspect on a momentous question or emphasise any side of it that has not been clearly understood, it is his bounden duty, however obscure he may be, to ventilate it.' The first thing to be noticed in this brief but exceedingly significant statement is that the patriot was now called upon to speak to a great nation and he would speak to a great nation when he had realised that greatness. Secondly, he was speaking to a great nation in a period of change and turmoil. It was therefore very important for him to see that the essential greatness of the national civilisation was not blurred by the issues and questions produced by a passing phase in the history of that civilisation. We may not realise the tremendous significance of this apparently plain statement at a time when politics has become a grossly partisan affair too often lapsing into still more grossly personal issues. Thirdly, the patriot must not just repeat some political clichés but go deep into the problems of an ancient people, inheritors of a great civilisation by some dire fate enmeshed in colonial rule. And he realised that he had something new to say, he was morally obliged to speak out. Sri Aurobindo went through this exercise of deeply contemplating the destiny of a great nation and he spoke out only when he was confident that he had something new to say and realised that he must say it. This gives Sri Aurobindo's political utterances even before he became a sage and a recluse the value of an inspired message.

Sri Aurobindo's first public political statement after his return to India is an article entitled '*India and the British Parliament*' published in *Indu Prakash* on 26 June 1893. But the new spirit he wanted to create in India he created through nine articles published under the general title *New Lamps for Old* in *Indu Prakash*, an English-Marathi weekly of Bombay between 7 August 1893 and 5 March 1894. The articles which are included in the first volume of Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library offer a new light to replace the flickering political lamp then producing but an uncertain flame. Sri Aurobindo wanted to

extinguish that old lamp which he thought was only making darkness visible and summon his countrymen to a new path illumined by a new lamp. *New Lamps for Old* is a repudiation of the entire policy of the Indian National Congress as a policy of prayer, petition and protest which he thought would never bring the country her freedom. The very first sentence of the first article in the series gives the essence of the entire series — 'If the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into a ditch?' It is a quotation from the Gospel according to St. Luke (Chapter 6 verse 39) where Jesus asks 'Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?' Sri Aurobindo does not attack the politicians in the language in which politicians attack each other today. But he is nevertheless firm in his denunciation of the Moderates who were then ruling our Congress. In article no. 7 Sri Aurobindo censures 'the Congress as a body not popular and not honestly desirous of a popular character — in fact as a middle-class organ selfish and disingenuous in its public action and hollow in its professions of a large and disinterested patriotism.'

In the seven articles on Bankim Chandra Chatterji published in *Indu Prakash* between 1,6 July and 27 August 1894 Sri Aurobindo repeats his accusations against the Congress but also raises a new hope about his country's future. Writing on Bankim Chandra soon after his death on 8 April 1894 Sri Aurobindo naturally concentrated on the situation in Bengal where he noticed the stirrings of a new life and a new ideal. In article no. 7 in this series entitled '*Our hope in the Future*' he says that 'the Congress in Bengal is dying of consumption' but adds that 'the desire for a nobler and inspiring patriotism is growing more intense'. Anticipating Gokhale's compliment to Bengal he said that 'what Bengal thinks tomorrow, India will be thinking tomorrow week.' 'This new spirit in Bengal' Sri Aurobindo says in this article 'is largely due to the awakening and stimulating influence of Bankim on the national mind.'

It was in 1900 that Sri Aurobindo turned to revolutionary politics and as a first step towards the work of organisation and propaganda sent Jatindranath Banerji to Bengal for a survey of the field. In the following year he used the period of his vacation and leave for revolutionary work in Bengal. Soon he established contacts with some secret societies in western India and in December met Lokmanya Tilak, then emerging on the Indian political scene as an extremist, at the Ahmedabad session of the Indian National Congress. It appears that Sri Aurobindo began working, slowly but steadily, on some revolutionary programme in 1902, an important year preceding the commencement of the Swadeshi Movement in 1905. In March that year was founded the *Anushilan Samiti*. In June was held in Calcutta the first Shivaji Festival. Dawn Society was founded in July and Sarala Devi's *Virashtami* Festival was celebrated in October. In

1903 political Bengal came to know about the British proposal for the partition of the province. Fraser's Note proposing transfer of Chittagong, Dacca and Mymensing to Assam was dated 28 March 1903. Curzon's Minute on Territorial Redistribution was signed on 1 June. On 3 December was published Risley's letter summing up the provisions of the Viceroy's Minute. And in the same month began protest meetings against the proposed Partition of the province. In his '*My Reminiscences of Pre-Independence Days*', one of his unpublished papers discovered by Chinmohan Sehanabish and recently published in *Socialist Perspective* (vol.viii, no.4, March 1981) Bhupendranath Datta says that 'about 1903 Aurobindo Ghose came to Calcutta and the nucleus of the revolutionary movement was started with Pramathanath Mitra, Bar-at-law as the President, Messrs Aurobindo Ghose and Chittaranjan Das as Vice-Presidents, Surendranath Tagore, the nephew of the poet Tagore as the Treasurer and Sister Nivedita as one of the five members that formed the Revolutionary Council of Bengal.' Probably this visit of Sri Aurobindo to Calcutta took place soon after 22 February on which date he took a month's leave of absence from Baroda College. On the whole Bhupendranath Datta's account of Sri Aurobindo's active role in the organisation of the revolutionary body in Bengal is exact in purport and in some cases even in its details. In *Sri Aurobindo on Himself* included in volume 26 of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library Sri Aurobindo says that "after I had started my revolutionary work in Bengal through certain emissaries, I went there personally to see and arrange things myself. I found a number of small groups of revolutionaries that had recently sprung into existence but all scattered and acting without reference to each other. I tried to unite them under a single organisation with the barrister P. Mitra as the leader of the revolution in Bengal and a central council of five persons, one of them being Nivedita.'

It is, however, important for us to see that this represents the first phase of Sri Aurobindo's political activities. Sri Aurobindo divides his political career till 1910 into three periods representing three principles and programmes of political action. In *Sri Aurobindo on Himself* he says that 'There were three sides to Sri Aurobindo's political ideas and activities. First, there was the action with which he started, a secret revolutionary propaganda and organisation the central object of which was the preparation of an armed insurrection.' Obviously this phase is represented in the events which led to the formation of the revolutionary council in Bengal. But he soon realised that this revolutionary ideal was not influencing the large masses of the Indian people and was not therefore gathering strength as a national revolution. So in the second stage of his political career he urged as he says in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself* 'a public propaganda intended to convert the whole nation to the ideal of independence'. But when he actually

entered politics and this he did when he wrote the pamphlets '*No Compromise*' and '*Bhawani Mandir*' during the public agitations that preceded the Partition of Bengal on 16 October 1905, he discovered that political action could not wait till the whole of India was converted into the new gospel of revolution. This brought Sri Aurobindo to the third phase of his political activity when he contemplated as he says in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself* 'an organisation of the people to carry on a public and united opposition and undermining of the foreign rule through an increasing non-co-operation and passive resistance.' Sri Aurobindo developed his philosophy and programme of a Swadeshi Movement from this idea of non-co-operation and resistance. So what is mentioned in our political history as the Extremist or the Nationalist ideal emerged out of Sri Aurobindo's ideas as he made them public in the few months preceding the Partition,

His one aim on the eve of the Swadeshi Movement was to convince his countrymen that the Congress policy of making wordy petitions to the British Government would never bring them their freedom. In an incomplete article entitled '*Unity*' found amongst his early manuscripts probably belonging to a period before the commencement of the *Swadeshi* Movement and included in volume 1 of Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library Sri Aurobindo attacks the Congress as a body which 'should meet once a year and deceive the country with an appearance of life; that there should be posts for the children of the soil with enough salary to keep a few from starving, that a soulless education should suck the vigour and sweetness of body and heart and brain of our children while flattering them with the vain lie that they are educated and enlightened;'

We must now ask ourselves one important question — did Sri Aurobindo believe in violent revolution as an instrument of national liberation? Here we must try to achieve a measure of conceptual clarity when we use words like violence, terrorism and revolution. A revolution may be conducted as a determined passive resistance without the use of violence; but for this reason a revolutionary is not expected to abjure violence for all time and under any circumstance. Secondly, a believer in violence as a necessary feature of a revolution may not welcome terrorist activities; but for this reason he is not expected to condemn terrorism as a vile political act. In some of his articles published in *Karmayogin* which Sri Aurobindo founded on 15 June 1909, that is, after his release from jail that year, he says a good deal about terrorism which shows he never involved himself in terrorist activities, not even in the first phase of his political career when he contemplated an armed insurrection against the British Government. Writing in the *Karmayogin* of 24 July 1909 Sri Aurobindo says that 'The delusion under which the Government labours that

the Terrorist activities have a great organisation at their back, is the source of its most fatal mistakes.' And Sri Aurobindo warned the Government that it was its repressive policy which was provoking terrorism. In another article in the *Karmayogin* of 29 January 1910 Sri Aurobindo even mentions terrorism as a kind of political violence for which the oppressive policy of the Government was responsible. That Government he said equated nationalism with terrorism and turned against anyone expressing his nationalist aspirations. 'Nor will the Government', he says in this article, '... allow us to use what we believe to be the only effective means of combating the spread of the virus among the people.' He adds that 'Terrorism will vanish from the country and the nightmare would be as if it never had been' 'when the peaceful expression and organisation of our national aspiration will no longer be penalised.' It is then obvious that while Sri Aurobindo did believe in violence as a means of revolution he did not believe in sporadic terrorist violence although he never condemned such acts of terrorism because he thought that they were a natural consequence of the Government's repressive policy.

On the question of violence Sri Aurobindo makes his position very clear in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself*. He says in one of his notes included in this work that if he 'had not believed in the efficacy of violent revolution or had disliked it, he would not have joined the secret society whose purpose was to prepare a national insurrection.... In his public activity he took up non-co-operation and passive resistance as means in the struggle for independence but not the sole means and as long as he was in Bengal he supported secret revolutionary activity as a preparation for open revolt, in case passive resistance proved insufficient for the purpose.' What he says on this very important issue in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself* is consistent with the ideas he presents in the seven articles we now mention *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance* and which were first published in *Bande Mataram* between 11 and 23 April 1907. This is the most important document of Sri Aurobindo's political thought in the years between 1905 and 1910. I think we have misunderstood the ideas presented in this work because we are inclined to identify Sri Aurobindo's doctrine of passive resistance with the passive resistance we associate with the Gandhian movement. Sri Aurobindo contemplated passive resistance as a means of unarmed insurgency against the Government independent of the Passive Resistance Movement which Mahatma Gandhi initiated at Johannesburg on 11 September 1906 in protest against the Act which required all Indians in Transvaal to get themselves registered with finger-prints on pain of severe penalties. Obviously Mahatma Gandhi's ideas on Passive Resistance were not elaborated in writing so as to reach Sri Aurobindo when he wrote on the subject barely seven months after

the mass meeting held at Johannesburg. There is therefore no reference to Mahatma Gandhi's Passive Resistance Movement in the seven articles called *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance*. Nor does Sri Aurobindo mention in these articles Henry David Thoreau's imprisonment for refusing to pay tax to a government waging war in Mexico or to his essay Civil Disobedience which appeared in 1847. We must, however, remember that when Sri Aurobindo came to know the details of the Passive Resistance movement in South Africa a few years later he wrote about it with great enthusiasm in his *Karmayogin*. Commenting on H. S. L. Polak's remarks that the 'Indian nation was being built in South Africa' Sri Aurobindo wrote in the *Karmayogin* of 11 December 1909 that this was true 'in this sense that the supreme example of the moral and spiritual strength which must be behind the formation of a new nation has been shown first not in India but in South Africa.'

But the seven articles constituting *The Doctrine of Passive Resistance* are not just an elaboration of the idea of Passive Resistance. They contain Sri Aurobindo's whole idea of Swadeshi which is a great deal more than boycott of British goods. If boycott is the central message of these seven articles that term comprehends things more fundamental than a vow of not buying British manufactures. For Sri Aurobindo boycott meant rejection of the entire apparatus of foreign rule, the three arms of its administration, the legislature, the executive and the judiciary, of the entire system of public instruction. This meant assertion of independence even when it was not granted by the occupying power and installation of a machinery for self-government. In the first article of the series Sri Aurobindo actually suggests a parallel *swadeshi* Government following a total boycott of a foreign government. '...we have to establish a popular authority' he says 'which will exist side by side and in rivalry with a despotic foreign bureaucracy — no ordinary rough-riding despotism but quiet, pervasive and subtle — one that has fastened its grip on every detail of our national life and will not easily be persuaded to let go even in the least degree, its octopus-like hold.' And Sri Aurobindo told his people that to do this 'it requires also an iron endurance, tenacity, doggedness far above anything that is needed for the more usual military revolt or sanguinary revolution'. This was the new policy of what was then called the New Party or the Nationalist Party. But when he urged passive resistance he did not reject violent resistance as immoral. He urged passive resistance because it would be a more suitable weapon at the moment than violent revolution. In the third article of the series Sri Aurobindo affirms that 'The present circumstances in India seem to point to passive resistance as our most natural and suitable weapon'. But he does not forget to add that 'To shrink from bloodshed and violence under such circumstances is a weakness

deserving as severe a rebuke as Sri Krishna addressed to Arjuna when he shrank from the colossal civil slaughter on the field of Kurukshetra'. He further adds that in 'Russia the denial of liberty is enforced by legalised murder and outrage, or, as in Ireland formerly, by brutal coercion.' In both cases 'the answer of violence to violence is justified and inevitable.' Sri Aurobindo contemplated a non-violent passive resistance because he did not desire that 'a daring minority purchase with their blood the freedom of the millions'. For passive resistance he said 'it is necessary that all should share in the struggle and the privation'. Sri Aurobindo presents a grand scheme of practical Swadeshi in the fourth article where he spells out the major aspects of the movement in clearest terms. 'If we refuse to supply our needs from foreign sources' he says, 'we must obviously supply them ourselves; we cannot have the industrial boycott without Swadeshi and the expansion of indigenous industries. If we decline to enter the alien courts of justice, we must have arbitration courts of our own to settle our disputes and differences. If we do not send our boys to schools owned or controlled by the Government, we must have schools of our own in which they may receive a thorough and national education. If we do not go for protection to the executive, we must have a system of self-protection and mutual protection of our own. Just as Swadeshi is the natural accompaniment of an industrial boycott, so also arbitration stands in the same relation to a judicial boycott, national education to an educational boycott, a league of mutual defence to an executive boycott'. Sri Aurobindo calls this boycott a war in an article entitled '*The Morality of Boycott*' which was not published in *Bande Mataram* but was produced as an exhibit in the Alipore Conspiracy Case in May 1908.

In his many articles published in *Bande Mataram*, a paper founded by Bepin Chandra Pal on 5 August 1906 Sri Aurobindo wrote on this ideal of total *Swadeshi*, his first one appearing on 20 August 1906 and the last on 1 May 1908. Some of these articles were reprinted in the weekly *Bande Mataram* which was founded in June 1907 and ceased publication in September 1908. The daily *Bande Mataram* survived Sri Aurobindo's arrest on 2 May 1908 only by six months. These articles have now become the *locus classicus* of the political literature of our Swadeshi Movement. The intensity of passion they express is matched by their force of logic and while they sometimes have the prophetic fire of a Jeremiah they have at other times the tenderness of a Bengali song. While in some you have the merciless banter such as one would expect from the pen of a Swift some of them have delicate lyricism such as one expects from a mystic. In the use of imagery and metaphor, of anecdotes from our legends, in their allusion to history, philosophy and literature they are masterpieces of political writing in the English language revealing the deepest aspirations of

the Indian mind.

Sri Aurobindo spent a little over four months in Bengal in 1906, the second year of the Swadeshi Movement during which period he took an active part in the formation of the National Council of Education, wrote some articles for *Yugantar*, a Bengali weekly founded by his brother in March 1906, attended the historic Barisal Conference held on 14 April and made a political tour of East Bengal in the company of Bepin Chandra Pal. In June that year he took a year's leave from Baroda College to be able to concentrate on his revolutionary work in Bengal and he soon went deep into it as chief contributor to the *Bande Mataram* and of the Nationalist Party in Bengal while attending the Calcutta on 14 August. At about this time he assumed full control of the policy of *Bande Mataram* and of the Nationalist Party in Bengal. While attending the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress held in December, he was happy that at last it was established, as he said, that 'henceforth leaders can only deserve reverence by acting in the spirit of the chief servants of their country'. What he says about the whole question of leadership in his article on the Calcutta session of the Congress published in the *Bande Mataram* of 31 December 1906 may have a salutary effect on the political leaders of these latter days. 'The charge of rowdyism' he says 'merely means that the Congress, instead of a dead unanimity and mechanical cheers, has this time shown lively signs of real interest and real feeling. It is ridiculous to contend that in a national assembly the members should confine themselves to signs of approval only and conceal their disapproval'. He summed up this idea of democracy in leadership in his article published in the *Bande Mataram* of 10 April 1907 where he said: 'Let there be only one dictator — the People.'

1907 is a crucial year in the political life of Sri Aurobindo during the Swadeshi Movement. In April he presented to the nation his *Doctrine of the Passive Resistance*. On 30 July the police searched the *Bande Mataram* office and lodged a complaint against Sri Aurobindo. Anticipating that he would soon be put into prison he resigned his principalship of the Bengal National College on 2 August and on 16 August he was arrested on a charge of sedition and was released on bail. He was acquitted in September when he rejoined the Bengal National College as a professor. Early in December he attended the Bengal Provincial Congress at Midnapore as leader of the Nationalist Party and presided over a meeting of the Nationalists held there after the Conference. He delivered his first public address on 14 December at a meeting held at College Square. But his most significant work during this year was what he did at the Surat Congress. On the two days preceding the annual session of the Congress which commenced on 26 December he presided over two conferences of the

Nationalist delegates from Bengal and prepared them for a show-down with the Moderates at the Congress session. On 27 December, that is, the second day of the Congress Sri Aurobindo led the Nationalists who broke the Congress. On 28 December he presided over meeting of all the Nationalist delegates who had come for the Surat Congress. In *Sri Aurobindo on Himself* he says that 'very few people know that it was I who gave the order that led to the breaking of the Congress and was responsible for the refusal to join the new-fangled Moderate Convention which were the two decisive happenings at Surat. Even my action in giving the movement in Bengal its militant turn or founding the revolutionary movement is very little known.' But Sri Aurobindo did not want the Congress to be liquidated. At a public meeting held in Calcutta on 10 April 1908 he said that the Surat Congress broke up for certain definite issues which were 'irregularities in the election of the President, the attempt from certain quarters to take advantage of the local majority to recede from the four Calcutta resolutions and the attempt to impose a creed by the help of a local majority with a view to exclude a large and growing party'. He added that the Nationalists would condone all these irregularities 'if a united Congress is to be held on the basis of the Calcutta resolutions. If the other party does not accept, the responsibility of the breaking up of the Congress and having a party institution in its place will be on their shoulders. Our position is, let us work on our different party lines through our own institutions, but at the same time let us have the united Congress of the whole people'. Sri Aurobindo wanted a united Congress to be the organisation of a united people which must make a united assault on foreign rule. He could envisage such unity in a national organisation that would make room for differences of opinion.

In the midst of such intense political activity Sri Aurobindo met in January 1908 Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, a Maharashtrian yogi and received training from him in yoga which gave him an experience of complete mental silence. While he continued to write political articles for *Bande Mataram* and to give public addresses he now developed some spiritual urge and this urge gave a new dimension to his political ideas. He would still speak of ideologies and programmes and at the same time look to something higher than politics, something that would give politics its spiritual quality. In his article entitled '*The Soul of India's Mission*' published in the *Bande Mataram* of 21 February 1908, that is, about ten weeks before his arrest he wrote that 'with India rests the future of the world. Whenever she is aroused from her sleep she gives forth some wonderful shining ray of light to the world which is enough to illuminate the nations'. What is still more striking is that in an article published in the same paper the following day he says that 'That man only is likely to dominate the chances of a Revolution,

who makes no plans but preserves his heart pure for the will of God to declare itself. The great rule of life is to have no schemes but one unalterable purpose. If the will is fixed on the purpose it sets itself to accomplish, then circumstances will suggest the right course; but the schemer always finds himself tripped up by the unexpected'. And it seems to be still more striking, let me call it amazing, that the last article he wrote for *Bande Mataram*, and it was published on 1 May 1908, that is, just a day before his arrest he said that 'the function of India is to restore the youth of mankind and assure it of immortality.' It is as if he had some premonition of the great change that would come in his life which would take him away from the political scene and make him a recluse searching for the lost soul of India and discovering it for his country and for the world. In an article entitled '*The New Nationalism*' which was not published in *Bande Mataram*, it may be it was the very last piece he wrote for the paper, but produced in the Alipore Conspiracy Case and was published thirty years later in the *Hindusthan Standard* on 14 August 1938, he defends nationalism on spiritual grounds and says that 'if he has sometimes to disregard the law of man, it is to obey the dictates of his conscience and the law of God.' Sri Aurobindo was soon to obey the law of God when he received his command from Heaven to eschew the path of politics to render to his country and to the world the great service which was the mission of his divinely ordained life.

Sri Aurobindo was arrested on 2 May 1908 on a charge of involvement in the terrorist activities of a group led by his brother Barindra and was put into the lock-up at Lal Bazar. As an undertrial prisoner at Alipore Jail where he was removed on 5 May he spent his time reading the *Bhagavadgita* and the *Upanishads* and practising yoga through which he realised the Cosmic Consciousness. The trial began in the Magistrate's court on 19 May and on 19 August he was committed to the court of sessions where trial commenced on 19 October. He was acquitted and released unconditionally on 6 May 1909. What happened to him in Alipore Jail he describes in memorable words in his famous *Uttarpara Speech* which he delivered on 30 May 1909 and in his Bengali work *Karakahini* first serialised in the Bengali monthly *Suprabhat* in 1909 and 1910 and later published as a book in 1920. In jail Sri Aurobindo had his revelation in which God told him that 'in all your actions you are moving forward without knowing which way you move'.

But Sri Aurobindo did not at once give up his political activity after this revelation. During the second half of 1909 he gave several public addresses particularly in East Bengal. In September he led the Nationalists at the Bengal Provincial Congress held at Hooghly and later attended a political conference at Sylhet. He founded the *Karmayogin*, an English weekly review, on 19 June,

associated himself with the Bengali weekly *Dharma* the first issue of which appeared on 23 August. In July he addressed an open letter to his countrymen suggesting a six-fold policy for the Nationalist party (1) passive resistance and self-help (2) non-co-operation with Government till the people get control of the Government (3) reconstitution of a united Congress (4) intensification of the Boycott Movement, both political and economic (5) organisation of the Provinces (6) a system of co-operation to achieve self-reliance and national efficiency. This letter was published in the *Karmayogin* of 31 July 1909.

In 1909 the British Parliament passed the Indian Councils Act after three years of consultations between Lord Minto the Viceroy and Viscount Morley the Secretary of State. Sri Aurobindo gave his view of the Morley-Minto Reforms in an article in the *Karmayogin* of 20 November 1909. 'The great measure' he said 'which is to carry down the name of Lord Morley to distant ages, — so at least all the Anglo-Indian papers and not a few of the Moderates tell us, — is now before us in all its details. The mountains have again been in labour, and the mouse they have produced this time is enormous in size and worthy of the august mountains that produced them, but not the less ridiculous for all that'.

We can now ask ourselves a plain question — what was in Sri Aurobindo's mind before he had his command from God asking him to go to Chandernagore? His last surviving statement on the national question made in 1909 is an open letter to his countrymen published in the *Karmayogin* of 25 December that year. That letter is a call to the Nationalists 'to establish a Nationalist Council and hold a meeting of the body in March or April of the next year'. In January 1910 he was still reflecting on the problems of boycott about which he says in the *Karmayogin* of 8 January that 'it is an ideal, like freedom'. But a change came upon him in February, the month he left for Chandernagore. In an article entitled '*The Necessity of the Situation*' published in the *Karmayogin* of 5 February 1910 Sri Aurobindo asks for suspension of nationalist activity because of the very complex political situation prevailing in the country. 'A triangular contest' he wrote in this article 'between violent revolution, peaceful Nationalist endeavour and bureaucratic reaction is an impossible position and would make chaos more chaotic ... Let us therefore stand aside, sure that Time will work for us in the future as it has done in the past ...' Sri Aurobindo's last political article published in the *Karmayogin* before his departure for Pondicherry on 1 April 1910 appeared in its issue of 26 March 1910. Here he speaks of the weakness of the movement and of the need for greater realisation. '... we have weaknesses' he says in this article 'that are still rampant and uncorrected in our midst.... If the intellectual equipment is deficient, the spiritual equipment is also far from perfect. Our leaders and our followers both require a deeper

Sadhana...' 'It is the Yogin who must stand behind the political leader or manifest within him', he adds. At the end of the article he says 'In all the events of the last year and a half the voice of the divine teacher can be heard crying to us, "Abandon that you may possess; do my will and know yourselves, purify yourselves, cease to follow your fancies.... The work that was begun at Dakshineswar is far from finished, it is not even understood. That which Vivekananda received and strove to develop, has not yet materialised'. These are the words of a revolutionary who has realised that even for the fulfilment of the revolution he has begun he must now acquire strength from sources not to be found in a political career. On the day he reached Pondicherry, 4 April 1910 a warrant was issued charging him with sedition for his '*Open Letter to My Countrymen*' published in the *Karmayogin* on 25 December 1909. On 7 November the Calcutta High Court declared that there was nothing seditious in the letter and the warrant of arrest was withdrawn. Sri Aurobindo was not a political convict when he began his spiritual life in Pondicherry.

There is still some idle speculation about what really took Sri Aurobindo away from politics to the life of a yogi. Actually Sri Aurobindo had begun a life of the spirit many years before he renounced politics. This gave his political ideas and political activities a power and a quality which distinguished him from even the most leading revolutionaries of his time or of any revolutionary of any time in India or elsewhere. Sri Aurobindo made a statement on his retirement from politics in a letter to *The Hindu*, Madras, dated 7 November 1910 and published in that paper on 13 November. But it is the statement made in October 1932 which fully answers the question we have put to ourselves about his leaving politics. In that statement and it is included in *Sri Aurobindo on Himself* he says: 'I did not leave politics because I felt that I could do nothing more there; ... I came away because I did not want anything to interfere with my Yoga and because I got a very distinct *ādeśa* in the matter. I have cut connection entirely with politics, but before I did so I knew from within that the work I had begun there was destined to be carried forward, on lines I had foreseen, by others, and that the ultimate triumph of the movement I had initiated was sure without my personal action or presence'.

I consider this statement as a historic confession of a sage about a historic turning-point in his life. In his humility he did not add that even as a Yogi he would be continuing his work as a nationalist though on a different plane. But he watched the affairs of his country with as much interest as it was possible for him to take as a sadhaka pursuing his spiritual goals.

The first World War brought about an important change in Sri Aurobindo's view of the human condition in the modern world and he now turned his mind to

the great questions of a happy and creative national life in a happy and creative human society. His nationalist spirit now matured into an internationalist ideal. On 15 September 1915 appeared in *Arya*, a paper founded on 15 August the same year, the first instalment of his *The Ideal of Human Unity*, and the series concluded in July 1918. *The Ideal of Human Unity* which appeared as a book in 1919 is a classic of the world's literature on the subject and yet it has an important bearing on Sri Aurobindo's idea of nationalism. For Sri Aurobindo looked upon the flowering of Indian nationalism as a great event in the history of the modern world. 'The renascence of India' he says in this work 'is as inevitable as the rising of tomorrow's sun, and the renascence of a nation of three hundred millions with so peculiar a temperament, such unique traditions and ideas of life, so powerful an intelligence and so great a mass of potential energies cannot but be one of the most formidable phenomena of the modern world'. Sri Aurobindo's next important work *The Human Cycle* serialised in *Arya* under the title *The Psychology of Social Development* from August 1916 to July 1918 is in the same way an elevation of his nationalist ideas to the higher plane of internationalism. The patriot who was once wistfully waiting for a dawn within the frontiers of his own nation is now envisaging that dawn as a great sunrise for the whole world.

While he was thus immersed in his meditation on the future of mankind Mrs. Annie Besant wrote to him asking for his opinion of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. In his reply to this letter which was first published in *New India* on 10 August 1918 he said that the 'whole thing is in the nature of a cleverly constructed Chinese puzzle'. Sri Aurobindo kept an eye on the political scene even when his mind was set on the highest ideals of the new man and a new world. And he believed that India was destined by history to make a great contribution to the making of that new world. This was not for him a question of there being a chosen race to lead the other races of the world. And he did not envisage the dominance of a particular country or of a particular civilisation in the new international order. He however thought it was one of his important intellectual tasks to present before India and the world the ideals of the Indian civilisation and he accomplished this task through some of his major works and one of them is *The Foundations of Indian Culture* the first instalment of which appeared in *Arya* in December 1918 under the title *Is India Civilised?*

At about this time many in India thought that Sri Aurobindo was the only person who could give the necessary leadership which the country needed after the infamous Rowlatt Act passed on 18 March 1919. The Massacre at Jallianwala Bagh took place on 13 April that year. Mahatma Gandhi suspended *Satyagraha* on 18 April. On the other hand not a few amongst the politicians of

the country seemed to be happy about the Reforms promised by Montagu and Chelmsford. The text of the Reform Bill was made public on 18 June. Less than three weeks earlier Rabindranath had renounced his knighthood in protest against the Amritsar atrocities. At this critical hour the nationalists thought the man to lead a renewed struggle against foreign rule was none other than Sri Aurobindo. Amongst those who wanted to persuade Sri Aurobindo to return to India to assume the country's political leadership were Joseph Baptista and Dr. Munje. Sri Aurobindo's replies to their letters are now available in volume 26 of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library. The two letters are important documents for serious students of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy in its bearing on his political ideas. In his letter to Baptista and it is dated 5 January 1920 Sri Aurobindo says that while he does 'not at all look down on politics or political action' what preoccupies him 'now is the question what it (the country) is going to do with its self-determination, how will it use its freedom, on what lines is it going to determine its future?'. In his letter to Dr. Munje and it is dated 30 August 1920 Sri Aurobindo says that he has now 'definitely commenced another kind of work with a spiritual basis, a work of spiritual, social, cultural and economic reconstruction of an almost revolutionary kind... which needs all the attention and energy I can have to spare'. Sri Aurobindo did not begin a life of sadhana for a private salvation: the end of his yoga was to find the way to the salvation of the world to which he thought that his country's spiritual tradition could make a very significant contribution. Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das visited Sri Aurobindo on 5 July 1923, that is, less than six months after he had presided over the Gaya Congress of 1922 and we can presume that he too requested the old revolutionary to come back to politics and resume his revolutionary movement.

When the Second World War broke out in September 1939 Sri Aurobindo thought that the future of mankind hinged on the victory of the Allied Powers and that the victory of the Axis Powers would bring disaster. He was, however, sure of the victory of the Allies. On 31 March 1942 he issued a message in support of the Cripps Offer because he was convinced that the British would leave India at the end of the war or soon after. When Independence came his people asked Sri Aurobindo for a message and the one he gave was broadcast from the All India Radio on 14 August 1947. 'India today is free but she has not achieved unity' he said in that message and then mentioned his dream of the 'spiritual gift of India to the world' which he thought had 'already begun'. His whole sadhana for forty years was directed towards India's true emancipation, an emancipation which would enable India to bring the emancipation of the world. If he was a revolutionary till 1910 he was even a greater revolutionary thereafter although his revolutionary work as yogi was of a higher kind. There

was a yogi in the revolutionary who led the nationalists during the Swadeshi Movement. That yogi one day realised through a divine revelation that he must turn to work which would fulfil the highest ends of the revolution, man's spiritual freedom after he had freed himself from his material bondage.

India will achieve her true freedom and begin to make that freedom an instrument of international peace and progress when she understands Sri Aurobindo's message and decides to make that message the very foundation of her policy. It seems extremely unlikely that at this hour when politics has become a carnival of private lust and when pursuit of power for individuals and groups seems to be the whole end of political activity Sri Aurobindo's message will make any impression on our leaders. But the gospel of Sri Aurobindo is a gospel of hope and that hope must sustain us till we realise what Sri Aurobindo wanted us to realise in his message to the nation four months after independence. 'We must not disguise from ourselves the fact' Sri Aurobindo said in that message 'that after these long years of subjection and its cramping and impairing effects a great inner as well as outer liberation and change, a vast inner and outer progress is needed if we are to fulfil India's true destiny'.

(Transcript of an address delivered at the Sri Aurobindo Bhavan, Calcutta, on Saturday 29 August 1981. Reproduced with thanks and acknowledgement to *Srinwantu* [English version] Nov, 1981)

Cripps's Mission: an Analysis

Divakar and Sucharu

India's Independence and the Spiritual Destiny

[Note: The month of March is memorable for what took place in it in 1942. The most thorough account of that significant event appeared last year in the October issue of the Students' Magazine, *Vers 1'Avenir*, from the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, pp. 22-25.

We congratulate its authors, Divakar and Sucharu, and are proud to reproduce their work in our pages minus the short introductory paragraph. At the end we have appended the famous exchange between Sri Aurobindo and Sir Stafford Cripps as well as some other relevant matter of importance not generally known.

This is the prefatory note by (Amal Kiran) KD Sethna, the editor of *Mother India* when he published it in the March 1992 issue of the periodical.]

In this talk we are going to look closely at the period between 1939 and 1942 in India's struggle for freedom. This was the period when the whole world was at war and the Indian people were one of the few exceptions who refused to take part in the war effort. As a part of their non-co-operation movement against their colonial rulers, the Indian National Congress, the most influential party of that time, decided not to support the war effort. The British, on their side, were anxious to secure India's participation in the war, for that would mean more men and more resources, which were badly needed.

To solve this somewhat intransigent situation arising out of India's demand for immediate and total independence and the British unwillingness to trust the Indians with the rule of the country at this crucial time, Sir Stafford Cripps came with his enterprising proposals.

Today we will firstly ascertain whether Cripps's proposals could have at all been accepted. And secondly, had they been accepted, whether the trauma of partition and all the serious and complex problems that are plaguing the country today could have been avoided.

It would not be altogether correct to say that India did not participate in the war effort. In fact, the war engaged officers and men of the Indian army which

had strength of one million. And every month there were 50,000 recruits who were volunteering to join the war effort.

At the utmost, what one can say is that the public opinion in India regarded the war with a divided mind. As for the Congress the word of Gandhi, the most popular leader of the time, was taken as a gospel and it received an almost mystical veneration. Although he did not occupy any official position in the Congress organisation, he was invariably consulted on important issues and rarely was his advice not followed. Now, Gandhi could never be "in the war", for war is the extreme example of the violence that he condemned. "An Allied victory," he once said, "will not make the world a better world."

But one of the most interesting features of the Congress policy since the outbreak of the war had been its mixed reaction to Gandhi's idealism. For the first 10 months, the Congress was apparently prepared to support the war effort but only on certain conditions. From the autumn of 1940 to the winter of 1941-42, under Gandhi's personal direction the party protested against the war effort. But due to the unpopularity of this campaign, the movement petered out in 1941. During this time, a majority of leaders led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajagopalachary made it clear that they could not commit themselves to "non-violence" in the face of a Japanese aggression.

No party — the Congress or the Muslim League — favoured the Nazis; in fact the public opinion was very much against Hitler and was with the Russians. But, on the other hand, fighting in the war meant siding with the British.

It was at this time that international sympathy grew for India.

In fact the U.S. senate issued a message with a serious undercurrent of anti-British feeling. It said: "We should strongly demand that India be given a status of autonomy. The only way to get the people of India to fight is to get them to fight for India."

As I mentioned earlier, the Congress decided to join the war effort only on certain conditions and unless they were fulfilled, the Congress would continue its agitation of non-co-operation with the administration.

The two most important demands were:

That India be given freedom immediately.

And a new constitution be framed by Indians themselves.

The attitude of the British government to these demands is known as the "August offer" of 1940. This offer promised India the right to form its own constitution and decide for itself whether it wanted to remain in the Commonwealth or not. But it said that this intricate business involved legislatures

and this could not be undertaken then itself as the British were struggling for their existence. However, Britain would implement these as soon as the war was over. In the meantime, India should co-operate fully in the war effort.

This offer was rejected out of hand by both the Congress and the Muslim League. The main cause of rejection was due to the distrust that had built up in the Indian Nationalists for 20 years against Britain. They could not trust her sincerity because all the promises were not straightforward but conditional. For example, they said that the new constitution must obtain the assent of the minority community. This evidently referred to the 90 million-strong Muslim community and Britain was taking advantage of the fact that the Muslim League would never approve of Congress policies and this would be an excuse for never setting India free.

From the "August offer" of 1940 to the famous Cripps proposals there was a lull in the political activities of both the British and the Indians. Though there were the Sapru proposals, which came after the "August offer", and a hectic struggle in Churchill's War Cabinet regarding India and the extent of autonomy that must be given to her, no concrete proposals emerged until 1942. In March the same year Cripps managed to veer the War Cabinet into accepting his proposals.

But before we come to the Cripps proposals proper, I will just trace the origin and the evolution of the offer which was formulated as way back as 1938.

The genesis of the Cripps offer occurred at the beginning of Nehru's visit to England in June 1938. Nehru went to Cripps's country house, where among many others was Sir Clement Attlee. The party discussed the means by which the Labour government would transfer power if they were elected. Cripps unveiled for the first time a provisional offer which resembled very much the later more famous Cripps offer. It said that an assembly would be elected by the Indian peoples to form a new constitution. This assembly would have separate representation of the minorities and the princely states. However, the free Indian government would be required to enter into a treaty with Britain who would look after the interest of the princely states during this transitional period. Nehru saw this as a modest demand for the acknowledgement of India's right to freedom and as a pre-requisite to co-operation during the war.

During Cripps's first visit to India which was in December 1939, he showed his scheme only to Gandhi and Nehru. All through his visit in India Cripps discussed this rudimentary form of his offer with Nehru. From his first reactions Nehru seemed to regard it as providing "some sort of basis". After a lot of reflection Nehru confirmed that Cripps's scheme was "broadly...on the right

line".

At this point, Gandhi too reiterated Nehru's views. He said that except for 1 or 2 matters in Cripps's scheme, it was an acceptable basis for negotiation and arrangement.

Then the Second World War was declared and the Congress resigned from the 8 provinces where they were in power, as a protest against the British government's attitude of not consulting the Congress which was a major power then.

Zetland, an important official in the cabinet, wrote to the then Prime Minister Chamberlain in trying to look for a solution to the Indian impasse. He wrote: "The instrument is Sir Stafford Cripps." If Cripps were able to get the Indian leaders to agree to his plan, "we should find it very difficult on moral grounds alone to resist it."

But the coming of Churchill was a great setback to all the efforts of reconciliation. Zetland writes: "He (Churchill) did not share the same anxiety to encourage and promote unity between the Hindu and Muslim communities. Such unity was in fact almost out of the realms of practical politics, which if it were to be brought about, the immediate result would be that the united communities would join in showing us the door. He regarded the Hindu-Muslim feud as a bulwark of British rule in India."

Despite Zetland's intense effort at getting the cabinet to adopt his "constructive plan of action", neither the cabinet nor the Viceroy from November 1939 to March 1940 was prepared to do so.

After the rejection of the "August offer" in 1940, the American and the world pressure forced Churchill to reconsider his hard-line policy towards India. Churchill looked for a scheme that would be acceptable to the Indians and would appease the American discontent.

The War Cabinet set about drafting such a proposal amid hectic political lobbying from the hardliners on the one hand and the India-sympathisers on the other. At this crucial phase of the discussion Cripps sprang his surprise; and, to cut the story short, he deftly manoeuvred his proposals amid criticism and doubt and managed to get them accepted by the War Cabinet.

On March 11, Churchill announced that the War Cabinet had agreed unitedly upon some proposals which would solve the crisis in India. Sir Stafford Cripps, Lord Privy Seal and leader of the House of Commons, would proceed as soon as possible to India to explain personally the solution agreed upon by the cabinet.

This startling announcement was well received in all political circles in India. That a cabinet minister should come out and discuss his government's policy face to face with Indians was in itself a proof of the seriousness with which the

problem was viewed in London.

The object of the declaration was "the creation of a new Indian union which shall constitute a dominion, associated with the United Kingdom and other dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown, but equal to them in every respect, and in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic or external affairs, and free to remain in or to separate itself from the equal partnership of the British Commonwealth of nations."

And therefore the declaration was as follows:

Upon completion of the war steps would be taken to set up in India an elected body charged with the task of framing a new constitution for India.

The Indian states would be invited to participate in framing the new constitution.

His Majesty's government would accept and implement immediately the constitution so framed only on condition that:

A) Any province wanting to retain its present position will be allowed to do so, provisions being made for it to join at a later stage if it so desires. Such provinces, if they so wish, will be provided a new constitution equal in status to that of the Indian Union.

B) The signing of a treaty will be between His Majesty's government and the constitution-making body. This treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands. It will make provision for the protection of racial and religious minorities, but will not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in future its relationship to other Member States of the British Commonwealth.

C) Whether or not an Indian state elects to adhere to the Constitution it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty arrangements so far as this may be required in the new situation.

D) The constitution-making body shall be composed as follows unless the Indian leaders in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of the war: A provincial election will be held immediately after the war and the members of the Lower House of the Provincial

legislature so elected will proceed to elect a constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about 1/10 (one-tenth) of the number of the electoral college.

E) But during the critical period which now faces India and until the new constitution can be framed, His Majesty's government will bear the responsibility for and retain the control and direction of the defence of India. But the task of organising to the full the military, moral, and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the government of India with the co-operation of the peoples of India.

His Majesty's government invites the participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country. Thus they will be able to contribute to the war effort which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India.

In England, though, Cripps's proposals received different reactions from the various quarters in the cabinet. Miss Agatha Harrison, who was shown the draft, said that she had no serious misgivings about the proposed arrangement. Cripps explained to her that within the Dominion status framework of the new constitution, India could break away from the Commonwealth, if it so wished, within 24 hours. He admitted the danger of Pakistan but argued that "even Gandhi said this idea should be among the schemes an assembly should discuss."

Linlithgow, the then Viceroy of India, regarded the proposals set forward by Cripps as a complete reversal of the British policy towards India, and threatened to resign. He said that Wavell regarded the declaration as disastrous and added that in his own view it was a calamity. But a prompt cajoling letter by Churchill dissuaded him from taking the extreme action; though Cripps would have been glad if that would have come about. There was also opposition among the ministers at the India office against the local option. By local option was meant the right given to the provinces to break away from India. After the meeting of ministers, one of them wrote: "...It would appear that the powers-that-are-to-be, are reconciled to the idea of a Muslim Confederation in the North. This means two India's and I am pressing for a central government."

The declaration soon became known as the Cripps offer. It was more concrete and constructive than the "August offer". It guaranteed India freedom immediately after the war and the option to frame its own constitution in the form of either a Dominionhood or of independence; and as soon as the constitution-making body was framed, the new constitution would take the place of the old one and the British government would leave the country.

The right of the princes to stand out of the post-war union of India was a further break from the no-freedom-without-unity policy. The provision for a treaty, whereby Britain would discharge her obligations to the dissident states and the minorities, set a time limit for the final transfer of power.

This evident departure in policy was the consequence of the overthrow of the formerly dominant Conservative party's influence in the War Cabinet. Wartime defeats and dependence upon the USA abroad and the Labour party at home made the pressures for changes irresistible.

In these circumstances Cripps became confident that Linlithgow could be displaced by a new Viceroy who would bring the Congress and the League together in a restructured Executive, acting as a National government. Cripps got everything that he wanted into the declaration except the replacement of Linlithgow, which later proved to be fatal.

On Saturday, 14th March 1942, Cripps set off for India. The only specific instruction from the War Cabinet to him was regarding the reconstruction of the Executive. It said that the Executive must not be more than advisory or consultative. Cripps could contemplate minor changes in the reconstruction of the Executive, but he could not negotiate away the Viceroy's statutory power and his special responsibilities.

Cripps arrived at New Delhi on the 23rd of March and immediately announced: "I have come here...because I want to play my part as a member of the War Cabinet in reaching a final settlement of the political difficulties which have long vexed our relationship. Once these questions are resolved, the Indian people will be enabled to associate themselves fully and freely...with our great allies, so that together we can assert our domination to preserve the Liberty of the peoples of the world."

From the 25th onwards, he began meeting the Indian leaders. The first to come was Maulana Azad, the Congress president. Next was Jinnah.

Cripps showed Azad his proposal for the new Executive. He told Azad that the present members would be replaced by men chosen by the Viceroy from the list of nominees furnished by the Indian parties. The Executive would be fully Indianised save for the Commander-in-chief. I quote Cripps here: "The system of government would not however be changed. The Viceroy would function as a Constitutional head like the King in the United Kingdom, normally accepting the advice of his council. The council would approximate to a cabinet in its operation."

Now, according to J Moore who is a renowned historian and the author of Churchill, Cripps and India, "Azad misunderstood Cripps, believing him to say that the Viceroy's special responsibilities and veto would be withdrawn. Many

felt that Azad's command of English was limited."

On his part, Azad came out clearly and stated: "I asked Sir Stafford what would be the position of the Viceroy in this council. Sir Stafford replied that the Viceroy would function as a Constitutional head like the King in the United Kingdom. In order to remove any room for doubt, I asked him to confirm that this would mean that the Viceroy, as a Constitutional head, would be bound by the advice of the Council. Sir Stafford said this was the intention. I asked again that the basic question was as to who would exercise power, the proposed Council or the Viceroy. Sir Stafford repeated that power would rest within the Council as it rests in the British cabinet... Our first interview thus came to an end on a note of optimism."

Jinnah had grown in political stature since Cripps had met him in December 1939. With the avowed goal of sovereign Muslim homelands he was increasingly accepted as the spokesman for Muslim Nationhood. Cripps explained to him the changes in his own views since 1939, when he had regarded Pakistan as a mere bargaining device. Jinnah on his part seemed rather surprised that the declaration went so far as to meet the Pakistan case. Cripps was impressed by his attitude.

Cripps met Gandhi for almost 2 hours on the 27th of March. Gandhi emphasised that he had "...nothing to do with Congress officially."

Cripps found him antagonistic towards the declaration, which he (Gandhi) expected the Congress to reject. Gandhi criticised the virtual invitation to the Muslims to create Pakistan. Cripps stressed that the declaration envisaged Indian unity and that non-accession would occur only if the constitution making body disagreed. Cripps told Gandhi that once the constituent assembly body was formed and Britain was out of the way, the Indians themselves ought to be able to agree upon a constitution for unity. In fact, when Cripps reminded Gandhi that the latter had gone through the Cripps plan in detail in Wardha in 1938 and had observed that the possibility of Pakistan should be included among the schemes an assembly should discuss, Gandhi said that he never remembered having made that statement.

Azad writes: "When Gandhiji met Cripps for the first time during his mission, Cripps reminded him of the *aide memoire* to which reference has already been made. Cripps said that the *aide memoire* had already been prepared after consultation with the Congress leaders including Gandhiji. The proposals he had now brought were substantially the same. Gandhiji said that he had no recollection of the *aide memoire*. All that he could remember of his talk with Cripps during his last visit were...some discussions about vegetarianism. Cripps replied that it was his misfortune that Gandhiji could remember his talk on food,

but not about the proposals he had so carefully prepared after consulting Gandhiji himself."

On 28th Cripps met the most moderate of Congress leaders, Rajagopalachary, whose view was that something should be done as regards the redrafting of the last paragraph in order to make it clear that the Indian people were asked to defend their own country and that it was not merely the obligation of the British government. Cripps obliged and the last paragraph was suitably modified.

In the meantime Cripps met Jinnah and gathered that the League working committee had accepted the Declaration in principle. Later in the day, one of their senior leaders, Sikander Hyat Khan, confirmed this news, and argued that in order to win over the Congress some appearance of defence responsibility should be given to an Indian. Azad also accepted that His Majesty's government must control strategy and troop movements.

Nehru arrived in Delhi by train the next day, the 29th of March. He had been bed-ridden with fever for two days and was to remain unwell throughout the negotiations.

As Nehru had not yet discussed the declaration with his colleagues he and Cripps went off to the Congress headquarters at Birla house where Cripps remained for 3 hours. They were joined by Azad who took them to Gandhi. There was a good deal of banter, with Cripps trying to pin down Gandhi to admit that he had approved Cripps scheme in December 1939 after a line by line reading of it.

Gandhi finally acquiesced, explaining that he had dismissed the occasion from his mind as merely an encounter with one of the "globe-trotters". Their conversation further confirmed Cripps's impression that India's association with the defence portfolio was the key to Congress acceptance of the declaration.

On the same day Cripps released the Declaration at a press conference where for 2 hours he answered questions for a group of about 100 journalists. He explained the paragraph (E) at this press conference:

The intention of this paragraph is to indicate to the Governor-General, who is responsible for the formation of a government in India, the broad lines upon which, in accordance with the scheme, that government might be formed... The object of the scheme is to give the fullest measure of government to the Indian people at the present time consistent with the possibilities of a constitution which cannot be changed until the end of the war... You cannot change the constitution. All you can do is to change the convictions of the constitution. You can turn the Executive Council into a cabinet... The leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people are to be

invited to play their full and effective part which means to say that the intention of this document is as far as possible subject to the reservation of defence to put power into the hands of Indian leaders... We want the government to be fully Indianised.

Sir Coupland, another noted historian, summarises the reaction of the press towards the Cripps' proposals. He said: "As I watched the faces of the Indian journalists and observed the manner of the questioners I was quite certain that Sir Stafford's sincerity was never for a moment doubted."

The next day, Gandhi, who had remained in Delhi at Azad's request, vehemently opposed the Declaration and called it "a post-dated cheque on a crashing bank."

That night Nehru dined with Cripps and they talked until late in the night. Cripps notes that he had never known Nehru more serious and more worried. From their conversation Cripps drew the conclusion that while Nehru and Rajaji were "doing their best to secure acceptance, Gandhi was against it and with his pacifist supporters would probably obtain a majority of the working committee."

The great obstacle was "The non-violent outlook of Gandhi and his supporters, which obviously was opposed to the idea of mobilising effectively the armed defence of India", rather than "any particular provision of the scheme itself." Cripps imagined Gandhi to be (I quote Cripps) "actually desirous to bring about a state of chaos while he sat at Wardha eating vegetables."

For the first time Cripps took a dark view of the prospects of his mission. The following days witnessed a see-saw change in the fortunes of the mission. At one point the Congress working committee was 7 to 5 against the proposals. After further negotiations, the balance favoured Cripps at 7 to 5. This fluctuation continued until finally on the 10th of April, at 7 pm Cripps received a letter from Maulana Azad rejecting his proposals on the ground that the members of the Executive Council could not act "as members of a cabinet in a constitutional government." In effect, what the Congress wanted was a national government which had to be a cabinet government with full power.

This meant a drastic change in the constitution. And as Cripps had already stated, "Everyone agrees that in these troubled times we cannot, here and now, set about forging a new constitution."

And so Cripps returned to England unsuccessful in the mission he once so successfully initiated, amid lots of opposition, for the people of India.

In our post-mortem of the Cripps proposals, let us consider the possibility of the declaration being accepted. Many historians maintain that the acceptance of this declaration would have still meant inevitably the partition of India, because

the Muslim League, led by Jinnah, regarded the partition of India as the only possible solution. Therefore, if a choice was given to all the provinces, it seemed certain that India would be fragmented.

But on the other hand non-accession alone was the way by which partition could be avoided. For, Cripps based himself on the profound psychological truth that one normally does not like to do what one is asked to do and by stimulating the Muslim's appetite for partition, Cripps hoped to keep India intact. Just as there was a chance of India wanting to stay in the British Commonwealth if she was free to go out, likewise the best hope of a single Indian Union lay in assuring the people of the predominantly Muslim areas, that they need not join the Union unless they wished.

And moreover, if the Cripps proposals had been accepted, then the Congress and the Muslim league would have had to work together and at that time they could definitely have arrived at a compromise. They could have adopted a loose federation of the provinces with enough safeguards to take care of the minority interests.

In regard to the composition of the Executive council, it is important that the Indians in the council have effective power in the running of the government. Sri Aurobindo during the First World War, had proposed a set of guidelines which he felt must satisfy India in order to participate in the war effort. There he had specified that the Indian ministers in charge of defence should not have their responsibilities curtailed to the point that they run only hospitals and ambulances. The ministers in the cabinet must have effective powers. And this much was promised in Cripps's proposals. It would be ridiculous to accept the Congress' claim that the council should function as a cabinet, and military decisions reached by the ministers would be binding on the Viceroy.

Frankly speaking, there was none in the Congress who had the experience and the competence for running the defence ministry at a time when the Axis Powers had the upper hand in the war.

When Cripps had come to India, he had told a journalist that if he could reach an agreement with the Congress on the reconstruction of the Executive then his powers would be such as to enable him to overcome any resistance by Linlithgow. I quote Cripps: "I told Nehru that if they accepted my terms I should be such a tremendous figure in England that I could do anything." It was generally believed that if Cripps brought off the settlement, he would replace Churchill. And then from his position of power he could grant any concession, short of complete independence, to the Congress.

But the most important reason why Cripps's proposals should have been accepted is the same reason why the British government was anxious that

India accept it. The Allies winning the war was crucial to India's future because in the case of an Axis victory, India's future would be doomed under the yoke of the cruel and ruthless Japanese and Germans. Therefore it was important that India joined the war and ensured the victory of the Allies. The British too were keen that India joined the war effort.

Cripps's proposals were therefore doubly beneficial to India. Not only was India offered an honourable opportunity to join the war but its independence was presented on a platter if India so agreed.

Even considering the possibility where the British would go back on their word and not give us our independence after the war, India had still to gain from an Allied victory. Moreover it would have been impossible for Britain to go back on her word, for the whole world, and especially America, would force her to keep her wartime promises. Therefore it can be seen that Cripps' proposals should have been accepted by the Indian leaders.

Many of you must be disappointed that we have not mentioned Sri Aurobindo's name as regards this mission. We have acted thus for two specific reasons.

Firstly it is a well-known fact (and therefore needless to mention), especially in the Ashram, that Sri Aurobindo openly supported the Cripps offer and even sent Duraiswamy Aiyar, as his envoy, with a message to the Congress leaders, suggesting to them to accept the proposals. Unfortunately the leaders of the time did not give the message their due respect, even though Sri Aurobindo had been himself a major political force and an established statesman in the early 20th century.

The second more important reason is that we did not want people to swallow Sri Aurobindo's opinion of the proposals merely on faith. We wanted them to realise that, if viewed rationally, the proposals corroborated Sri Aurobindo's point of view. We hope we have been successful in our endeavour.

Appendix

Sri Aurobindo and Cripps's Proposal

Since coming to Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo had retired from public life. In his own words, "His retirement from political life was complete, just as was his personal retirement into solitude in 1910." There were two occasions when he had to take public action. The first in relation to the Second World War when, in 1940, September 10th he and the Mother made a joint declaration in support of the Allies. The second was his public support to Cripps' proposal.

On 31st March 1942 he sent the following telegram to Cripps: "I have heard

your broadcast. As one who has been a nationalist leader and worker for India's independence, though now my activity is no longer in the political but in the spiritual field, I wish to express my appreciation of all you have done to bring about this offer. I welcome it as an opportunity given to India to determine for herself, and organise in all liberty of choice, her freedom and unity, and take an effective place among the world's free nations. I hope that it will be accepted, and right use made of it, putting aside all discords and divisions. I hope too that friendly relations between Britain and India, replacing past struggles, will be a step towards a greater world union in which, as a free nation, her spiritual force will contribute to build for mankind a better and happier life. In this light, I offer my public adhesion, in case it can be of any help in your work." The above implies a successful end to the war and a united free India.

Sri Aurobindo envisaged two great perils facing the country, domination by Japan and partition of our Motherland, and according to him the way to prevent both of them successfully was to accept Cripps's proposal. He made this clear in his personal message through Duraiswamy Aiyar to the Congress Working Committee and in his telegrams to Dr Munje, the Hindu Mahasabha leader, and to C Rajagopalachary. In the telegram to Dr Munje he asked if there was no way to accept cooperation, while resisting the partition of India, and arrive at a settlement with Britain in view of the grave peril facing India. He further suggested a combination of Congress nationalist and anti-Jinnah Muslims so as to defeat the League in the elections in Bengal, Punjab and Sind. His telegram to C Rajagopalachari on the same day, namely 2 April 1942, reads, "Is not compromise defence question better than rupture. Some immediate settlement urgent, face grave peril. Have sent Duraiswamy insist urgency. Appeal to you to save India formidable danger new foreign domination when old on way to self-elimination."

Sir Stafford Cripps's reply of 1 April 1942 by telegram to Sri Aurobindo's message was: "I am most touched and gratified by your kind message allowing me to inform India that you who occupy unique position in imagination of Indian youth are convinced that declaration of His Majesty's Government substantially confers that freedom for which Indian Nationalism has so long struggled."

Arthur Moore, editor of the Calcutta daily *Statesman*, telegraphed to Sri Aurobindo on 1st April 1942 saying, "Your message to Sir Stafford Cripps inaugurates the new era. Nothing can prevent it. I am glad that my eyes have seen this salvation coming."

Amarendra Chatterji, Member Central Legislative Assembly, sent the following telegram to Sri Aurobindo on 9 April 1942: "Thanks broken silence pray come lead again. With [M.N.] Roy may yet save hesitant confused misled

public." He also wanted Sri Aurobindo to lead a new party, even though it be from Pondicherry, a party called The People's Progressive Party. Sri Aurobindo replied to Amarendra Chatterji telegraphically, saying that he was unable to leave Pondicherry. A similar reply was given by Duraiswamy on Sri Aurobindo's behalf to the Congress Working Committee.

The negotiations failed and the proposal was rejected. In his own words Sri Aurobindo gives the reasons why he supported Cripps's proposal. He gave his support "because, by its acceptance, India and Britain could stand united against the Asuric forces and the solution of Cripps could be used as a step towards independence. When negotiations failed, Sri Aurobindo returned to his reliance on the use of spiritual force alone against the aggressor and had the satisfaction of seeing the tide of Japanese victory, which had till then swept everything before it, change immediately into a tide of rapid, crushing and finally immense and overwhelming defeat. He had also after a time the satisfaction of seeing his previsions about the future of India justify themselves so that she stands independent with whatever internal difficulties."

In the first draft of his telegram to Cripps the last sentence had read: "I hope that in stating my adhesion I speak for the deeper soul of India." He altered it to the form quoted earlier. Nirodbaran has reported: "When the rejection was announced, Sri Aurobindo said in a quiet tone, 'I knew it would fail.' We at once pounced on the words and asked him, 'Why did you then send Duraiswamy at all?' 'For a bit of *nishkama karma* [disinterested work] was the calm reply."

Notes:

Quotations from Sri Aurobindo are from pp.39-40 of Vol. 26 of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library.

(This article was a presentation by the writers as part of their college-level studies at Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education [SAICE], Pondicherry and was originally published in *Mother India*, March, 1992))

The Organisational Cycle: The Age of Reasoning

Suhas K. Mehra

[This paper is part 2 of the series, *The Organisational Cycle*. The opening part was published in the February 2015 issue of **Sraddha**, Vol. 6 (3), pp. 96-112.]

Introduction

We begin by sharing a few pertinent quotes from various bestselling books on business management and leadership. These quotes speak of the journey of a business organisation.

"Initially, entrepreneurial success is fuelled by creativity, imagination, bold moves into uncharted waters, and visionary zeal."ⁱ

"At this stage companies are led by a few people who are fuelled by their passion to change the world. They are willing to work all day and all night. There are no "strategic planning" systems, although there are frequent meetings to determine where to go next....They [the founders] are willing to risk everything to make it happen and are they were highly energised by the challenge and the risks involved."ⁱⁱ

"The second stage in the evolution of a new industry is characterised by rapid growth. Now it has grown from few people to several hundred people. Formal training systems have been implemented in an effort to make sure that new employees are told about the corporate culture, ethics and values. Mission statements are created and distributed."ⁱⁱⁱ

"As a company grows and becomes more complex, it begins to trip over its own success – too many new people, too many new customers, too many new orders, too many new products. What was once great fun becomes an unwieldy ball of disorganised stuff. Lack of planning, lack of accounting, lack of systems, and lack of hiring constraints create friction. Problems surface – with customers, with cash flow, with schedules. In response,

someone (often a board member) says, “It’s time to grow up. This place needs some professional management.” The company begins to hire MBAs and seasoned executives from blue-chip companies. Processes, procedures, checklists, and all the rest begin to sprout up like weeds. What was once an egalitarian environment gets replaced with a hierarchy. Chains of command appear for the first time. Reporting relationships become clear, and an executive class with special perks begins to appear. “We” and “they” segmentations appear – just like in a real company. The professional managers finally rein in the mess. They create order out of chaos, but they also kill the entrepreneurial spirit. Members of the founding team begin to grumble, “This isn’t fun anymore. I used to be able to just get things done. Now I have to fill out these stupid forms and follow these stupid rules. Worst of all, I have to spend a horrendous amount of time in useless meetings.” The creative magic begins to wane as some of the most innovative people leave, disgusted by the burgeoning bureaucracy and hierarchy. The exciting start-up transforms into just another company, with nothing special to recommend it. The cancer of mediocrity begins to grow in earnest.”^{iv}

“Unmanaged, the evolution of the corporate architecture proceeds in a predictable way, which evitable leads to cultural lock-in — a state in which the corporation is effectively frozen in place.”^v

Do these quotes remind us of something else? Don’t they sound surprisingly similar in spirit to the different evolutionary stages of psycho-social development that Sri Aurobindo speaks of in his social philosophy?

Sri Aurobindo’s *The Psychology of Social Development* was first published in the philosophical monthly *Arya* from August 15, 1916 to July 15, 1918. It was later published as a book *The Human Cycle*. The very first chapter in the book, “The Cycle of Society” introduces the different stages through which a society or a collective passes in its evolutionary journey. In this series of articles, we have been exploring how a close study of the different stages – symbolic, typical, conventional, individualistic and subjective – help inform our understanding of the journey through which an organisation evolves.

We have been applying Sri Aurobindo’s social thought to the field of business management and organisational studies. Our goal is to bring to light the significance of the profound truths in Sri Aurobindo’s psychological-sociological thought as applicable in the field of business studies, through relevant examples. We also hope to point out that his keen insights either preceded or were contemporary to some of the most innovative ideas coming out from the field of business studies, with one major difference being that Sri Aurobindo’s insights

resulted from his deep and fundamental understanding of the foundational truths of human psychology.

Our approach has been to closely follow the line of thought given by Sri Aurobindo in *The Human Cycle*, and explain with the help of several examples how a collective (a business organisation in the present case) closely follows the fundamental lines of evolutionary growth that Sri Aurobindo has spoken of. In the first part of the series, we began with an examination of the parallel between an individual and a collective organisation. We then focused on the symbolic, typical and conventional stages of an organisation’s progression, though brief mention was also made of the individualistic stage in order to provide a complete picture. This second part focuses primarily on the end of conventional stage leading toward an individualistic stage of the socio-psychological evolution with an explicit focus on the role of Reason in shaping the organisation’s path. Several examples of business organisations are presented to illustrate this. These examples are drawn from information that is available in the public domain, but with a specific objective to chart the organisation’s growth process from the perspective of Sri Aurobindo’s sociological thought.

Sri Aurobindo, however, has also spoken of the next steps of a socio-psychological evolutionary path, and that’s where his fundamental contribution to sociological and organisational studies rests. But in order to be ready to launch into the next future, an organisation, like any collective or any individual, must be able to retrace its evolutionary journey from its beginning to where it is now. That’s the point we want to bring home through this series of articles, to encourage a close study of the deeper motivation and inner workings of an organisation’s journey so that it may become more self-aware and conscious of its next direction. This is what we believe is the fundamental contribution of Sri Aurobindo’s social philosophy to the field of organisational studies, that is, it gives organisations a blueprint for where they must go if they want to fulfil their deeper purpose of existence.

Another close reading of the quotes with which we open this paper tells us how a new venture first begins with some type of a symbolic idea, which is a representation of something greater than the individual, an idea which makes the person toil day in and day out to realise it and manifest in reality. We see then that over time as the idea begins to crystallise, more carefully selected people join the venture, in most cases the psychological driver for them is generally the idea of becoming a part of something bigger than themselves, still a representation of the symbolic leading on to the typical stage.

In the first part of the series “*The Organisational Cycle*” we had analysed this progression from symbolic to typical to conventional stages using the case

study of the world-renowned Aravind Eye Hospital. We had written extensively about the ‘symbolic’ beginnings which led Dr. V (founder of Aravind) to start this enterprise, and gradually involving members of immediate family who were mostly driven by the *dharmic* or ethical idea of working in an establishment that would give them an opportunity to be a part of a work bigger than that of an eye doctor. This, we saw, was the typical stage. We also gave several examples of how this stage slowly transitions into the conventional stage, in the context of an organisation. These examples were selected both from the Aravind study as well as the personal experiences of the first author in a big multinational corporation.

In this paper, we dig a bit deeper into what leads to the failure of the conventional stage in an organisation, which eventually opens the way for a more individualistic stage that is also the stage of reasoning.

Failure of the Conventional Stage

As indicated in some of the opening quotes, when a company goes through a continued phase of growth and expansion, naturally more people are hired and systems are put in place, thus bringing in the needed bureaucracy and hierarchy. In other words, growth leads to the necessity of putting conventional practices and systems in place for an efficient working. This conventional stage, according to Sri Aurobindo, can have its golden period when the spirit and thought, though confined within the form of the convention, are still living, that is, while the formulated processes and procedures are being used effectively the underlying spirit behind them is also in force. This period “is often very beautiful and attractive to the distant view of posterity by its precise order, symmetry, and fine social architecture, the admirable subordination of its parts to a general and noble plan.”^{vi}

In our previous paper, we had presented as part of the work-experience of the first author at his former place of employment where this “beautiful” and “golden” phase was marked by the development of best practices. During this phase the team had created several procedural documents pertaining to the operations, training, audit etc. The period was also considered golden from the point of view of the upper management, which was happy because the revenues had increased and systems were organised.

But it is precisely the formulation and codification of such best practices and procedures that could eventually result in the problems associated with the conventional stage. This is described by Sri Aurobindo as the phase when the “form prevails and the spirit recedes and diminishes.”^{vii} Once the focus of activities of the team in charge of developing and modifying best practices

shifts elsewhere, the result could be a non-thinking conformity and adherence by the organisational staff to the established practices without being mindful of the actual spirit behind them. This is precisely the rigidity of the conventional stage.

Condition for an Age of Individualism

The next stage in the evolutionary journey is the age of Individualism and Reason. This stage “comes as a result of the corruption and failure of the conventional.... Before it can be born it is necessary that the old truths shall have been lost in the soul and practice... stripped of all practical justification, they exist only mechanically by fixed idea, by the force of custom, by attachment to the form.”^{viii}

For their bestselling business management book *Good to Great* (2001), Jim Collins, along with his research team, “began with a field of 1,435 companies and emerged with a list of 11 good-to-great companies: Abbott Laboratories, Circuit City, Fannie Mae, Gillette Co., Kimberly-Clark Corp., the Kroger Co., Nucor Corp., Philip Morris Cos. Inc., Pitney Bowes Inc., Walgreens, and Wells Fargo.”^{ix} These eleven companies, according to the author “attained extraordinary results, averaging cumulative stock returns 6.9 times the general market in the fifteen years following their transition points.”^x There were a few unifying themes about these companies. First was their continued initial dismal performance; several of them were on the verge of bankruptcy. Second, they all experienced what can be called as the coming of Individualism. This began with a realisation that the existing dismal condition of the company was the result of following a conventional thinking, out-dated processes and attitudes, which were no longer valid. To use Sri Aurobindo’s terminology, we may say that this realisation happened because the “gulf between the convention and the truth becomes intolerable and the men of intellectual power arise, the great “swallowers of formulas”, who, rejecting robustly or fiercely or with the calm light of reason symbol and type and convention, strike at the walls of the prison-house and seek by the individual reason.”^{xi}

The most important unifying factor in all the eleven companies studied by Collins was that they transitioned from being dismal to good to great during their individual-driven phase. This transition happened primarily due to the efforts of select individuals who had understood how the old standards and procedures had become meaningless and were no longer of much help. A few individuals in these companies had become discoverers, pioneers and searched out by their individual reason, intuition, idealism or desire appropriate means to transform their organisations.

The Roadblocks along the Path

The age of individualism has its share of roadblocks. The reasoning individual first discovers that under the conventional regime he or she is not allowed to search, test, prove, inquire, and discover. Independent pursuit of knowledge is not encouraged because of blind reliance on experts^{xii} who because of their vested interests want to keep the status quo.

A good example may be found in the story of Amul – “the Taste of India.” Amul began when milk became a symbol of protest.^{xiii} The story goes like this: “Angered by the unfair trade practices, the farmers of Kaira, Gujarat approached Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel under the leadership of local farmer leader Tribhuvandas K. Patel. He advised them to form a cooperative and supply milk. The cooperative was further developed and managed by Dr. Verghese.”^{xiv}

Verghese Kurien (1921–2012) is best known for his “billion-litre idea” (Operation Flood) – the world’s largest agricultural development programme. This idea transformed India from a milk-deficient nation to the world’s largest milk producer, surpassing the United States of America in 1998, with about 17 per cent of global output in 2010-11, which in 30 years doubled the milk available to every person. Dairy farming became India’s largest self-sustaining industry.

Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC), Amul’s first major customer, required constant milk supply all year round. But the production of milk is not constant throughout the year; it decreases during summer and increases in winter. Typically, dehydrating the milk during winter and reconstituting it from dried milk during summer overcomes this situation. Dehydration of cow milk was a well-established procedure but buffalo milk (which happened to be the major source of milk) could not be dehydrated as per the conventional wisdom. Dr. Kurien and his team questioned this conventional wisdom. His peers were highly critical of him, they even tried to discourage him from conducting trials to verify the validity of the conventional-expert opinion. But Dr. Kurien and his team went against the expert opinion and were successful in developing indigenous technology for dehydrating buffalo’s milk. This was one of the biggest reasons that Amul could supply the required quantity of milk to the BMC all year round.

Another roadblock appears in the form of severe resistance an individual faces from the existing and potential competitors in the field. It is almost as if the established companies consider themselves to be privileged and armed with special repressive powers to discourage any new idea to enter the field and turn the scene around. For example, when Amul wanted to develop baby food, the boss of Glaxo (the then leader of baby food industry) is believed to have commented, “Amul will never be able to sell its brand of baby food and when their tins begin rotting on the shelves, I will have them collected and thrown into

the African Sea!”^{xv}

Yet another difficulty may appear because of the fixed and rigid social order that results from the preceding conventional age. To quote from Sri Aurobindo, the individual pioneer challenging the existing social order may find “an equally stereotyped reign of convention, fixed disabilities, fixed privileges, the self-regarding arrogance of the high, the blind prostration of the low.... He has to rise in revolt; on every claim of authority he has to turn the eye of a resolute inquisition.”^{xvi} We find this trend reflected quite remarkably in the Amul story. “At the onset there was no dearth of cynics, renowned dairy experts questioned if the ‘natives’ could handle sophisticated dairy equipment? Could western-style milk products be processed from buffalo milk? Could a humble farmers’ cooperative market butter and cheese to sophisticated urban consumers? The Amul team – farmers and professionals – confounded the conventional attitude of the cynics by processing a variety of high-grade dairy products, several of them for the first time from buffalo milk, and marketing them nationally against tough competition.”^{xvii}

Creative Destruction

Why does the individual pioneer face roadblocks such as resistance, suppression and discouragement? We find an answer to this in Sri Aurobindo’s words: “The champions of the old order may be right when they seek to suppress him [the reasoning individual] as a destructive agency...because to destroy is his mission, to destroy falsehood and lay bare a new foundation of truth.”^{xviii} This “temporary reign of the critical reason largely destructive in its action is an imperative need for human progress.”^{xix} We find several examples of this in historical and present times.

Suppression of novel ideas under conventional stage has been prevalent for centuries. Nicolaus Copernicus, a Renaissance mathematician and astronomer formulated a model of the universe that placed the Sun rather than the Earth at its centre (also known as Heliocentric astronomical model). Around 1514, Copernicus asked his friends to review a forty-page manuscript describing his ideas about the heliocentric hypothesis. “Ignoring the advice of his closest friends, he did not openly publish his views, not wishing — as he confessed — to risk the scorn “to which he would expose himself on account of the novelty and incomprehensibility of his theses.”^{xx}

Almost a century later Galileo published *Sidereus Nuncius* (Starry Messenger), based upon the observations he had made with his invention, telescope, the phases of Venus and the Galilean moons of Jupiter. With these observations he promoted the heliocentric theory of Copernicus. Galileo’s

discoveries were met with opposition within the Catholic Church, and in 1616 the Inquisition (a group of institutions within the judicial system of the Roman Catholic Church whose aim was to combat opinion or doctrine at variance with the orthodox or accepted doctrine) declared heliocentrism to be formally heretical. Heliocentric books were banned and Galileo was ordered to refrain from holding, teaching or defending heliocentric ideas. He was sentenced to indefinite imprisonment and was kept under house arrest until his death in 1642.^{xxi}

In the present times, Robert Goddard is hailed for his research and experimentation with liquid-fuelled rockets. Although his work in the field was revolutionary, Goddard received very little public support for his research and development work. The press sometimes ridiculed his theories of spaceflight (for example, *The New York Times* once reported that Goddard seemed to lack a high school student's basic understanding of rocketry). As a result, he became protective of his privacy and his work. Years after his death, at the dawn of the Space Age, he came to be recognised as the founding father of modern rocketry.^{xxii}

"For a work to be truly creative, it has to depart from the status quo at some point. That departure makes many people uncomfortable. Despite our oft-stated desire for more creativity, we also hold a stronger desire for certainty and structure. When that certainty is challenged, a bias against creativity develops."^{xxiii} This departure from the status quo results in creative destruction also known as "Schumpeter's gale" (generations of economists have also adopted it as a shorthand description of the free market's messy way of delivering progress^{xxiv}), a term in economics, which has since the 1950s become most readily identified with the Austrian American economist Joseph Schumpeter's theory of economic innovation. In the book *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Schumpeter introduced the term "creative destruction," which he explicitly derived from Marxist thought and used it to describe the disruptive process of transformation that accompanies innovation:

"Capitalism...is by nature a form or method of economic change and never can be stationary. ... The fundamental impulse that sets and keeps the capitalist engine in motion comes from the new consumers' goods, the new methods of production or transportation, the new markets, the new forms of industrial organisation that capitalist enterprise creates. ... The opening up of new markets, foreign or domestic, and the organisational development from the craft shop and factory...illustrate the same process of industrial mutation... that incessantly revolutionises the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one. This process of

Creative Destruction is the essential fact about capitalism. It is what capitalism consists in and what every capitalist concern has got to live in."^{xxv}

Companies that once revolutionised and dominated new industries – for example, Xerox in copiers or Polaroid in instant photography – have seen their profits fall and their dominance vanish as rivals launched improved designs or cut manufacturing costs. In the case of audio technology, the cassette tape replaced the 8-track, only to be replaced in turn by the compact disc, which was undercut by MP3 players, which will in turn eventually be replaced by newer technologies.

Another frequently cited example of creative destruction is the smartphone, which all but killed the market for not only regular cell phones but also PDAs, MP3 players, point-and-shoot cameras, wristwatches, calculators and voice recorders, among other things.^{xxvi} Very soon Apple Watch will be unveiled, which shall have all the features of a smartphone on a watch and much more. All these examples demonstrate that today's novel-ness shall very soon become a convention and eventually fade out to be replaced by some other pathbreaking innovation that shall again become a convention and this cycle would continue.

Innovation and Reasoning

Innovation is the key result of age of reasoning, which results in creative destruction. The term innovation implies an original and a more effective idea which "breaks into" the market or society.^{xxvii} We as customers see the end-product of the innovation, but behind the innovation lies a paradigm shift in the way that organisation thinks and motivates its employees. Innovation is not possible in a conventional regime because it discourages searching, testing, verifying, inquiry and discovery. Innovation is the direct result of an age of individualism.

Most innovations are led by what Sri Aurobindo refers to as the eagerness to "search for the first principles and rational laws, its delighted intellectual scrutiny of the facts of life by the force of direct observation and individual reasoning." Another important force behind an innovation is the individual's urge to discover "large practicality and his sense for the ordering of life in harmony with a robust utility and the just principles of things."^{xxviii} Last but not the least, is the pursuance of these tendencies seriously, with great enthusiasm and passion.

Percy Spencer, one of the world's leading experts in radar tube design, was working at Raytheon (American defence contractor) as the head of the power tube division to develop and produce combat radar equipment for M.I.T.'s

Radiation Laboratory. It was US military's second highest priority project during WWII, after the Manhattan Project.

One day, while Spencer was working on building magnetrons for radar sets, he was standing in front of active radar set when he noticed that the candy bar he had in his pocket had melted. He and some other colleagues then began trying to heat other food objects to see if a similar heating effect could be observed. The first one they heated intentionally was popcorn kernels, which became the world's first microwaved popcorn.

Spencer then created what we might call the first true microwave oven by attaching a high-density electromagnetic field generator to an enclosed metal box. The magnetron would then shoot into the metal box, so that the electromagnetic waves would have no way to escape, which would allow for more controlled and safe experimentation. He then placed various food items in the box and monitored their temperature to observe the effect.

The first commercially produced microwave oven was about 6 feet tall and weighed around 750 pounds. The price tag on these units was about \$5000 a piece. It wasn't until 1967 that the first microwave oven that was both relatively affordable (\$495) and reasonably sized (counter-top model) became available.^{xxix}

Though Spencer wasn't the first to notice something like this with radars, he was the first to conduct detailed investigation. At that time these ovens were not practical at household level, it was only a decade later that more households, in the developed countries, had these ovens compared to dishwashers.^{xxx} Now perhaps all modern households in India have microwave ovens. The popularisation of microwave oven happened as a result of practical utilisation of this invention, combined with an effective and organised marketing strategy.

A similar story is seen in the case of the widely used Post-it Notes. Dr. Spencer Silver, a scientist at 3M, was attempting to develop a super-strong adhesive. Instead he accidentally created a low-tack, reusable, pressure-sensitive adhesive. For five years, Silver promoted his "solution without a problem" within 3M, both informally and through seminars but failed to gain acceptance. In 1974 a colleague, Art Fry, who had attended one of his seminars came up with the idea of using the adhesive to anchor his bookmark in his hymn-book. The original notes' yellow colour was chosen by accident, as the lab next-door to the Post-it team had only yellow scrap paper to use. Thus was born the Post-it.

3M launched the product as "Press 'n Peel" in stores in four cities in 1977, but the results were disappointing. A year later, 3M issued free samples directly to consumers in Boise, Idaho, with 94 percent of those who tried them indicating they would buy the product. On April 6, 1980, Press 'n Peel was re-introduced in the US stores as "Post-It Notes." The following year they were launched in

Canada and Europe. The patent expired in 2003, after which it gained further popularity throughout the world.^{xxxi}

As these examples clearly illustrate, the success in the marketplace is driven largely by the pursuance of the novel idea, its practical utility, and the serious pursuance of the twin goals with great enthusiasm and passion. In all the companies shortlisted in the book, *Good to Great* we find these common tendencies – critical observation, analysis, followed by individual reasoning to develop core principles and organising them for their application.

Supreme Desiderata

The very nature of the age of reasoning is dependent upon individual enlightenment and discernment. Unrestrained use of personal judgment without any checks and standards could be dangerous and could lead to continual difference of opinion, perspective, possibly even a chaos of ideas instead of a progressive and harmonious unfolding of the truth of things. To overcome this shortcoming Sri Aurobindo proposes two supreme desiderata that Reason must fulfil:

"It must find a general standard of Truth to which the individual judgment of all will be inwardly compelled to subscribe without physical constraint or imposition of irrational authority. And it must reach too some principle of social order which shall be equally founded on a universally recognisable truth of things; an order is needed that will put a rein on desire and interest by providing at least some intellectual and moral test which these two powerful and dangerous forces must satisfy before they can feel justified in asserting their claims on life." ^{xxxii}

Though the book *Good to Great* was published in 2001, it is even more relevant today because it set the standard for how Collins (the author) used research and analysis to identify the most crucial patterns that shape organisational success. Collins used the metaphor of a bus, the bus driver, passengers and destination. The bus is the company, which is at a standstill (conventional stage), and it is the business leader's responsibility to get it going. He is the driver who needs to decide where to go, how to get there, and who is going. Leaders of companies that go from good to great start not with "where" but with "who." They start by getting the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats. The "right people" team is one that "consists of people who debate vigorously in search of the best answer, yet who unify behind decisions, regardless of parochial interest."^{xxxiii}

This is the resulting action of the “right people,” whose primary psychological characteristic is that they believe in some general standard of Truth, which they are “inwardly compelled to subscribe without physical constraint or imposition of irrational authority” (Sri Aurobindo). This general standard of Truth could simply be the belief that if you have the right executives on the bus, they will “do everything within their power to build a great company, not because of what they will “get” for it, but because they simply cannot imagine settling for anything less. Their moral code requires building excellence for its own sake, and you’re no more likely to change that with a compensation package than you’re likely to affect whether they breathe. The good-to-great companies understood a simple truth: The right people will do the right things and deliver the best results they’re capable of, regardless of the incentive system.”^{xxxiv}

We refer back to the example mentioned in our previous paper, that of Aravind Eye Care, which was founded in 1976 by Dr. V. In an eleven-bed hospital manned by 4 medical officers, he saw the potential for what is today one of the largest eye care facilities in the world. Over the years, Aravind has evolved into a sophisticated system dedicated to compassionate service, serving as a model for not only India but rest of the world. Applying Collins’ analysis, we may say that this organisation’s success is mainly attributed to two factors: the individual illumination of Dr. V., and the total commitment of his core team, the “right people” who believed in Aravind’s mission to become something greater than the individuals working there and its core mission of eliminating needless blindness. Or using Sri Aurobindo’s terminology, we may say that this core team had “subscribed to the general standard of Truth to which the individual judgment of all [was] inwardly compelled to subscribe without physical constraint or imposition of irrational authority.”

The second desideratum, according to Sri Aurobindo, is that Reason will be effective only when it is based on some principle of social order which shall in turn be founded on a universally recognisable truth of things. This principle of social order has the potential to rein in the individual tendencies of personal desire and self-interest.

Uncontrolled desires, interest and myopic vision have had devastating effecting on the companies. Kodak is best known for photographic film products. During most of the 20th century Kodak held a dominant position in photographic film, and in 1976, had a 90% market share of photographic film sales in the United States.^{xxxv} Steven J. Sasson, an electrical engineer who invented the first digital camera at Eastman Kodak in the 1970s commented on his invention, “My prototype was big as a toaster, but the technical people loved it, it was filmless photography, so management’s reaction was, ‘that’s cute — but don’t

tell anyone about it.”^{xxxvi} In 1981, Vince Barabba, the then head of market intelligence at Kodak, with the support of Kodak’s CEO, had conducted a very extensive research which looked at the core technologies and likely adoption curves around conventional film versus digital photography. The results of the study produced both “bad” and “good” news. The “bad” news was that digital photography had the potential capability to replace Kodak’s established film based business. The “good” news was that it would take some time for that to occur and that Kodak had roughly ten years to prepare for the transition.^{xxxvii} In spite of these findings, Kodak management failed to realise that digital photography could serve as a disruptive technology for their conventional film business. And instead of marketing the new technology, the company held back for their interest in protecting their own lucrative film business, well after digital products were reshaping the market. In January 2012, Kodak filed for bankruptcy.

Another form in which an organisation’s self-interest or desire may manifest is in the falsehood of wanting to continue in the same line of existence, ignoring the call of the changing times which may require a creative destruction for the company’s renewal and continued success. Bajaj Auto Limited (Bajaj Auto), a leading Indian manufacturer of two wheelers in India, provides a relevant example of this. Right from 1945 onwards, Bajaj Auto was the market leader in the Indian two-wheeler industry till late 1990s. Chetak (one of its premium models, named after the legendary stallion of the Rajput king Maharana Pratap) was well-known for its reliability and sturdiness and used to have a waiting list on delivery for many years. For 40 years the model and design of Chetak and other Bajaj two-wheelers remained almost unchanged except for a few cosmetic modifications. But the sale or the demand never diminished, keeping the brand name Bajaj in leading position. The consumer remained satisfied because the brand name carried a lot of trust owing to the vehicle’s strong body, low maintenance and good mileage, as compared to the next available alternative.^{xxxviii}

In late 1990s, the scenario changed. After the liberalisation of the Indian economy in 1991, foreign players began to enter the Indian two-wheeler industry with their innovative products and sophisticated technology. Bajaj leadership could not visualise the impact of these changes on their market share. In spite of rising competition, Bajaj neither upgraded its scooter models, nor focused on the rapidly growing motorcycle segment. It is said that during this time the company’s efforts were directed more toward influencing the government against opening of the Indian economy, instead of focusing on research and product development, which might have helped it keep its position. The company lost its leadership status in the scooter segment to Honda Motorcycles and Scooter India (HMSI). Finally, in December 2005, Bajaj discontinued Chetak and since

then has been out of the scooter market though scooter sales have continued to increase at a steady rate.^{xxxix}

Scientific Pursuit to satisfy Supreme Desiderata

Science, according to Sri Aurobindo, seemed to fulfil impeccably the two supreme desiderata of an individualistic age of Reason. This is because Science does not depend on any doubtful scripture of fallible human authority. Instead, it relies on the fundamental truths of Nature herself which are available for all to uncover with patient and persistent observation, and intellectually honest judgment. In his words:

“Here were laws, principles, fundamental facts of the world and of our being which all could verify at once for themselves and which must therefore satisfy and guide the free individual judgment, delivering it equally from alien compulsion and from erratic self-will. Here were laws and truths which justified and yet controlled the claims and desires of the individual human being; here a science which provided a standard, a norm of knowledge, a rational basis for life, a clear outline and sovereign means for the progress and perfection of the individual and the race.”^{xl}

He concludes that the individualistic age of Reason is characterised by an attempt to “govern and organise human life by verifiable Science, by a law, a truth of things, an order and principles which all can observe and verify in their ground and fact and to which therefore all may freely and must rationally subscribe.”^{xli}

Encyclopaedia Britannica defines Science as “any system of knowledge that is concerned with the physical world and its phenomena and that entails unbiased observations and systematic experimentation. In general, a science involves a pursuit of knowledge covering general truths or the operations of fundamental laws.”^{xlii} Since it is also a systematic enterprise that builds and organises knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions, therefore, the discoverable truths are “inwardly compelling to individuals without physical constraint or imposition of irrational authority,” according to Sri Aurobindo. These truths also serve to rein in individual desire and interest by providing at least some intellectual test. Momentous progress, growth and prosperity of the mankind can be attributed to the application of physical sciences. Based upon this success followed the development of scientific management movement.

Outcome of The Age of Reason: the Scientific Management

It was believed that the capabilities of science cannot only transform the physical world but also the arena of management. Scientific management introduced a novel way of organising labour and measuring productivity at the modern workplace. With a stopwatch and a clever method of analysis, Frederick Winslow Taylor gave industrial/organisational consultancy a ground-breaking tool: the efficiency study. He and his associates were the first people to study the work process scientifically. They closely observed the working procedures and their effect on worker productivity.^{xliii}

The application of Taylor’s scientific management theory can be seen in nearly all-modern firms. His imprint can be found in production planning, production control, process design, quality control, cost accounting, and even ergonomics. Another contribution of scientific management theory was the importance of quantitative analysis, or the analysis of data and numbers to improve production effectiveness and efficiency.^{xliv}

Taylor’s scientific management consisted of four primary principles :^{xlv}

- a. Develop a science for each element of a worker’s work profile, which would then replace the old rule-of-thumb method.
- b. Scientifically select and then train, teach, and develop the worker, whereas in the past the worker chose his own work and trained himself as best as he could.
- c. Cooperate with the workers so as to ensure all of the work being done in accordance with the principles of the science that has been developed.
- d. Ensure an almost equal division of the work and the responsibility between the management and the workmen. The management takes over all work for which they are better suited than the workers, like application of scientific principles, while in the past almost all of the work and the greater part of the responsibility were thrown upon the workers.

The Ford Motor Company was launched in 1903 in a converted factory. During its early years the company produced just a few cars a day. Groups of two or three men worked on each car.^{xlvi} In 1908 the Ford Company unveiled the Model T, a four-cylinder, 20-horsepower car that cost between \$825 and \$850 (equivalent to \$15,500-\$16,000 in 2003). However, Henry Ford was determined to build a simple, reliable and affordable car; a car the average

Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856-1915), an American inventor and engineer applied his engineering and scientific knowledge to management and developed a theory called scientific management theory. His two most important books are: *Shop Management* (1903) and *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911).

American worker could afford. Ford was able to decrease the price eight years later to \$345-\$360 by developing an assembly line mode of production. Ford's output grew from just over 32,000 cars in 1910 to nearly 735,000 cars in 1916. His Highland Park and River Rouge factories would become famous for their low-cost, standardised mass production.^{xlvi} All this was made possible by Ford's application of scientific management in its mass production plants through division of labour and specialisation of tasks.

Three ideas emerging from Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management*^{xlvi} which are considered relevant to this day are:

1. Rewards: "A reward, if it is to be most effective in stimulating men to do their best work, must come soon after the work has been done... The average workman must be able to measure what he has accomplished and clearly see his reward at the end of each day if he is to do his best."
2. Quality standards: The use of written documentation for each part of a worker's job, inherent in scientific management, is strikingly prescient of the procedural documentation in use in the ISO (International Standards Organisation) series of quality standards.
3. Suggestion schemes: An incentive for employees to make suggestions if they feel an improvement could be made to either the method or the implement used to undertake a task.

Modern day examples of scientific management can be abundantly seen in organisations such as McDonalds. The fast-food chain has complete uniformity, no matter what location, country, as are the methods used to prepare food, clean floors, promote staff and even lock-up on closing. It is this ability to efficiently supply standard food and service throughout the world that has allowed McDonalds to become the biggest restaurant chain on the planet. One can find several examples of scientific management techniques being used in call centres, hospitals (including Aravind Eye Care) and many other organisations. It has definitely helped in streamlining operations.

One of the most critical components of scientific management was the "time and motion" studies. Taylor employed a young man to analyse all the operations and the motions performed in each task and to time the motions with a stopwatch. By knowing how long it actually takes to perform each of the elements in every job, it would be possible to determine a fair day's work.^{xlix} Through painstaking analysis, Taylor could also see that work was more efficient when broken down into its constituent parts and standardised (current terminology of this practice is development of "Best Practices"). This standardisation also entailed breaking the workers' tasks into smaller and smaller parts; in essence, specifying not only what is to be done but how it is to be done and the exact time allowed for

doing it.^l Standardisation also implies one right way of doing the task, however, this could also mean no scope for continued improvement, originality and innovation. In other words, the scope for individual contribution to improve and innovate may be highly limited in such systems.

Sri Aurobindo not only foresaw the scope of applying scientific techniques to govern humans but also commented upon the shortcoming of doing so, in terms of loss of individual freedom and suppression of individual's discovery of his law of being. While writing about the use of science to govern human life he wrote:

"Discovery by individual free-thought of universal laws of which the individual is almost a by-product and by which he must necessarily be governed, this attempt actually to govern the social life of humanity in conscious accordance with the mechanism of these laws seems to lead logically to the suppression of that very individual freedom which made the discovery and the attempt at all possible. In seeking the truth and law of his own being the individual seems to have discovered a truth and law which is not of his own individual being at all, but of the collectivity, the pack, the hive, the mass."^{li}

Division of labour created two classes – the doers and the planners, the workers and the managers. Seen from one perspective this seems fine because the workers could focus on carrying the production demands, while the management concentrates on planning, developing new standards, marketing, etc. Thus a law and truth of the collective or the pack, to use Sri Aurobindo's terminology, of two different classes was established as a result of the practice of division of labour.

But if this idea is carried too far and great walls between the two classes are created the same arrangement could prove to be detrimental. For example, an engineer developing new standards without the input of the workers, or workers not giving feedback to the managers on how a particular task could be improved, is neither in the interest of the organisation nor the customers. This too was foreseen by Sri Aurobindo, who wrote:

"Thus we should have a new typical order based upon purely economic capacity and function, *gunakarma*, and rapidly petrifying by the inhibition of individual liberty into a system of rationalistic conventions. And quite certainly this static order would at long last be broken by a new individualist age of revolt, led probably by the principles of an extreme philosophical Anarchism."^{lii}

Scientific management entails breaking down of jobs into smallest possible

parts, so that each worker only performs a few movements over and over. This reduces humans to perfect automatons, making the job monotonous, tedious and boring. Motivating the workforce and encouraging them to take pride in their work become a serious challenge. After the implementation of scientific management at Ford in 1913, Ford had to hire more than 52,000 men to maintain a workforce of only 14,000, due to high attrition rate. New workers required a costly break-in period, making matters worse for the company. Also, some men simply walked away from the line to quit and look for a job elsewhere, thereby stopping the line and halting the production. The increased cost and delayed production kept Ford from selling its cars at low prices. Drastic measures were necessary if Ford was to keep up its production targets.^{liii} As a solution to high turnover Ford astonished the world in 1914 by offering a \$5 per day wage (\$120 today), which was more than double the rate of most of the workers. Further, they even reduced the working hours from 48 hours per week to 40 hours. These moves were extremely profitable; instead of constant turnover of employees, the best mechanics in Detroit flocked to Ford, bringing their human capital and expertise, raising productivity, and lowering training costs.^{liv} This example suggests that increasing the wages or reducing the work time could be a good solution to worker motivation. But it is not a lasting or sustainable one. Dr. Paul Krugman (Nobel-winning economist) has this to say on the role of wages as a motivation factor:

“The obvious economist’s reply is, if paying higher wages is such a good idea, why aren’t companies doing it voluntarily? But in any case there is a fundamental flaw in the argument: Surely the benefits of low turnover and high morale in your workforce come not from paying a high wage, but from paying a high wage ‘compared with other companies.’”^{lv}

Reducing the worker activity to fulfilling the bare necessities of the task in hand and removing any thought or skill from that task makes the work merely a mechanical motion. Following such a motion day in and day out without a true understanding of its purpose in the larger scheme of things could lead to a lack of pride and ownership of work. Taylor’s claim that workers are solely concerned with monetary reward and that every facet of work needs to be controlled from above seems outmoded, untrue, and impractical. Both Ford and Taylor shared a similar opinion of the workers on the assembly lines. Ford is known to have commented, “The average worker, I am sorry to say, wants a job in which he does not have to think. Those who have what might be called the creative type of mind and who thoroughly abhor monotony are apt to imagine that all other

minds are similarly restless and therefore to extend quite unwanted sympathy to the labouring man who day in and day out performs almost exactly the same operation.”^{lvi}

While on the first read the above statement makes it look like a low opinion of the ordinary worker, a candid read will make it obvious that this does represent the ordinary mentality of a lot of workers, including those working in the so-called white collar professions. Sri Aurobindo’s social-psychological thought tells us that this is symptomatic of the conventional stage of evolution, a mentality that prefers status quo and has a preference for following a prescribed set of instructions, an existing well-established pattern without any motivation to explore the deeper rationale behind the outer practice or imagining any further improvement or modification in the pattern. This is true not only of the individual but also of the collective organisation.

Only when Reason begins to question the status quo will things begin to evolve further. It is interesting to note that while the scientific management practices evolved as a result of application of individual reasoning, the mass of workers did not evolve beyond a conventional mentality. Rather, it may be said that the success of scientific management relied upon keeping the workers at a conventional stage of psychological evolution.

Shortcomings of the Scientific Management, beyond The Age of Reasoning

Major criticism of the scientific management was that it tended to make workers into robots or machines. Several social scientists referred to this theory as merely the machine theory of organisation. Its core idea was to gain maximum benefits for employers, thus creating opposing interests between workers and the management.^{lvii}

After the Second World War, social scientists and psychologists began to take interest in worker related issues. They theorised that though the workers were getting higher salaries and incentives the sense of contentment wasn’t there. Elton Mayo and his colleagues conducted what came to be known as Hawthorne Experiments at Western Electric’s plants to understand the problems faced by the workers and the larger social impact of scientific management. Their major finding was that workers demonstrated an explicit preference to be treated as human beings first and employees next. These studies became the basis for the Human Relations movement. Human Relations school emphasises the social and psychological aspects of an individual’s experience at workplace rather than technology, job, and mechanical requirements.^{lviii} As a result several theories were proposed, such as the now famous Theory X and Theory Y.^{lix}

Sri Aurobindo speaks of two operational forces which could either modify or frustrate the consummation of the age of reason. First is the over-stretched application of science to social and human realms. In his words:

“...rationalistic and physical Science has overpassed itself and must before long be overtaken by a mounting flood of psychological and psychic knowledge which cannot fail to compel quite a new view of the human being and open a new vista before mankind. At the same time the Age of Reason is visibly drawing to an end; novel ideas are sweeping over the world and are being accepted with a significant rapidity....”^{lx}

The Human Relations movement is one manifestation of this new view of the human being, which is now the most widely accepted view in the field of business management.

The second operational force, according to Sri Aurobindo, is the increasing influence of Eastern spiritual thought which emphasises greater subjectivism in understanding human nature and behaviour. He writes:

“...the East, as the result of its awakening, follows its own bent and evolves a novel social tendency and culture, that is bound to have an enormous effect on the direction of the world’s civilisation...it will not be in favour of any re-ordering of society on the lines of the still current tendency towards a mechanical economism which has not ceased to dominate mind and life in the Occident. The influence of the East is likely to be rather in the direction of subjectivism and practical spirituality...”^{lxi}

We have already seen the impact the Japanese thought has made in the field of business management. The Toyota Way^{lxii} is a shining example of that. The fact that in India also we are seeing a new and gradually expanding school of thought in management which draws inspiration from Indian thought is another indication of this growing trend. Prof. S.K. Chakraborty has written extensively on the inner dimensions of management, business ethics and role of human values.

The Management Centre for Human Values at Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta “enshrines more than two decades of aspiration and effort to hold up to the members of human organisations and institutions – in India and elsewhere – contemporary adaptations from the perennial corpus of Indian Psycho-Philosophical wisdom. It is completely non-denominational. It also embodies the striving towards evolving the ‘Vedantic Ethic’ from the Indian

deep structure, bridging a vital gap between the ‘Protestant Ethic’ from the Far West and the ‘Confucian Ethic’ from the Far East. A large segment of managers and professionals in India has for long been awaiting filling up of this end.”^{lxiii} M.S. Srinivasan at Sri Aurobindo Foundation for Integral Management, Pondicherry^{lxiv} has been leading the effort to bring Sri Aurobindo’s spiritual thought into the field of business studies. We are also witnessing many conferences on the themes of Spirituality, Leadership and Management that attract both academics as well as business leaders. The Delhi based Faculty of Management Studies hosts such a conference annually. However, these are still glimpses of what is yet to come.

Recap and a look to the Next Future

A quick look into the history of evolution of management as a field of practice reveals its somewhat unorganised and unsure beginnings. Major advances in physical sciences eventually encouraged social scientists to apply scientific approach and methods in fields concerned with human behaviour and individual and societal life. The field of human management also saw such application of science.

Scientific management definitely led to increased productivity in the beginning. At the same time it also revealed that workers when turned into automated machines may not perform at their full potential or would soon feel a sense of discontent because fiscal reward only serves as a limited incentive or motivator. In a way, the individual reason led to the development of scientific management and it was individual reason again combined with a newer and deeper view of a human being, which uncovered some of the serious shortcomings of this approach, giving birth to the Human Relations movement. As workers become more aware of their inherent worth as human beings first, they refuse to be treated like a piece of machine with an assigned task or as part of a mechanism of laws governing the production. They challenge any workplace practice that dehumanises them in any way.

Over a period of time progressive organisations begin to recognise that productivity and success are obtained not merely by controlling all the factors at the workplace, but by actively contributing to the individual and social well-being and development of all of their employees. The modern management practice, therefore, is to rank organisations based on several humanistic factors such as employee initiative, loyalty, engagement and adaptability alongside worker efficiency.^{lxv}

Sri Aurobindo had concluded, decades prior to the present Human Relations movement that the outcome of the application of science to human aspects will

lead to two idea-forces of master potency — “the democratic conception of the right of all individuals as members of the society to the full life and the full development of which they are individually capable.”^{lxvi} Additionally, “there is this deeper truth which individualism has discovered, that the individual is not merely a social unit; his existence, his right and claim to live and grow are not founded solely on his social work and function.”

An individual spends vast majority of time at his or her occupation. If somehow it could help, in a small way, to live life fully and greatly, and to develop the individual’s capabilities and potentialities, wouldn’t that be a much needed improvement both for the life of an individual employee as well as the collective life of the organisation? But the next question arises – what is meant after all by life and when is it that we live most fully and greatly? “Life is surely nothing but the creation and active self-expression of man’s spirit, powers, capacities, his will to be and think and create and love and do and achieve. When that is wanting or, since it cannot be absolutely wanting, depressed, held under, discouraged or inert, whether by internal or external causes, then we may say that there is a lack of life.”^{lxvii} This requires a more subjective view of human life, aspiration and progress.

In what way can an organisation encourage this life-spirit in its employees? What role does subjectivism play in this future progress that an organisation must make if it wants to evolve further and move closer to its deeper purpose of existence? What are some of the challenges and potential pitfalls on the path of subjectivism – for an individual as well as the organisation? These are some of the questions we will explore in the next part of the series.

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Aims of True Education: Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi

Beloo Mehra

I will attempt to address four fundamental questions in this paper as I explore some key differences and similarities between and Sri Aurobindo's and Mahatma Gandhi's approaches to education. These questions are:

- What is human and what is human destiny?
- What is the aim of life and aim of true Education?
- What is the “social” relevance of Gandhian and Aurobindonian thoughts on education?
- Can Gandhian educational philosophy be considered Integral?

This essay may be seen as an attempt to understand Mahatma Gandhi's vision for education in the light of Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's approach to Integral Education. Given that the four guiding questions are closely inter-connected I offer this write-up as an initial attempt at weaving together some responses, with full awareness that many gaps are bound to be here. I am already familiar with some critical gaps, particularly regarding the ideal of human unity as envisioned by these two thinkers, the pedagogical and curricular differences and similarities, and larger differences between the visions and works of these two thinkers – their educational thought being an integral piece of that vision and work. My focus in the present work, however, is on the aim of man and education.

¹In order to create an easier flow in writing, throughout this paper I am using the word “man” and its corresponding pronoun “his” in a more generic gender-neutral manner to represent matters concerning the universal person, individual, or human. The use of the word “man” is not meant to exclude women from the applicability of this analysis in any gender-exclusive or male-centric way. This use is also in alignment with the language used by Sri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi in their writings, both of whom also never meant to exclude women from their vision and thought.

With this acknowledgment of incompleteness, I begin.

Aims of Life and Aims of Education

Based on a deep and conscious awareness of the significance of socio-cultural variations in the concept of man, his life and destiny, of the nation and of humanity and the life of human race, which get reflected in the respective philosophies of education, Sri Aurobindo developed his scheme of integral education rooted in the developing soul of India, to her future need, to the greatness of her coming self creation, to her eternal spirit (Raina, 2000). India, according to Sri Aurobindo, has seen always in man, the individual a soul, a portion of the Divinity enwrapped in mind and body, a conscious manifestation in Nature of the universal self and spirit.

Integral Education is based on this conception of man. This truth of man's existence also carries within it the truth that it is important to distinguish and cultivate in man "a mental, an intellectual, an ethical, dynamic and practical, an aesthetic and hedonistic, a vital and physical being, but all these have been seen as powers of a soul that manifests through them and grows with their growth, and yet they are not all the soul, because at the summit of its ascent it arises to something greater than them all, into a spiritual being, and it is in this that she has found the supreme manifestation of the soul of man and his ultimate divine manhood, his *paramārtha* and highest *purusārtha*" (Sri Aurobindo, CWSA Vol.1, p.426).

Integral Yoga is the basis for Sri Aurobindo's thought and vision of Integral Education. Integral Yoga is a grand synthesis of several major schools of Yoga – Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga. Without rejecting any of these Yogas, Sri Aurobindo takes the idea of Yoga to the next level – Yoga of self-perfection. But he is careful in explaining that the principle of Integral Yoga is "not perfection of the human nature as it is but a psychic and spiritual transformation of all the parts of the being through the action of an inner consciousness and then of a higher consciousness which works on them, throws out their old movements or changes them into the image of its own and so transmutes lower into higher nature. It is not so much the perfection of the intellect as a transcendence of it, a transformation of the mind, the substitution of a larger principle of knowledge – and so with all the rest of the being" (CWSA, Vol.35, pp.585-586).

This transformation or self-perfection, Sri Aurobindo explains, begins with the discovery and knowledge of the powers, principles and process of self-realisation. It requires a patient and persistent personal effort in growth and change. Integral development of different parts of the being – physical, vital,

mental and psychic and – brings about a transformation into a spiritual being. Such a transformed and spiritualised being is the final goal of Sri Aurobindo's system of Integral Education.

"[Education's] central aim is the building of the powers of the human mind and spirit, it is the formation, or, as I would prefer to view it, the evoking of knowledge and will and of the power to use knowledge, character, culture,— that at least if no more" (CWSA, Vol.1, p.421). True and living education helps to "bring out to full advantage, makes ready for the full purpose and scope of human life that is in the individual man, and which at the same time helps him to enter into his right relation with the life, mind and soul of the people to which he belongs and with that great total life, mind and soul of humanity of which he himself is a unit and his people or nation a living, a separate and yet inseparable member" (Ibid, p.425).

A truly Integral Education should have three central aims – 1) for an individual, it is growth of the soul and its powers and possibilities, 2) for the nation, the preservation, strengthening and enrichment of the nation-soul and its *Dharma*, and 3) to raise both the individual and nation into powers of the life and ascending mind and soul of humanity. "And at no time, will it lose sight of man's highest object, the awakening and development of his spiritual being" (Ibid, p.427).

In the light of these central aims of education, learner's education and training of the intellect divorced from the perfection of moral and emotional nature is injurious to human progress. Moral training can't be "imparted" in the same way as the training of the mind, because the "heart is not the mind and to instruct the mind does not necessarily improve the heart" (Ibid, p.389).

It appears that many of the truths expressed in earlier paragraphs find their equivalents in Gandhian thoughts on education. The emphasis on body, heart, mind and spirit in the educational process is most visible one. As Cenkner quotes Gandhi – "Man is neither mere intellect, nor the gross animal body, nor the heart or soul alone. A proper and harmonious combination of all the three is required for the making of the whole man and constitutes the true economics of education" (1976/1994, p.102). Like Sri Aurobindo, Gandhi also emphasises the cultivation of the heart and refinement of human emotions and impulses. "True education is that which cultivates the soul or the spirit, and leads ultimately to the full and complete development of man's body, mind and spirit...Literacy then is not the primary goal of education: it is the cultivation of character, and the development of the spirit; it is the education of the heart not the head" (Richards, 2001, p.12).

The interconnectedness of the individual, nation, and humanity is another important commonality. However, in my readings of Gandhi I haven't come across anything similar to nation-soul or soul of the people, which is an essential and important aspect of Sri Aurobindo's thought. Once the truth of a collective soul, as Sri Aurobindo explains, is thoroughly understood and accepted, one can readily accept the immense variation and diversity in the mental, vital, and physical expressions that are manifested in a group whether it is a community, nation, or the entire world, and at the same time continue to aspire for an inner human unity. What Gandhi does emphasise quite strongly is the social orientation of education, and the role of schools in reconstructing society. I shall revisit this point a little later in the essay.

The true aim for education, for Gandhi, is derived from the whole purpose of life, which "is to know the Self, the Atman, which is akin to knowing the Truth, and realising God" (Richards, 2001, p.12). A system of education, therefore, should help learners to understand the meaning of such a quest for Truth. Gandhi emphasises a conception of Truth that is not static, dogmatic, or rigid, and one that is same as Reality (*Sat*) and in identity with the Self within (*Atman*). This Self within is at one with the essence of the universe. The quest for Truth therefore is the same as seeking to know the true nature of the Self. The Truth here is indivisible, One and implies essential unity of all existence. This Oneness however manifests itself in multiple forms, as reflected in Gandhi's quote cited by Richards – "What though we have many bodies? We have but one soul. The rays of the sun are many through refraction. But they have the same source. I cannot, therefore, detach myself from the wickedest soul nor may I be denied identity with the most virtuous" (2001, p.3).

For Gandhi, this knowing the Truth happens by listening to the inner voice, that is, knowing the Truth in the Self through the Self. But he is also quite clear that it would not be appropriate for anyone to claim to hear the inner voice without showing in the first place a measure of self-discipline, single-minded devotion, and indifference to worldly interests. "Truth resides in every human heart, and one has to search for it there, and to be guided by truth as one sees it. But no one has the right to coerce others to act according to his own view of truth" (Gandhi, cited in Richards, 2001, p.8). So what is truth for one person will not necessarily be truth for another. But the Truth with which Gandhi is concerned is that which can't be grasped through the instrument of mind, which as Sri Aurobindo reminds us emphatically, is not an instrument of true knowledge.

Thus, the truth that individual is a soul in its true essence also seems common to both Gandhian and Aurobindonian thought. But let's look a little deeper.

Education for the Individual

For Gandhi, education should help prepare and direct the learner toward the true purpose of life, which is to realise the *Atman*, the Self, which he also views as realising God. But Sri Aurobindo distinguishes between the psychic being that is individual and embodied, and grows from life to life, and central being (*Atman*, Self) which is immortal and remains the same through all our lives. The psychic being is the link between the outer personality and nature, and the deeper, highest *Atman* or Self. It can also be understood as the evolving soul, the soul of the individual evolving in the manifestation or soul-individuality. Though the word "soul" is sometimes used as a synonym for psychic being, but in a deeper, stricter understanding there is a difference between the two. The soul is the divine essence or spark of the Divine in the individual, the psychic being is the developing soul-personality put forth by the soul as its representative in the evolution. This psychic being evolves and grows by its experiences in the manifestation; and as it develops, it increasingly aids the evolution and growth of the mental, vital and physical parts of the being.

It is this psychic being that takes an important place in the educational thought of Sri Aurobindo. For him, education must help prepare the learners grow in their psychic being, so it can develop and manifest itself. Because it is this psychic being that supports "the evolution or the unveiling of the Divine Consciousness on earth, so that one day there will be Divine Life possible right here on earth (Huppes, 2001, p.9). Gandhi doesn't make this sharp distinction between the evolving and immortal soul and as a true Advaitin values the Self- or *Atman*-realisation as the true and ultimate aim of life. For him, the final aim of life stops here, at the realisation of Self, the realisation of God, the *Moksha* or *Nirvana*.

For Sri Aurobindo, that is the beginning of his Integral Yoga, and this Self-realisation is one part of the triple transformation that he views as the necessity of the transformation of the individual, society, humanity and the earth as a whole. The first transformation is the psychic realisation or transformation when the psychic being in man becomes the guide and true leader, and his physical, vital, and mental are perfect instruments of this true inner guide, the psychic being. The second transformation is the spiritual realisation or the Self-realisation that Gandhi values as the aim of life. But for Sri Aurobindo, this Self-realisation or *moksha* is not the goal or ultimate aim of man's life; it is a sure step toward the Supramental realisation and establishment of the Supramental Force on the Earth itself. Also, the realisation of the Self or Atman is partial if there is no transformation of the lower nature of man in the Light and Spirit of the Divine. This deeper transformation is needed for the Life on Earth to be transformed

into a Life Divine. The central purpose of Integral Yoga is understood as: “Transformation of our superficial, narrow and fragmentary human way of thinking, seeing, feeling, and being into a deep and wide spiritual consciousness and an integrated inner and outer existence and of our ordinary human living into the divine way of life” (Pandit, 1992, p.127). The practice of Integral Yoga emphasises the need for personal transformation as a way to act towards a deeper transformation of the evolving outer world with a goal to enable a progressive and fundamental change in individual and collective consciousness.

In the light of these aims of life and destiny of man emphasised by Sri Aurobindo one begins to see the fundamental difference between his and Gandhi’s thoughts on the role of education. For Gandhi, education must prepare the learners for Self-realisation or liberation (*Moksha*). He emphasised the ancient Indian wisdom – *Sa vidya ya vimuktaye*² (“That which liberates is knowledge”). In his socio-political and educational thought, Gandhi talked about two kinds of liberation. One form of liberation consisted in securing the freedom of the country from foreign rule, which for him would also include developing indigenous models of social, economic, educational development. Such freedom, however, may prove short-lived if not understood in the right perspective and light of the other kind of liberation (*moksha*) which is for all time. As an Advaitin he is referring to the liberation from the cycles of birth and death on the earth, from the suffering of the world, and he is emphasising this liberation, *moksha* as the ultimate goal for life (one of the four *purushārthas*, other three being *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*). It is important to emphasise here that this liberation is an individual liberation, and does not transform the earth-nature in any way.

Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, is not satisfied with individual liberation. He sees it as an escape from life, from the world, a negation of the spirit. He envisions a spiritually transformed man, a spiritually transformed humanity, and a spiritually transformed life on earth, a divine life. As he writes beautifully in his epic poem, *Savitri*:

A high and blank negation is not all,
A huge extinction is not God’s last world,
Life’s ultimate sense, the close of being’s course,
The meaning of this great mysterious world.
In absolute silence sleeps an absolute Power.
Awaking, it can wake the trance-bound soul
And in the ray reveal the parent sun:

² *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, Amsa 1, Canto 19, Verse 41

It can make the world a vessel of Spirit’s force,
It can fashion in the clay God’s perfect shape.
To free the self is but one radiant pace;
Here to fulfil himself was God’s desire
(CWSA, Vol 33-34, pp.311-312).

It is this fulfilment of the man in this world, the inner and outer transformation that is necessary for this fulfilment, and the evolution of consciousness that facilitates such transformation that are behind Sri Aurobindo’s thoughts on Education and its aims. Education, in this light, becomes the means to prepare learners for such transformation, which requires that all parts of their being – physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual – are properly prepared and developed to manifest a harmonious and integral personality. The emphasis is more on integral development, instead of emphasising any one or two aspects of personality. For Gandhi also, education should provide for a harmonious development of the learner, but one can also trace certain special emphases that Gandhian model places on basic education and working with hands.

Social Aim of Education

Education is not a matter that concerns only the individual; it also deeply concerns the society, the collective. And both Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi recognise and deeply value the inter-connection between individual and collective, as reflected in their thoughts on education including its aims. But again one notices a key difference. “The key to Gandhi’s social thought and concept of man is characterised in one word: *sarvodaya*” (Cenkner, 1976/1994, p.97). A strong emphasis on *sarvodaya*, the upliftment of all, certainly gives a very clear orientation to Gandhi’s educational approach. He emphasises the significance of school and education for the upliftment of the oppressed of the society, for the organic development and growth of the community, and for building the nation. The “social” role of man, in the sense of what an individual can do for the society, is thus emphasised here. At the same time, the purpose of education for Gandhi is to raise man to a higher moral and spiritual order through the full development of the individual and the evolution of a new man, a *satyagrahi*, one that grasps the truth. This man-making goal of education, for Gandhi, is achieved by service to mankind, by self-giving.

Sri Aurobindo is also equally concerned about the relation between the individual and the society. But he also emphasises that an individual “is not merely a social unit; his existence, his right and claim to live and grow are not founded solely on his social work and function. He is not merely a member of a

human-pack, hive or ant-hill; he is something in himself, a soul, a being, who has to fulfil his own individual truth and law as well as his natural or his assigned part in the truth and law of the collective existence” (CWSA, Vol. 25, p.24). At the same time we are also reminded that “as the society has no right in suppressing the individual in its own interest, so also the individual, in Sri Aurobindo’s view, has no right to disregard the legitimate claims of society upon him in order to seek his own selfish aims” (Kishor Gandhi, 1965/1991, p.67). So there is a much more equal relation between the individual and society in this view, which has implication for the education as well.

An Integral Education, in Sri Aurobindo’s view, will not emphasise society’s demands over the individual’s need for inner development and growth. It will allow complete freedom to the individual soul to grow and evolve in a multi-faceted and harmonious way. At the same time, the social nature of man will not be ignored because not only will the learning be happening in a communal setting and in close relations with the teachers; but more importantly the role of individual transformation in the larger, spiritual transformation of humanity will be emphasised and modelled for the learners. In the light of Sri Aurobindo’s thoughts on destiny of mankind, this truer and deeper connection between individual and collective in the evolution of consciousness is the basis of Integral Education. Education, in this view, is the means for facilitating individual transformation to prepare the humankind, one individual at a time, for a collective transformation. The nature of upliftment that is of concern to Sri Aurobindo is the upliftment of consciousness – individually and collectively. Human society, in its present nature, with all its pleasures and pains, abilities and limits, gains and losses, convergences and conflicts, peace and war is a creation of human consciousness that is in its turn limited by and subject to its present nature. As long as this consciousness remains, all adjustments and readjustments, all revolutions and re-organisations, re-thinking and re-planning in the society and its structures – political, economic, cultural – will be devised by the same consciousness that created the earlier structures, and are therefore bound to solve problems facing humanity only for a short period of time, if at all they are able to solve any. A new consciousness alone is the solution. A consciousness that is wider, higher, and deeper than the one in which the humanity persists at present. A consciousness which enables the separative, divisive, egoistic tendencies that are presently behind every action and decision we make in our personal, social conduct to transform and evolve into unifying, integrative, harmonising, and ego-less tendencies.

This deep transformation doesn’t happen all at once in masses of humanity, but is a long and arduous process that happens, one individual at a time through

an evolutionary ascent of consciousness and with Divine Grace represented in the descent of Supramental Consciousness that transforms the nature and process of evolution itself. Sri Aurobindo has illuminated for us the nature of this new supramental consciousness, the conditions necessary for coming of a new spiritual age, the kind of gnostic beings who will be the pioneers of spiritual age, and the nature of transformed social structures in such a spiritualised society. However, it is important to note that these details are not presented in absolute terms based on some abstract sociological projections, but are only indicated as hints in the light of spiritual realisations and experiences of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother.

This new consciousness does not evolve in a vacuum. It is the most natural progression for an individual consciousness, and indirectly for the group or societal consciousness. This is where the aim of Integral Education comes to forefront again. It is the evolution of consciousness in the individual that the education is concerned with, but this evolution is an integral part of the evolution of societal consciousness. And in this way the social impact of Sri Aurobindo’s thoughts on education are just as important as Gandhi, because they are both emphasising different things. Gandhi is deeply concerned with the human society as it exists now, the product of mental consciousness, and all the inequities and sufferings. Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand compels us, with our feet planted firmly in the present, to set our eyes on the society that he envisions for us, the spiritualised society, the result of a Supramental consciousness. Gandhi persuades the learners to act for changing the lives of the marginalised and the oppressed, and in the process transform and grow in their character. And Sri Aurobindo reminds us that “to hope for a true change of human life without a change of human nature is an irrational and unspiritual proposition; it is to ask for something unnatural and unreal, an impossible miracle” (CWSA, Vol. 21-22, p.1096). The social orientation of education for Gandhi is valuable because social engagement facilitates moral and spiritual development and transformation of the learners. Sri Aurobindo is concerned with the integral development and transformation of inner and outer nature of the learners and educators, and a centre of education that experiments with such a system of integral education becomes a dynamic ideal for the society through the very nature of its work in facilitating individual and collective evolution of consciousness.

At this point I visit the fourth question that I listed at the beginning of this essay – can Gandhian philosophy of education be considered Integral? I am tempted to say, no. Is it holistic? Certainly yes. But it is not integral in the sense of the term used by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. “Integral” in Aurobindonian sense is a term that comes from the Sanskrit word “*purna*,” which means

“complete.” In more general terms, holism concerns itself with all aspects of existence, which includes physical, emotional, instinctual, mental, moral, social and spiritual aspects; it looks upon them as equally valid and contributing for growth and evolution. But without transformation of these aspects of existence, a true integration or synthesis is not possible. Cenkner (1976/1994) explains:

“Integralism is possible in Sri Aurobindo’s system through transformation. He integrated experience not through a forced juxtaposition of realities and levels of being. Diverse principles and realities do not unite on their original level but are first transformed and then enter into a greater synthesis. For example, matter and spirit enter into synthesis only if matter loses its imperfections and limitations, but when it does so it can be integrated on a new level, a spiritual level, of being. The work of transformation is the work of man and the divine; transformation takes place most significantly on a supramental plane. What appears diverse is transformed and then integrated in such a way that unity and not opposition exists in the diversity” (p.147).

It is in this sense that the Integral transformation achieved through an evolution of consciousness becomes much wider, higher and deeper than holistic transformation.

Gandhian vision of education is concerned with the whole person, but it is not concerned with the divine or spiritualised human, an integrally transformed human. It emphasises the spiritual goal of man, but it is not concerned with the spiritualisation of humanity. It values the liberation (*moskha*) of man, but it doesn’t envision the Supramental transformation of the earth-life itself.

Spiritual and Psychic Education

In this last section I touch upon another important difference between Gandhian and Aurobindonian thought on the matter of spiritual education.

A spiritual education, in the light of Sri Aurobindo, would help the seeker to view both Spirit and Matter in a new light. Spirituality, in his vision, is an adventure in consciousness with matter for its basis, because the material or the so-called mundane world is neither false, nor illusory, but a truth, a reality though shrouded in falsehood and illusion. Therefore, one seeking for Truth must change one’s attitude to matter. Sri Aurobindo speaks of the necessity of the spiritual transformation of man which begins with the discovery of psychic being. The education of the psychic is based on the view that true education aims at the growth of the spirit than intellectual, moral or even religious knowledge.

For Sri Aurobindo, an adventure in consciousness begins with psychic

education which may be seen as his special contribution to educational theory and praxis. Sri Aurobindo emphasises that the principal function of education is to facilitate the learners’ process of discovering their psychic being. Psychic being, the psychological centre of an individual, is the spark of Divine that is spontaneous, direct and luminous, and supports the vital, the physical and the mental being. “the true secret whether with child, or man, is to help him find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within. That, if we ever give it a chance to come forward, and still more, if we call it into the foreground as ‘the leader of the march set in our front,’ will itself take up most of the business of education out of our hands and develop the capacity of the psychological being towards a realisation of potentialities.” (CWSA, Vol. 25, p.33).

Education in this respect becomes a social approach that is aimed at providing the best opportunity for exercise, expression and growth of psychic being. As Cenkner describes:

“The starting point is to discover within oneself that which is independent of external reality and the physical body, that is, the discovery of a sense of universality and limitlessness...The educative process is twofold. The first step is surrender to that which is beyond ego, and the second step is to will an identification with one’s psychic being....The four vehicles of learning – the vital, the physical, the mental and the psychic – respectively, cultivate power, beauty, knowledge and love and hence liberate man from material conditioning, desires, ignorance and suffering. This fourfold approach to education is simultaneous, beginning at an early age and all organised homogeneously around the psychic centre. The psychic movement inward which is complemented by opening outward to higher existence brings spiritual transformation” (1976/1994, p.170).

For Gandhi, a thoughtfully conceived and open-minded approach to religious education which values and welcomes comparative understanding of various religions becomes an important component of good education. For Sri Aurobindo, psychic education is something not connected with any religious education but a way to prepare learners for a spiritual seeking beyond religion. However, Gandhi’s emphasis on religious education does not imply that he doesn’t value the primary spiritual aim of education – an aim that is not bound by any one particular religion but points to something that transcends any constructed view of religion.

Sri Aurobindo would also admit that spirituality can be understood and practised through religion, but he also cautions strongly that religion has a

tendency to become....well, like religion, and therefore dogmatic, credal and limiting. As he writes in *The Human Cycle*:

“There are two aspects of religion, true religion and religionism. True religion is spiritual religion, that which seeks to live in the spirit, in what is beyond the intellect, beyond the aesthetic and ethical and practical being of man, and to inform and govern these members of our being by the higher light and law of the spirit. Religionism, on the contrary, entrenches itself in some narrow pietistic exaltation of the lower members or lays exclusive stress on intellectual dogmas, forms and ceremonies, on some fixed and rigid moral code, on some religio-political or religio-social system. Not that these things are altogether negligible or that they must be unworthy or unnecessary or that a spiritual religion need disdain the aid of forms, ceremonies, creeds or systems. On the contrary, they are needed by man because the lower members have to be exalted and raised before they can be fully spiritualised, before they can directly feel the spirit and obey its law. An intellectual formula is often needed by the thinking and reasoning mind, form or ceremony by the aesthetic temperament or other parts of the infra-rational being, a set moral code by man’s vital nature in their turn towards the inner life. But these things are aids and supports, not the essence; precisely because they belong to the rational and infrarational parts, they can be nothing more and, if too blindly insisted on, may even hamper the suprarational light. Such as they are, they have to be offered to man and used by him, but not to be imposed on him as his sole law by a forced and inflexible domination. In the use of them toleration and free permission of variation is the first rule which should be observed. The spiritual essence of religion is alone the one thing supremely needful, the thing to which we have always to hold and subordinate to it every other element or motive (CWSA, Vol. 25, pp.177-178).”

It is this “spiritual essence of religion” that will form the basis of comparative religious education for Gandhi. As this quote of his illustrates – “To me religion means Truth and *ahimsa* or rather Truth alone, because Truth includes *ahimsa*, *ahimsa* being the necessary and indispensable means for its discovery. Therefore, anything that promotes the practice of these virtues is a means for imparting religious education and the best way to do this, in my opinion, is for the teachers rigorously to practise these virtues in their own person”(Gandhi quoted in *Young India*, December 6, 1928, as cited in Cenker, 1976/1994, p. 114).

In addition to emphasising the universal essentials of religion, Gandhi also had specific views on what a curriculum of religious education should look like,

what type of writings should be used in such a curriculum. He also emphasised that a study of other religions besides one’s own will give the learner a grasp of the underlying unity of all religions and will also provide a glimpse of that universal and absolute Truth which lies beyond the dust of creeds and faiths. Thus the ultimate aim of such a religious education will also be to prepare learners to eventually experience the search for Truth, the spirit’s seeking for the Truth beyond religion.

It seems to me, however, that such a comparative religious education may not always lead towards facilitating a move beyond the mental/intellectual understanding of the oneness of all religions or belief. It may just be a really great and transforming way to intellectually grasp the wisdom of *Ekam Sat, Vipra Bahudha Vadanti* (Truth is One, Sages speak of it by different names) but whether such an intellectual acceptance may also create some openings for learners to feel or experience a central aspiration or a seeking for an inner life is not certain. Perhaps this is because of the human tendency (or mind’s tendency) to fall into the trap of religionism (as Sri Aurobindo explains) and steer away from the true spiritual essence of religion. It is here that I find Sri Aurobindo’s and The Mother’s approach of psychic education much more appealing and powerful.

Gandhi’s primary approach to spirituality, though beyond the narrow chauvinistic religiosity, is still grounded in the “universal essence of religion.” Whereas for Sri Aurobindo, spirituality is about that which is beyond religion, though religion also has the spiritual essence. For Sri Aurobindo, education should help facilitate the opening of learners’ minds and hearts to a universal spirituality, should help prepare learners mentally, vitally and physically in such a way that it facilitates a gradual opening or flowering of inner psychic being, and should instil in learners an aspiration for seeking for personal truth through self-search and self-knowledge. For Gandhi, education should help learners develop a sense of such a universal spirituality through a genuinely respectful and empathic understanding of different religious traditions (though Gandhi also emphasises moral and spiritual development through other important means such as service, manual labour etc.)

I wish to end this paper with the following passage from an essay by Nolini Kanta Gupta, titled, “*The spiritual genius of India*.” The following words convey succinctly the difference between Religion and Spirituality, which add an important dimension to the differences between the kind of religio-spiritual education Gandhi envisions and the kind of psychic and spiritual education emphasised by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. I include these lines here also because in a rather unique way, they also represent a fundamental difference

between Gandhian and Aurobindonian visions of education. While Gandhian educational thought might have been more influenced with the essence of Religion as presented in the following words, Sri Aurobindo's thought seems to be based more on the view of Spirituality as described in these words. Though of course, this may not fully illustrate all the important details that make each of their visions unique and relevant.

“Religion starts from and usually ends with a mental and emotional approach to realities beyond the mind; Spirituality goes straight forward to direct vision and communion with the Beyond. Religion labours to experience and express the world of Spirit in and through a turn, often a twist, given by the mental being — *manu* — in man; it bases itself upon the demands of the mental, the vital and the physical complex – the triple nexus that forms the ordinary human personality and seeks to satisfy them under a holier garb. Spirituality knows the demands of the Spirit alone; it lives in a realm where the body, the life and the mind stand uplifted and transmuted into their utter realities. Religion is the human way of approaching and enjoying the Divine; Spirituality is the divine way of meeting the Divine. Religion, as it is usually practised, is a special art, one – the highest it may be, still only one – among many other pursuits that man looks to for his enjoyment and fulfilment; but spirituality is nothing if it does not swallow up the entire man, take in his each and every preoccupation and new-create it into an inevitable expression of its own master truth. Religion gives a moral discipline for the internal consciousness, and for the external life, a code of conduct based upon a system of rules and rites and ceremonies; spirituality aims at a revolution in the consciousness and in the being” (Gupta, 1976/1993, p.117).

Inspired by the above words, I wish to claim that in Gandhian vision, the ultimate aim of education is to help learners develop human means of meeting the divine. In the vision of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, the ultimate aim of education is to help learners develop divine ways of meeting the Divine and bringing the Divine on Earth.

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Exploring the ‘Spirit of Delight’ in Sri Aurobindo’s sonnets

Aurobindo Goswami

Rarely, rarely, comest thou,
Spirit of Delight!
Wherefore hast thou left me now
Many a day and night?
Many a weary night and day
'Tis since thou art fled away.
-*The Song* by Shelley

‘Delight’ is a sensation which rarely visits ordinary human mortals such as ourselves. There are obviously very few who really appreciate the worth of this delight or eagerly await like a Shelley for the ‘spirit of delight’ to pervade in their lives. It is often confused with a wave of egoistic, physical or vital sensation, a mere thrill and sensation of the nerves, which arises whenever a person indulges in self-enjoyment and satisfaction of his lower vital or egoistic desires. A delight that pushes us towards a higher truth, awakens in us the aspiration for living a higher, divine life upon the earth, is actually the pure and the real source of the Supreme Ananda in this universe.

Sri Aurobindo’s sonnets take us further into the realm of this Supreme Delight that exists in the universe – hidden, mysterious, inscrutable. It is a joy for every reader to discover in them a staircase of light which leads him to the hidden zone of Truth, knowledge and bliss.

The sonnets reveal that our present passionate enjoyment or vital sensations that bind us is only a flicker of the real delight that awaits us in the distant future, the distinct hints of which we find in the sonnet *The Silver Call* where he writes –

All eye has seen and all the ear has heard
Is a pale illusion by some greater voice
And mightier vision; no sweet sound or word,
No passion of hues that make the heart rejoice

Can equal those diviner ecstasies.

One can relate this vision and music of delight with the following lines of Keats from the poem *Ode on a Grecian Urn* –

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:

One can also relate this theme to another sonnet of Sri Aurobindo *The Kingdom Within*, where he writes –

Wider behind than the vast universe
Our spirit scans the drama and the stir,
A peace, a light, an ecstasy, a power
Waiting at the end of blindness and the curse
That veils it from its ignorant minister
The grandeur of its free eternal hour.

The sonnets reveal that the source of this delight lies within our very heart and it is not necessary to discover this delight in Nature or in any external object in this universe, for our heart is the very centre through which this delight enters and can flow through every tissue and cell, leading to a wider spiritual embrace with the universe, as he writes in the sonnet *Bliss of Identity* –

O fiery boundless Heart of joy and love,
How art thou beating in a mortal’s breast!

It is Thy rapture flaming through my nerves
And all my cells and atoms thrill with Thee;
My body Thy vessel is and only serves
As a living wine-cup of Thy ecstasy.

It is thus this very ‘ecstasy’ which Keats finds in the nightingale in his poem *Ode to a Nightingale* where he writes –

While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy.

The delight which is mysterious, unknown and yet Shelley hears it in his poem *To a Skylark* where he laments that the source of delight is invisible to him as he writes –

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of heaven,
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen – but yet I hear thy
shrill delight

Sri Aurobindo further establishes in the sonnets that delight is the very instrument through which one has to capture the Truth in the evolutionary process as he himself says, “Delight is the secret. Learn of pure delight and thou shalt learn of God.” (*Thoughts and Glimpses*).

The sonnets reveal that it is not through any intellectual analysis that one has to arrive at a higher knowledge upon Earth but through the “far subtle vision of his soul” (*The Ways of the Spirit [1]*). A vision which can only be captured not in “life’s stuff of passionate unease” (*The Kingdom Within*) but in the “deep Atlantic of delight” (*Now I have borne*) which lies within the heart. The truth of the Brahman must be captured in delight as stated in the following lines of the sonnet *The Bliss of Brahman* –

I have become a foam-white sea of bliss,
I am a curving wave of God’s delight,
[...]
I am drunken with the glory of the Lord,
I am vanquished by the beauty of the Unborn;
I have looked alive on the Eternal’s face.

The ‘Eternal’s face’ can only be gazed at by being ‘drunken with the glory of the Lord’ in a ‘wave of God’s delight’, a phenomenon which reminds us of

the lines of the poem *Kubla Khan* by Coleridge –

Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight ’twould win me,
[...]
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Sri Aurobindo emphasises in his sonnets the great beauty and harmony of delight or ecstasy which pervades the poet. There is a certain method, beauty, rhythm and harmony in a spiritual ecstasy and delight quite a mark away from the excited, wayward, passionate, physical and vital enjoyment which we are currently in. Here the abstruse, disoriented waves of the vital and physical joys have been tamed into a calm delight; a rejection and a transcendence of the transient, intermittent joys and pleasures associated with our physical and lower-vital nature has taken place. The Supreme Delight that touches the poet doesn’t excite him but creates for him peace and harmony as he writes in the sonnet *Liberation [1]* -

My mind is hushed in wide and endless light,
My heart a solitude of delight and peace,

It is the very ‘solitude’ which this ‘delight’ or ecstasy creates. The harmony of this delight can again be traced to the sonnet *The Divine Hearing* where he clearly indicates in the final couplet –

A secret harmony steals through the blind heart
And all grows beautiful because Thou art.

The poet thus wants to extend this very harmony and delight to ‘all’, i.e., to the whole universe. This reminds us of Shelley’s lines in his poem *To a Skylark* where he writes –

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,

Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow,
The world should listen then – as I am
listening now.

Shelley's 'harmonious madness' thus translates into 'A Silence on the mountains of delight' in Sri Aurobindo (*The Universal Incarnation*).

The sonnets also bring into context our general concept of 'Silence' and 'Nothingness' as a hollow, joyless concept of existence. Sri Aurobindo establishes in the sonnets that 'Nothingness' and 'Silence' are not empty spaces of clumsiness, torpor and gloominess or inaction but a zone of infinite delight, peace and joy of existence. It is to be noted that 'Silence' is actually the state in which all our animal passions are stilled into a calm, harmonious wave of peace. The glimpses of this very peace and delight and joy of existence immersed in silence, can be observed clearly in the following lines from the sonnet *The Self's Infinity* –

All things by the agent Mind created pass
Into a void and mute magnificence.

My life is a silence grasped by timeless hands;
The world is drowned in an immortal gaze
[...]

A momentless immensity pure and bare,
I stretch to an eternal everywhere.

It's to be noted that this very 'Nothingness' had been previously treated by earlier poets such as Shakespeare, as a state of vacancy and despair. We can observe this in the famous soliloquy from *Macbeth* –

Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. (Act V, Scene V)

We notice the same sense of 'nothing' though in a different context a few scenes back in Act I, Scene III when Macbeth contemplates about the crown –

My thought, whose murmur yet is but fantastical
Shakes so my single state of man, that function
Is smother'd in surmise; and nothing is
But what is not.

One can notice that in both these contexts, the word 'nothing' is not an expression of an intense spiritual joy or a discovery of an intense delight or ecstasy of a spiritual vision or discovery, but an expression of anguish or remorse that arises from the pessimism and frustration of the individual. He might have arisen to capture the Nihilistic vision of life but has failed to appreciate the joy of Nothingness, the spiritual calm and delight immersed in a 'nothing'. The vision of 'nothing' in *Macbeth* carries only the knowledge without the delight; or rather half the knowledge as knowledge is incomplete without delight.

Sri Aurobindo further emphasises in the sonnets that all delight comes from the chamber of immortality, lurking deep within our hearts. He assures us that delight is nothing but the secret sensation that drives us towards immortality. The following lines from the sonnet *Immortality* reveal that delight itself contains the seed of immortality –

I have drunk deep of God's own liberty
From which an occult sovereignty derives:
Hidden in an earthly garment that survives,
I am the worldless being vast and free.

[...]
Abolishing death and time my nature lives
In the deep heart of immortality.

The same image of delight or ecstasy associated with immortality is found in the poem *Ode to a Nightingale* where the bird who has been "pouring forth thy soul abroad", "in such an ecstasy!", assumes an immortal existence in the following lines –

Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;

It is to be noted Keats wishes to depart like a spirit away from the world to achieve immortality, as he says in the same poem a few lines back –

Oh, for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth,
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim – .

The very “beaker full of the warm South” becomes the ‘Hebe’s cup’ in Sri Aurobindo’s *The Inner Fields*, where the poet sips it to achieve immortality –

Immortal spaces of cerulean hue
Are in our reach and fields without this fault
Of drab brown earth and streams that never halt
In their deep murmur which white flowers strew
[...]
There we can walk and see the gods go by
And sip from Hebe’s cup nectar enough
To make for us heavenly limbs and deathless face.

It’s only divine love carrying the seed of delight that can promise immortality even on the verge of death. A theme which is also found in Tennyson’s poem *The Coming of Arthur* where the poet writes –

For each had warded either in the fight,
Swore on the field of death a deathless love.

Sri Aurobindo believes that immortality is a thing decreed even though our present consciousness do not appear to hold such promise, as he writes in *The Pilgrim of the Night* –

I walk by the chill wave through the dull slime
And still that weary journeying knows no end;
Lost is the lustrous godhead beyond Time,
There comes no voice of the celestial Friend.
And yet I know my footprints’ track shall be

A pathway towards Immortality.

The sonnets highlight the fact that all creation must arise out of Supreme Delight otherwise the creation is flawed. It is a satire on the present motive of man behind his every creation, which is nothing but his mere survival and a prolongation of his physical and vital enjoyment. Sri Aurobindo states that the universe has been created out of delight and exists for the sake of delight only. The following lines from the sonnet *Creation* help us understand this better –

Since Thou hadst all eternity to amuse,
O sculptor of the living shapes of earth,
O dramatist of death and life and birth,
World-artist revelling in forms and hues,
[...]
Building a universe from Thy theories?
Protean is Thy spirit of delight,
Craftsman minute and architect of might,
World-adept of a thousand mysteries.

We find this very delight of creation again in the sonnet *Lila* where he writes –

A king of greatness and a slave of love,
Host of the stars and guest in Nature’s inn,
A high spectator Spirit throned above,
A pawn of passion in the game divine,

One who has made in sport the suns and seas
Mirrors in our being his immense caprice.

The song of delight which has “made in sport the suns and seas” is echoed in the following lines of Meredith’s *The Lark Ascending* –

For singing till his heaven fills,
'Tis love of earth that he instils,
And ever winging up and up,
Our valley is his golden cup,
And he the wine which overflows
To lift us with him as he goes:

The woods and brooks, the sheep and kine
 He is, the hills, the human line,
 The meadows green, the fallows brown,
 The dreams of labour in the town;
 He sings the sap, the quickened veins;
 The wedding song of sun and rains
 He is, the dance of children, thanks
 Of sowers, shout of primrose-banks,
 And eye of violets while they breathe;
 All these the circling song will wreath,
 And you shall hear the herb and tree,
 The better heart of men shall see,
 Shall feel celestially, as long
 As you crave nothing save the song.

Sri Aurobindo, like Meredith, hears the music of delight in every creation of the universe.

The sonnets illustrate the truth that true love is only that with which is associated this element of delight. The love which presently moves us is nothing but a play of our physical and lower-vital sensations. We can thus understand that any emotion which doesn't have the essence of a harmonious delight of the soul and has only a bundle of physical and vital impulses associated with it; cannot be an image of true love. We can relate this to the sonnet *O face that I have loved*, where the poet says—

They say you are not beautiful, — no snare
 Of twilight in the changing mysticness
 Or deep enhaloed secrecy of hair,
 Soft largeness in the eyes I dare not kiss!
 Unreal all your bosom's dreadful bliss.
 Too narrow are your brows they say to bear
 The temple of vast beauty in its span
 Or chaste cold bosom to house fiercely
 Beauty that maddens all the heart of man.
 I know not; this I know that utterly
 My soul is by some magic curls surprised,
 Some glances have my heart immortalised.

These lines clearly indicate that the external beauty of the beloved is not at all a criterion of the poet to love her, for he rejects the sensual pleasures

associated with love that arises from the attraction towards the external charm of the beloved, which “maddens all the heart of man” but accepts the eternal, calm delight of the soul which is “by some magic curls surprised” to discover the inner beauty of his beloved. This is illustrated in Shakespeare's sonnet number 130, where he rejects the traditional forms of beauty celebrated in Elizabethan love poetry and boasts of the heavenly, spiritual beauty of his beloved as he writes —

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
 Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
 If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
 If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

 I grant I never saw a goddess go, —
 My mistress when she walks treads on the ground;
 And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
 As any she belied with false compare.”

Shakespeare finds a greater ‘delight’ in ‘perfumes’ than in the ‘breath’ from his mistress, but finds an eternal delight in the spiritual calmness and harmony present in her, as he rejects all that provokes a lustful appreciation of his beloved's beauty. We can relate this to the following lines from his sonnet number 116—

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
 Within his bending sickle's compass come;
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

Sri Aurobindo like Shakespeare, rejects the prurient pleasures of the “rosy lips and cheeks” and participates with him in the appreciation of the beauty and the delight of the spirit.

Sri Aurobindo emphasises in his sonnets the fact that one does not need to escape from the universe to attain this ‘delight’, as according to him, this ‘delight’ exists in each and every being of the universe. He states that it is mainly due to our present stage of ignorance and imperfection that we are unable to realise this delight, or the *rasa* of existence. It is only by rising to a higher consciousness that we can feel in ourselves this ‘delight’ existing throughout the universe, in all and thus it is not necessary to run away from this world in order to attain this

state of ‘delight’. The following lines from the sonnet *Form* offer us some clues –

O worshipper of the formless Infinite,
Reject not form, what dwells in it is He.
Each finite is that deep Infinity
Enshrining His veiled soul of pure delight.
Form in its heart of silence recondite
Hides the significance of His mystery,
Form is the wonder-house of eternity,
A cavern of the deathless Eremite.

It’s only by seeking the Infinite in every finite that we can arrive at delight, as Tennyson discovers it in the following lines of his poem *De Profundis* –

That thou art thou — who wailest being born
And banish’d into mystery, and the pain
Of this divisible-indivisible world
Among the numerable-innumerable
Sun, sun, and sun, thro’ finite-infinite space
In finite-infinite Time — our mortal veil
And shatter’d phantom of that infinite One,
Who made thee unconceivably Thyself
Out of His whole World-self and all in all —
[...]

Not Matter, nor the finite-infinite,
But this main-miracle, that thou art thou,
With power on thine own act and on the world.

Like Tennyson, Sri Aurobindo states that the finite and the infinite merge into the single identity of The One, who “in His glory multitudinous”, “compels the great world-petals to enclose” to enshrine “His veiled soul of pure delight”. The sensation of delight is suddenly found in each and every form in the universe once our mortal vision changes into a divine one in which one emerges from his self-centredness to a universal identity of his self, where one feels all in one and One in all, as Sri Aurobindo describes in the *Divine Sense* –

For Thou hast changed my sense’s habitude
From mortal pleasure to divine surprise.

Hearing and sight are now an ecstasy,
And all the fragrances of earth disclose
A sweetness matching in intensity
Odour of the crimson marvel of the rose.

In every contact’s deep invading thrill,
That lasts as if its source were infinite,
I feel Thy touch; Thy bliss imperishable
Is crowded into that moment of delight.

We find similar hints of this concept in the final couplet of the sonnet *Divine Sight* –

All forms are Thy dream-dialect of delight,
O Absolute, O vivid Infinite.

The sonnets establish the fact that all our present suffering and anguish is only a preparation for a greater delight upon earth and that we shouldn’t take suffering as a curse but as a necessary passage to the delight of existence; as he enlightens in *Savitri* – “Its darkness is a blackened knot of light”.

The following lines of the sonnet *To weep because a glorious sun*, establishes the fact that at the end of all suffering and misery, waits for man the eternal delight –

To shrink from pain without whose friendly strife
Joy could not be, to make a terror of death
Who smiling beckons us to farther life
And is a bridge for the persistent breath;
Despair and anguish and the tragic grief
Of dry set eyes or such disastrous tears
As rend the heart though meant for its relief,

The sonnet reminds us that our present sorrowful existence is a consequence of our own imperfect consciousness but can transform into a state of perfect bliss, if we take the trouble to find in us the ‘spirit of delight’. We have to accept the truth that each sensation of pain and agony prepares us for a spiritual ecstasy as is noted by Keats in his *Ode on Melancholy* –

Aye, in the very temple of Delight

Veiled Melancholy has her sovran shrine,

Though seen of none save him whose strenuous
tongue

Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
His soul shalt taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

We understand that delight and grief are both divine sensations and mutually reflect each other, as indicated in the following lines of the sonnet *Omni-presence* –

He has become my substance and my breath;
He is my anguish and my ecstasy.
My birth is His eternity's sign, my death
A passage of His immortality.

The words 'anguish and 'ecstasy' become synonymous as both lead to the Divine.

The sonnets present us with a notion of delight which can exist even if the outer circumstances of life are not favourable for us, i.e., even if we fall into misery and suffering in outer life, we can always invoke the 'spirit of delight' to pervade in our lives; for delight exists for its own sake, it is independent of the "the tragedies of the heart and the body" (*Thoughts and Aphorisms*). This brings forward an individual who can feel the 'sorrow of millions' in his heart and yet remain unmoved in his spiritual calm and eternal delight. The sonnet *Cosmic Consciousness*, offers us exactly the picture of the cosmic man who resides in his spiritual joy irrespective of the world-events –

All Nature is the nursling of my care,
I am the struggle and the eternal rest;
The world's joy thrilling runs through me,
I bear the sorrow of millions in my lonely breast.

In the same context we can examine the following lines from *The Cosmic Spirit* –

My life is the life of village and continent,

I am earth's agony and her throbs of bliss;
I share all creatures' sorrow and content
And feel the passage of every stab and kiss.
Impassive, I bear each act and thought and mood:
Time traverses my hushed infinitude.

We also find him in Tennyson's *Ulysses*, where the traveller experiences the sorrows and delights of all he encounters but still his 'gray spirit' yearns 'in desire to follow knowledge like a sinking star'. The following lines give us a better idea of this cosmic man who journeys through life unmoved by outward joy or suffering –

I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoyed
Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vexed the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known – cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honoured of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;

However, the vital question that arises is how far a general reader will be able to appreciate the essence of this delight in Sri Aurobindo's sonnets, for the very consciousness from where the poet is writing may seem inaccessible to him. We then have to regard the fact whatever be the present consciousness of the reader, there must come in him an opening that whenever he reads them, it will help him to experience this delight, even though a flicker. The general reader may not be able to manifest this delight in his life but it will surely pave the way for the birth of a higher consciousness in the future.

It is to be noted that the main defect that lies within us is our unwillingness to rise from our present state of our dull ease and bowed greyiness. We have to understand that it is not through any logical reasoning or speculation that we can arrive at a higher truth or consciousness where all our present problems of existence will be dissolved but only by rising from our very sphere of mortal

existence, by raising our aspiration to a higher, divine life upon earth. The knowledge we currently possess is imperfect, it is “so much of the truth seen in a distorted medium as the mind arrives at by groping” (*Thoughts and Aphorisms*); for it is an amalgam of mere intellectual analysis which cannot lead to harmony, delight or peace; it can only lead to a mutual interchange of joy with grief, a mere thrill and sensation of the body which can for a short time compensate for our pain and suffering on earth. Thus we must invite ‘*The Golden Light*’ into us which will prepare us for the ultimate knowledge in the future, for knowledge is incomplete without the promise of delight. We find this in an aphorism of Sri Aurobindo –

“Shun the barren snare of an empty metaphysics and the dry dust of an unfertile intellectuality. Only that knowledge is worth having which can be made use of for a living delight and put out into temperament, action, creation and being.” (*Thoughts and Aphorisms*)

The sonnets prepare us for the delight that await us at the end of our journey; it is a preparation for us to live a life of greater breath. The ‘spirit of delight’ can make our existence a veritable delight and it is only through a conscious opening to it that we can arrive at our destined immortality. The promise is echoed in the words of our poet, in the lines of his epic poem *Savitri* –

All here shall be one day her sweetness’ home,
 All contraries prepare her harmony;
 Towards her our knowledge climbs, our passion gropes;
 In her miraculous rapture we shall dwell,
 Her clasp shall turn to ecstasy our pain.
 Our self shall be one self with all through her.
 (Book III: *The Book of the Divine Mother*, Canto II: *The Adoration of the Divine Mother*, p. 314)

Notes On Authors

(Includes names of those contributors whose writings have not appeared in this journal before)

Aurobindo Goswami came to know about Sri Aurobindo and the Mother at a very young age. Having read most of their works and popular titles on them, he took up the literary works of Sri Aurobindo as the subject of his own research. He holds a M.A. in English Literature from the University of Calcutta. He lives in Sodepur, Kolkata.

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Rabindra Kumar Das Gupta (2 July 1915 – 3 February 2009) was a Bengali Indian scholar of Bengali and English literature and a social and cultural commentator. He was considered by his peers as one of the last scholars with equal command of English and Bengali languages. Graduating from the Scottish Church College in 1935, where he had studied English and Bengali literature from scholars like William Spence Urquhart and Birendrabinode Roy, he did his M.A. degree in English literature at the University of Calcutta in 1937. He received *Regina Guha* Gold Medal and U.N. Mitra Research Scholarship for his M.A. thesis on *English Tragedies on Attic Lines*. He also obtained the *Premchand Raichand Scholar* (PRS) award in 1939. He was a *Mouat Gold Medalist* and obtained his Doctorate in Philosophy from the University of Calcutta in 1950. He went to Exeter College on a *Sir Rashbehari Ghosh Travelling Fellowship* in 1955, to complete his D.Phil in English literature on the works of John Milton, in record time. He worked under the guidance of Dame Helen Gardner.

After his post-graduation from the University of Calcutta, he was first appointed as a faculty at the post-graduate department of English at Calcutta University in 1938, where he worked until 1945. He was a Reader at University of Saugar from 1946 to 1947. He went to Delhi and joined as a Professor in English at the Hindu College, University of Delhi. Subsequently, he was appointed as the

Officiating Professor of English at Presidency College, Kolkata in 1958. Thereafter he joined Jadavpur University as a Reader in English, where he worked until 1960. Later he joined Calcutta University as a Reader in English and continued in this post until 1962. In the same year he went to Delhi as Tagore Professor of Bengali in the Department of Modern Indian Languages, University of Delhi and served in that post until 1977. After retirement he was a Professor at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta. Later in life, he became the first Indian executive member of the International Comparative Literature Association and Canadian Review of Comparative Literature. He contributed articles in Kolkata's English language daily, *The Statesman* and in the Bengali periodical *Desh*. He was also appointed as the Director of National Library. He was an eloquent and expressive thinker. Some of his publications are *English Poets on India and Other Essays*, *Revolutionary Ideas of Swami Vivekananda*, *East West Literary Relations*, *Bangali ki Atmaghati O Anyanya Rachana* ('Are Bengalis Self-Destructive and Other Essays' in Bengali, in response to Nirad C. Chaudhuri's *Atmaghati Bangali - 'The Self-Destructive Bengali'*), etc. Among the many awards received by him mention must be made of the following: *Sarojini Gold Medal* for his essays on Michael Madhusudan Dutta, *Rabindra Puraskar* by the Government of West Bengal, *Desikottama* by the Visva-Bharati University in 2006, *Sarat Puruskar* in 2008.

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