

# *New Race*

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*New Race*

*blessings*  


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## From the Editor's Desk...

### FROM CLASH TO CONFEDERATION OF NATIONS

World political conditions are assuming alarming dimensions today. While the need for unity is on the rise, the world is continuously equipping itself to divide and rule or kill. It is truly puzzling and discomfoting to imagine the state in which we are living. The war is on. All rests on one lunatic from the East or the West to press the button and the earth will cease to exist. Yet constantly there is a cry for peace and harmony and unity. How are these forces working? How is it that sitting on the brink of extinction we continue to live and breathe and think of the future of earth? Is it a dream, a fantasy? When we plan for 2050, do we ever think that the earth may cease to exist by then?

In reality both the conditions are true. The drive towards unity is strong world over but the seperative mentality has not left us. It is this rule of the separative mentality that is leading individuals as well Nations to divide rather than coalesce. The force of nature is pushing the world towards unity but the forces of mind are forcing a division. As a result of these two forces the world is busy arranging and rearranging itself in various permutations and combinations of divisions, unions and federations.

The great seer Sri Aurobindo observes that in the future it is not that the national boundaries would vanish and the world would become a single nation. He rather envisions that the individual nations will grow in collaboration with each other and form larger confederations based on their temperament or *swabahva*. Such a confederation will not sacrifice the diversity and freedom of any nation. It will facilitate an organic growth for all and would bring unity by a psychological and spiritual need. "Unity would be the largest principle of life, but freedom would be its foundation-stone" says the *rishi*.

At present each nation has to address its own internal problems before it becomes ready for the larger unity. Therefore, humanity can consciously work towards coming together and form psychological and spiritual units which would finally manifest the larger confederations when the world conditions are ready.

It is in this context that the excerpts from Sri Aurobindo's writings on the Chinese threat and the Kashmir problem become relevant and we get a deeper vision of the apparent political contions of the world.

It is indeed for the future to reveal the reality.

*Shruti Bidwaikar*

# TRUTH



**All differences in this world are of degree, and not of kind,  
because oneness is the secret of everything.**

Swami Vivekananda

## ON THE KASHMIR PROBLEM

*Sri Aurobindo*

Now let us come to your article. All you have written up to the X mark against the beginning of a para is very good and needed to be said; but after that there are certain things to which I have to take objection. For instance, why suggest a slur on the whole Mohammedan population of Kashmir by speaking of “fanatic spell of the name of Allah”? This cannot apply to the Kashmiris who follow Abdullah and who are in a large majority, they are for his idea of a secular state. The others in Gilgit and elsewhere are not actuated by religious fanaticism but by political motives. The rest of the sentence should be modified accordingly; the people

in the districts who have been rescued from the grip of the rebels have shown strong gratitude for their release and it would be quite impolitic to ignore by such doubts the sincerity of this gratitude. I am not enamoured of your idea of an understanding between Pakistan and India, it is not likely that the Pakistan Government will consent to any understanding except one which will help to perpetuate the partition and be to their advantage. It would be most dangerous to forget Jinnah’s motive and policy in establishing Pakistan which is still the motive and policy of the Pakistan leaders,—although it would not be politic to say anything about it just now. If you keep what you have written it should be with the proviso, if there is a change of heart and if Pakistan becomes willing to effect some kind of junction with India or some overtopping Council of cooperation between the two federations. But the most amazing thing is your disastrous suggestion of a coalition Government between the loyalists and the rebels in Kashmir. That would give a position and influence and control over all the affairs of the State to the supporters of Pakistan which they can never hope to have under the present circumstances. They would be able to appoint their own men in the administration, use intimidation and trickery in order to press people to vote against their will and generally falsify the plebiscite, and they certainly would not hesitate to do all that they could for that end. It might very well knock all the good cards out of Abdullah’s hands and smash up his present predominant chances of a favourable issue of the plebiscite.

There is a passage in your article containing a trenchant suggestion which has puzzled me. You seem to say that India has been beaten on the military ground in Kashmir and there is no hope of her keeping it or clearing out the invaders; her last chance is the plebiscite and that is the reason why she is insisting on the plebiscite. Is that at all true? It would mean that Indian military strength is unable to cope with that of Pakistan and then, if she cannot cope with it in Kashmir in spite of her initial advantage, can she do it anywhere? If she gives up Kashmir because of her military weakness that encourages Pakistan to carry through Jinnah’s plan with regard to the establishment of Muslim rule in Northern India and they will try it out. I don’t think this is really the case. It was for political motives, I take it, and not from a consciousness of military weakness that India did not push her initial advantage, and she insisted on the plebiscite, not because it was her last or only chance but because it gave her the best chance. In a plebiscite on the single and straight issue of joining either Pakistan or India she was and is quite confident of an overwhelming majority in her favour. Moreover, she does not cling to the plebiscite from motives of ideological purity and will even refuse it if it is to be held on any conditions other than those she has herself clearly and insistently laid down. She is quite prepared to withdraw the case from the cognizance of the U.N.O and retain Kashmir by her own means and even, if necessary, by fight to the finish,

if that is unavoidable. That Patel has made quite clear and uncompromisingly positive and Nehru has not been less positive. Both of them are determined to resist to the bitter end any attempt to force a solution which is not consistent with the democratic will of the Kashmir people and their right of self-determination of their own destiny. At the same time they are trying to avoid a clash if it is at all possible.

One thing which both Abdullah and the India Government want to avoid and have decided to resist by all possible means is a partition of Kashmir, especially with Gilgit and Northern Kashmir going to Pakistan. This is the greatest danger but the details and the reasons for the possibility of its materialising, though they are plain enough, have to be kept confidential or, at any rate, not to be discussed in public. But if you take account of it, it will be easier to understand the situation and the whole policy of the India Government. That at least is the stand taken by them and the spirit of the terms they have laid down for the conditions of the plebiscite. These conditions have been just at this moment published in the newspapers and the whole course of negotiations with the U.N.O. Kashmir Commission has been laid bare in a public statement. Practically, the Commission representative has conceded on its part almost all the essential demands and conditions laid down by Nehru. All, however, remains fluid until and unless the Security Council acquiesces in the arrangements proposed by their own Commission or else take a different decision and until the plebiscite Administrator is appointed and makes the final arrangements. What will finally transpire from all this lies as the Greeks used to say on the knees of the Gods, *theōn en gounasi keitai*. It lies also with the reactions of the Pakistan leaders which are more easily calculable, but may not show themselves until a possibly much later date.

In any case, it seems to me that our only course is to support the India Government in the stand they are taking in regard to Kashmir and the terms and conditions they have made, so long as they do not weaken and deviate from their position. Nothing should be said which would discourage the public mind or call away the support which the Government needs in maintaining the right course. What I have written on Kashmir is only my personal view at present based on the information I have and must be kept quite private. But it may perhaps be of some help to you in determining what you may say or not say about Kashmir.

Since the above was written there has appeared Pakistan's interpretation of the Commission's arrangement for the plebiscite. It looks as if Lozano had made his statements as smooth as possible to either party so that they got very different impressions of what was meant to be done. However there is only one important point and that is about the Azad armies. If these are allowed to remain in arms in the places they now occupy the plebiscite will become a farce. But the India authorities seem to have received a definite promise from Lozano that it will be otherwise. We shall have to wait and see what will be the definite arrangements and how the Commission will get out of this imbroglio. But Pakistan in this matter is showing a mentality that makes one wonder whether it is worth while your suggesting the possibility of an amicable rapprochement between the two parts of partitioned India such as you have gone out of your way to elaborate in your article.

c. September 1949  
(CWSA 36: 517-520)

## THE CHINESE THREAT\*

*Sri Aurobindo*

Here again, as elsewhere, the actual danger presents itself rather as a clash between two opposing ideologies, one led by Russia and Red China and trying to impose the Communistic extreme partly by military and partly by forceful political means on a reluctant or at least an infected but not altogether willing Asia and Europe, and on the other side a combination of peoples, partly capitalist, partly moderate socialist who still cling with some attachment to the idea of liberty,— to freedom of thought and some remnant of the free life of the individual. In America there seems to be a push, especially in the Latin peoples, towards a rather intolerant completeness of the Americanisation of the whole continent and the adjacent islands, a sort of extended Monroe Doctrine, which might create friction with the European Powers still holding possessions in the northern part of the continent. But this could only generate minor difficulties and disagreements and not the possibility of any serious collision, a case perhaps for arbitration or arrangement by the U.N.O., not any more serious consequence. In Asia a more perilous situation has arisen, standing sharply across the way to any possibility of a continental unity of the peoples. Of this part of the world, in the emergence of Communist China. This creates a gigantic bloc which could easily englobe the whole of Northern Asia in a combination between two enormous Communist Powers, Russia and China, and would overshadow with a threat of absorption South-Western Asia and Tibet and might be pushed to overrun all up to the whole frontier of India, menacing her security and that of Western Asia with the possibility of an invasion and an overrunning and subjection by penetration or even by overwhelming military force to an unwanted ideology, political and social institutions and dominance of this militant mass of Communism whose push might easily prove irresistible. In any case, the continent would be divided between two huge blocs which might enter into active mutual opposition and the possibility of a stupendous world-conflict would arise dwarfing anything previously experienced: the possibility of any world union might, even without any actual outbreak of hostilities, be indefinitely postponed by the incompatibility of interests and ideologies on a scale which would render their inclusion in a single body hardly realisable. The possibility of a coming into being of three or four continental unions, which might subsequently coalesce into a single unity, would then be very remote and, except after a world-shaking struggle, hardly feasible.

(\*Title given by the editors; CWSA 25: 590-591)



Courtesy: Internet



## **PSYCHIC BEING: THE SCULPTOR OF THE FORMS OF THE INFINITE**

*Ananda Reddy*

It is interesting to note that Sri Aurobindo had revised by himself the first three books of *Savitri*. In such a revision he must have inserted great details of his own spiritual experiences. This book is really autobiographical and no wonder he said “my life is not on the surface for men to see”. No one else but he alone could have depicted this inner life. It is this that attracted me to look into these three books and study the process of integral yoga.

Sri Aurobindo has chosen here Aswapathy as the protagonist of integral yoga, but you can see time and again that this is not the same Aswapathy that we meet in the Mahabharata. In the ancient epic we see Aswapathy as an aspirant, fair king who does intense tapasya, but obviously he was not as Sri Aurobindo calls, “a colonist from Immortality”. In Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri* Aswapathy is presented in a new dimension altogether - a representative of humanity’s aspiration for a greater evolutionary step. There is a new dimension added to Aswapathy by Sri Aurobindo that of the “colonist from immortality”.

After giving us in the beginning of Canto 3, a sketch of the personality of Aswapathy, we get a flashback which tells us how he attained this status of a colonist from Immortality, how was he a representative of humanity. After gaining this perspective, we come to know the process of attaining the universal consciousness. The first step, as we see in *The Synthesis of Yoga* and other letters by Sri Aurobindo, is to go through the process of psychicisation, After about one and a half pages of describing Aswapathy’s personality we get the description of the psychic being and its role in human evolution. Then once Aswapathy realizes the soul we get intimate description of the changes that come upon him, how he is suddenly grew into the universal consciousness, how he travels from the stage of psychicisation to that of spiritualization. All this we know from *The Synthesis of Yoga* and *The Life Divine* but in *Savitri* it becomes something like a graphic description because here it is not the philosopher who is writing, it is the seer-poet himself who is giving his own experiences and of course as we all know, poetry is the best means of transcribing one’s own spiritual experiences; prose cannot suitably convey it as vividly & powerfully. That’s why all our scriptures are in poetic form, be it the Vedas or Upanishads or the Gita, because the spiritual experiences have the inseparable dimension of vibration which can be caught only by poetry and not by prose. So there is this inevitable rendering of spirituality in poetry that makes it a mantra. That’s why I get charmed and all of us get hooked on to these descriptions. Here is the added dimension of imagery and we do not fail to see Sri Aurobindo himself in these lines.

Coming now to the lines which describe the psychic being:

This sculptor of the forms of the Infinite,  
This screened unrecognised Inhabitant,  
Initiate of his own veiled mysteries,  
Hides in a small dumb seed his cosmic thought.

This is of course the soul, the psychic being which is called the “sculptor of the forms of the Infinite”. When I read this, I asked myself a question, is it only a poetic image to call the soul a sculptor or an artist? Sri Aurobindo does not write just for the sake of mesmerising us by the poetic imagery. Why is the soul a sculptor? The Mother describes about the birth of the soul –

how it takes up a new body. When the soul chooses to come upon earth, it has a definite choice, it is not that it really drops down on earth into a womb – there is a particular destiny, a chosen experience. Because of the specific aim it chooses a particular country, family, place and culture. And then, when it chooses these, it also chooses a body. When a human being dies, the body left behind is cremated or buried, but then there is the vital sheath, the mental sheath, which also, after some time, get dissolved. But then there is the inner vital, inner mental, inner physical in the subliminal - what happens to them when one dies? It is this subliminal which carries the impact of the experiences of our life. So the inner vital, inner mental remain in their own subliminal world but carry the experiences of the person who died some time back. That is how the experience that we gather now gets uploaded in the subliminal and stays back, it doesn't get dissolved. So when the soul returns to a new body, it chooses the subliminal – that means that packet of experience –which is suitable for it in the upcoming birth. So it has as if, a ready package of experience and then according to this experience, it chooses the required body, vital and the mind.

We were trying to understand this line: “This sculptor of the forms of the Infinite” – the soul is sculpting out a form like a great sculptor. Out of the infinite forms, the psychic chooses a particular form; out of the infinite possibilities one particular body is selected as its vehicle of experience upon earth. Birth remains an unsolved mystery that is why there is the relevance of re-birth; otherwise there is a missing link. “This screened unrecognized Inhabitant” – obviously unrecognized by men till now. Common man doesn't know that he is carrying the important “Inhabitant” within himself. “Initiate of his own veiled mysteries”: – the soul initiates its own next movement- what is the experience that it wants to have, where does it want to go, what is its fulfillment, what is the level of its progression – all this is its own initiation. "Hides in a small dumb seed his cosmic thought" –the soul hides its seed in the individual form or we can even say it hides in the atom the cosmic thought. What is the “cosmic thought?” The cosmic thought, as Sri Aurobindo would say is the Real idea which is hidden in the atom. Behind the DNA there is this Real idea or the supramental idea or the cosmic seed because of which everything evolves according to the divine plan. So everywhere there is hidden in the cosmic thought.

In the mute strength of the occult Idea  
 Determining predestined shape and act,  
 Passenger from life to life, from scale to scale,  
 Changing his imaged self from form to form,  
 He regards the icon growing by his gaze  
 And in the worm foresees the coming god.

We know now that “passenger from life to life, from scale to scale” is the exact characteristic of a psychic being – going from one life to another, taking up one body, leaving it and taking another body. But then "from scale to scale" – it is evolving, not just on horizontal level but it is leaping from one level of consciousness to another level. As it is going on higher level of consciousness it is taking different forms. "Determining pre-destined shape and act" – what is this pre-destined shape and act? I'll read an explanation from the Mother which reflects this idea;

This is how things happen: the psychic being passes from one life to another, each life on earth being the occasion and means for a further progress, for a further growth. But it can happen that the psychic takes birth with the intention of going through a certain experience, of learning a certain thing, of developing a certain faculty through a definite experience. Then, in that life, in the life in which that experience has to be gone

through, for one reason or another – there may be several – the soul does not fall exactly on the spot where it should: a displacement of some kind can occur, a set of contrary circumstances – it can happen – and in that case the incarnation miscarries totally and the soul goes away to wait for a better occasion. But in other cases, the soul simply does not find it possible to do exactly what it wants and finds itself dragged into untoward circumstances – untoward not merely from the objective point of view, but untoward for its own growth. And that makes it necessary to begin the experience again, often under much more difficult conditions. (CWM 15:391)

This is something very interesting. As I was telling you, the soul incarnates with a specific purpose and aim; but sometimes it happens that it has different experiences, it does not drop exactly where it should and a displacement of some kind may occur. I can give you an example of a child from Auroville. When the child was a few months old, he fell in the swimming pool and got drowned. When the case was taken to the Mother, she clarified that sometimes the soul comes down but does not get the right opportunity; so it leaves the body as soon as possible. However, this is one of the examples. Further she says, “that the soul does not find it possible to do exactly what it wants and finds itself dragged into untoward circumstances” - in which case, there could be a suicide. Sometimes the soul may choose a short-cut of apparent suicide because it is in “untoward circumstances” that its growth, its experience is in a particular body annulled or blocked. It may feel why it should waste its birth in a particular body and it may go away for a better opportunity in a different body.

*Question: I thought our birth and death are pre-determined, is it not?*

It is said that once Amal Kiran asked the Mother whether free will is there or not; “tell me only yes or no.” It seems that the Mother said yes. Amal Kiran then returned home and wrote a long article and showed it to Sri Aurobindo. He concluded that there is Determinism and at the same time free will also. How do we understand this conclusion. May be the Mother can come to our rescue:

A stone falls. If it fulfils its destiny, it will fall to the ground, won't it? But you are there and you have a vital or a mental will – one or the other – and you catch the stone in your hand. You have changed the destiny of the stone. A leaf falls – onto the ground if it follows its normal destiny. You have a vital will, take the leaf in your hand. You have changed the destiny of the leaf. This happens millions of times in the universe and nobody notices it because it is so common.

But imagine that you have a very high range of consciousness. If into the determinism down here you can bring, by aspiration, an urge, a prayer, a higher consciousness, if you can get hold of your higher consciousness, so to say, and bring it into the material destiny, everything would immediately be changed. But because you do not see or do not understand what is happening, you say that it is a chance or a miracle.

Not every destiny is active in the material world, and if you want to change this material destiny, you must be able to bring down another one from above. In this way, something new will enter into it – these “descents” of the higher consciousness take place all the time, but because we do not understand them, this “something new” that comes is turned by ordinary people into a “miracle”.

This is precisely what we want to do by bringing down into the physical and material world the supramental force and consciousness. At first it works by diffusion, not directly. Its working is more or less veiled, more veiled and distorted as it descends into the physical world, until it becomes almost imperceptible. If it could work here directly, without this distortion and this veiling, it would change everything in an absolutely unexpected way.

I hope you will get this concrete example one day! (CWM 15:313)

This was a very simple answer for the explanation of simultaneous existence of free will and destiny. What we understand from this explanation of the Mother is that there are different levels of determinism – physical, vital, mental, spiritual and supramental. So from every level, the things are determined, but we read that the lower determinism can be cancelled by a higher one. On the material level, there is a law of gravity – any object thrown up has to fall down. But then by my will I can intervene and devise a method that it does not fall, take for example, an aeroplane. So too, in our physical life, we may be carrying on our shoulders the load of karma and if one is left to oneself, one's own efforts on the physical level, one may require many a birth to work out the past karma. But by bringing in a consciousness higher than the physical one can leap beyond the effects of physical karma. So if you want to erase the cause and effects on the physical level or on the vital level you cannot do so unless and until you bring into play a higher destiny or higher consciousness or power. That is why when one takes to a spiritual path, the higher consciousness releases the power or connects it to the life level, then the karmic effects get slowly dissolved, not at one go. Sometimes we call it a miracle or sometimes we call it Grace because Grace is the higher consciousness which cancels our lower destiny. Therefore, we have pre-determinism, but then there is higher consciousness, which, as the Mother said “by aspiration and urge and prayer, if you can get hold of your higher consciousness and bring into the material destiny, everything would immediately be changed”.

It is in this light that we can approach Narad's prediction – “It was the day when Satyavan must die.” He “must die” means that Satyavan must die on the day that was pre-determined. But can anyone cancel that verdict? Perhaps yes: it is the higher consciousness of Savitri - not Savitri who is Satyavan's wife, but one who does *triratni* yoga, who prepares herself, who raises herself into the higher consciousness and identifies herself with the transcendental consciousness. It is such a Savitri who alone can erase, contradict, wipe off a law that was almost eternal. It is not a small cancellation of an event, it is one of the greatest laws that is on the earth since its creation. Therefore, naturally, her own consciousness had to be on the highest level for, otherwise, had it been even the Intuitive consciousness or Overmental consciousness, it would not have worked because Death itself belongs to the overmental consciousness. So unless and until Savitri incarnates the Supramental consciousness, Death could not have been conquered. What we ought to remember is that the lower gets cancelled by the higher. You can apply this to “It was a day when Satyavan must die”. So the prophesy is right, determinism is right, what Narad says is right and yet we see Satyavan is not dead – physically dead but not dead and gone – because a Higher consciousness intervenes and he returns to life.

Now coming to the lines –

Changing his imaged self from form to form,  
He regards the icon growing by his gaze  
And in the worm foresees the coming god.

The poet gives us great solace: in this “worm” called man, he foresees the coming god. But here is another poem which I would like to quote from Sri Aurobindo called “The Miracle of Birth” which throws light on what we are discussing:

I saw my soul a traveller through Time;  
From, life to life the cosmic ways it trod,  
Obscure in the depths and on the heights sublime,  
Evolving from the worm into the god.  
A spark of the eternal Fire, it came  
To build a house in Matter for the Unborn.  
The unconscious sunless Night received the flame,  
In the brute seed of things dumb and forlorn  
Life stirred and Thought outlined a gleaming shape  
Till on the stark inanimate earth could move,  
Born to somnambulist Nature in her sleep  
A thinking creature who can hope and love.  
Still by slow steps the miracle goes on,  
The Immortal’s gradual birth mid mire and stone. (CWSA 2:615)

The meaning is clear: how the soul comes into the Inconscient and how things evolved -, from Matter to Life and then to Mind resulting in the thinking creature, Man. But then, it doesn’t stop here – “Still by slow steps the miracle goes on, / The Immortal’s gradual birth mid mire and stone.” Will continue beyond Man. Till here, we had had a general description of a psychic being – its role, its function. After this line, we are taken back to Aswapathy:

At last the traveller in the paths of Time  
Arrives on the frontiers of eternity.

Eternity, Immortality, Infinity are not just words for Sri Aurobindo. In fact, Amal Kiran once argued with him on this issue. He asked him why he uses such big words like Brahman etc. To this Sri Aurobindo answered that he constantly lives in Brahman consciousness and it is as much true for him.

What happens to Aswapathy, the traveller, when he arrives on the frontiers of eternity–

In the transient symbol of humanity draped,  
He feels his substance of undying self  
And loses his kinship to mortality.

Wonderful! That is the first sign of psychic emergence, the first signature of the psychic experience when it comes in front and one feels that one is immortal, because one loses the identity with one’s body. So if one wants to know how far one is from one’s the psychic being, one should ask oneself as to how far one is from the sense of immortality. The more one feels that this transient body and world is not myself the nearer one is going to the immortal self; the more one identifies with the body, the further you are from the psychic being. So the very first sense is to lose the “kinship with mortality”. One doesn’t have relation anymore with mortality.

“He feels his substance of undying self” – Aswapathy, the traveller, the sadhak, when he comes closer to the psychic being, feels his substance of undying self. What is this “substance”? Sri Aurobindo doesn’t say that he feels the presence of the psychic being; one feels the warmth, the light, the glory and yet all that could be mental, imaginative, wishful. You know sometimes

we have experience of a golden light or some beautiful blue light and we feel we are in the psychic presence. Sri Aurobindo has not given a chance to our imagination. He says, that the only assurance of psychic experience is the feeling of the “substance of the undying self”. For example, when I look at a book I may find it beautiful but, when I feel its substance, I get more assured of the book’s existence. But then what is the substance of the psychic? Every form in this universe has its substance – the material substance, the emotional substance, the substance of thought – on each level the substance becomes subtler. It becomes subtler as we rise in our consciousness. Similarly, the psychic being too has its own substance but it is very subtle. Supermind too has its unique substance. And, when one goes into the Divine being, he too has substance. That subtlest substance is called the Divine and the grossest Matter. It is all a continuity of subtlety, not a broken thing and therefore this grossest Matter can return to its greatest subtle form and this “returning” is called physical transformation. Now we can understand and are assured that the body can become immortal because one can transform from the grossest to the subtlest as it is a journey back.

A beam of the Eternal smites his heart,  
His thought stretches into infinitude:  
All in him turns to spirit vastnesses. (CWSA 33-34: 24)

The word ‘smites’ implies a terrific force so when the beam of the Eternal smites Aswapathy’s heart. It breaks its boundaries and stretches to infinitudes resulting in “All in him turns to spirit vastnesses”. What is meant by ‘all’ in him?

His soul breaks out to join the Oversoul,  
His life is oceaened by that superlife.  
He has drunk from the breasts of the Mother of the worlds;  
A topless supernature fills his frame:  
She adopts his spirit’s everlasting ground  
As the security of her changing world  
And shapes the figure of her unborn might.

The “all” includes Aswapathy’s soul, mind, life and body – all of what have undergone a transformation.

Again an expression of all in him turned to spirit’s vastness. I found the same experience in Sri Aurobindo’s poem “Surrender.” Let us read some relevant lines from the poem:

O Thou of whom I am the instrument,  
O secret Spirit and Nature housed in me,  
Let all my mortal being now be blent  
In Thy still glory of divinity. (CWSA 2:611)

The poet, after a communication and contact with his soul, is surrendering his instrumental nature.

I have given my mind to be dug Thy channel mind,  
I have offered up my will to be Thy will:  
Let nothing of myself be left behind  
In our union mystic and unutterable.  
My heart shall throb with the world-beats of Thy love,  
My body become Thy engine for earth-use;

In my nerves and veins Thy rapture's streams shall move;  
My thoughts shall be hounds of Light for Thy power to loose. (CWSA 2:611)

This is a magnificent form of surrender. It's not just an emotional fervor; it is really a mantra of self-offering. Each part of our being consciously surrenders. But, let's be clear that to surrender is not to nullify oneself. The poet says, "I have given my mind to be dug Thy channel mind," "My will to be Thy will" and then "My body become Thy engine," "my veins and nerves Thy rapture streams" and "my thoughts hounds of Light for Thy power". Each part in us wants to surrender because it can become the channel of Divine manifestation upon earth.

In such a surrender there is no self-extinction but a greater manifestation of the higher consciousness. However, the soul does not want to merge in the Divine. "Leave only my soul to adore eternally, /And meet Thee in each form and soul of Thee" writes the poet. He wants to retain his individual psychic being and not merge in the Transcendental or the Universal. And that's what Sri Ramakrishna said in a very simple but catching manner – "I want to remain the honey bee so that I can eternally taste the honey." If the bee is lost in the Honey, who is to experience that? That's what Sri Aurobindo aspires for in his sonnet. "Leave only my soul..." And then in *Savitri* - "His life is oceaned by that superlife."

What we have seen till now is a description of the psychic experience – the moment one feels the very substance of the psychic, one loses kinship with mortality. Then there comes the question of psychicisation – when the psychic being takes over our life, our emotions and our mind. That is what Ashwathya undergoes. And then

He has drunk from the breasts of the Mother of the worlds;  
A topless supernature fills his frame:  
She adopts his spirit's everlasting ground

There is a radical change in the outer nature – Prakriti is transformed into its universal aspect. This also reflects the change in the relationship of Purusha and Prakriti. Until now the Prakriti was dominant, but now after the very first contact with the psychic being Prakriti changes, she gives in and transforms herself. This concept is vividly described in *Savitri*. Let me read some lines to capture the essence of this essential relationship between Purusha & Prakriti.

He speaks no words or hides behind the wings.  
He takes birth in her world, waits on her will,  
Divines her enigmatic gesture's sense,  
The fluctuating chance turns of her mood,  
Works out her meanings she seems not to know  
And serves her secret purpose in long Time.  
As one too great for him he worships her;  
He adores her as his regent of desire,  
He yields to her as the mover of his will,  
He burns the incense of his nights and days  
Offering his life, a splendour of sacrifice...  
Held in her leash, bound to her veiled caprice,  
He studies her ways if so he may prevail  
Even for an hour and she work out his will;  
He makes of her his moment passion's serf:

To obey she feigns, she follows her creature's lead:

For him she was made, lives only for his use. (*Savitri*:BI.C 4)

There are long descriptions where we see that Purusha is completely subservient to Prakriti. Through all this 'game' the Purusha is studying her ways so that at least "for an hour she may work out his will". The whole purpose of the psychic being or the soul giving in to Prakriti in the beginning is to please her, to show her that he is her companion. In the beginning Prakriti is full of energy, imagination, fancy and whims. If you tell her to transform herself, she may defy and deny. Hence, Purusha has to give in in the beginning and win her over because he wants to transform her and bring her in his fold and consciousness. She too realizes that by surrendering to the Purusha she is being lifted into the Paraprakriti, into its own higher nature. That's the transformation about which Sri Aurobindo speaks in his poem "Surrender". And in these lines, when he says, "Leave only my soul to adore eternally, /And meet Thee in each form and soul of Thee". It is a magnificent poem revealing Sri Aurobindo's sadhana. Truly, the more we read *Savitri*, the more we discover Sri Aurobindo!

(The transcription of a talk given on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2013)

### **SRI AUROBINDO**

Majestic and immaculate,

Sublime in his poise,

With deep eyes focusing afar

Beyond the horizons of this world

Wandering in golden infinities –

He sits there all all alone

Over the Everest of spiritual plains

And mystic vistas...

With peace settled on his brow,

Haloed Supermanhood in his visage,

Purushahood in his sparkling in his body

He is manifest:

Sri Aurobindo the Avatar.

*Ananda Reddy*



## BEAUTY AND DELIGHT



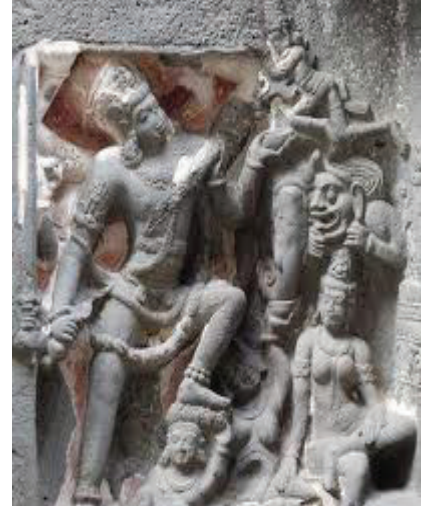
**She [India] lavishes her riches because she must,  
as the Infinite fills every inch of space with the stirring  
of life and energy because it is the Infinite.**

Sri Aurobindo

## SANSKRITI TATHA KALA DRISHTI: CULTURE AND ARTISTIC SENSE

Narendra Joshi

It is a fundamental truth that we cannot go against our own nature. Modern psychology tells us about various physical and psychological diseases which occur due to suppression of natural desires and one's own nature. Thus suppression is not a solution, at least for majority of people. Desires suppressed bring pestilence. Nature should be turned upwards to become Culture. There is a right way, right attitude to do every action, no matter what it is: then that pursuit will become culture. Culture is expression of 'Consciousness of life.' (Sri Aurobindo) This expression is in all the aspects of human life, individual as well as collective, mundane as well as spiritual. It covers life as a whole- religion, philosophy, science, technology, literature, painting, sculpture, dances, dramas, social structure, economics, politics, ...etc.



Sri D.B. Thengadi in his 'Hindu Kala drishti' has listed parameters of the term Samskriti (culture). The list includes geography, environment, agriculture, education, politics, economics, codes of morality, religion, arts, romance, human relations, law and order, history, sociology; the list is very long. While education today deals with compartmentalized study of the above and that too mostly at the mental level, culture aims at a holistic approach and moulds not just the mind and body but also deeper levels of the being. The tool used for this is Samskara: a scientific way of repeating the things till they become automatic, subconscious responses for any future stimulus. Kala or Art is a very effective way to achieve this. It is unique compared to study and following of the rituals and scholarly scriptures, one because it can be more accessible to masses and second because it does so without drying up of the Rasa or sap of the truth it carries.

In the words of Dr. Ananda Koomarswami, (The Dance of Shiva) 'Dancing' came into being



at the beginning of all the things. The idea behind all these dances is the manifestation of the primal rhythmic energy. Primeval dancing was clearly set forth in choral dance of constellations and in the planets and fixed stars. Their interweaving and interchange and orderly harmony. In the Nataraja image drum means creation, hand represents protection, fire means destruction, foot aloft means release.

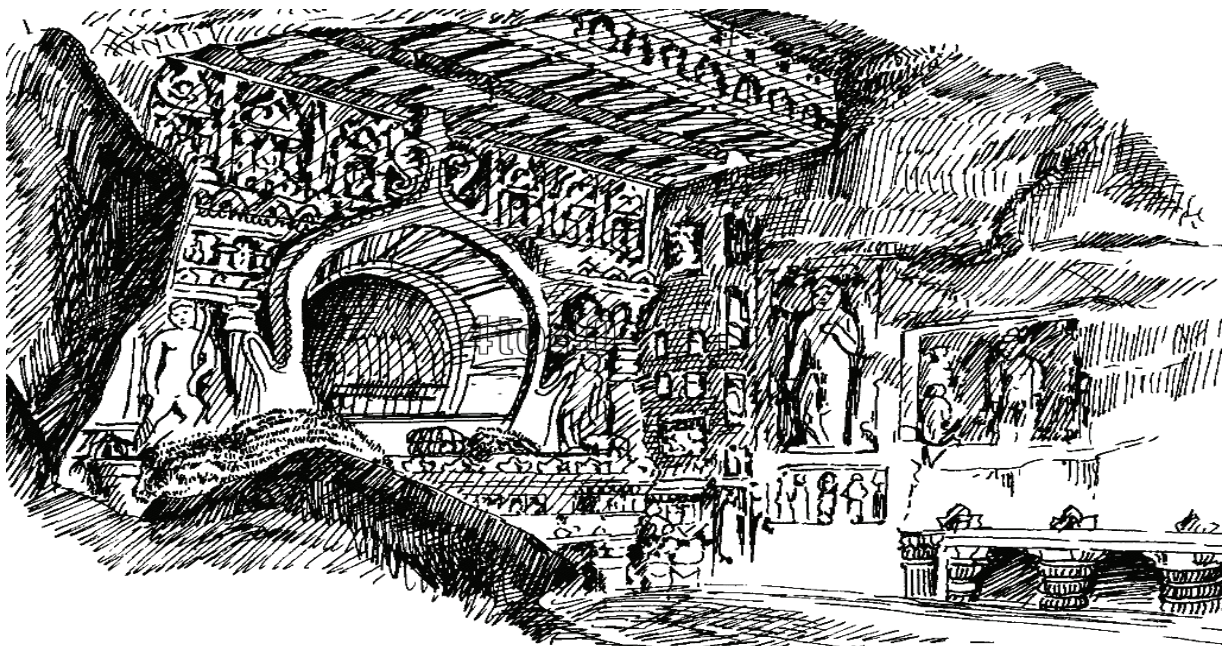
Our lord is a dancer, who like the heat latent in firewood, diffuses his power in mind and matter and makes them dance in their turn.

He further explained that there is no negation. All is harmonized. All the forces of life are grouped like a forest whose thousand waving arms are led by

Nataraja, the master of dance. Everything has its place, each being has its function, and all take part in the divine concert. Their different voices, their very dissonances lead to the most beautiful harmony.

Whereas in the West, cold hard logic isolates the unusual, shutting it down from the rest of the life into a definite and distinctive compartment of spirit. India, ever mindful of the natural difference in souls and philosophies, endeavors to blend them into each other, so as to recreate in its fullest perfection the complete unity. Matching of the opposites creates true rhythm of life. Spiritual purity may not shrink from allying itself with sensual joy, and the most licensed sexualism may be joined the highest wisdom. The amazing Sahaja tradition is, an extreme example a paradoxical challenge to forces opposed and mated. In the masterpieces of art we see the beauty wedded to science or to religion, for the harvest of intensely lived life is invariably garnered from the intermingling of many different seeds.

Dr. Koomarswami emphasized that the essential contribution of India is simply her Indianness. The heart and the essence of Indian experience is to be found in a constant intuition of the unity of all life. India has passed through many experiences and solved many problems which younger races have hardly yet recognized. All that India can offer to the world proceeds from her philosophy. This philosophy is not indeed unknown to the others, ... but nowhere else has it been made the essential basis of sociology and education. Hindus grasped more firmly than others the fundamental meaning and purpose of life and more deliberately than others organized society with a view to attainment of the fruit of life. This organization was designed not for the advantage of any single person or class, but to use the modern formula, to take from each according to his capacity and to give to each according to his need. Devnagari, city of gods was an ideal and philosophy was the map of life. There were provisions made for interests and activities of spiritual immaturity. Else there would have been a division between sacred and profane, church and society, but such a thing was never allowed to happen. Puritanism forcing asceticism to everyone as opposed to industrialism forcing self assertion and competition for all both were avoided by the philosophy of Swadharma. While Brahmins understood self realization as the aim of life, they also understood that it will be illogical to impose it on all who are not yet weary of self assertion.



The relation between dreams, myths and truth is amply clarified in Puranas and Epics. The importance of invoking dhyamantra, visualization, worship, penance at solitary place is linked to sudden flash of idea in dream. This is important insight for an artists, mantrin and yogin (many times they were considered as one). All knowledge is directly available to a concentrated mind, when senses are not intervening. Every stroke or line is seen by imagination before it actually becomes reality. The prerequisites for a shilpin are given as follows: he should have knowledge of Atharvaveda, 32 shilpshastras, Vedic mantras, should wear sacred thread and kusha, worship god and be faithful to wife., etc. A painter was expected to be a good human being, not given to anger, holy, learned, charitable, self controlled, devout, should work in solitude, trained by father and member of a guild, protected by king and not anxious for competition... Vision of beauty is enjoyed by those who are competent to do so, pictures, poetry and any work of art produces effect on those who are prepared to received it. Both the examples of shilpin and painter above show that art was expected to be a passage for a higher life. Aesthetic experience is beyond good and evil, beyond a definite moral purpose, that is why puritanists are afraid of arts. All architecture is what you do to it when you look upon it. All music is what awakens in you when you are reminded of it by instruments. The true critic, rasika perceives the beauty of it, of which artist has exhibited the signs. Preparation is necessary to appreciate it.



The nearest explanation of the significant form should be such as to exhibit the inner relation of the things. Or which reveals the rhythm of the spirit in the gestures of the living things. He explained that if beauty awaits discovery everywhere, it means that it waits upon our recollection, in aesthetic contemplation as in love and knowledge. We momentarily recover the unity of our being released from individuality. There are no degrees of beauty and civilized art is not more beautiful than the savage art according to him.

If such is the case then why there is decline in the arts. How even great art or artists do not always have great succession? Dr. Koomarswami then explained that there cannot be continuous progress in art. As soon as a given intuition has attained its perfectly clear expression, what follows and remains is only an attempt to multiply and repeat this expression. This repetition may be desirable for many reasons, but it almost invariably involves a gradual decadence because we soon begin to take the experience for granted.

He ended his masterly analysis of Kala and Sanskriti with an observation: "The vitality of a tradition persists so long as it is fed by the intensity of imagination."



### Mandala: The Pattern that Connects

Our culture emphasizes on a pattern at all levels including the ultimate cosmic design or cosmic pattern. The peculiarity of a pattern is its "relations" which are more important than objects or points to make a typical pattern. In fact relations intersect to define a point: intersect to define objects, to create institutions and finally to manifest the cosmos. Each has a place in relation with others and has relation with the One. It is the joining: Dharma, Tantra, Sutra that sustains. This is seen not only in our arts, in sculptures and in our scripts, but has been done at social structure as well. Wherever a person is, he should be helped, allowed to rise up, step by step, grades by grades, without injuring others, without getting injured by others; as per his or her Swabhava, Swadharma, Samskara and Adhikara. The pattern aims at repeating itself on different planes of consciousness.

To relate with the *Ekatma Manavata Vad* of Deendayal Upadhyay, this is the spiral evolution from *Vyashti* to *Samashti*, to *Srishti* and to *Parameshti*. It is evolution from child to old man, from Masyavatara to Buddhavatara, from muladhara chakra to sahasrar chakra, from pinda to brahmanda, ... this concept pervades in Yoga, Jyotisha, Tantra, Yajna and Puja, in temple architecture and even in the so called tribal mysticism and animism. The word Mandala sounds Sanskrit, but it has pierced the walls of Himalaya through Buddhism and reached Tibet. It spread all over the so called Mongolian belt and is seen vividly on their flags, paintings, prayer wheels, and in caves.

It is notable in this context that the new paradigm in Physics, in Ecology and in Psychology emphasizes on interrelatedness and interconnectedness. The latest discoveries in Quantum physics as well as Astronomy support a Cosmic design and Pattern theory. Cosmos is not just made from building blocks of matter put on each other linearly. It is a web of interconnecting and intersecting relations. Fritzof Capra tells us in *Uncommon Wisdom*: "I have learned from Chew that one can use different models to describe different aspects of reality without regarding anyone of them as fundamental. And those several interlocking models can form a coherent theory." Gregory Bateson emphasized on relations, not objects and applied this new paradigm to ecology. Laing explained its application to medical practices and healing. They all were thrilled about the "Pattern that connects." Chew told Dr. Capra that intense concentration for prolonged period of time is an essence of any seeking for continuity is crucial. One can use different models to describe different aspects of reality without regarding anyone of them as fundamental. And

those several interlocking models can provide a coherent theory. In fact it is now asserted that behind all apparent things in physical as well as mental world, There is a pattern that connects.

The importance of circle, cycle, series of cycles, gradual advance of elements through a cyclic motion of advance and relapse: all these are great favorites in Indian Culture, in her designs, dances and rituals.

They must be so because they are simplified visual explanations of the most abstract principles. These cycles lead to rhythm, which is essential in tribal life as well as the later agro based life. The slow rhythmic continuous and curvilinear movements are required in making a pot, an ornament, to weave a cloth, or to process the food grains. The rhythm brought songs on the lips and also gave relaxation essential to allow



work for a long time. This built in relaxation and enjoyment avoided separate entertainment mechanisms which today have assumed demonic proportion.



The way the dancers join their hands in a typical tribal, Indian dance is same as the way the bamboo strips are joined to make a mat or an article, and also is similar to how a weaving pattern looks. The relation is never 1-2 and 2-3. It is multiple, nonlinear and thus more beautiful and perhaps more truthful as well.

#### RANGOLI :

Indian music is combination of ever changing Sur and constant beat or Tal. A singer makes all the variations, depths and heights only to ensure a timely return to the beat or Tal. (Sam sadhana) Some say that Sur is Smriti or the Etihas and Puranas which change with time and Tal is Shruti which like Vedas are eternal and unchanging.

This combination of flexibility in firmness (Tough like a metal wire and yet bent in a beautiful curve, observes Swami Vivekananda) is perhaps the peculiarity of Indian mind.

The instinct for order and freedom at once in any field is always a sign of very high capacity in that field according to Sri Aurobindo. The analogy of a metal wire drawn in a beautiful curve has a significance: Curve is essence of art, sign of beauty, it involves smoothening, synchronizing and harmonizing and it is in contrast to straight lines, polygons which are invariably part of any mechanical system. This peculiarity of Indian mind has led Swami Vivekananda to declare that in India everything is artistic, symbolic and is supposed to tell the viewer something deeper. He told about how even dresses are not with straight lines, and have folds and curves, homes have decorations on walls and ground. Art was part of religious ceremonies and was used for *Chittashuddhi*, purification of turbulent mind before the actual ritual started.



In discussing the place of art in the evolution of race and its value in the education and actual life of the nation, Sri Aurobindo in his articles on "The National Value of Art" has written

that the manners, the social customs, and restraint in action which are so large a part of national prestige and make a nation admired like the French, loved like the Irish, or respected like higher class English is based essentially on the sense of form and beauty, of what is correct, symmetrical, well adjusted, fair to eye and pleasing to imagination. The absence of these qualities is the source of national weakness. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan wrote that civilization is not a matter of mere material possession, or speedy communication. It is a state of mind, tradition, culture, sense of values. According to



him what distinguishes a cultivated man from uncultivated or barbarous is his pursuit of wisdom, his passion for beauty, his practice of love. The truth is that many of us have become cynical and skeptical, irrationally desirous, with empty, boring and trivial lives due to this lack of cultivation of arts. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, all great art is a result of contemplative chastity, emotional identity, and heightened vision. Vinoba Bhave said that a man who has seen the true vision of art will not tolerate any ugly habit in his ordinary daily life. That is what children have to be taught. He emphasized that it is not enough that they should acquire certain dexterity of hand, but their whole outlook must be colored by a vision of beauty. He further said that there is art in posture, in sitting, standing, in cutting lime, banana skin peeling, in short beauty of orderly living is part of appreciation of beauty in any art. He then explained that beauty and purity are interrelated. The very name for Venus is Shukra, which is derived from shuchi meaning purity. In front of this heavenly beauty, there is no value for pearls in ocean according to Vinoba. While describing Ramarajya, Tulsidas wrote that to pay homage to Sri Rama, the Ocean used to cast pearls on the shore by himself. Vinoba wrote that Tulsidas should have added a stanza saying that the children in Sri Rama's kingdom used to play with those pearls and threw them back in the sea after play.

That would have shown real valuation of true versus artificial beauty and luxury to everyone according to Vinoba.

Savitri devi a Greek scholar wrote in her *Warning to the Hindus* as follows: "According to Plato visible beauty leads to invisible beauty. They stress on spirituality. But nobody puts stress on physical beauty of the Hindu people. People speak of the Hindu culture as an abstract entity, as if it could grow anywhere and everywhere." According to her, they forget to note that those who live it as a nation are amongst the most beautiful races of mankind. There is no doubt a mysterious identity between that culture and them.



From the above examples it is clear that art had great value in Culture and also in National education. An artist was expected to be pious, knowledgeable, intuitive and visionary. This is in sharp contrast to its role today which is similar to that of a nauch girl amusing the masses, appealing to the lowest possible instincts and used primarily as a stress buster in an oppressively huge machinery called modern life.

## MYSTERY – MIRACLE – MAGIC OF HALEBIDU AND BELUR

*Shruti Bidwaikar*

Sri Aurobindo's essays documented in *The Renaissance in India* give us a fresh and deep perspective on Indian Art and Culture. As an art critic Sri Aurobindo has set certain parameters through which we can not only appreciate Indian Art but also the European Art. At the outset he makes it clear that the lenses used by the critic to see Indian and Western Art are entirely different. In the context of sculpture Sri Aurobindo says, the Western Art's appeal is to the imaginative faculty and focuses mostly on the external details. Indian Art on the contrary "stresses something behind, something more remote to the surface imagination, but nearer to the soul, and subordinates to it the physical form." (CWSA 20: 262) Indian art reveals the underlying spirit and inspiration in which it was created because it is "identical in its spiritual aim and principle with the rest of Indian culture". (CWSA 20: 268) How is this spiritual aspect depicted in the hard granite? How the Spirit was captured and revealed through the toughest rock on earth could be seen in the Bahubali statue of Shravanabelgola and the temples at Halebidu and Belur in Karnataka State. While I got a chance to visit these places recently, I could see that these monuments called for a contemplative observation and a quiet being so that they could reveal their spirit to us.

Sri Aurobindo cautions us that these places are not to be visited as tourists if we want that the art should reveal its true significance to us. He says,

A great oriental work of art does not easily reveal its secret to one who comes to it solely in a mood of aesthetic curiosity or with a considering critical objective mind, still less as the cultivated and interested tourist passing among strange and foreign things; but it has to be seen in loneliness, in the solitude of one's self, in moments when one is capable of long and deep meditation and as little weighted as possible with the conventions of material life. (CWSA 20: 271)

When we visited the three places of sculptural significance, we were only in a mood to absorb what the granite figures were going to speak to us. It was not a romantic walk to the corridors of the past. In the hot summer noon, the hot granite stood the testimony of time, zeal and inspiration of all the artisans who under a great unified spell of intuition carved these temples and figures incessantly for decades. The first impression after seeing these art works created a "mystery, miracle and magic" (*Philosophy of Indian Art*: 15) to borrow a phrase from Dr. Kireet Joshi. It was







**Bhagwan Bahubali Statue in Shravanabelgola**

mysterious for we were yet to discover what the stones would reveal; it was miraculous because what we saw looked like the work of super-humans. The precision, the variety, the accuracy, the detail and oneness of vision of all the artists were awe-inspiring. It was magical because we are at once transported into that India which indulged in lavish details, leisurely art work and was ambitious to etch the spiritual into the material. What would have inspired hundreds of artists for so many decades? We imagine! It is also amazing to see that the whole structure emerges as one. All the carvings from the façade to the door of the *sanctum sanctorum* have a unity of design and show equal dexterity, love and patience of the artists. Hundreds of unnamed artists left for posterity a soul-vision in granite!

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With an expectation of seeing a great monument in grey granite we ascended 700 steps of the Gomteshwar temple in Shravanabelgola (picture on the previous page). The steps carved into the hard granite rock are not too high which made the climb quite easy. But the marvel is that a monolithic statue of 57 feet (17m) stands at the top of the rock. It is the largest monolithic statue on earth. It seemed to have been carved top below. As a human figure it has a few exceptions which are sometimes taken to be defects of the statue. For example, the hands are unusually long, one of the fingers of the feet are long. But taking clue from Sri Aurobindo's description we understood that this was not made only as an aesthetic activity. It had spirituo-religious motive behind it. Bhagwan Bahubali, the son of the first *teerthankars* of the Jain saints was known for the strength of his arms and was a spiritually realised person. It may also be questioned as to why such a huge statute was made which cannot be even seen in the right perspective if we stand in front of it. But we get the explanation by Sri Aurobindo:

The statue of a king or a saint is not meant merely to give the idea of a king or saint or to portray some dramatic action or to be a character portrait in stone, but to embody rather a soul state or experience or deeper soul quality, as for instance, not the outward emotion, but the inner soul-side of rapt ecstasy of adoration and God-vision in the saint or the devotee before the presence of the worshipped deity. (CWSA 20: 291)

Such was the vision and motive with which this Bahubali statue was carved out. The “soul-side” of this great realised soul is depicted in the calm expression and stable posture of his body. The size signifies the largeness of his soul. His long hands symbolize the extent of his inner realization and the apparent disproportions of his body make him different from other normal human beings. The embracing creeper may signify the length of time of his *tapasya* in which the vegetation has started growing around him. Also, that he is so calm and still that the vegetal world has no fear to climb up on his body.

From our first destination at Shravanabelgola, we drove 45 minutes and reached to see the multifaceted temple structure of Halebidu. We were arrested on the outside of the temple itself. A structure carved out of the shining black granite simply felt unearthly. The first reaction to this beauty in stone was aesthetic. We were caught by the beauty of form, grace of the body postures, the accuracy of proportions, the sizes of the sculptures, depiction of some historic event or story on the stones and the great battles of the gods and the evils. But all this lead to one experience: the experience of “*akhandā rasa*, undifferentiated and unabridged delight in the delightfulness of things” (CWSA 1: 440) highlighted by Sri Aurobindo.



**One of the structures from outside at Halebidu Temple**

The picture above depicts only one side, one small part of the many structures carved outside of the temple of Halebidu. Architecturally they are not round, square or rectangular in shape. But are polygonal and each side is further cut into more folds so that more surfaces are available for carving. But seen from afar it maintains the unity and symmetry of structure. The carvings on the different walls do not resemble each other but they are of the same style and motivation. The pattern of carving too is the same. Pattern here denotes the depiction of animals and beasts, human beings in their daily activities, evil beings and apsaras, the interaction between gods and human beings and then the cosmic godheads standing right at the top watching over us. The entire

variety of depiction is mind-boggling and aesthetically pleasing. One is just led from wonder to wonder and can't help exclaiming in utter admiration of the art and vision that the artists have left for us. But it is not just aesthetic pleasure that we get out of these meditations on the sculptures. In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

For the Indian mind form does not exist except as a creation of the spirit and draws all its meaning and value from the spirit. Every line, arrangement of mass, colour, shape, posture, every physical suggestion, however many, crowded, opulent they may be, is first and last a suggestion, a hint, very often a symbol which is in its main function a support for a spiritual emotion, idea, image that again goes beyond itself to the less definable, but more powerfully sensible reality of the spirit which has excited these movements in the aesthetic mind and passed through them into significant shapes. (CWSA 20: 270)



**One of the niches, richly carved at the temple in Halebidu**

The depiction on one of the niches of the temple portrays the entire life and activities of human beings. They are crowded but distinctly visible; they are opulent but simple in suggestion. No aspect of human life has escaped the eye of the artist. One may almost feel the motion captured in the still stones. They are much more awe-inspiring because such small detail in granite seems almost impossible. Just one distraction on the part of the artist, just one feeling of laziness or boredom would spoil the entire work on the niche. It is beyond imagination that the artists who seem to be almost doing sadhana around these hot stones would have kept their purity and worshipped their sacred work. For only when one finds one's work sacred that one is fully concentrated that he brings out something with immense perfection and harmony. In Sri Aurobindo's words: "...sculpture like the architecture springs from spiritual realisation, and what it creates and expresses at its greatest is the spirit in form, the soul in body..." (CWSA 20: 289) This spirit was portrayed through beauty, perfection, harmony and purity. While we saw that some of the sculptures were destroyed by some insensitive human beings, we did not, rather could not touch them at all. They were so delicate, so pure and so distant to the normal human consciousness that one dare not malign them by touching.

One after the other statues small, statues large we could not stop admiring the details that were attended by the artisans. The ornate human figure stood sentry over the door of the *sanctum sanctorum*. It was amazing to see the ornaments carved on every inch of this six feet tall figure. From the crown to the details of anklet and even the nail is attended upon. Why would one decorate a *dwarpal*, a sentry? It was because all human life was considered sacred. No work was small in the eyes of a spiritually realised man. And so the artisans took all the pains to make each detail of each ornament as much as they did for the gods and goddesses.



**Nandi Bull facing Lord Shiva in Halebidu temple**

Not only human figures and gods but even in animal figures full attention to detail could be seen. On the huge Nandi Bull, sitting outside the *garbha griha*, facing the Lord, every ornament is judiciously carved. It looks as if Nandi is eternally celebrating the presence of the Lord in front. The expression of its face is calm and undisturbed. It looked as if Nandi too is meditating on the Lord.

Further we see that the small dancing statues on all the walls present men and women in graceful postures. One could almost imagine the well-skilled, self-lost devdasis dancing in ecstasy before the Lord. Seeing the dance forms and use of mudras and postures today, it feels that they have tried to copy and borrow the grace and posture from these living granite statues. We can see that none of the postures, neither the carvings not even the arch around each dancer is the same. In this variety also there is a harmony. We see human beings in all shades and forms and moods. On the lower part of the niche the mundane human activities,



**Various dancing poses on the niche of the temple**

animals and beasts are depicted. On the upper part, refined human activities like dances and crafts and other sacred art is depicted.. There is a perfect ascent of human consciousness depicted on them.

Not yet satiated with the Halebidu temple we moved on to Belur temple which was another 20-25 minutes away from there. While Halebidu depicted the earthly and the ethereal on the outside walls of the temple, an opulent and mesmerizing carving caught us by storm inside the Belur temple. Variety, detail, perfection and harmony characterized each pillar, figure and depiction inside the temple corridors. We wondered why was all this needed at all inside the temple where one comes for the Lord himself. But here was a specimen to show that God is not only seated in



**Dwarpal at the temple gate at Halebidu**

his secret chamber but he manifests as beauty, perfection and harmony through human beings into stones. Unlike Chidambaram temple, no two pillars inside Belur temple are same. Their carvings, depictions and events all are different. But they complement each other. There is no need for any sameness; it is the diversity which brings in the feeling that all differences can still lead to beauty. Belur temple was a perfect example of satyam shivam sudaram.

The apsaras in various postures hung from the roof in perfect balance could only be seen when light was flashed on them. We almost felt that such perfection could not have been carved even in paper and yet the artists have achieved this in granite. These depictions too looked unearthly or perhaps represented the perfect human body, activity and grace. Such has been the ideal of grace that was set before Indian men and women. Not outward show, but a body held by an inner poise reflected in the grace of the posture and balance of features and expression. There was much to learn from these super-human figures.



**Dancing apsara at Belur temple**

Another aspect on which I got arrested and wanted to capture each figure in my memory or at least in camera were the depictions of gods and goddess (image on the previous page). It was interesting that in both the temples, especially in Halebidu Vedic as well as Pauranic gods were depicted in every trait and character. I was amazed to observe that the sculpture was placed even

in the corner-most space of the temple. They are sometimes not even visible clearly, but the artists did not leave the space empty because of the difficulty of vision. Perhaps they were spiritually guided by the fact that God is there in every corner and so they chose to place them everywhere. While a few critics take objection in figures of gods and goddess Sri Aurobindo answers them fittingly,



**Gods on the outer wall of Halebidu temple**

The gods of Indian sculpture are cosmic beings, embodiments of some great spiritual power, spiritual idea and action, inmost psychic significance, the human form a vehicle of this soul meaning, its outward means of self-expression; everything in the figure,

every opportunity it gives, the face, the hands, the posture of the limbs, the poise and turn of the body, every accessory, has to be made instinct with the inner meaning, help it to emerge, carry out the rhythm of the total suggestion,.. (CWSA 20: 290)

This visit to Shravanabelgola, Halebidu and Belur was not only an education in art and history, but it was an odyssey in our own inner being. Like in poetry, so in any other art, I realised that unless we are *sahridaya*, one hearted, one consciousness and pure within, we will only remain mesmerized with the outer beauty of these figures. But the more we remain quiet we almost feel that each stone is speaking to us. Recollecting those moments even today I am led to tranquility and peace. We have to make our being as tranquil as the artisan so that we could enter the purity of the atmosphere in which the structures were carved with perseverance, patience, devotion and love. It was a selfless offering of the artists because nowhere are their names written or mentioned. Their carving perhaps was their mediation and *puja* and that alone was their offering. While they took decades of incessant work to pour soul into stone, we can perhaps spend a day or two invoking them to reveal the same soul to us. For the first time I understood that the inner eye was needed to appreciate what was carved with an inner vision.

### UNSELFISH WORK IS TRUE RENUNCIATION

This world is not for cowards. Do not try to fly. Look not for success or failure. Join yourself to the perfectly unselfish will and work on. Know that the mind which is born to succeed joins itself to a determined will and perseveres. You have the right to work, but do not become so degenerate as to look for results. Work incessantly, but see something behind the work. Even good deeds can find a man in great bondage. Therefore be not bound by good deeds or by desire for name and fame. Those who know this secret pass beyond this round of birth and death and become immortal.

The ordinary Sannyasin gives up the world, goes out, and thinks of God. The real Sannyasin lives in the world, but is not of it. Those who deny themselves, live in the forest, and chew the cud of unsatisfied desires are not true renunciators. Live in the midst of the battle of life. Anyone can keep calm in a cave or when asleep. Stand in the whirl and madness of action and reach the Centre. If you found the Centre, you cannot be moved.

*Swami Vivekananda*

# LIFE



**A master-work of colour and design,  
A mighty sweetness borne on grandeur's wings;  
A burdened wonder of significant line  
Reveals itself in even commonest things.  
All forms are Thy dream-dialect of delight,  
O Absolute, O vivid Infinite.**

*Sri Aurobindo*

## BANDE MATARAM \*

*(An excerpt from Sri Aurobindo's article on "Rishi Bankim Chandra", CWSA 6: 315)*

There are many who, lamenting the by-gone glories of this great and ancient nation, speak as if the Rishis of old, the inspired creators of thought and civilisation, were a miracle of our heroic age, not to be repeated among degenerate men and in our distressful present. This is an error and thrice an error. Ours is the eternal land, the eternal people, the eternal religion, whose strength, greatness, holiness, may be overclouded but never, even for a moment, utterly cease. The hero, the Rishi, the saint, are the natural fruits of our Indian soil; and there has been no age in which they have not been born. Among the Rishis of the later age we have at last realized that we must include the name of the man who gave us the reviving mantra which is creating a new India, the mantra Bande Mataram.

The Rishi is different from the saint. His life may not have been distinguished by superior holiness nor his character by an ideal beauty. He is not great by what he was himself but by what he has expressed. A great and vivifying message had to be given to a nation or to humanity; and God has chosen this mouth on which to shape the words of the message. A momentous vision has to be revealed; and it is his eyes which the Almighty first unseals. The message which he has received, the vision which has been vouchsafed to him, he declares to the world with all the strength that is in him, and in one supreme moment of inspiration expresses it in words which have merely to be uttered to stir men's inmost natures, clarify their minds, seize their hearts and impel them to things which would have been impossible to them in their ordinary moments. Those words are the mantra which he was born to reveal and of that mantra he is the seer.

What is it for which we worship the name of Bankim today? What was his message to us or what the vision which he saw and has helped us to see? He was a great poet, a master of beautiful language and a creator of fair and gracious dreamfigures in the world of imagination; but it is not as a poet, stylist or novelist that Bengal does honour to him today. It is probable that the literary critic of the future will reckon "Kopal Kundala", "Bishabriksha" and "Krishna Kant's Will" as his artistic masterpieces, and speak with qualified praise of "Devi Chaudhurani", "Anandamath", "Krishna Charit" or "Dharmatattwa". Yet it is the Bankim of these latter works and not the Bankim of the great creative masterpieces who will rank among the Makers of Modern India. The earlier Bankim was only a poet and stylist—the later Bankim was a seer and nation-builder.

But even as a poet and stylist Bankim did a work of supreme national importance not for the whole of India or only indirectly for the whole of India, but for Bengal which was destined to lead India and be in the vanguard of national development. No nation can grow without finding a fit and satisfying medium of expression for the new self into which it is developing— without a language which shall give permanent shape to its thoughts and feelings and carry every new impulse swiftly and triumphantly into the consciousness of all. It was Bankim's first great service to India that he gave the race which stood in its vanguard such a perfect and satisfying medium. He has been blamed for corrupting the purity of the Bengali tongue; but the pure Bengali of the old poets could have expressed nothing but a conservative and unprogressing Bengal. The race was expanding and changing, and it needed a means of expression capable of change and expansion. He has been blamed also for replacing the high literary Bengali of the Pundits by a mixed popular tongue which was neither the learned language nor good vernacular. But the Bengali of the Pundits would have crushed the growing richness, variety and versatility of the Bengali genius under its stiff inflexible ponderousness. We needed a tongue for other purposes than dignified treatises and erudite lucubrations. We needed a language which should combine the strength, dignity or soft beauty of Sanskrit with the verve and vigour of the vernacular, capable at one end of the utmost vernacular raciness, and at the other of the most sonorous gravity. Bankim divined our need and was inspired to meet it,—he gave us a means by which the soul of Bengal could express itself to itself.

\* Title given by the editors



## AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBI GANGULY

Deepshikha Reddy

*(Robi Ganguly came to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in the early 1940's. He grew up as a photographer here and worked in the Ashram Press till the end of his life.)*

**Deepshikha** - *I've heard you were very young when you came to Pondicherry several decades back. What was it like when you first arrived here?*

**Robi-da** - I came here as a very young boy and for reasons rather personal about which I will tell you later, I had to take admission or the mother had to admit me in Calve College. But you know our Centre of Education i.e. our school was initially not started for educational purposes i.e. for educating the children... That was perhaps sometimes in 1942 or 1943. Mona, Gama and their family had come, Kittu had come even earlier. At that time, you know there used to be only three darshans. One in the morning, balcony darshan, in between there used to be another darshan when She used to feed the crow called Blackie and the third used to be when the Mother would come to her window when all the people used to stand below to have her glimpse. I was then working in the Atelier, which was very close. I too used to come and everyone used to call out collectively 'Victoire a la douce Mere'. I don't know how it started, I mean this kind of chanting while the Mother appeared, but this is how it used to be. At this time when she used to appear for this darshan over the terrace of Dyumanbhai, she used to feed 'blackie' the crow. After that she used to go up alongwith Chinmoyee, her caretaker then, through the staircase on the roof of Pavitrada to the upper roof. There she used to stroll for around 8/9 times covering the roof. We all used to watch her from below. This mid-day darshan used to be known as the 'Window-darshan.' I hope you understand me. First she used to be on Dyumanbhai's roof, then on the second floor roof she used to walk for quite some time. This was around 11.00 a.m in the morning. Personally, I think perhaps it was for the sake of some exercise and movement that she used to go up there. At that time we were all very young. We used to play hopscotch and other games there and made quite a lot of noise. One day Mother called Chandulal – (do you know who Chandulal was? He was Vasudha's brother and an Engineer) and asked if there was any place where these children could be sent temporarily before the darshan. A place where these kids could be kept occupied for say half - a - day or so? Then she told him to look for such a place and arrange for some benches for these children to sit on. As he was an Engineer, he designed a few benches, got them made and brought into the Ashram courtyard for the Mother to see from top while She came for the darshan hour. Then she told us to sit and try those whether they were comfortable. So, initially the School was only for half-day. The kindergarten had also started with Chom, Jhumur, Gowri etc. who were very small babies. There were only A B C classes and the kindergarten – nothing more than that. When I had my holidays in the Calve College, I used to then come to our school for 2 or 3 months.

**Deepshikha** - *How did you feel being both a part of the Calve and our School?*

**Robida** - As you know the Mother had to admit me to Calve College. I developed friendship with others outside the Ashram circle. Slowly, I became a little distanced from the Ashram activities and the Ashram routine so to say. In the evening very often I used to go to play with those friends. I was not too much on this side. So much so that at that time the Mother used to give darshan upstairs and when I went for her darshan – in fact this was when after the vegetable

darshan she used to climb up and sit there – it was then that I used to go to her sometimes. Once she remarked to me saying “it will do you no harm if you come to me from time to time”.

At that time in the early morning I also used to work in the Ashram laundry – Pranabda, Birenda also used to work there. In the early morning I used to go there, finish the work, return home to go to the school. I continued with the work that she had given me. In fact even when I was quite young, I never neglected my work. You know, in my childhood, in war time, there used to be special flowers like aspiration, patience, transformation etc. which we were told to collect and specially count them and tell the number to the Mother. We just could not give her the flowers without counting them perfectly. I do not know what significance these numbers carried but we always had to count and give her. We used to go far outside to collect those special flowers for her. At that time Flower room was inside the Ashram premises only. Later the Flower room got shifted to the western side of the school building in front of the Ashram building.

**Deepshikha** - *What did She do with those counted flowers then?*

**Robida** - No, exactly I do not know the inner reason for that kind of a ritual almost, if I can say, but later she distributed those flowers among the devotees as per their need or aspiration – whatever. I still remember, in the beginning I wanted to talk to the Mother and I didn't know what to talk to her. Once she gave me a flower and I asked her the significance of that flower. It was “open your psychic or psychic opening” or may be “opening of the psychic centre” I have now forgotten that particular flower though. I studied outside till I finished my schooling and came fifth in my examination. You know I was not at all a studious boy. I almost never studied at all. But I passed fairly okay. In fact I was also a very mischievous boy.

**Deepshikha** – *That is quite a news - we have always known you to be serious and poised with measured smile. Were you really naughty?*

**Robida** – Really, I was a very naughty boy and often they used to give me the notebook, kind of a school performance book to be signed by the Mother as she was my guardian. The idea was that she should come to know how I behave in the school. Of course, she knew everything and she also knew me so totally!

**Deepshikha** - *Did she ever scold you for your pranks and mischiefs? How was your relationship with the Mother?*

**Robida** - No, no, she never scolded me. While signing she used to say ‘it is okay’ knowing very well how naughty I was. After the school was over I got a scholarship to study further in London, in England. That was in 1947. That was a special scholarship that used to be given in those days to particular students which I could avail.

**Deepshikha** - *So really you were a very naughty boy! It is hard to believe.*

**Robida** - Yes, they used to suspend and send me out of the school and demand that the Mother sign my conduct report. Mother used to behave rather easy and normal always giving me the feeling that she knew and understood me. You see, she was almost like my physical mother, I was a young child under Her full care, she was both my guardian and a mother. At that time, in those early days, things were very different. She used to ask me about all the things in the school. She truly knew me through and through.

**Deepshikha** - *So then what did you do with your scholarship?*

**Robida** - You see, at that time nobody really went out of the Ashram to study or anything like that. For me to go outside of Pondicherry to continue my further studies was quite an issue in itself. That was not the rule of the day in those early days as you see it now with students. So, quite naturally I went to the Mother to ask her about this dilemma whether I should go out of the Ashram and continue my further studies with the scholarship that I had got. Then the Mother replied that if I wanted to be a learned fool, I could go out. Then she continued saying that if I wanted to have information, I could join classes and learn things but if I wanted to get true knowledge, then I should live in the Ashram to gain it. Now you can imagine, after such a clear-cut advice, I completely gave up my idea of going out for continuing my studies and started looking for some work right here.

**Deepshikha** - So, where did you decide to go for the work?

**Robida** - It was then that she sent me to the Press and that was in 1947 and I worked there for about six months or so. After that you know Khodabhai's family - Chimanbhai, Baba and all of them came to the Ashram. Jayant became a good friend of mine. Now, one day Jayant just casually remarked to me, "Why don't you learn photography from my brother Chimanbhai?" I took the suggestion and went to ask the Mother if I could learn photography. She then asked me if I was really serious about it – meaning that it should not be just a passing fascination. Then I said "yes, I can be serious." Then she allowed me to learn photography and so I left working at the Press to learn photography. After that I rejoined the Press as you know, but that I did much later. Then I got totally immersed in photography. Mother had told me to show to her all the photographs that I would shoot. She had a very, very modern outlook regarding photography. For example, I went one day to our garden Cuznov to take photos. I shot a few photos of rice paddy shoots over there which I personally felt quite satisfied with. I felt that they came out to be good photos. But when I went and showed those photos to the Mother she said, "You see, this is a subject for painting, these paddy shoots are meant for strong strokes of painting. This is not a subject for photography." Then she explained to me as to which are the subjects or objects to be photographed and how they are to be photographed, etc.

I remember, there was a photography exhibition in which I received the second prize and another contestant bagged the first prize. She used to examine each and every photograph very critically and enthusiastically looking into all the details. She would tell me to bring to her all the photographs so that she could see them and teach me the merits and demerits through all of them. Then she saw the particular one which was given the first prize in the competition and remarked that it was a good photograph. It became a good photo when it represented the time-spirit it is taken in, the age that it reflects. She said that my photograph was also good but it did not reflect the age it was taken in. It did not relate to the time-spirit.

**Deepshikha** - *Is it like say Impressionism in paintings representing the age it was painted in or for that matter, the rigid and formal kind of photographic art of the early times of Europe representing the rigid life and mental make-up of that age? I mean when our mind and life break into a new form in evolution, paintings and photography too must reflect that through their medium. Is it something like that?*

**Robida** - Yes, it is right. The Mother used to take deep interest in photography. Then there was the international exhibition of photography. She literally used to see each and every photograph to be put in the exhibition. In fact when the photos used to arrive at the Post Office, I used to

fetch the whole parcel of photos straight up to her room. I felt that she was not so fond of colour photography, but later she took a lot of interest in those too. When I would open and show her the photos, she would explain to me many things. I remember, in the first exhibition, as I was one of the organisers, I could not be eligible to be a participant. Since we knew all the names and other details, we could not become participants. In that exhibition, a particular photograph that got the first prize and in fact, you may even know about it, that it became quite famous, picture of a little child. That photo was taken to the Mother to see. The moment she saw that she became very angry and said, “How this picture has been admitted in the exhibition at all! This child does not possess a psychic at all! Had I known it, I would not have admitted this photograph in the Exhibition Hall at all!” Then we said, “Mother, how would we know if this child has a psychic or not!” And you know Deepshikha, even after receiving the award, we could not put that photo in the exhibition hall. She just would not accept it.

**Deepshikha** - *Indeed this is both very interesting and revealing. You all were so lucky Robida, we can't even imagine. Well, those days did you also go for meditation alongwith the elders?*

**Robida** - Yes Deepshikha you know the sad part is that we did not understand Her in reality. Your question is interesting. I will tell you. During the time of meditation, we had to be outside as we were young children then. No, meditation was then not meant for us. As we were asked not to be a part of meditation, curiosity took over me and I wrote to the Mother if I could join the meditation. Then she wrote back in big letters “yes, you can come for meditation”.

**Deepshikha** - *You also took photos in the Sports ground. Didn't you?*

**Robida** - Yes, we took photos in the Sports ground, and She used to see all of those with a lot of interest. She used to watch all the selected pictures too. One day she told me to bring to her the photograph that I had taken the day before. She said, “Yesterday, your artist being was in front”. She used to teach me everything in great detail and guide each time with so much love and patience as if she had so much time. She used to make intense constructive criticism of photography. It was incredible to fathom her knowledge in photography. At that time colour photography had just started. Most of all was black and white. She was very deeply interested in colour photography. Once she was asked to give a message for, may be an exhibition or something – she wrote – “ Photography is an art and photographer is an artist.”

**Deepshikha** - *Anything more you remember that would interest us in general about Her ways?*

**Robida** - I remember she used to love pictures of monkeys and she really loved them. There were times when she gave photos of monkeys to be included in certain exhibitions. One day, seeing her deep love for monkeys I asked her “ why didn't you build this Ashram with monkeys instead of human beings like us as you like the monkeys so much?” Then she said, No, it is not exactly so. It is just that whenever I see a monkey's photo, especially in their eyes, I see there is a struggle for evolution, something like a feeling of limitation while evolving. As though there is an obstruction despite knowing that it has to reach beyond. It feels that it cannot take that leap in evolution. When that struggle gets reflected in the photograph, I like those photos.

**Deepshikha** - *Robida, how could you say to the Mother that she could have made the Ashram with the monkeys?*

**Robida** - What she meant was that the monkeys have a brain which is not developed. Therefore, it cannot express itself the way it wants to. As it cannot do that there is a struggle in its eyes which when it gets revealed in photos –she liked those.

**Deepshikha** - *I have understood that but I quite can't imagine how you said that?*

**Robida** - You see, Deepshikha, try to understand that we knew Her from our childhood almost like our physical mother. We were never afraid of her or thought we have to keep a distance or hide anything. We could speak to Her just as I am speaking to you, everything. We could say everything to Her and she also used to be very normal with us. She slapped me too.

**Deepshikha** - *So you were slapped on which occasion?*

**Robida** - In the basketball game we were watching girls and somewhat enjoying teasing them not knowing that she was just there around. She came out at that time and saw me amongst others. Next day when I went to her, she first slapped me saying, “so, you were also one of those mocking the girls”.

**Deepshikha** - *Did you read any book of Sri Aurobindo?*

**Robida** - There used to be philosophy class those days. She told me to join that. One day she told me, “look, Sri Aurobindo is not a cup of tea. Someone teaches you and you understand it. If you have true aspiration, then try to read him yourself. You will see that slowly you will understand his writings. His general writings are more suited for the west because the west understands things mentally whereas you are very lucky to be born in India. You have the element of natural devotion. You accept things from the heart.” She didn’t want everyone to read or to join the classes.



Robi Ganguly

# QUALITY EDUCATION: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR TODAY'S INDIA

Charan Singh

The object of education should be to enable us to utilize the resources of the country. Proper education should enable the people to make the land more fertile, the mines more productive, the trade more flourishing, the bodies more active, the minds more original, the hearts more pure, the industries more varied and the nation more united... The taking in of knowledge which we cannot carry out in practice, is spiritual constipation or mental dyspepsia. (Swami Rama Tirtha, *Collected Works* Vol. III, p. 213)

We are living in an age in which, according to H.D. Thoreau, the great American thinker, "... there is greater anxiety, commonly, to have fashionable, or at least clean and unpatched clothes, than to have a sound conscience"(Walden p. 23). Destined to breathe in an atmosphere where money, market and machine have taken predominance over the basic ethics and values of life, man is paying a hefty price for creating an unequal and unjust system of education, the foremost and fundamental prerequisite of human development. Needless to say that one of the original guiding principles of democracy is equality—equality of privileges and opportunities, of expression and evolution. This common public sense of equality should be reflected, first of all, through an equal and just as well as valuable system of education for all citizens, irrespective of their class, caste, creed and colour.

The future of a nation depends upon the future of its single individual. For verily an individual is a 'miniature nation' and, also the smallest unit of the nation's character. Thus the development of a single citizen is finally that of a nation. By enriching an individual, we enrich the country and make her proud, strong, vigorous, valorous and invaluable. As food for the body, so is education for the mind. No great country can survive without intellectual pabulum for long. "Books rule the world, or at least those nations which have a written language; the others do not count... When once a nation begins to think, it is impossible to stop it", writes Voltaire. (quoted in *The Story of Philosophy*, p. 261) It becomes easier to comprehend this statement by the great French philosopher once we look at the intellectual and academic acumen of the west that has governed the world by the power of their great and sublime institutions like Oxford University (est. 1167 A.D), the University of Cambridge (est. 1200 A.D) in Britain and Harvard University (est. 1636 A.D) in America. The west is ruling the world by the force of thought generated and transmitted by these 'powerhouses of knowledge'.

The true testimonies of these proud universities are the great intellects nursed and nurtured by them. Walking together with a Nobel laureate or getting a chance to sit in his/her class becomes a life transforming experience for the new learner and, this interaction inspires the latter to be like his mentor. Sri Aurobindo, the greatest philosopher - sage of modern India and an alumnus of the university of Cambridge, says,

What makes Oxford and Cambridge not local institutions but great and historic universities? It is the number of great and famous men, of brilliant intellects in every department which have issued from them...In England the student feels a pride in his own University and college, wishes to see their traditions maintained, and tries to justify them to the world by his own success. (*Speeches* p.3)

Ancient India too governed the world of Word by the light and puissance of universities like Taxshila, Vikarmshila and Nalanda for centuries but, its glory faded away by the devastation of these institutions. Ironically, when the west was erecting the majestic porticos and balustrades of Cambridge university, during the same period in India, an outside assailant was setting ablaze the three storied library of Nalanda! What an irreparable loss to India and the world! The rest – or shall we say the ‘unrest’? – is history.

Independent India too is battling with the mammoths of illiteracy, poverty and an ever soaring hydra of over population, the root of all ills. To improve the quality of education the govt. , in 2001 launched *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*. This move was followed by ‘The Right to Children of Free and Compulsory Education (RTE)’ Act in 2009, as a supplementary step to bridge the ever widening line of universal education. But deep is the rot and diverse are reasons behind the inefficacy, insufficiency and inefficiency of these acts and initiatives. In the following pages we will discuss the nature, scope and area of quality education. Our analysis shall be concluded by a conceptual framework of education, presented according to the need of today’s India.

### Quality Education: Nature and Scope

All the world’s possibilities in man

Are waiting as the tree waits in its seed (*Savitri*, p.482)

‘Educate’, the root verb of the world education, is originated from Latin word ‘educatum’ which means – ‘to bring up’. And *how* we bring up someone or something is of equal importance. Hence the need of ‘quality’ in education. Generally quality means the degree of excellence. Thus ‘quality education’ means education provided with the best degree of excellence through an excellent way. It is a kind of vision which dreams of tapping of full possibilities inherent in a child and thereby turning him into a significant participant in the process of the nation building. The core ethics of education is character building but it seems that there is no place for this fundamental value in our present day education system. Sadly, ‘how to amass wealth’ has become the summanbonum of life. Dr George Samuel, Director Value Education Centre Kerala, rightly writes,

The present education system is primarily concerned with “how to make a living”, ignoring the more fundamental question “how to live”. By laying excessive stress on professional skill, the matter of character building, the highest human value is being ignored, it seems. The knowledge and skill acquired, in the absence of an integrated system of values can be dangerous and suicidal. In fact, character should be the basis of achievement. (*Manorama Year Book 2015*, p. 817)

In fact the contemporary class teaching is based on an erroneous interrelationship of ‘giver and taker’ or the ‘learned and learner’ pattern of education. This gives way to the false and suicidal tendency among the teachers that ‘they are always good, correct and ultimate in the subject’! And worse, the student or learner or taker can never be correct! This mindset is, perhaps, the fundamental error in our education system, as it makes the teacher ‘rulers’ and not ‘facilitators’ in the learning process. It also makes them snob and supercilious in their vision to life and learning. On the contrary, education in the class room should be a celebration and the process of teaching as spontaneous as the advent of efflorescence in the life of nature. Sri Aurobindo gives us some illumination on the method of teaching and imparting knowledge to the young minds –

The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or task master, he is a helper and a guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose. He does not actually train the pupil’s mind, he only shows him how to perfect his instrument of knowledge and helps and encourages him in the process. He does not

impart knowledge to him; he shows him how to acquire knowledge for himself... The second principle is that the mind has to be consulted in its own growth. The idea of hammering the child into the shape desired by the parent or teacher is a barbarous and ignorant superstition. It is he himself who must be induced to expand in accordance with his own nature... The third principle of education is to work from the near to the far, from that *which is* to *which shall be*...the past is our foundation, the present our material, the future our aim and summit. Each must have its due and natural place in a national system of education. (*Sri Aurobindo's Action*, April 2014, p. 3)

This is the genuine attitude towards real education. These things should be kept in mind by the teachers while dealing with young and delicate minds in the class rooms. Such an attitude will surely create a 'quality atmosphere' for quality education.

The role and relevance of parents especially during the formative years of their child's development is of paramount importance. They are the first Primer of Life the child meticulously reads in the process of his education. Every great man and woman of exemplary character has been the child of an equally great parents. It is famously said of about Swami Vivekananda that once he bluntly asked his father Vishwanath, 'what have you done for me'? Hearing this, the somewhat annoyed father replied – 'Go and look at yourself in the mirror, then you will know'. (Vivekananda, a biography, p. 14) The parents themselves must be living example of the qualities they want in their child. But alas, the irony is –

...very few, even among those who are most serious and sincere, know that the first thing to do, in order to be able to educate a child, is educate oneself, to become conscious and master of oneself so that one never sets a bad example to one's child. For it is above all through example that education becomes effective. To speak good words and to give wise advice to a child has very little effect if one does not oneself give him an example of what one teaches. Sincerity, honesty, straightforwardness, courage, disinterestedness, patience, endurance, perseverance, peace, calm, self control are all things that are taught infinitely better by example than by beautiful speeches. (*The Mother, On Education*, p. 10)

Great nations are result of some unheard of sacrifices done by some great men. A country becomes great, strong and prosperous not by gold but by men of high character. Therefore, sound education pertaining to the past glories the present challenges of the country should be imparted to the young minds. Only then will they develop a deep sense of responsibility, regard and patriotism for their nation. They should be steeped in the core character of their country and her role in the making and manifestation of the world's possibilities. The Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram Puducherry, further enlightens us on this point,

In any country the best education that can be given to children consists in teaching them what the true nature of their country is and its own qualities, the mission their nation has to fulfill in the world and its true place in the terrestrial concert. (*On Education*, p. 252)

An education commission of the govt. of India visited Sri Aurobindo Ashram in August 1965, and when members of the commission asked the Mother about India's true genius and her message to the world, she replied – "To teach the world that matter is false and impotent unless it becomes the manifestation of the Spirit" (ibid , p.250)

Unfortunately India is still under the morose impressions of Macaulay and his 'philosophy' of



education for India. We are still fettered in the morass of the dead and dreary past. The shallow moorings of secularism have further decimated the true vision and mission of education in the country. Given the innumerable challenges lying before the creative canvas of our education today, we feel that this key sector requires a holistic and radical transformation in its present character. We therefore present a conceptual framework for quality education, with anticipation that the suggestions given shall be leniently heard and put into practice by the conscience – keepers of the country.

## **A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR QUALITY EDUCATION**

The five - point formula of the education framework is discussed one by one in the following lines –

### **A- A JUST, EQUAL AND UNIFORM SYSTEM OF EDUCATION FOR ALL –**

Democratic freedom and development is a matter of 'experience' and not only shallow perception of mind. Equality, in truth, is the heart and soul of a democratic system of govt. Without equality of opportunities and equal advancement, no democracy can dream of surviving long. And equality should be seen and applied in education sector with Great Spirit. India severely lags far behind to meet this urgency. Indeed it is a matter of collective shame for us that even after six decades of independence, a great part of our population is still uneducated just because of poverty. Ideally, education, the greatest equalizer and strongest weapon of empowerment, should be the right of every citizen. 'The Committee to Advise on Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education,' headed by Prof. Yash Pal, aptly comments –

No student should be turned away from an institution for wants of funds for education...Guaranteed student loans at low interest rates for those who can take loans and free education for those who cannot afford it at all will be necessary to educate India. (Report submitted to MHRD in 2009, p.42)

One of the worst aspects of Indian education system is that it has got converted into a highly booming industry. Also, the demand for quality school completely outstrips supply—making admissions a matter of fierce competition and conflict. They 'eminent' hill school and public school culture has turned education into an ugly market. Dev Lahiri, former Principal of the Welham Boys School, Dehradun, rightly comments on this face of our system –

This boom in the school market has created a new kind of buccaneer. Promoters of these schools are usually from the liquor, property or allied trades. They view the school 'business' much in the same way – except that it gives them a fig leaf of respectability. (*The Times of India*, Dec. 9, 2014, p.10)

An unequal and unjust system paves way to deep social unrest, backlash and sometimes, a radical revolution and cataclysm. Therefore the present authors believe that a democracy's education system should be based on the values of justice, equality and uniformity.

### **B- QUALITY TRAINING OF TEACHERS**

It is said that 'the destiny of a nation is shaped in its classroom,' but this is true only when the classroom is graced by the best brain in teaching and, most receptive minds on the receiving end. Sadly this is not the often case in Indian classrooms. One of the great problems of our education

system is inefficient and untrained teachers and their poor and ineffective method of teaching. Most of the teachers have very poor standard of communication skills, particularly in English for example, though the govt. in Uttarakhand has introduced CBSE pattern in all state run schools, no measure has been taken to upgrade the level of teachers to the standard of the new syllabi. Similar is the case in Degree colleges where, extremely poor in communication in English, most of the students do not grasp the real message of the great books and thoughts prescribed in their syllabus.

Therefore we feel that special training courses should be made mandatory for all teachers in order to meet the growing and pressing need of standard in education. We advise that special incentives should be given to those teachers who are innovative and experimentative in their approach to teaching.

### **C- IMPARTING BASIC EDUCATION THROUGH MOTHER TONGUE**

In India, parents blindly rush to schools that claim imparting education 'throughout' in English medium. And this tendency is growing apace. While there is no denying the growing importance of English as a 'language of empowerment', we feel that primary education should be always given to the child only in her mother tongue. Teaching in the mother tongue emotionally connects the learner to the subject taught and also makes it easy to sort out the difficulties of learning process. Moreover, this will surely make the parents', especially the mother's, dealing with the teaching of the child easy and enjoyable at home. A Yogi of Sri Aurobindo's stature also feels that 'teaching [at primary level] the children through English is harmful'. (*Speeches*, p.17)

### **D- INTRODUCING SANSKRIT AS LANGUAGE OF CULTURE AND KNOWLEDGE**

In a highly market driven society, this suggestion may sound to many as an odd and orthodox idea with little value in today's education system. But education which is meant to 'bring up' a nursery of 'young plants' deep rooted in the soil of cultural roots, sound knowledge of Sanskrit – the most ancient language of the world and also most technologically perfect – is the only ambrosia for this. Sanskrit, the mirror of India's soul and sophistication, is the only language in which the best and most profound thoughts have been expressed by our sagacious forefathers. The Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, the great *Kavyas* and classics and many other books are written in Sanskrit, the refined language. True spirit and message of India cannot be grasped without a deep knowledge of these books in the language of their compositions. We strongly believe that in an age when the gentle flow of River of Life is being blocked by rage, rancour, rapine and raucousness, Sanskrit can serve the best antidote of restoring the flow and flavor of life.

### **E- FOCUS ON THE INNATE CREATIVITY OF THE LEARNER**

There are many lessons which the teacher could learn from his students! The teacher should be sensitive enough to deal with his little walking gods in the garden house of goddess Saraswati. The children in their early age are full of curiosity and creativity. The main focus of the teacher, thus, should be to create conditions for full blossoming of their creative urge. One day in a week should be celebrated as 'day of creativity', and singing, shouting, dancing, dangling, writing, roaring, sketching, and skylarking, should be given predominance on that day. This will certainly make learning 'a joy of life' and classrooms shall be naturally converted into houses of Ananda, amity and ecstasy.

We believe that school and college education is only a part of education a child or youth has in his entire life. In truth the whole of life is an education and there is not a single day when we don't learn anything new in the School of Life. The theoretical lessons learnt within the four walls of schools and colleges are to be applied in the practical laboratories of life. We cannot but agree to the words of Will Durant when the American philosopher opines –

...“education must be... a continuous growth of the mind and a continuous illumination of life...Real education comes after we leave school; and there is no reason why it should stop before our death”. (*The Story of Philosophy*, p.681)

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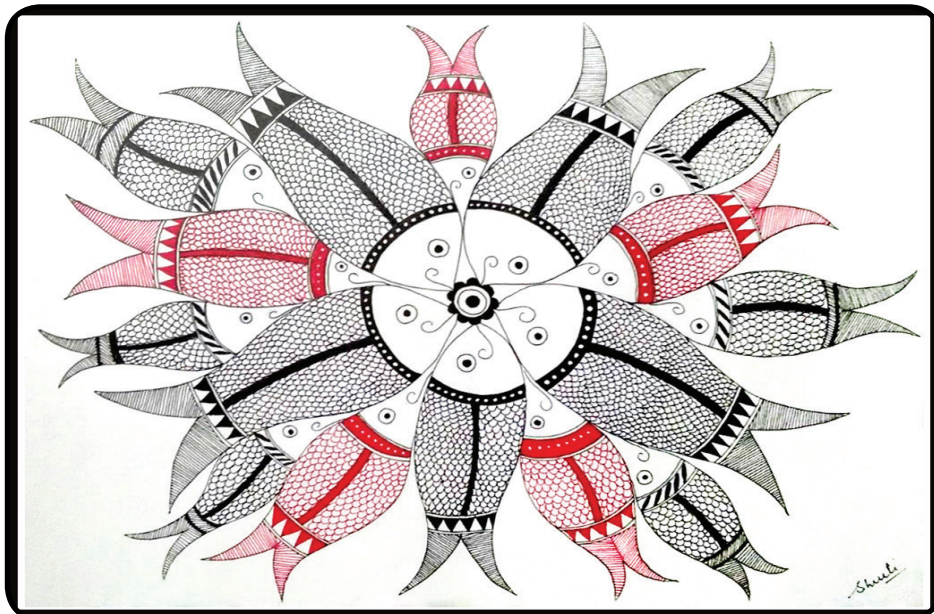
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## ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS: IN THE LIGHT OF SRI AUROBINDO

Oeendrila Guha

This article humbly suggests a reversal of the ontological division of mind and body in the Judeo-Christian religion which justifies human being as holding the central position of power in the natural world and the culminating environmental exploitation as a matter of course. One of the ways to reverse this hierarchy and contain the environmental degeneration is by inculcating the eco-centric practices of ancient religions which deny to God or to humanity the central position of power as spirit and reason.

Non-Western as well as Western ecologists indict the Judeo-Christian tradition as culpable of inducing the on-going environmental crisis. Lynn Townsend White Jr. writes, “Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia’s religions...not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God’s will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.” (1205) John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* is an apt example of Judeo-Christian culture “consolidating and protecting a strict human-animal divide” (Huggan and Tiffin 163) as exemplified in the following lines:

Let us make now Man in our image, Man  
In our similitude, and let them rule  
Over the Fish and Fowl of Sea and Air,  
Beast of the Field and over all the Earth,  
And every creeping thing that creeps the ground.(171)

Jugal Kishore Mukherjee states that in Christian theology animals and plants are not created in God’s image as in the case of human beings but “affected through some secondary agency”. (2)

The Judeo-Christian exegesis has its germination in the Greek classical tradition which identifies humanity as the bearer of “reason, intellect and progress.” (Manes 17) Plato considers mind (noumenal consciousness) superior to body (phenomenal consciousness) since it dies. The soul, which is imprisoned in the body, on the other hand can free itself by conquering “the non-rational aspects of itself” or isolating itself from the body. (Kheel 66) In fact, the Judeo-Christian tradition supports the faith that humanity can regain an eternal life in paradise by redeeming its sins on earth. It is the idea of dying, “of the body be given up...to Nature” (Fromm 31), that weighs the most on the minds of Adam and Eve for they were immortal until they committed the sin. Similarly, Christ is tempted by Satan in the wilderness and attains transcendence on resurrecting after death. His mind conquers death but not his body. The germination of the concept that there is no immortality of the body, as averred in the Bible, has its ancient root in Plato.

In the parable of creation, the Judeo-Christian God, the Father, firstly establishes a human rule on earth in the figure of Adam and Eve and secondly gives them the license to tyrannise nature since it is a “secondary agency”. The difference between humanity and nature reiterates the gulf between God and nature which is similar to Plato’s description of the natural world as a shadow of the world of Ideas. On the contrary, in the *Aiteraya Upanishad* it is said that consciousness resides in humanity, animals and plants. It is possible to identify with this consciousness by knowing oneself and nature as *Sat* or formal representations of the *Asat*, Brahman. The Hindu deities do not sanction “organizational hierarchy” (Drengson 1992: 133) between themselves, humanity and nature. Dr. Ujjwal Jana notes,

In Indian thought, the hierarchy between the human world the environment world is markedly absent, rather the attitude towards nature is one of reverence and worship...In

this context the words as inscribed in Vedic texts are critique of modern human beings' insensible way of looking at nature from the colonisers' perspective by subjugating nature to our will... (258)

The Vedanta conceptualized a non-dualistic universe: the Divine in all and all in the Divine.

Similarly, Taoism, Buddhism and Jainism are other ancient religions which maintain a "quietist" approach to nature as they preferred a withdrawal from all activities to an all-purposeful intervention. Ecologists have paid most attention to Taoism and Buddhism for their preferred withdrawal from all activities in nature to an all-purposeful intervention. The Taoist maintains that the way nature functions as a whole proves that the natural world or the world of forms is a representation of the Formless or the Non-being and is in conformity with the Formless, who is the ultimate creator of this world. Taoism is more like a system of guidance than a religion for "tao" means "way" in Chinese. Buddhism maintains that depending on the physical environment, an individual can either be negatively or positively influenced and depending on the nature of an individual, nature can either be exploited out of greed or nurtured out of love and kindness. One such example is of the Buddha taking shelter and attaining enlightenment under a *bodhi* tree and earning the title of "The Buddha". Thus, the Buddhist tenets of detachment and renunciation, as part of The Eightfold Path, encourage human beings to become egoless and cultivate selfless love and compassion for the natural world as both are intrinsically knit in "cosmic purpose". (Hay 95) Jainism deems non-violence, non-absolutism and non-possessiveness as values which should be shown towards all living creatures since they house the immortal essence or soul or *Jiva*, which survives physical death.

These religions do not promote the symbolic existence of an all-powerful God who represents terror and punishment. Instead, they initiate "a letting go, a responsiveness to the grace and gifts this world affords, and a presence to the world as subject, all of which have been associated with spirituality." (Cheney 59) Thus, post-colonial eco-critics allege that environmental degradation is the result of European imperialism which imposed its dualistic dialectic idiosyncrasies on the colonized and mutilated its fauna and flora that framed its cultural ethos. Dwaita Hazra argues that the imperial West thinking itself civilized, destroyed the East's primitive earth-centric traditions in the name of its superior religion and philosophy. For example, the current Indian system of education, based on the principles of materialism and utilitarianism of Macaulay's Minute of 1835, is non-Vedic. Macaulay's Minute annihilated the ancient Indian education system which recognized the imprint of Spirit behind Matter or Matter as an extension of the Spirit and therefore, encouraged the growth of an individual's inner consciousness, resulting in harmony and peace with the outer environment. Macaulay made English mandatory and removed the learning of Arabic and Sanskrit from the then present syllabus.

Prof. S. Murali opines "...since the ways of thinking of the people of the East differs a great deal from that of the people of the West, historically and culturally" (93) they maintain that all animals have souls and ergo to be venerated, they have the necessary solutions for the ongoing environmental crisis. Fortunately, Western ecologists, for example, Greg Garrard has come to realise that the man-nature opposition of Western religion and philosophy can only be erased by returning to "a monistic, primal identification of human and the ecosphere". (24) Shamanistic religions of the East and other parts of the world must be revisited and resurrected so that Euro-centrism is reversed and environmental degeneration is gridlocked because their God does not occupy the central position of power.

Hailing from the East, his roots entrenched deep into Vedantic philosophy, Sri Aurobindo

bridges the Western ontological gap between mind and body and humanity and nature. In the words of S. Murali, Sri Aurobindo's integral philosophy is "grounded in a distinctly non-Eurocentric tradition, and any approach to his work has to take into account this factor." (100) His vision, founded on the tenets of Vedantic philosophies, bases itself on the mindset of the erstwhile Indians and seeks to inculcate in them a practice to venerate nature and thus founds a bio-centric education.

Sri Aurobindo's vision is integral because he combines the earliest tenets of Vedantic philosophies to develop his own metaphysics. The earliest philosophical school of Indian thought, the Vedanta conceptualized a non-dualistic or monistic universe: the Brahman in all and all in the Brahman. Sri Aurobindo asserts "The Upanishads affirm that all this is the Brahman; Mind is Brahman, Life is Brahman, Matter is Brahman..." (CWSA 22: 338) The Judeo-Christian tradition maintains that creation rose out of chaos and darkness. Unlike the Vedantic vision that the Brahman created this world out of Ananda, the Judeo-Christian God, the Father is not attributed with any reason as to why he chose to create; he merely does. The concept of a God who punishes his creation is foreign to Hindu religion because a God cannot punish the same creation which He created out of an "immense delight to be" (CWSA 2: 609), as an extension of becoming of His own Being. M. G. Bhagat comments that the comprehensive extent of Indian thought does not allude to a "severe, cold and hard Majestic Sovereign. Such a concept of God is quite alien to it." (74) Thus, the "immense delight to be" of the unmanifested Brahman is the beginning and purpose of all creation.

In order to identify with the "immense delight to be" or Ananda, Sri Aurobindo explains that the conquering of ego and transforming Matter, Life and Mind is imperative. On the authority of Sri Aurobindo, as the mind sifts to arrive at independent, existential facts, it is not perfect. Majority of humanity lives in the lower vital which is "full of obscure desires...pleasures and pains". (CWSA 28: 185) Instead, humanity must live in the higher vital which is "wide, vast, calm, strong, without limitations, firm and immovable, capable of all power, all knowledge, all Ananda." (CWSA 28: 185) Sri Aurobindo calls the higher vital as the "true" vital because it is sans ego. Similarly, the material consciousness is "obscure, stupid, indolent, full of ignorance and inertia, darkness and slowness of *tamas*." (CWSA 28: 210) But it can and must be awakened to "Light and Power and Ananda" and ultimately transformed. Thus, by rising above these three modes of action, ego can be conquered and Matter, Life and Mind transformed to live the Vedantic Truth that the Brahman resides in everything and matter or nature need not be rejected as something inert and passive, incapable to house the Divine.

Sri Aurobindo says that an individual is obviously engulfed in its own surface consciousness which is limited to its senses and absolutely shut out from the "universal forces". (CWSA 28: 213) It believes that all that it thinks, feels and senses are its personal fortune, privy to itself when in reality the truth is that its thoughts, feelings and sensations are the "universal forces" which enter any one and every one. Thus, the ego is an external consciousness, like the physical body, which pretends to be the internal consciousness of the individual. According to Sri Aurobindo, an individual can train itself to recognize the thoughts, emotions and sensations infiltrating it as external agents and choose to control their invasion, thereby becoming aware of its subtle or "environmental" self. Such an individual possesses "the environmental consciousness" (CWSA 28: 213) in its wideness of consciousness and peace and calmness of feeling and action. Development of "the environmental consciousness" is imperative to solving the environmental crisis because an individual "without it would be without contact with the rest of the world." (CWSA 28: 214)

Therefore, the environmental is not something outside of oneself but inside of oneself. It is not of the world but of the individual. Unless every individual changes his/her nature first, he/she will not develop “the environmental consciousness” vital to solving the environmental cataclysm. Sri Aurobindo’s humanity-nature philosophy, founded on the ecologically conscious exegesis of the Veda and the Vedanta: *isha vasyam idam sarvam*, is intrinsically eco-centric.

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# THE FOUR FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS OF HUMAN UNITY

(In light of Sri Aurobindo's Vision)

Divyanshi Chugh

My aspiration to recognise and realise the very essential basis of what seemed like a very complex riddle - *the ideal of human unity* - found its answer in the chapter "The Conditions of a Free World Union" in his volume *Ideal of Human Unity* (Sri Aurobindo, 1997) wherein very simply, besides talking about the essential outward conditions on a global scale, Sri Aurobindo reveals the four essential characteristics of human unity.

He writes, "Unity would be the largest principle of life" (p. 540), "freedom would be its foundation-stone" (p. 540), "a living diversity would be its object" (p. 540), and "each culture... (serving) the common aim and idea of human perfection" (p.545).

In this article, I will be going deeper in each of the four characteristics: 1) unity as the largest principle of life, 2) freedom its foundation stone, 3) diversity a living presence and 4) the idea of human perfection as the common aim served by each in its individuality and interaction.

These ideas are mentioned in different paragraphs throughout the chapter, and not as parts of a single puzzle in a short summary. They are not ingredients to a recipe or digits that when added to each other will create the sum of "human unity". It is not a summation in which one puts these four components together and have human unity as an outcome. On the other hand, it is quite the opposite. The deeper one goes into any principle; the others are invariably revealed. Each contains the other three, and yet is distinct and salient.

## Unity

In *The Conditions of a Free World Union*, Sri Aurobindo defines unity as

"a living unity, not in the externals of civilisation, in dress, manners, habits of life, details of political, social and economic order, not a uniformity, which is the unity towards which the mechanical age of civilisation has been driving, but a free development everywhere with a constant friendly interchange, a close understanding, a feeling of our common humanity, its great common ideals and the truths towards which it is driving and a certain unity and correlation of effort in the united human advance" (p. 543).

The basis of this unity, as he articulates in the Conditions for the Coming of a Spiritual Age, is the "revealing and finding of the divine Self in man, the supreme." (Sri Aurobindo, 1985, p. 256) It is the intrinsic Oneness in all life, of which a true world union is one form - the highest at that scale.

At the global scale, this inner union will express as 'Free World Union', which first requires humanity to get out of the institutions of violence it has built. Thus, it would mean the absolute elimination of war. As he puts it, "Force as the arbiter of international differences and a free world-union are two quite incompatible ideas and practically could not coexist." Secondly, each nation has the right to self-determination. Thirdly, the arrangement of the economic life in its new order would be by mutual and common agreement. Fourthly, he sees the transformation of the very idea of nation. In his words:



“the national idea might be expected to undergo a radical transformation; it might even disappear into a new and less strenuously compact form and idea of group-aggregation which would not be separative in spirit, yet would preserve the necessary element of independence and variation needed by both individual and grouping for their full satisfaction and their healthy existence” (p. 547).

Essentially, human unity is an outward expression of the underlying Truth of the ever-present reality of all being One. It is the highest of human endeavours, for only in a deep sense of love and Self-awareness can human unity be realized. Most structures that exist today represent our forgotten sense of self. And, thus, it is not uncommon to see territories blocking the flow of people, money blocking the flow of resources, and organisations blocking the flow of love in the relationships. Forms, patterns and structures that emerge out of a living sense of Oneness would indeed be quite different, if not the opposite. Founded on inner wisdom, we may not need many of the systems present today, inherently divisive forms such as finance, governance. For instance, the mainstream economic system divides nature and humans; men's work and women's work; and physical labour and mental work. Its instruments are ignorant and divisive. Money puts a price on the sacred value of Nature and humans, obscuring their true value of things and work.

To manifest an economic system as a living embodiment of human unity, each member must pursue the ideal of human perfection needs to be pursued by each contributing member as its common aim, rather than human attachments and desires, that corrode the collective ideals.

### **The Common aim and ideal of human perfection: Progress**

To understand the common aim of human perfection, it is important that we understand evolution of consciousness, and to understand it, we must understand involution. For Consciousness to be evolving in Matter, it must first have “involved” itself. But, how does that happen? Sri Aurobindo used the example of a boy who reads a book to illustrate the process concentration, the underlying cause of involution. The boy is engrossed in reading and forgets everything else – who he is, what his duties are, what happens around him. When one is fully engrossed – as we are – one forgets for the moment about Israel, the wars in the world, the traffic on the street, and one's family. Sri Aurobindo takes this concentration as the fundamental process responsible for the involution of the divine consciousness into its apparent opposite, matter. So what happens when one starts with the ultimate divine consciousness that comprehends everything? At first, there are no limitations – only pure vastness, infinity, light. Then it separates into multitudes of consciousness, but each centre is still infinite and contains everything. These units start concentrating more, but they start excluding other things. They become more and more focused until, in the end, they are so focused that they become, for example, electrons which know only one thing, how to circle a proton. It is a point-like concentration of the consciousness. The only thing that still betrays consciousness at that level is the habit of form – the habit of orbiting the nearest proton. This consciousness is completely limited to one a single, fully fixed expression, obeying the laws of physics. Between the top layer of free consciousness and the fully determined, physical level, all the other, planes of consciousness are formed. The mental consciousness is free, in that it can see things from above. The vital consciousness becomes more involved; It is bound to one point from where it interacts with others. On the lowest level, there

is the physical consciousness, where Consciousness is contained inside itself. There are physical interactions, of course, but only when different entities bump into each other. The consciousness cannot move out of its groove. Here is the end of involution, and consciousness has hidden itself completely and has turned into its apparent opposite, matter (Cornelissen, 2002).

From where originates the complex mixture of physical, vital and mental aspects of reality that make up our life on earth? For this, one needs a re-emergence of consciousness. The fantastic thing is this evolution is not just the mirror image of the involution. There are many people who have said that the Divine consciousness first immerses itself in a physical body, and through yoga, emerges from it. But it is not that simple as that, because our individual lives are part of an on-going evolution of consciousness in Nature. Evolution of consciousness is not an evolution out of matter, but it is an evolution in matter.

In matter on the vital plane, we have our interactions. We have emotional experiences, such as love and hate, taking place horizontally. On the mental level, we have a consciousness that still has some possibility of emancipation. For example, I can rise above myself “in my mind,” and I see that I am a human being just as others. But I am still looking from one point. I can see the world “objectively,” but in only in one way at a time. My ideas can still be in conflict with reality and the ideas of others. Lastly, on the supramental level, there is joy of variety and oneness at the same time.

Thus, the task of life is to realise our Oneness with each other, with nature, and with the Divine. It is only through this Oneness that one can achieve peace, of harmony and a new *Satya Yuga*. However, this must happen with complete freedom of each member of the human race. Anything forced will lead to just another reproduction of the same old ways.

## **Freedom**

In the symbolic age, discovering and understanding symbols as mystic influences was the object of life. In the typical age, following the ideals *Brahmin*, *Kshtriya*, *Vaishya* or *Shudra* was the object of life. In the conventional age, the outward expression became more important than the ideal. In the individual age, individuals began to break conventions, question and think independently; and thus, rebellion became the object of life. And lastly, coming full circle, the subjective age is about revealing the Divine Self in human. Here the individual begins to find his deeper self.

In the conditions for *The Coming of the Spiritual Age* in *The Human Cycle*, Sri Aurobindo writes:

The spiritual age will be ready to set in when the common mind of man begins to be alive to these truths and to be moved or desire to be moved by this triple or triune Spirit. That will mean the turning of the cycle of social development, which we have been considering out of its incomplete repetitions on a new upward line towards its goal. For having set out, according to our supposition, with a symbolic age, an age in which man felt a great Reality behind all life which he sought through symbols, it will reach an age in which it will begin to live in that Reality, not through the symbol, not by the power of the type or of the convention or of the individual reason and intellectual will, but in our own highest nature which will be the nature of that Reality fulfilled in the conditions—not necessarily the same as now—of terrestrial existence (p. 260).

In this sense, true freedom is to obey one's law of Being, without depending on symbols, as humanity has and continues to.

In the chapter *Nature's Law in Our Progress*, Sri Aurobindo succinctly elaborates on the purpose of "freedom" in human evolution in the following line - "Human society progresses really and vitality in proportion as law becomes the child of freedom"(p. 426). In the same chapter, he also defines freedom/ liberty as "the freedom to obey the law of our own being, to grow to our natural self-fulfilment, to find out naturally and freely our harmony with our environment."(p. 425).

### **Living Diversity**

*"We see that in this harmony between our Unity and our diversity lies the secret of life."*

- Sri Aurobindo

Nature finds joy in diversity, variety, and idiosyncracies. Imposition of the mental will, more often than not, produces standardization and fixity, which is contrary to the Force of Nature. To understand why, it is worthwhile to explore the fundamental nature of reality. The fundamental Nature of reality is One (*ekam sat* or *tad ekam*) – the pure Consciousness, the truth of Existence, the source of transcendental delight (*Sachchidananda*)-- and at the same time, "infinite." It is the Infinite One that has manifested itself as infinite instances of itself, each entirely unique, for the purpose of experiencing the beauty and bliss of Unity in Diversity. It is in *The Life Divine* (p. 937), Sri Aurobindo writes, "A diversity in oneness is the law of the manifestation; the supramental unification and integration must harmonise these diversities."

### **Summary**

In summary, many times, we see diversity and unity manifest as polarities, and freedom is seen and lived as contradictory to progress. However, unity is beyond polarities. It transcends the continuum between polarities in a manner that manifests the Infinite One as Multiple Unity. It is then living diversity and unity, freedom, and the common ideal of human perfection are no longer seen as contradictory or opposites, but rather as the non-negotiable elements, the living material, and the indispensable needs of an actual human unity - which can only be brought forward, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, by a 'clear recognition by man in all his thought and life of a single soul in humanity of which each man and each people is an incarnation and soul-form'.

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# THIRUVANNAMALAI UNDER THE FULL MOON

*Deborah Keller-Rihn*

In 2012, I wanted to make a spiritual pilgrimage to India. I asked my friend, yogi and Bharathnatyam dancer, Dr. Sreedhara A.R. where I should go and he made arrangements for me to stay at an ashram near Thiruvannamalai in the mountains in a Guest House run by his friend Ashok, brother of Arun. Knowing of my spiritual curiosities, Ashok asked me if I would like to see the famous full moon walk in Thiruvannamalai. Of course, I am always up for experiencing something new so before I knew it we were off to the town on his motorcycle swerving between cows, autos and buses not to mention huge potholes that he skillfully missed. We went to see a few temples around the Ramana Ashram and I took some pictures but thought they were so inadequate that the idea of a return trip to document the walk took a firm hold of my imagination. My obsession with photography was the motivating force but more than that, it was the desire to capture the feeling of devotion and the sensory quality of the spirituality that I felt there. It was something completely alien to my experience as a person hailing from West. I wanted to recreate this experience in my hometown where I work as an arts organizer.



I came again to Thiruvannamalai with my daughter and her friend in December 2016 but I didn't realize December was the major time for pilgrimage as this is the month that the Shiva fire is lit on top of the mountain of Arunachala. Literally, hundreds of thousands of people were in Thiruvannamalai and we couldn't even find a hotel in so we stayed in Gingee, a nearby town. We did go near the temple in Thiruvannamalai during the day with some friends from Bangalore but it was decided that the full moon walk was out of the question and my urgent dream to photograph the walk was left unrealized. If I had been alone, I surely would have braved the crowds but I didn't want to make my daughter and her friend uneasy so I acquiesced.

So, it was my good fortune to be able to come back to India to study at the Sri Aurobindo Centre of Advanced Research (SACAR) in July and August of 2017. In late July, I took a brief excursion to Kanchipuram and noticed the road sign to Thiruvannamalai and my heart's desire to do the moon-walk was reawakened. Realizing that the August full moon was only a week away, I quickly made arrangements to find a hotel. Dr. Reddy, the Director of SACAR, was surprised that I was able to find a hotel so close to the time of the walk so maybe it was time for me to realize this desired experience.

I was also fortunate to have the sweet service of Mani, a Shiva devotee who drove me to Thiruvannamalai chanting and praying the entire way. We met a woman along the way who gave us a blessing. This beautiful woman said something to me in a very low, gruff voice and I asked Mani, "Is that a man or a woman? He said, "Both!"

"Well, even better I said!" We had a good laugh about that...

I was thrilled to see the beautiful countryside that I was familiar with from previous trips – the red dirt, the houses colorfully painted, the roadside shrines and when I saw the rock formations and the forts of Gingee, I thought my heart would burst. When we finally got to Thiruvannamalai,

I was happy to see how close my hotel was to the Ramana Ashram. Later in the day, I went to the ashram passing under the green arch and again saw the huge tree like a piece of organic, modern sculpture in front of the bookstore and the exquisitely clean courtyard carefully being swept by diligent devotees. I bought some books and explored the area. I went into the meditation hall and saw they had rearranged the backlit pictures I loved so much. I noticed a beautiful new gold statue of Sri Ramana Maharshi was installed in the inner sanctum. I walked behind the hall only to find a quaint gallery of photographs and drawings that I had missed on my last trip. They seemed to be the original photographs that you see reproduced on book covers, in the hall and on posters and signs everywhere here in India.

The full moon in August was at 11:00 p.m. so I still had hours to wait so I took a nap to pass the time and make sure I had energy for the walk. Finally dusk came and I went out to the street by the ashram and was pleased to see people were already walking. A young artist was selling his artwork and I understood him to say that he was twelve so he was selling his drawings for twelve rupees so I went to get change. As an art teacher, I had to reward this young man's initiative! I came back out and his price was now fifty rupees! Good, I thought, it is a bad habit for artists to give away their work and I now have a beautiful painting of Arunachala done by Sohil—so note that name—Sohil, the famous young artist from Thiruvannamalai!



We began walking around the famous mountain of Arunachula in a counter-clockwise direction. There were thousands of people walking as the sun slowly set—all ages, some dressed in saris, some sadhus, children, some businessmen, young men and women, girls—almost all Indian. I saw only a handful of Westerners the whole walk and I would think how they looked out of place forgetting that I, myself am of European descent. Almost immediately, a young man named Prathap (Peace) started talking to me. He wore a T-shirt that said “Be Happy-This is your Life!” Prathap was very friendly and spoke good English and he told me that he is a guide and that this is how he maintains his life. He had a limp and a crippled hand and his sincere, jovial manner did not cover the fact that he had a hard life. He was from Mammalapuram and had come to Thiruvannamalai to find his own way apart from family pressure. His family expected that he should already be married by now with a good job and though he would like to find someone, that person had not appeared. He was currently homeless and someone had snatched his cell phone so he was not in a good place. I enjoyed his company and had no problem with our unspoken agreement that I was employing him as my guide. He was very patient with me taking pictures and helped me scope out shots where there was good lighting. It was pretty dark so taking good photographs was something of a challenge.



We would stop for blessings at the many temples along the way. We got so many blessings that night! We went into



a Ganesh Temple, a Sai Baba Temple, a Kali Temple, a Murugan Temple, a Shiva Temple and I am probably forgetting some others. Our foreheads were covered in ochre, white and red ash. I would watch Prathap and imitate whatever he did. He knew some of the people in the temples and he is the type who really never meets a stranger so he was a good companion to have encouraging me to go into places where I might have been too shy to go alone. We walked and talked

and stopped by the Hare Krishna bookstand so I could take phone pictures to send to my Hare Krishna friends on Facebook. They responded, “Hey, those are our books!” Some of my other friends, including Dr. Sreedhara, my original contact from India said, “You’re glowing!” I must say that I was intensely happy but the glow might have also had something to do with the heat and the physical exertion.

We stopped to have tea and to buy bracelets for my grandbabies. We also had some sugarcane juice with lime. That was delicious! There were lots of people giving out free food but the lines were quite long. Prathap kept encouraging me giving me things to look forward to along the way. He would say, “Just around the corner is my guru, Babaji or Muniji,” for example.

Muniji, the guru was sitting on a platform in a little hut off the main road. I was not allowed to take pictures of the guru but the sight of him was very moving. He was a living embodiment of Shiva covered in ash wearing only a short dhoti. His hair was grey in dreadlocks but he didn’t appear that old – maybe in his mid-forties at the most. He seemed to have a cold and he was very quiet and remote. Then Prathap told that he hadn’t spoken a word in nineteen years. He blessed us each individually with a small gesture of recognition then he blessed us as a group. There was a little baby there and her proud parents, some older gentleman in slacks and Western shirts and a pretty blonde lady named Theresa who lives in India for nine months of the year and in Germany the rest of the time. She said she is partial to Thiruvannamalai. She was dressed in a white shawl with a red Om pattern and she was sweetly devout. My guide says they both come here everyday. They gave us food in little leaf bowls-prasadam-one spicy and one sweet. Some of the guru’s attendants also gave us some fruit as well as some jasmine and marigold flowers. There were ladies there washing huge cooking bowls so thanks go to them, no doubt for the delicious food.

We went back to the road and I stopped to take a picture of a candle alongside the road and the next thing I knew, I was talking to a lady who wanted to tell my fortune. She had a parakeet in a cage that hopped out and picked a little pamphlet from a stack. The lady opened the pamphlet and showed me an image of some Goddesses- Laxmi, Saraswati and Maheshwari. She said the Goddesses were looking after me and that is why I seem to have good luck.

The fortune teller told my friend that yes, he was having a hard time but she blessed him, read his palm and gave him something wrapped in newspaper and told him to perform some little ritual to better his future. Her manner was direct and firm and she seemed quite confident. I enjoyed the experience very much. We gave her some small amount of money and were on our way. Outside to the Ganesha temple, there were two ladies dressed in orange with turmeric on

their faces who did a spiritual cleansing on us one hitting us on the back with some green leaves—maybe neem leaves and the other stepping on a lime. They were motherly and friendly, one more than the other who was a bit reserved. After the cleansing, I felt above Prathap's head and there was energy surging over him for a while. I do hope his future grows brighter. With Shiva and his initiative and social intelligence, I see no reason why not.

There were literally hundreds of sadhus along the road mostly in orange, some playing music, some just chatting, some asking for change. I thought that if all of these sadhus are praying for the world, then we have nothing to worry about.

Prathap said that there is always food in India. He said he sleeps by one of temples, then goes to the Ramana Ashram where he meditates and gets his breakfast. He gets his other meals with his guru and says that many people survive on as little as thirty rupees (fifty cents) a day. He said that housing was a bit expensive and that he has to buy food for his family and pay for a ritual for his Father who died almost a year ago. I thought it was funny that the desire for fatherly approval knows no cultural boundaries. I guess most parents just want their kids to be secure and the thought of the child without food or shelter causes anxiety so it is only understandable. But children must live life on their own terms. Even Sri Ramana Maharshi's Mother did not want him to become a sannyasi but he had to follow his own calling and eventually she became his devotee and organizer for his ashram.

At first, everyone on the walk was very energetic and walking briskly. There were people chanting for Shiva and Arunachala but as the evening was coming to a close, the pace also slowed. Prathap kept encouraging me saying, "We are almost through the town, the temple is coming up really fast or the Ramana Ashram is right around the corner. Let's stop and have another tea." "It's just around the next bend" became our little joke since that is what my father used to tell us as children on long hikes in the mountains. The course around the mountain is fourteen kilometers and it gets a little arduous especially since I was developing a couple of blisters (little medals of achievement). Near the end of the walk we came to the area in the center of the road where there is a good view of Arunachala and it was thrilling to see how people lighting fires to honor Shiva and how they were actually praying amidst the small flames.

I began to get tired of seeing all of the commerce along the way but people have to make a living. Many villagers set up just for the night. Prathap told me that if he could get married and have a little house and a motorcycle and a small business for the moonwalk nights, his dreams would have all come true. Some things, most things, if not all things, especially our dreams connect us to all others in this small beautiful world.

I am happy to report that I did not break down and take an auto like his last customer and that I made it the whole way. I was very happy to see the green arch of the Sri Ramana Maharshi Ashram and take a left down the long road to my hotel.

I gave Prathap a little tip and I was so happy to have met such a nice young man.

I hope his dreams come true! Jai Shiva!

# SRI AUROBINDO CENTRE FOR ADVANCED RESEARCH AND MY LEARNING

*Krishna Reddy*

I profoundly remember the day I arrived in March in SACAR (Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research) with a plan to stay here for a week to get to know about SACAR, The Mother and Sri Aurobindo and definitely the town of Pondicherry. But as fate had designed, I decided to stay for a month and pursue the Intensive Research on Sri Aurobindo's works and the in-depth Consciousness research he has done.

I started with *The Life Divine*, the cornerstone or the foundation of Sri Aurobindo's experiential analysis of Consciousness as Science or perhaps Consciousness as "The Reality". As I started off with *The Life Divine* I came across two most important statements that is quintessentially the essence or the substance of the whole book, which Sri Aurobindo has clearly stated.

The ancients dawns of human knowledge have left us their witness to this constant aspiration; today we see a humanity satiated but not satisfied by victorious analysis of the externalities of Nature preparing to return to its primeval longings. The earliest formula of Wisdom promises it to be its last...

A remarkable opening sentence like this, has shakened my inner chords and transported to the deep abyss of the time - the "dawn" - from the birth of the time when aspiration to know the "nature of reality" has begun and has, had been a deliberate and constant aspiration since then. In the human cycle of earth, this time has always come when man through the profoundest discoveries of mind was saturated by focusing and exploiting the externalities of nature, but despite his achievements and ardent rational mental tendencies towards the outlook of external reality, he is not satisfied, contented and at peace. He still feels incomplete and a vacuum within. Despite his satiation, he longs like his predecessors, for the Divine Life— God, light, Freedom, Bliss & Immortality.

The essential understanding of these first lines was the first spark that shook me to the core. Yes, since the beginning of time and the times present we have been longing for the Truth & Light, to realise ourselves and the Brahman, longing for the ultimate union with God and have been searching for a blissful life - liberated from pain and suffering and questioning inwardly and outwardly too as to whether immortality can ever be a reality?

Then Sri Aurobindo takes me to the crux of the problem where he says ; the problem of humanity is essentially the problem of harmony. As I read the succeeding chapters I came to re-analyse that yes, since Aryan civilization, Man has somehow lost a clear understanding of the truth. Sri Aurobindo brings up various arguments of different philosophers who has explored "The Reality as it is" and ultimately presents us with a synthetic view of the Cosmos, Being & Non-Being, the Supramental and the Existence. As a matter of fact, there has always been a division or a negation in the logical analysis of Truth.

It has been seen in the bifurcation of Spirit & Matter, Birth & Death, Good & Evil, Pleasure & Pain - a constant disharmony rather assimilation or synthesis of different truths.

Another problem, which made me reflect, was the disharmony we all face within ourselves



– the different sub-selves of ourselves, the sub personalities of ourselves; the mind is always in disharmony. But again a very profound statement comes in - that a fully illumined mind can never stay in such a disharmony and thus like every yuga the search begun for the human race for the “*The Life Divine*”.

*The Life Divine* is such a deep experiential work of Sri Aurobindo, where he, not only, gives us the gradations of reality – the ascension process in every minute details but tells us how to reach the Supermind and the purpose, we are here on earth for – The Agni within each of us is burning to reach the perfect state of Sacchidananda and even go higher to reach the supreme, from where a new beginning descends – the Supramental Race, for as the Master says – "the greater the Consciousness, the greater the life." We should never get stuck to the minimal attractions of illusory pleasure nor should we remain in the closet of fulfilling our basic desires only, for the eyes that has rendered this huge vision has given us a “wake up” call long back. We might not reach the Supermind in one life, but our aspiration, mind and soul should constantly burn in the Agni and endeavour to reach the highest realms of Consciousness which Sri Aurobindo and the Divine Mother has already done and has also laid a path for us.

These are the profound teachings which I have started envisioning in the light of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. However during my study at SACAR, the first thing which I have noticed is the seriousness and the love that each member has for the Lord & the Mother. The fire lit up by the great sage Sri Aurobindo and the Divine Mother burns in each of the “Aurobindonions” of SACAR.

The deep learning from Sir, and the spiritual passion, commitment and intense perseverance he has is leading SACAR to its veritable destiny. The four pillars of Integral Management, the values that he has imbibed so deeply in himself through his deep research and teachings of Sri Aurobindo made me realize the value and essence of Integral Management that is – Wisdom, Perfection, Harmony and Strength. It is through these essential qualities and values that SACAR is being led, with humility as its aid, where apart from giving wisdom to the knowledge seekers, the necessary elements of Discipline, Perseverance and Commitment is entrenched everywhere. This integrally comes with the holistic touch of Kindness, Love and Care which makes you stop and think, reflect and refine yourself to a different extent.

With this I end my note -

To The Divine Mother,

Let thy fire burn within me as it has burnt within all your disciples to create the earth that humanity has been longing since eternity.

*I rest not from my great task!  
To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes  
Of man inwards into the worlds of thought, into Eternity  
Ever expanding in the Bosom of God, the human imagination.*

*William Blake*

## EVENTS AT SACAR

SACAR Organised a Seven-Day ICPR Sponsored Workshop on  
*Studies in Consciousness in the Light of Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy*  
(With Special emphasis on the Upanishads)

19<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> July 2017

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### INAUGURAL

The Session started with the Invocation by Mrs. Deepshika Reddy

#### CHIEF GUEST: Prof. Sibnath Deb (*Director of DDE, Pondicherry University*)

- The workshop started with an invocation to the Divine, followed by lighting of the lamp by the chief guest, Professor Sibnath Deb, Director i/c DDE Pondicherry University, Professor Sreekala Nair, Dean School of Social Sciences, SSUS Kalady, Dr. Reddy, Director of SACAR and Mrs. Reddy.
- In his address to the participants, Dr. De spoke about the moral crisis in the present day society, where the moral and ethical values are going down. He laid emphasis on the concept of happiness and said that it is important to understand it in the context of the welfare and development of all.
- To understand the concept in depth one needs to adopt three psychological methods of Observation, Introspection and Experiment. This alone can make us understand what is to be rejected in life to be happy. It is a fact that materialistic issues have taken predominant place in the contemporary society. In the present scenario Sacar is doing a good work in bringing a new perspective with the study of consciousness.
- Dr. De stressed the importance of childhood experiences in the shaping of human character. Hence, a child needs to be sensitized at an early stage to empathize with other people's needs and problems. For this purpose, parents and school have a greater role to play.
- The goal of human life should be to be happy and shun violence of all kinds towards others. The dignity of an individual has to be maintained.
- At present we are facing great challenges in the field of mental Health. Besides, one is usually led by one's ego, having a very narrow and limited Perspective in dealing with issues in life. Here, Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy can be a wonderful guideline to steer the course of life by providing a direction towards Peace and Happiness.

#### KEYNOTE ADDRESS: Dr. Sreekala Nair

- Prof. Sreekala Nair, delivered her talk on "Resolving the Riddle of Consciousness : The Method of Yoga." The Power Point presentation highlighted the following points.
- First, she spoke about the three great ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity which worked as a foundation for modern day values of democracy and justice. At the same

time, lamented that Science has been reduced to mere technology, the rampant use of gadgets. No one is interested in the pure sciences. At this juncture, consciousness studies has a great role to play.

- The important question is : Is Mind and Consciousness the same? Here we can look into the ideas of Descartes as well as the Philosophical standpoint of Sankhya. According to Dr. Nair, the modern schools of psychology provide half-baked ideas in the understanding of Consciousness.
- The important issue is how can Philosophy or Yoga, help in solving the problems of human society. It should be noted that our ancient scriptures, the Vedas and the Upanishads highlight the truth that everything on earth has consciousness, even matter. The only difference is in the degree of consciousness manifested in the stone, plant and animal.
- There are objective and subjective views on the subject. It has been found by the scientists, too, that there is nothing purely objective. There is always an aspect of subjectivity in perception.
- In this context, Sri Aurobindo, states that Mind is an instrument of Consciousness to gain knowledge. Through the process of Yoga one can solve the riddle of consciousness.

#### **WELCOME ADDRESS: Dr. V. Ananda Reddy**

- Dr. Reddy started his address with the question about the relevance of Consciousness Studies. There are several philosophies explaining the concept of Consciousness including Sankhya. It is necessary to look for something new. The beginning was made in San Francisco in 1990 to understand the relation between Science and Consciousness. The aim was to prove scientifically the existence of consciousness.
- There are three dimensions of an object, for example a table, but when we add qualities of color to it then a subjective ( consciousness) element is added to it. These are known as “Relational Qualities”.
- The concept of Consciousness in the subject-object relationship has been dealt by the Vedas and Vedanta Philosophies centuries ago in India.
- The sum and Substance of this is that All is Brahman, All is in Brahman, and finally Brahman is in All. Due to an extreme attitude based on this philosophy, the segregation was lost. Hence we became more subjective in our life. Judgments based on a subjective viewpoint took place, for example, Superstitions, which deteriorated the values in life. At this juncture the Western Scientific outlook helped in the establishment of the Rationalism, free from sentimentalism and emotionalism. Perhaps, this was an inevitable part of the Evolutionary Process.
- Dr. Reddy mentioned Kena Upanishad, which states that it is not the eye that sees or the ear that hears. It is the Mind that understands and interprets the data from the senses, the organs are just instruments. There is a Seer behind them, which is the Consciousness.



One may call it as Purusha. They meet on a common platform as both agree that the fundamental aspect is energy. Vedas name this as Chit-Tapas. Science has taken the aspect of Will and Force. Upanishads state that Will is not different from Chit-Tapas.

- There are four positions in the discourse on Consciousness regarding the relation between Object and Subject. Various Acharyas have taken up the study in this field. First, subject alone is true. The subject is Brahman. Object is the world. Second, the scientific outlook where the object is important. Here matter took a greater significance, giving rise to a materialistic Philosophy. Third, Subjective-Objective. Here both are important, but the subject is within the object. Fourth, is the Objective-Subjective narrative of the Tantra tradition. Here the subject, Purusha is within Prakriti. They believe that Prakriti has a Power to transform matter. Brahmic consciousness is in the womb of matter.

## **SPEAKER-WISE SUMMARY OF LECTURES**

### **Prof. Sreekala Nair**

*(Dean School of Arts and Social Sciences, SSUS, Kalady)*

#### **Problem of Consciousness in Upanishads**

- The Upanishadic thought is monistic, though it is difficult to determine the particular form of its monism.
- Dualistic interpretations of the Upanishads: the Dwaita (abheda) and the Adwaita (bheda).
- The subject matter of the Upanishads discussed in this presentation are: Brahman and its nature, individual self and its relation to Brahman,
- The etymological meaning of Brahman is expansive or wide since the Brahman pervades the sentient and the non-sentient worlds. Thus, living in the Brahman consciousness results in the necessary widening of one's limited, ego-centric consciousness to a limitless Consciousness.
- The Upanishadic tradition moulded the Indian psyche.
- It maintains that consciousness is one.
- Consciousness and experience are mutually inclusive: the knower, the known and the knowledge are one and the same.
- There are three states of consciousness: jagrat, swapna and susupti.
- The Upanishads speak of two types of knowledge: ordinary and extraordinary. In the course of acquiring knowledge, one must shift from ordinary knowledge to extraordinary knowledge, from the ordinary knowledge of the outer self to the extraordinary knowledge of the inner self. The individual must tune in with the Brahman.
- The Upanishads, structured in the form of a dialogue, records the esoteric wisdom of the guru and the shishya's quest for the knowledge of the unitarian consciousness of the Brahman. Through dialogue, one consciousness comes in contact with another



consciousness: thinking and participating agents. The guru leads by being an example of consciousness and experience.

- Group discussions/presentations based on the presentation.

### **Dr. Sampananda Mishra**

*(Director, Sri Aurobindo Foundation for Indian Culture, Puducherry)*

### **Sanskrit: A Language of Consciousness**

The highlights of Dr. Mishra's presentation are:

- Language is the brilliant light that shines eternally. It is a creative vibration of the Supreme Consciousness as described in the ancient scriptures. It voices the inner experiences of the rishis.
- A language expresses the soul; it is the vehicle and nucleus of the speaker's consciousness.
- At present, Sanskrit is the only pure language. It is the para-vac or the Supreme Word and has captured the fundamental sounds of humanity.
- Sanskrit is not limited to the form: words are not object-specific, rather context or character-specific. Thus, in Sanskrit, form (vaikhari) is not as important as the creative origin (adi spanda).
- Language or word has four levels of being/consciousness: para (prior to manifestation), pashyanti (after manifestation/sound and sense take shape), madhyama (selective sound) and vaikhari (external form).



### **Consciousness: Insights from the Ancient Scriptures**

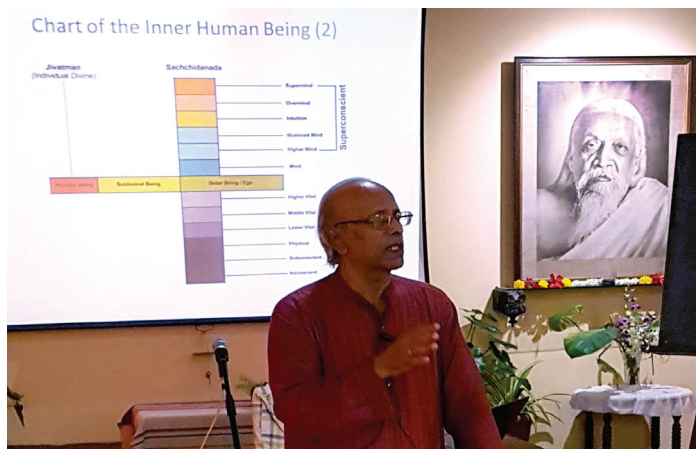
- Dr. Sampadananda opened his talk with a sloka from the Devimahatmyam,
- 'Ya devi Sarvabhuteshu Chetanebhidhiyate,'
- Namastasyai ...
- My salutations to the Devi who is known to be the very consciousness – chetana – in this manifestation.
- According to our scriptures nothing is without any consciousness 'achaitanyam na vidyate' – nothing can remain inactive 'Khanamapi' – not even for a second, says the Gita.
- Then he went on to give us the classification of consciousness. Example – Achhadita chetana in all 'sthavara' – inanimate things. Then 'Sankuchita chetana' say in the animals – 'Mukulita chetana' – in more awakened creatures – etc. etc.
- Then while illustrating more in depth about consciousness, he brought in many details about plant –life and their actions – their 'Swabhava' and 'Prabhava' in creation from the Mahabharata and the Yoga Vashishtha.
- 'TantraYukti' in 'Charaka Samhita' is so advanced that it gives us the research – methodology and logic, carried out with intuition – such deep truths in our scriptures – alas – many are lost or misinterpreted and many not yet known.

- Then he described how the Mother of our Ashram has created a new language of Sadhana through flowers only by going deep into the very consciousness of the flowers.
- Then he related the story of Bhrigu's tapasya – how he realised several layers of consciousness like 'Annam Brahmeti', 'Pranam Brahmeti', 'Mano Brahmeti', then 'Vijnanam Brahmeti' and finally – 'Anandam Brahmanam' in different stages. All the five koshas were realised by him.
- Anna – Prana and Manas – belonging to the Aparardha and Vijnana being the bridge to go to the 'Parardha' which is the 'Ananda' – the representative word for Sat, Chit and Ananda.
- 'Anandat na upare labham' – there is nothing beyond Ananda.
- Finally while explaining the gradation of mind and its corresponding levels upwards, he concluded deliberating on the AUM, the very signature of the Supreme Divine.
- The class was a mesmerising one, inspiring with brilliance of Indian visionaries leaving all with a Jignasa to know and learn more.

### Dr. V. Ananda Reddy

(Director, Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, Puducherry)

#### Dimensions of Consciousness in the Upanishads



- An introduction to Sri Aurobindo's works and style of writing.
- According to Sri Aurobindo, the Upanishads have not only given India but humanity mantras to guide itself in walks of ordinary life as well as in yoga.
- Sri Aurobindo himself has made extensive and comprehensive use of the Upanishadic tradition to give a shape to his integral philosophy of *isha vasyam idam sarvam*.

- In the same manner that the Upanishadic tradition holds that Consciousness and experience are mutually inclusive, likewise Sri Aurobindo maintains that experience precedes expression.
- Analysis of the term Sachchidananda.
- Group discussions/presentations on selected passages from *The Life Divine*.

#### The Concept of Consciousness: The Essence of Vedanta

- The Upanishadic Rishis had in common realised that under this infinite finite forms, this flux of movement and motion, there is one Supreme Unity and immutable stability.
- It is "eternal, immutable, imminuable and indivisible". It is the "*nityo-nityanam*, the one

eternal in many transient.”

- The second basic realisation, a corollary to the first one, is that of “*cetanas cetanam* the One Consciousness in many Consciousness”.
- The third, the one that is interlinked with human beings is the realisation that the self in the individual is identical with the Transcendental Reality – Sachchidananda. That is the truth that is embodied by the Mahavakyas: *Soham, aham brahma asmi* and *tat tvam asi*.
- In brief, the Upanishadic realisations can be summed up in two trilogies, the subjective: *Sachchidanandam*, Existence, Consciousness, Bliss and the Objective: *satyam, jnanam, anantam*.

### The Gradations of Consciousness

- It is now more than half a century since scientists and psychologists are struggling to define and come to terms with a comprehensive definition of “Consciousness”.
- It is in Sri Aurobindo’s integral yoga psychology that all these serious researches into the nature and reality of consciousness seem to integrate.
- Sri Aurobindo’s understanding and realisation of the hierarchy of the different levels of consciousness, independent of each other, though impacting one another is a true synthesis and an inclusive solution to the deeper understanding of consciousness as such.
- Experientially, Sri Aurobindo describes the levels of consciousness that are above below, around and within the human personality. These are further divided into three major parts: the Inmost Being, The Inner Being or the subliminal and the Outer Being centred around the ego.
- Once the Inmost Being or the Psychic being is awakened, it opens them in its turn to the true self, which is unborn, and by “conscious recovery of it we transcend the changing personality and achieve freedom and full mastery over our nature.”
- That is the ideal of Sri Aurobindo’s yoga and philosophy – complete transformation of the outer human nature moulded by the innermost being.

### Dr. Matthijs Cornelissen

(Director, Centre for Consciousness Studies, Founder, Indian Psychology Institute)



### The importance of Consciousness as Power

- He spoke about major two schools of thoughts first one Sankhya and Monism.”Gita” ( known as a holy book of Hindu Culture) is the combination of both consciousness; monism and Sankhya.
- Sankhya speaks about ordinary consciousness. According to it Purusha and Prakriti are two different part of our consciousness. There is dualism between our Self and Prakriti.
- Next he spoke about the Tantra and kashmir Shavism. Tantra is secretly passed the from Guru to the disciple. It was never a part of mainstream philosophy. It Patanjali speaks about concentration and Consciousness as pure awareness.
- Bhagvad-Gita demands great effort. It speaks about an all encompassing concentration

on Lord Krishna, through Bhakti. Besides a complete reliance on the Divine for action. One can reach the transcendent by freeing oneself from Ego.

- Sri Aurobindo, in *The Life Divine*, describes the stages of going higher in Consciousness. According to the Integral Philosophy the differentiation in Prakriti is the plan of the Divine.
- At the end a discussion followed on the Philosophy of Advaita and Sri Aurobindo's Integral Philosophy. Questions from participants like Alok and Rajiba on the Planes and Parts of Being, the Power of Soul and the concept of Jeevan mukta made the session lively.

### **Three Essentially Different Concepts of Consciousness**

- Three ways of looking at reality: physical and mental (science and technology moulding the outer human nature/social psyche) and spiritual (Consciousness as the base of all existence).
- Physical reality is exclusive concentration/consciousness of the inclusive Brahman Consciousness.
- According to science, Consciousness is a disorder. It denies Consciousness the creative role to have shaped the universe.
- Science observes Consciousness as subjective and since the very foundation of scientific enterprise rests on objectivity or objective reality, science finds it almost impossible to appreciate the role of Consciousness in framing human understanding.
- According to Sri Aurobindo, Consciousness is self-awareness. One becomes more and more conscious when one stretches the boundaries of one's ego consciousness. Ego limits one's consciousness to the outer world of body, life and mind. It places a screen between the outer and the inner being, confusing the individual to believe that the outer world is the ultimate truth of existence, which is why the individual involves itself in the world sans any objectivity and feels pained. Pain in turn makes it realise the evanescence of the sensorial world and forces the individual to reflect on the transitory nature of the physical and mental being and the eternal nature of the Sachchidananda.
- Absolute consciousness is absolute/limitless egalite d'ame.

### **Dr. Narendra M. Joshi**

*(Principal, St. Angel College, Mumbai)*

### **Mechanistic View of Consciousness and Its Limitation**

- The talk started with a shloka from Taittiriya Upanishad, describing the various aspects of Reality, from the material to the subtle. The emphasis was to understand consciousness from the materialistic aspect, starting from Annamaya kosha, to the Praanmaya, Manomaya, Vijnana level and to the Anandamaya level.
- The recent developments in science reveals that it is no longer clinging to the old paradigm. The scientists believe in the basic building blocks of Nature. Science, is indeed





at crossroads, where various viewpoints like the Relativity Theory, consumer Studies and Artificial intelligence are coming together.

- In this context, Sri Aurobindo's works are of tremendous importance in bringing Science and Spirit together. Either Matter will be spiritualized or the Spirit to be Materialized. Basically, our inquiry must move from the question "How to know, to the why to know", aspect.
- Science have dealt with the Cause and Effect behind every Phenomena. Dr. Joshi says, we have to move from Cause to greater cause, for example, Mind to higher, or Intuitive Mind.
- In the present day crisis if the Mind does not go higher, then it will become a servant of the lower levels of the vital and the physical. Even computers are used for satisfying material (luxurious and utilitarian) motives. Sri Aurobindo, speaks about Vital barbarism in this context of the so called modern individual. Hence, unless the consciousness of the people who use the gadgets change, there will not be any fundamental change.
- Materialism has its uses. The age of Reason was a necessary step, but at a point the scientists became arrogant which resulted in a Reductionist view point. Therefore, Consciousness is, ultimately the key to the riddle of all problems. A gradual progression from the lower to higher states can liberate the Mind from the slavery of Materialism.

### **Dr. Shruti Bidwaikar**

*(Coordinator for ICPR Workshop)*

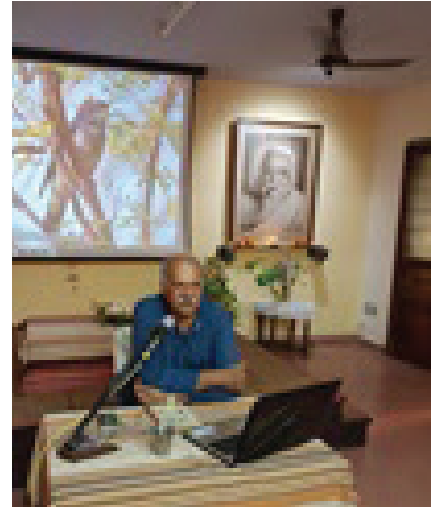
#### **A Consciousness Approach to Indian Culture**

- Indian culture is varied, rich and vibrant: satyam, shivam, sundaram. The unitary nature of Indian culture, founded on the common aesthesis of "truth", "breath of life", "beauty and delight" and "perfection", has shaped the spiritual endeavour to realise not only one's inner self as divine but the entire universe as a cosmic lila of the Divine.
- A culture is known by its leaders. India is known by its spiritual dignitaries.
- Sri Aurobindo mentions three life-values of a culture: "power of its original conception of life", "power of the forms, types and rhythms it has given to life" and "the inspiration, the vigour, the force of vital execution of its motives". (Sri Aurobindo CWSA 20:154)
- Indian art is similarly an expression of one's consciousness. It harmonises the body, heart, mind and soul into one creative and unitary consciousness. It is intuitive, born of some permanent truths of life. According to Sri Aurobindo, the highest office of Indian art is to "disclose something of the Self, the Infinite". (Sri Aurobindo CWSA 20:267)
- The Indian temples manifest the levels of cosmic consciousness that an individual is capable of experiencing. An Indian temple represents a human body: feet (main gate), knees (entrance porch), chest (sabha mandapa), neck (antarala) and forehead (garbha griha). Indian temples are built keeping in mind the journey of the psyche from the outer being to the inner being.



**Prof. S. Murali***(Retd. Prof. of English, Pondicherry University)***Poetry and Spiritual Evolution**

- Sri Aurobindo is essentially poet. He is a poet with a purpose; the purpose to index the ascent of his individual consciousness.
- He says that tradition should not be considered a bane or a burden but a boon since tradition frames a culture.
- Aurobindonian poetry addresses the two cardinal themes of revelation (vision) and inspiration (word). Every art, including poetry, aims to arrive at a concentrated expression of the Spirit/soul, the aesthetic being.
- Sri Aurobindo uses language with the sense of will and passion.

**The Future Poetry**

- *The Future Poetry* documents the source of Sri Aurobindo's own poetic inspiration. He traces the evolution of human consciousness in/through poetry.
- With an insight gained from an understanding of both European and Indian traditions, he expounds his own theory on the future nature of poetry.
- Sri Aurobindo scans the gradations/levels of mind to recognise the sources of revelation and inspiration. The five suns of poetry are: Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life and the Spirit.
- Sri Aurobindo is a kavi in the Vedic and Upanishadic sense of the word since he sees and hears (pashyanti vac) and writes what he experiences: knowledge by identity.

**Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research (SACAR), Puducherry**

Organises

**“Living Within” Study Camp number 28**August 2017 (13<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>)**PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT: A CONSCIOUSNESS PERSPECTIVE**

Speaker (s)

**DR. SOUMITRA BASU AND OTHERS**

Time: 9.00 am to 5.30 pm everyday

For Registration please contact: [sacarstudycamps@gmail.com](mailto:sacarstudycamps@gmail.com)

Mob: 9994190403

Venue: SACAR, 39 Vanniar Street, Vaithikuppam, Puducherry, 12

Landmarks: Masimigham Road, Mother's Guest House

For Programme schedule please visit: [www.sacar.in](http://www.sacar.in)

## “Living Within” Study camp number 29

16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> September 2017

### STRESS AND GROWTH

Organised jointly by

**SACAR & NAMAHA**

#### TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Day – One 16th September 2017	Day - Two 17th September 2017
09.00 – 09.15 am INVOCATION	09.00 – 09.15 am INVOCATION
09.15 – 10.15 am <i>Self -management and Stress</i> DR. ANANDA REDDY	09.15 – 10.15 am <i>Conscious Breath as a means of harnessing the inherent Opportunities of Stress</i> Ms. MARGOT BORDEN
10.15 – 10.45 am TEA BREAK	10.15 – 10.45 am TEA BREAK
10.45 – 11.45 am <i>Stress and Tension: A Personal Perspective</i> Mr. JAMES ANDERSON	10.45 – 11.45 am <i>Moving from a Stress-prone State to a stress- free Consciousness — a Practical Approach</i> DR. YOGESH MOHAN
11.45 – 12.45 pm <i>Dandelions and Orchids – Intentionally Leveraging Stress</i> Ms. PREETI D'MELLO	11.45 – 12.45 pm <i>Stress of Illness on the Growth of Personality</i> DR. UTTARESHWAR PACHEGAONKAR
12.45 – 02.30 pm LUNCH BREAK	12.45 – 02.30 pm LUNCH BREAK
02.30 – 03.30 pm <i>Stress: an Evolutionary Perspective</i> DR. ALOK PANDEY	02.30 – 03.30 pm <i>Re-defining Stress – Ancient Perspectives</i> DR. SAMPADANANDA MISHRA
03.30 – 04.00 pm TEA BREAK	03.30 – 04.00 pm TEA BREAK
04.00 – 05.00 pm Utilising Stress for Growth DR. DEBABRATA SAHANI	04.00 – 05.00 pm Stress as a Springboard to Progress DR. FALGUNI JANI

Camp Fee for residents at SACAR's Guest House: **Rs. 2000** (Including Food, Stay and Study)

For non-residents: **Rs. 1400** (Including Lunch-Tea and Study)

**CAMP FEE IS NON-REFUNDABLE**

Mode of Payment: DD/ Cheque/ Bank transfer in favour of SACAR TRUST

**Venue:** SACAR, 39 Vanniar Street, Vaithikuppam, Puducherry - 605012

**For information contact:**

**NAMAHA:** James (0413) 2226263, 7094898789 **Email:** james@namahjournal.com

**SACAR:** Shruti (0413) 2348067, 9994190403; **Email:** sacaroffice@gmail.com

## A VISIT OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS OF LOYOLA COLLEGE, CHENNAI

*(Students' feedback after hearing five lectures on 'Integral Yoga' and their visit to Sri Aurobindo Ashram)*

The very learning I take from here is "all life is yoga". This touched me most because I find that this connects yoga to the all aspects of life. This becomes very much practical and applicable in life. This is not abstract but concrete.

*Naveen Kerketta*

In Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga, I learned that I should not be satisfied with my present level of consciousness, but I need to evolve towards the level of Supermind where there are no restrictions or conditions. I will be free, not only myself but I will work for the liberation of the whole society. Of course I need to do further research because so far I have seen one side/stage of life but now I am introduced to different perspectives of life. So I hope in coming days I may get the chance to know more of Sri Aurobindo.

*John Benedict P*

My experience of visiting the Ashram was one of the great experiences because it was a first time where I visited and found peace and an atmosphere which was prayerful.

*Sanjaya Tigga*

Puducherry visit was a great experience for me. It gave me the feeling of oneness as all the people are connected here and SACAR helped me to become aware of everything what I do.

*Vinod Kerketta*

The idea of collective consciousness, transformation appealed the most to me, also the phrase "all life is yoga"

*Sunny Anthony Sosta*

First of all I did not come with any expectation. I came with a negative image. The image where I would hear almost the same thing which I heard in Indian Philosophy. But as I started listening to the session, I felt that this was a completely new thing I was hearing and from then on all along it kept me interested and attentive to the listen and learn more about this great man and his idea.

*Shawn E Dsiwa*

Integral yoga is difficult from other yogas which we speak or do in our day to day life. The integral yoga is the realization of one's own consciousness and to attain that higher consciousness. Integral yoga helps us to understand that we are a part of Brahman.

*Aruind Minj*

About integral yoga –firstly I came to know the difference between yoga in general and the integral yoga. "all life is yoga" - this struck me deeply. It is a uniqueness of Sri Aurobindo to explain about sat-chit-ananda, involution and evolution. The essence of this yoga is "divine life in a divine body".

Definitely I would be very happy to do my further studies and learn more about his teaching in detail. Moreover at the end of 3rd semester I am planning to write a Dissertation paper on Sri Aurobindo philosophy and his teachings.

The key aspects of aspiration, rejection and surrender enlightened my mind. I felt there almost similar to what Christianity teaches to me. Here I'm able to make same comparison.

*Vinod Saldanha*

The very idea of Aurobindo's teaching and understanding on yoga, I like the most. I came to realize how his teaching of yoga is different from all the others.

I had a prayerful and satisfied kind of experience at Sri Aurobindo's Samadhi. I felt the presence divine and a kind of energy and vibration.

*Ashish Kumar*

The content was very well planned. It was taken up step by step which helped to understand systematically.

Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga gave me a lot of unique experiences. I got the insight of the deeper way of life to practice, to search for divinity. I learned about the practical aspects that are very relevant, they are aspiration, rejection and surrender. "all our life is yoga". It helps me to be in union with the divine. It gave me the understanding of only One who is the supreme and above all.

*Ammet Laksa*

Sri Aurobindo's concept of integral yoga is very unique. It does not mean physical exercises or only psychological discipline. It is about being in union with the Divine. It is the process or method to return to the Origin. It not just the individual liberation but collective liberation.

*Sharun D Souza*

Very simple genuine method of delivery, than bombarding with the content. Very kind down to earth delivery clearing all the doubts clarifying the concepts asking questions.

Integral yoga – a method through which one actually realizes one's potential, one's union with the divine and does not stop there.

*Thitesh Parmar*

The core concept of yoga is the union with us and Divine. In integral yoga we are required to let the divine take control of everything. We surrender everything to the divine thus making ourselves empty. Thus all our life becomes yoga, helping us to go beyond our mind.

*Jackson Dsouza*

Sri Aurobindo's Integral yoga is based on divine life in a divine body. It includes all activities. Through yoga one can have direct contact with the divine which is the source of everything. All the reality is one. It is the union between man and divine.

*Sareng Sipriam Jonas*

Sri Aurobindo yoga is not a method, not a set of rules but it's my way of life, my union with the divine and my responsibility to see divine in all. Hence a collective responsibility in the process of evolution.

I felt that the idea of one and collective journey towards the supermind appealed to me the most. I would like to read on this more.

I did not go to the Samadhi with much expectation but once I reached I felt a spiritual force that exists in that place. Very quiet place and a respect for this person is what I saw and experienced.

*Jaison Glen Pals*

# *Institute of Human Study*

Some shall be made the glory's receptacles  
And vehicles of the Eternal's luminous power.  
These are the high forerunners, the heads of Time,  
The great deliverers of earth-bound mind,  
The high transfigurers of human clay,  
The first-born of a new supernal race.

Sri Aurobindo

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