

# *New Race*

## *A Journal of Integral & Future Studies*



*Published by  
Institute of Human Study*

VOLUME - III ISSUE - I

13. 12. 66

*New Race*

*blessings*  
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NEW RACE is published by Chhalamayi Reddy on behalf of  
Institute of Human Study, 2-2-4/1, O.U.Road, Hyderabad 500 044.

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ISSN No.: 2454-1176

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*A Journal of Integral & Future Studies*

February 2017  
Volume III Issue 1

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## From the Editor's Desk...

"To understand how any society functions you must understand the relationship between the men and the women" said Angela Davis. We have seen that world over the equations of men and women have been changing and there is a sense that equality has to be established between both the sexes. However, in this still persisting male dominated society women are struggling to gain some ground. Incidentally, the women, especially in India, perhaps have taken to the idea that wearing clothes like boys, being "chilled out", and doing all those activities which the men do like drinking alcohol, late night party, driving all night on the road are the things that will make them equal to men. It is not true for all the women. However, there is a major shift in the very idea of the "feminine" in the minds of women. They think that if they dress-up in Indian outfits, wear bangles and bindi and sari that would make them look a weaker sex; a person who needs constant protection from men. Our attempt is to understand the psychology of women. Why are we so scared to be feminine? Do we need to examine the meaning of femininity?

We can perhaps take a case in point and analyse this. Ahilya bai Holkar, the Queen of Malwa who lived for seventy years and ruled Malwa for more than thirty years is a supreme example of what an ideal Indian woman could be like. Fighting with her own destiny, losing her husband and son she stood up for her Province. While she kept losing her loved ones at frequent intervals she did not break down. She was the mother of her subjects and a commanding queen for her courtiers.

Being a Queen she was not partial and unanimous in taking decisions. She was compassionate, loving but firm and confident. She wore the Indian outfit and jewelry but was adept in fighting with sword, riding horse and using cannons. She was no less than a man in decision-making and no less than a woman in caring. She was an epitome of grace and beauty and yet an idol of strength. Such are the ideal Indian women whom the present day women can imbibe and follow.

However, the Mother takes us to the kernel of the problem of men and women and tells us how to deal with this:

"Thus the problem of feminism, as all the problems of the world, comes back to a spiritual problem. For the spiritual reality is at the basis of all others; the divine world, the Dhammata of Buddhism, is the eternal foundation on which are built all the other worlds. In regard to this Supreme Reality all are equal, men and women, in rights and in duties; the only distinction which can exist in this domain being based on the sincerity and ardour of aspiration, on the constancy of the will. And it is in the recognition of this fundamental spiritual equality that can be found the only serious and lasting solution for this problem of the relation of the sexes. It is in this light that it must be placed, it is at this height that must be sought the focus of action and new life, around which will be constructed the future temple of Humanity." (CWM 2: 146).

*Shruti*

# TRUTH



**The whole secret of existence is to have no fear.  
Never fear what will become of you, depend on no one.  
The moment you reject all help are you freed.**

**Buddha**

## THE GREATNESS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

*Sri Aurobindo*

In all movements, in every great mass of human action it is the Spirit of the Time, that which Europe calls the Zeitgeist and India Kala, who expresses himself. The very names are deeply significant. Kali, the Mother of all and destroyer of all, is the Shakti that works in secret in the heart of humanity manifesting herself in the perpetual surge of men, institutions and movements, Mahakala the Spirit within whose energy goes abroad in her and moulds the progress of the world and the destiny of the nations. His is the impetus which fulfils itself in Time, and once there is movement, impetus from the Spirit within, Time and the Mother take charge of it, prepare, ripen and fulfil. When the Zeitgeist, God in Time, moves in a settled direction, then all the forces of the world are called in to swell the established current towards the purpose decreed. That which consciously helps, swells it, but that which hinders swells it still more, and like a wave on the windswept Ocean, now rising, now falling, now high on the crest of victory and increase, now down in the troughs of discouragement and defeat, the impulse from the hidden Source sweeps onward to its preordained fulfilment. Man may help or man may resist, but the Zeitgeist works, shapes, overbears, insists.

The great and memorable vision of Kurukshetra when Sri Krishna manifesting his world-form declared himself as destroying Time, is significant of this deep perception of humanity.

When Arjuna wished to cast aside his bow and quiver, when he said, "This is a sin we do and a great destruction of men and brothers, I will forbear," Sri Krishna after convincing his intellect of error, proceeded by that marvellous vision described in the eleventh canto of the Gita to stamp the truth of things upon his imagination. Thus run the mighty stanzas:

कालोऽस्मि लोकक्षयकृत् प्रवृद्धो  
लोकान् समाहर्तुमिह प्रवृत्तः ।  
ऋतेऽपि त्वां न भविष्यन्ति सर्वे  
येऽवस्थिताः प्रत्यनीकेषु योधाः ॥  
तस्मात्त्वमृत्तिष्ठ यशो लभस्व  
जित्वा शत्रून् भुङ्क्ष्व राज्यं समृद्धम् ।  
मयैवैते निहताः पूर्वमेव  
निमित्तमात्रं भव सव्यसाचिन् ॥

I am Time who waste and destroy the peoples; lo, I have arisen in my might, I am here to swallow up the nations. Even without thee all they shall not be, the men of war who stand arrayed in the opposing squadrons. Therefore do thou arise and get thee great glory, conquer thy foes and enjoy a great and wealthy empire. For these, they were slain even before and it is I who have slain them; be the occasion only, O Savyasachin.

It is not as the slow process of Time that Sri Krishna manifests himself; it is as the Zeitgeist consummating in a moment the work carefully prepared for decades that He appears to Arjuna.

All have been moving inevitably towards the catastrophe of Kurukshetra. Men did not know it: those who would have done everything possible to avert the calamity, helped its coming by their action or inaction; those who had a glimpse of it strove in vain to stop the wheels of Fate; Sri Krishna himself as the *niskama karmayogin* who does his duty without regard to results, went on that hopeless embassy to Hastinapura; but the Zeitgeist overbore all. It was only afterwards that men saw how like rivers speeding towards the sea, like moths winging towards the lighted flame all that splendid, powerful and arrogant Indian world with its clans of Kings and its weapons and its chariots and its gigantic armies were rushing towards the open mouths of the destroyer to be lost in His mighty jaws, to be mangled between His gnashing teeth. In the lila of the Eternal there are movements that are terrible as well as movements that are sweet and beautiful. The dance of Brindaban is not complete without the death-dance of Kurukshetra; for each is a part of that great harmonic movement of the world which progresses from discord to accord, from hatred and strife to love and brotherhood, from evil to the fulfilment of the evolution by the transformation of suffering and sin into beauty, bliss and good, *śivam, śantam, śuddham, anandam*.

Who could resist the purpose of the Zeitgeist? There were strong men in India then by the hundred, great philosophers and Yogins, subtle statesmen, leaders of men, kings of thought and action, the efflorescence of a mighty intellectual civilisation at its height. A little turning to the right instead of to the left on the part of a few of these would, it might seem, have averted the whole catastrophe. So Arjuna thought when he flung aside his bow. He was the whole hope of the Pandavas and without him their victory must seem a mere dream and to fight an act of madness. Yet it is to him that the Zeitgeist proclaims the utter helplessness of the mightiest and the sure fulfilment of God's decree. "Even without thee all they shall not be, the men of war who stand arrayed in the opposing squadrons." For these men are only alive in the body; in that which stands behind and fulfills itself they are dead men. Whom God protects who shall slay? Whom God has slain who shall protect? The man who slays is only the occasion, the instrument by which the thing done behind the veil becomes the thing done on this side of it. That which was true of the great slaying at Kurukshetra is true of all things that are done in this world, of all the creation, destruction and preservation that make up the lila.

The greatness of this teaching is for the great. Those who are commissioned to bring about mighty changes are full of the force of the Zeitgeist. Kali has entered into them and Kali when she enters into a man cares nothing for rationality and possibility. She is the force of Nature that whirls the stars in their orbits, lightly as a child might swing a ball, and to that force there is nothing impossible. She is *aghatana-ghatana-patiyasi*, very skillful in bringing about the impossible. She is the *devātmaśaktih svagunair niguūdhā*, the Power of the Divine Spirit hidden in the modes of its own workings, and she needs nothing but time to carry out the purpose with which she is commissioned. She moves in Time and the very movement fulfils itself, creates its means, accomplishes its ends. It is not an accident that she works in one man more than in another. He is chosen because he is a likely vessel, and having chosen him she neither rejects him till the purpose is fulfilled nor allows him to reject her. Therefore Sri Krishna tells Arjuna:

यदहङ्कारमाश्रित्य न योत्स्य इति मन्यसे ।  
मिथ्यैष व्यवसायस्ते प्रकृतिस्त्वां नियोक्ष्यति ॥



“The thought which thou thinkest and takest refuge in egoism saying ‘I will not fight,’ this thy resolve is a vain thing; Nature will yoke thee to thy work.” When a man seems to have rejected his work, it merely means that his work is over and Kali leaves him for another. When a man who has carried out a great work is destroyed, it is for the egoism by which he has misused the force within that the force itself breaks him to pieces, as it broke Napoleon. Some instruments are treasured up, some are flung aside and shattered, but all are instruments. This is the greatness of great men, not that by their own strength they can determine great events, but that they are serviceable and specially-forged instruments of the Power which determines them. Mirabeau helped to create the French Revolution, no man more. When he set himself against it and strove, becoming a prop of monarchy, to hold back the wheel, did the French Revolution stop for the backsliding of France’s mightiest? Kali put her foot on Mirabeau and he disappeared; but the Revolution went on, for the Revolution was the manifestation of the Zeitgeist, the Revolution was the will of God.

So it is always. The men who prided themselves that great events were their work, because they seemed to have an initial hand in them, go down into the trench of Time and others march forward over their shattered reputations. Those who are swept forward by Kali within them and make no terms with Fate, they alone survive. The greatness of individuals is the greatness of the eternal Energy within.

(CWSA 13: 29-32)

## Krishna

(Cretics)

O immense Light and thou, O spirit-wide boundless Space,  
Whom have you clasped and hid, deathless limbs, gloried face?

Vainly lie Space and Time, “Void are we, there is none.”

Vainly strive Self and World crying “I, I alone.”

One is there, Self of self, Soul of Space, Fount of Time,  
Heart of hearts, Mind of minds, He alone sits, sublime.

Oh no void Absolute self-absorbed, splendid, mute,  
Hands that clasp hold and red lips that kiss blow His flute.

All He loves, all He moves, all are His, all are He;  
Many limbs sate His whims, bear His sweet ecstasy.

Two in One, Two who know difference rich in sense,  
Two to clasp, One to be, this His strange mystery.

Sri Aurobindo (CWSA 2: 637)



# THE DREAMS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND SRI AUROBINDO

*(A Compilation)*

*Ananda Reddy*

“Have you seen God?” asked Swami Vivekananda and Sri Ramakrishna asserted that he had not only seen God but continuously lives in God! A young man of eighteen sought God intensely, though he was an atheist to begin with, and within the next few years from 1881 to 1886, had realised the quintessence of God-consciousness.

Similarly, Sri Aurobindo, an agnostic to begin with, had sought the experience of God. That is what he wrote to his wife Mrinalini Devi in 1905: if God exists, he desires to see Him, face to face. Popular religion has made God a formula, prayer a routine, godliness a show. Sri Aurobindo had no use for this kind of religion. But if God exists—and He does! —there must be a means of confronting Him *tete-a-tete*, experience Him; the Hindu scriptures say that God too can be seen and prescribe certain disciplines for the attainment of that end. “I have begun to observe them,” says Sri Aurobindo, “and within a month I have been able to ascertain that words of the Hindu Dharma are not untrue.” (K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, *Sri Aurobindo: A Biography and a History*, p.200)

Swamiji was under the special love and grace of his master Sri Ramakrishna and it is only after 1886, after getting “the force” from his Master that he began to workout his dreams of a new India and a changed world:

It was only three or four days before the Master’s Mahasamadhi. Shri Ramakrishna called Naren to him. Looking steadfastly at him he entered into deep meditation. Naren felt as though a subtle force, resembling an electric shock, were entering his body. He lost outer consciousness. When he came to, he found the Master weeping. Wondering, Naren asked him why he wept, he was told, “O Naren, today I have given you my all and become a Fakir, a penniless beggar. By the force of the power transmitted by me, great things will be done by you; only after that you will go where you came from.” (*Eastern & Western Disciples*, 1979, p. 182)

Sri Aurobindo had certain “inner experience coming of themselves and with a sudden expectedness”:

Before he met Lele, [ 1908 ] Sri Aurobindo had some spiritual experiences, but that was before he knew anything about Yoga or even what Yoga was, e.g., a vast calm which descended upon him at the moment when he stepped first on Indian soil after his long absence, in fact with his first step on the Apollo Bunder in Bombay: (this calm surrounded him and remained for long months afterwards); the realisation of the vacant Infinite while walking on the ridge of the Takhti-Suleman in Kashmir; the living presence of Kali in a shrine on the banks of the Narmada; the vision of the Godhead surging up from within when in danger of a carriage accident in Baroda in the first year of his stay, etc. (Sri Aurobindo, SABCL, Vol.26, p.50)

It was with the consciousness of these inner experiences and the strength and force of his later sadhana that Sri Aurobindo dreamt of India's freedom and the unity of the world. In fact, he had referred to this force in his letter to his wife in 1905, when he was a young man of 33 years:

...whereas others regard the country as an inert piece of matter and know it as the plains, the fields, the forests, the mountains and the rivers, I know my country as the Mother, I worship her and adore her accordingly. What would a son do when a demon, sitting on his mother's breast, prepared to drink her blood? Would he sit down content to take his meals or go on enjoying himself in the company of his wife and children, or would he rather run to the rescue of his mother? I know I have the strength to uplift this fallen race; not a physical strength, I am not going to fight with a sword or a gun, but with the power of knowledge....

He will do it, not by *kshatratej*, but by virtue of his *brahmatej*. It is his *mahavrata*, mighty vow, and he is resolved to carry it out. Nor is this a sudden whim or passing mood:

I was born with it, it is in my very marrow. God sent me to the earth to accomplish this great mission. At the age of fourteen the seed of it had begun to sprout and at eighteen it had been firmly rooted and become unshakable. (KRS, p.335-56)

Indeed, this unmistakable conviction of "God sent me to the earth to accomplish this great mission" of uplifting the fallen human race is reiterated once again years later, in 1947, in his 15<sup>th</sup> August message to "Free India":

August 15<sup>th</sup> is my own birthday and it is naturally gratifying to me that it should have assumed this vast significance. I take this coincidence, not as a fortuitous accident, but as the sanction and seal of the Divine Force that guides my steps on the work with which I began life, the beginning of its full fruition. (*Sri Aurobindo's Message on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947*)

It is in this prophetic message that Sri Aurobindo enumerates his five dreams or the "world-movements" which he had hoped to see fulfilled in his lifetime.

The first of these dreams was a revolutionary movement which would create a free and united India. India today is free but she has not achieved unity. At one moment it almost seemed as if in the very act of liberation she would fall back into the chaos of separate States which preceded the British conquest. But fortunately it now seems probable that this danger will be averted and a large and powerful, though not yet a complete union will be established. Also, the wisely drastic policy of the Constituent Assembly has made it probable that the problem of the depressed classes will be solved without schism or fissure. But the old communal division into Hindus and Muslims seems now to have hardened into a permanent political division of the country. It is to be hoped that this settled fact will not be accepted as settled for ever or as anything more than a temporary expedient. For if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled: civil strife may remain always possible, possible even a new invasion and foreign conquest. India's internal development and prosperity may be impeded, her position among the nations weakened, her destiny impaired or even frustrated. This must not be; the partition must go. Let us hope that that may come about naturally, by an increasing recognition of the necessity not only of peace and concord but of common action, by the practice of common action and the creation of means for that purpose. In this way unity may

finally come about under whatever form—the exact form may have a pragmatic but not a fundamental importance. But by whatever means, in whatever way, the division must go; unity must and will be achieved, for it is necessary for the greatness of India's future. (*Sri Aurobindo's Message* on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947)

In his vision of the future of India Swamiji did not have to face the problem of the partition of this country—hence he did not talk about it. However,

Vivekananda was central to many of the intellectual undercurrents that made modern India possible. He was the progenitor of projects central to modern Indian identity. The claim that without removing hunger and ignorance of the masses, no national regeneration would be possible now seems commonplace, even if unconscionably unfulfilled. But he shifted the central question of India's future to the removal of poverty and ignorance with unprecedented rhetorical power and force. Ignoring poverty and education was the highest form of treason. (*What Vivekananda Valued* by Pratap Bhanu Mehta, p.2)

Further,

In a strange way, his political thought is incomprehensible without unpacking two categories: abhaya (fearlessness) and aparigraha (renunciation). Indeed what is common to the non-Marxist understanding of equality in the Indian tradition is precisely that equality might not be possible without individuals practising some form of renunciation. For the root source of inequality is excessive attachment and a will to dominate. And the only means to address inequality therefore, is to shape ourselves in a certain way. (*What Vivekananda Valued* by Pratap Bhanu Mehta, p.4)

It is in the context of equality that Swamiji claimed that

For our motherland, a conjunction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam — Vedanta Brain and Islam Body is the only hope has been tirelessly misinterpreted. This quotation is prefaced by two striking claims “Practical Advaitism, which looks upon and behaves to all mankind as one's own soul, was never developed amongst the Hindus.” And “if any religion approached equality in any appreciable manner it was Islam and Islam alone.” The reference to Islamic body is not to an ideal of power; it is to the central idea of equality. (*What Vivekananda Valued* by Pratap Bhanu Mehta, p.3)

If Sri Aurobindo emphasized on the unity of India for which the “partition must go”, “the division must go; unity must and will be achieved, for it is necessary for the greatness of India's future.” Swamiji emphasized on the then social problems of inequality, of poverty, of women, of masses, which would make our country strong, for, indeed says Swamiji:

Let me tell you, strength, strength is what we want. The remedy for weakness is not brooding over weakness, but thinking of strength. What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and the secrets of the universe, and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion even if it meant going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face. That is what we want. And the first step in getting strength is to uphold the Upanishads, and believe—“I am the Soul”. Therein lies strength enough to

invigorate the whole world. For centuries people have been taught theories of degradation. ... Let them hear of the Atman—that even the lowest of the low have” the Atman within, which never dies and never is born. (Swami Vivekananda: *Rebuild India*, p.33)

Interestingly, Sri Aurobindo too stressed on the same point:

The deeper we look, the more we shall be convinced that one thing wanting which we must try to acquire before all other is strength—strength physical, strength mental, strength moral, but above all strength spiritual. It is one inexhaustible and imperishable source of all the others. If we have strength, everything else will be added to us easily and naturally. In the absence of strength we are like men in a dream who have hands but cannot see or strike, who have feet but cannot run. (Kittu Reddy: *Impact of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo on Indian Freedom Movement*, p.196)

It is an undeniable fact that both Swamiji and Sri Aurobindo adored their country to the extent of worshipping it. Writes Sister Nivedita:

But he was born a lover, and the queen of his adoration was his Motherland. Like some delicately-poised bell, thrilled and vibrated by every sound that falls upon it, was his heart to all that concerned her. Not a sob was heard within her shores that did not find in him a responsive echo. There was no cry of fear, no tremor of weakness, no shrinking from mortification, that he had not known and understood. He was hard on her sins, unsparing of her want of worldly wisdom, but only because he felt these faults to be his own. And none, on the contrary, was ever so possessed by the vision of her greatness. ... His country's religion, history, geography, ethnology poured from his lips in an inexhaustible stream. (Kittu Reddy : *Impact of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo on Indian Freedom Movement*, p.192)

And writes Sri Aurobindo to his wife:

My third madness is that while others look upon my country as an inert piece of matter, I look upon the country as the Mother. I adore her, I worship her as the Mother. What would a son do if a demon sat on his mother's breasts and started sucking her blood? Would he quietly sit down to his dinner and amuse himself with his wife and children? Or would he rush out to deliver his mother. I know I have the strength to deliver this race. It is not physical strength but the strength of knowledge. This feeling is not new in me. It is not of today. I was born with it. It is very much in my marrow. God sent me to earth to accomplish this great mission. (Kittu Reddy : *Impact of Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo on Indian Freedom Movement*, p.196)

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Now let us take up the second dream of Sri Aurobindo:

Another dream was for the resurgence and liberation of the peoples of Asia and her return to her great role in the progress of human civilization. Asia has arisen, large parts are now quite free or are at this moment being liberated: its other still subject or partly subject parts are moving through whatever struggles towards freedom. Only a little has to be done and that will be done today or tomorrow. There India has her part to play and has begun to play it with an energy and ability which already indicate the measure of

her possibilities and the place she can take in the council of the nations. (*Sri Aurobindo's Message* on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947)

I am not sure, with my limited reading of Swamji's literature, if he has emphasized much on such a "resurgence of the peoples of Asia". However, I pressure that in his time these issues of the people of Asia did not occupy much the mind of global consciousness and Swamji focused on the awakening the masses to "root reforms, not agendas imposed from above of which the common man had little or no understanding." (*Vivekananda's Policies*, Department of History Culture, Jama Milli Islamin, New Delhi)

To be more precise, "his essential message was the empowerment of the people: through education, collective thought and action but above all, realizing the underlying unity of all human existence. In the Hindu tradition, ascetic detachment from the world had been criticized even before Vivekananda but it was he who first actively joined the idea of individual renunciation to committed social service. In this sense, he gave new meaning or signification to the very idea and institution of sannyasa." (*Vivekananda's Policies*, p.1)

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Sri Aurobindo's third dreams was

...a world union forming the outer basis of a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind. That unification of the human world is under way; there is an imperfect initiation organized but struggling against tremendous difficulties. But the momentum is there and it must inevitably increase and conquer. Here too India has begun to play a prominent part and, if she can develop that larger statesmanship which is not limited by the present facts and immediate possibilities but looks into the future and brings it nearer, her presence may make all the difference between a slow and timid and a bold and swift development. A catastrophe may intervene and interrupt or destroy what is being done, but even then the final result is sure. For unification is a necessity of Nature, an inevitable movement. Its necessity for the nations is also clear, for without it the freedom of the small nations may be at any moment in peril and the life even of the large and powerful nations insecure. The unification is therefore to the interests of all, and only human imbecility and stupid selfishness can prevent it; but these cannot stand for ever against the necessity of Nature and the Divine Will.

But an outward basis is not enough; there must grow up an international spirit and outlook, international forms and institutions must appear, perhaps such developments as dual or multilateral citizenship, willed interchange or voluntary fusion of cultures. Nationalism will have fulfilled itself and lost its militancy and would no longer find these things incompatible with self preservation and the integrality of its outlook. A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race. (*Sri Aurobindo's Message* on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947)

Swami Vivekananda too had dreamt of a united mankind—not of united nations as was the case with Sri Aurobindo—a union based on the unity of religions. Here is what he declared as the "Cyclonic Hind Monk" at the historic Parliament of Religions in 1893:

We want to lead mankind to the place where there is harmonization of the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran. Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions

of the Religion, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best. (Gopinath Raina: *Swami Vivekananda - How relevant is he today?* p.1)

At the final session of the Parliament on 27<sup>th</sup> September, Swamiji concluded:

If anything, the Parliament of Religions has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world. Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilizations, and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come. I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honor of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal." In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written: 'Help and not fight,' 'Assimilation and not Destruction,' 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.' (Gopinath Raina: *Swami Vivekananda - How relevant is he today?*, p.5)

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The fourth dream of Sri Aurobindo is:

Another dream, the spiritual gift of India to the world has already begun. India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever increasing measure. That movement will grow, amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice. (*Sri Aurobindo's Message* on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947)

Swamiji was a true precursor to Sri Aurobindo, the fulfillment of this dream. Listen to his powerful oration:

Shall India die? Then from the world all spirituality will be extinct, all moral perfection will be extinct, all sweet-souled sympathy for religion will be extinct, all ideality will be extinct; and in its place will reign the duality of lust and luxury as the male and female deities, with money as its priest, fraud, force and competition its ceremonies, and the human soul its sacrifice. Such a thing can never be. (Swami Vivekananda: *Rebuild India*, p.48)

I see in my mind's eye the future perfect India rising out of this chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedanta brain and Islam body. ...For our own motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam— Vedanta brain and Islam body—is the only hope. (Swami Vivekananda: *Rebuild India*, p.49)

None can resist her any more, never is she going to sleep any more; no outward powers can hold her back any more; for the infinite giant is rising to her feet. (Swami Vivekananda: *Rebuild India*, p.50)

In another talk, "The Future of India", Swami Vivekananda is perhaps most elegant in his speech and most inspiring:

This is the ancient land where wisdom made its home before it went into any other country, the same India whose influx of spirituality is represented, as it were, on the material plane, by rolling rivers like oceans, where the eternal Himalayas, rising tier above tier with their snowcaps, look as it were into the very mysteries of heaven. Here is the same India whose soil has been trodden by the feet of the greatest sages that ever lived. Here first sprang up inquiries into the nature of man and into the internal world. Here first arose the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, the existence of a supervising God, an immanent God in nature and in man, and here the highest ideals of religion and philosophy have attained their culminating points. This is the land from whence, like the tidal waves, spirituality and philosophy have again and again rushed out and deluged the world, and this is the land from whence once more such tides must proceed in order to bring life and vigour into the decaying races of mankind. It is the same India which has withstood the shocks of centuries, of hundreds of foreign invasions of hundreds of upheavals of manners and customs. It is the same land which stands firmer than any rock in the world, with its undying vigour, indestructible life. Its life is of the same nature as the soul, without beginning and without end, immortal; and we are the children of such a country. (*The Future of India*, p.1)

And we find a very similar echo of Sri Aurobindo's fourth dream in the following words of Swamiji:

In this land of charity, let us take up the energy of the first charity, the diffusion of spiritual knowledge. And that diffusion should not be confined within the bounds of India; it must go out all over the world. This has been the custom.

Those that tell you that Indian thought never went outside of India, those that tell you that I am the first Sannyasin who, went to foreign lands to preach, do not know the history of their own race. Again and again this phenomenon has happened. Whenever the world has required it, this perennial flood of spirituality has overflowed and deluged the world. (Eknath Ranade: *Rousing Call to Hindu Nation*, p.86)

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The fifth and the last dream of Sri Aurobindo, in his own words, is:

The final dream was a step in evolution which would raise man to a higher and larger consciousness and begin the solution of the problems which have perplexed and vexed him since he first began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society. This is still a personal hope and an idea, an ideal which has begun to take hold both in India and in the West on forward looking minds. The difficulties in the way are more formidable than in any other field of endeavor, but difficulties were made to be overcome and if the Supreme Will is there, they will be overcome. Here too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must proceed through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and, although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers. (*Sri Aurobindo's Message* on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947)

This step in evolution as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo is the coming of the New Race, the race with a Supramental consciousness—the Race of Superman. Sri Aurobindo was surely the



harbinger of this new consciousness, but here too we see the role and contribution of Swami Vivekananda. I quote here a conversation in 1939 from Nirobaran's "Talks with Sri Aurobindo" (Vol. 1, p.161-62)

**Sri Aurobindo:** I had no idea of the Supermind when I started and for long it was not clear to me. It was the spirit of Vivekananda who first gave me a clue in the direction of the Supermind. This clue led me to see how the Truth-Consciousness works in everything.

**Nirodbaran:** Did he know about the Supermind?

**Sri Aurobindo:** He didn't say "Supermind". "Supermind" is my own word. He just said to me, "This is this, this is that" and so on. That was how he proceeded by pointing and indicating. He visited me for fifteen days in Alipore Jail and, until I could grasp the whole thing, he went on teaching me and impressed upon my mind the working of the higher consciousness-the Truth-Consciousness in general which leads towards the Supermind. He would not leave until he had put it all into my head.

**Nirodbaran:** Do Gurus come in that way and give teachings?

**Sri Aurobindo:** Why not? That is the traditional experience from ancient times. Any number of Gurus give initiation after their death.

**Nirodbaran:** You once spoke about Ramakrishna's and Vivekananda's influence in your life. Was it this you meant?

**Sri Aurobindo:** No. I referred to the influence of their words and books when I returned from England to Baroda. Their influence was very strong all over India. But I had another direct experience of Vivekananda's presence when I was practising Hathayoga. I felt this presence standing behind and watching over me. That exerted a great influence afterwards in my life. (*Statements on the spiritual role of Swami Vivekananda in Alipore jail*)

In another conversation there is a further clarification:

**Nirodbaran:** You said the other day that his spirit visited you in Alipore Jail and told you about the Higher Consciousness from where, I suppose, these intuitive flashes come.

**Sri Aurobindo:** Yes, he did tell me. I had no idea about things of the Higher Consciousness. I never expected him and yet he came to teach me. And he was exact and precise even in the minutest details.

**Nirodbaran:** That is very interesting. He has nowhere in his books or conversations spoken of those things. Could his spirit know after death what he didn't know in life?

**Sri Aurobindo:** Why not? He may have got it afterwards.

**S (disciple):** Can the spirit evolve after death?

**Sri Aurobindo:** Of course. But either he may not have known in life or else he may have known and kept silent. A Yogi doesn't say all that he knows. He says only what is necessary. If I wrote all that I know, then it would be ten times the amount I have written.

**S (disciple):** People will judge you by what you have written.

**Sri Aurobindo (laughing):** That doesn't matter.

**Nirodbaran:** Then we shan't know all that you know?

**Sri Aurobindo:** Well, realise first what I have written. (*Statements on the spiritual role of Swami Vivekananda in Alipore jail*, p.3)

The impressions that one gets on comparing the dreams of Swamiji and Sri Aurobindo is as writes Rishabhchand (1981):

What Vivekananda intuited and initiates, Sri Aurobindo developed, expanded and carried to its crowning accomplishment. (Rishabhchand: *The Integral Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, p.208)

There seems to have been continuity of work and vision that was initiated by Swamiji and fulfilled in Sri Aurobindo. They seem to be kindred souls—one fulfilling the other:

Only a yogi of Sri Aurobindo's intuitive grasp, could put Swami Vivekananda's life in proper perspective. He quotes an incident from the Swami's life to underscore the latter's spiritual authority and power.

The reference is to a retort by Vivekananda to a Madras pundit's objection on the basis that 'Shankara does not say so'. The swami shot back saying, 'But I, Vivekananda, say so'.

Sri Aurobindo points out that that 'I Vivekananda' may seem to the ordinary eye as the Himalaya of egotism. But it is not what it seems. It is the truth of Vivekananda's spiritual experience, and the attitude of the fighter who as the representative of something great cannot allow himself to be put down or belittled, says Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo is not a mere apologist of the Swami. He is a fraternal yogi, whose deep intuitions make him singularly suited to understand Vivekananda in correct light.

The teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo asserted, combine the full light of the knowledge of the Upanishads with all life and action in a unique synthesis.

Sri Aurobindo compares Vivekananda with Buddha (the latter indeed was a favourite of the Swami!), saying that just as the Buddha, after discovering Nirvana, turned back to open the way for others, Vivekananda, "drawn by the Absolute, feels the call of the disguised Godhead in humanity and most the call of the fallen and the suffering, the call of the self to the self in the obscure body of the universe". (Article: *Swami Vivekananda through Sri Aurobindo's eyes*)

To quote Subhash Chandra Bose:

I cannot write about Vivekananda without going into raptures. Few indeed could comprehend or fathom him – even among those who had the privilege of becoming intimate with him. His personality was rich, profound and complex and it was this personality – as distinct from his teachings and writings – which accounts for the wonderful influence he has exerted on his countrymen and particularly on Bengalees. This is the type of manhood which appeals to the Bengalee as probably none other. Reckless in his sacrifice, unceasing in his activity, boundless in his love, profound and versatile in his wisdom, exuberant in his emotions, merciless in

his attacks but yet simple as a child – he was a rare personality in this world of ours. (What did the luminaries of the age think of Swami Vivekananda?)

In fact, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo form the trinity of the New Age of Spirituality that was inaugurated by Sri Ramakrishna, as said Swamiji:

From the very date that he (Sri Ramakrishna) was born, has sprung the Satya Yuga (Golden Age). Henceforth there is an end to all sorts of distinctions, and everyone down to the Ghandala will be a sharer in the Divine Love. The distinction between man and woman, between the rich and the poor, the literate and illiterate, Brahmins and Chandalas—he lived to root out all. And he was the harbinger of Peace—the separation between Hindus and Mohammedans, between Hindus and Christians, all are now things of the past. That fight about distinctions that there was, belonged to another era. In this Satya Yuga the tidal wave of Shri Ramakrishna's Love has unified all. (Swami Vivekananda: *Rebuild India*, pp.50-51)

And Sri Aurobindo wrote of the two giant spiritual figures:

It is she [India] who must send forth from herself, the future religion of the entire world, the Eternal religion which is to harmonize all religion, science and philosophies and make mankind one soul.... It was to initiate this great work, the greatest and most wonderful work ever given to a race, that Bhagwan Ramakrishna came and Vivekananda preached. (Sri Aurobindo: SABCL, Vol.1, p. 66)

In another place:

What was Ramakrishna? God manifest in a human being; but behind there is -God in His infinite impersonality and His universal Personality. And what was Vivekananda? A radiant glance from the eye of Shiva; but behind him is the divine from which he came and Shiva himself and Brahma and Vishnu and OM all-exceeding. (Sri Aurobindo: SABCL, Vol.13, pp.442-43)

It is said that there are two lines of the descent of Avatars—the line of Vishnu—the consciousness that builds and preserves) and the line of Shiva (the consciousness that works to transform and destroy). Whenever there was the manifestation of the Shiva aspect, the Avatar or the Vibhuti “tried to fight against illusion and demolish what existed.” (Nolini Kanta Gupta, Vol. 4, p.106)

Sri Aurobindo says that Swami Vivekananda is “a radiant glance from the eye of Shiva”, and there are others before him who had manifested the aspect of Shiva—destruction “with intention of transforming”—and they were in all probability the Buddha and Shankaracharya.

In Sri Aurobindo, we find a synthesis of both the Vishnu and Shiva aspects—the aspect that destroys the old consciousness and brings in a new higher consciousness into earth life and man. Being so he could integrate the Vedanta and Tantra, the East and West, the highest spiritual aspirations of man with the coming New Race of Superman. Sri Aurobindo seems to be the grand synthesis of Sri Ramakrishna & Swami Vivekananda—the two aspects of personal and the impersonal divine, the only synthesis of Shiva and Shakti aspects of Divinity.

# EXPLORING THE DESTINED ROLE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE HUMAN EVOLUTION

*Narendra Joshi*

According to Sri Aurobindo, the triumphant domination, the all-shattering and irresistible victory of Science in nineteenth century Europe is due to the perfection with which the great psychological wants of the western mind were satisfied by science. These wants probably were curiosity about existence, passion to control the environment, individual freedom, and supply of endless novelties to enjoy the wants of life. They discovered laws, principles, and fundamental facts of the world and of our being, which all could verify at once for themselves. These laws could satisfy and guide the free individual judgment, delivering it equally from vital impulses and erratic self-will. These laws and truths, Sri Aurobindo explains, justified and yet controlled the claims and desires of the individual human being.

“The attempt to govern and organize human life by verifiable Science, by a law, a truth of things, which all can observe and verify and to which all may freely and must rationally subscribe” (CWSA 25: 20-21) is the culminating movement of European civilization according to Sri Aurobindo.

He wrote that there is a great danger in this progress of science and the age of objective reason. He says that Science has prepared us for an age of wider and deeper culture and in spite of and even partly by its materialism it has rendered impossible the return of the true materialism. By true materialism, he means that of the barbarian mentality. However, according to this thought, science has encouraged more or less indirectly another kind of barbarism. This is barbarism of the industrial, the commercial, the economic age which according to him is progressing to its culmination and its close. This economic barbarism, he explains, is that of the vital man who mistakes the vital being for the self and accepts its satisfaction as the first aim in life. The essential barbarism of all this is the pursuit of vital success, satisfaction, productiveness, accumulation, possession, enjoyment, comfort, convenience for their own sake. He says that vital is an important facet of human life but it must be subordinated to the superior needs of the mental being, chastened and purified by a greater law of truth, good and beauty before they can take their proper place in the integrality of human perfection.

According to Sri Aurobindo, “If it persisted too long, Life would become clogged and perish of its own plethora or burst in its straining to a gross expansion. Like the too massive Titan it will collapse by its own mass.” (CWSA 25: 81)

He wrote that in the modern era under the impulsion of Science this effort of scientific and rational governing of the whole life assumed enormous proportions. It claimed for a time to examine successfully and lay down finally the true principle of not just external Nature but also internal nature. However, according to Sri Aurobindo, this has not been a success. The human mind is beginning to perceive that it has left the heart of almost every problem untouched and

illuminated only the outer layers. It has understood few of the processes of Nature but not the reason or idea behind any of these. Therefore, a vast abyss of Truth lies below concealing the real springs, the mysterious powers which are secretly the decisive influences of existence. Sri Aurobindo says that

“It is a question whether the intellectual reason will ever be able to give us an adequate account of these deeper and greater things or subject them to the intelligent will as it has succeeded in explaining and canalizing, though still imperfectly, yet with much show of triumphant result, the forces of physical nature. However, these other powers are much larger, subtler, deeper down, more hidden, elusive, and variable than those of physical nature.” (CWSA 25: 109) According to him “The root of the difficulty is, at the very basis of all our life and existence, internal and external, there is something on which the intellect can never lay a controlling hold, and that is the Absolute, the Infinite. It is this infinite which is behind every being, object, class and tendency in Nature. Each striving to follow secret of its own truth in its own way and thus each individual brings in his or her own variations. Therefore, there are infinite potentialities, expressions and forms manifesting from the one infinite Absolute. This infinite potentiality and infinite variation is quite baffling to the reasoning intelligence; because the reason deals successfully only with the settled and the finite.” (CWSA 25: 112) Sri Aurobindo explains that in man this difficulty reaches its acme. The reason can govern, but only as a minister, it can do so imperfectly, or as a general arbiter and giver of suggestions. The real sovereign is beyond this minister. Therefore, according to Sri Aurobindo,

Man’s impulse to be free, master of Nature in himself and his environment can be really fulfilled only when his self-consciousness grows beyond the rational mentality, becomes aware of the true sovereign, and is either identified itself with him, or entered in constant communication with his supreme will and knowledge. (CWSA 25: 113)

After Quantum mechanics, science is at a crossroad. Concepts like subjectivity, the unity of all existence, the hierarchy of wholes are taking roots in science. These revelations of the new science are all consistent with Sri Aurobindo’s more comprehensive and integral philosophy of existence. Conclusions like the unity of matter and energy, unity of space and time, relativity, the role of consciousness in material processes are essentially pointing to an integral theory of the unity of the entire universe. The recent emphasis on qualitative analysis rather than quantitative, on the absolute as well as the relative, on the subtle and not obvious, and on words and not only figures are positive signs of this shift in AI. Science has now come to the conclusion that there is no essential matter, that consciousness and force are both essential for any activity and both are ultimately the same. The limits of cold logic are now also accepted in the realm of science. In the opinion of scientists like Fritjof Capra, the foundations of science have already started moving and science is now on the ‘Tao’, i.e. the path of a more holistic and integral thought.

Quantum computing, the Global consciousness project, Penrose’s quantum coherence hypothesis, and Nagel’s subjective thought experiments are a few examples of the influence of the new science in AI. In Quantum computing, computing is done by qubits and the speed is very high. Noncomputability is taken as grey area. The Global Consciousness Project attempts to record the responses of certain human receptors in many people across the world to global

events and upheavals, and thereby prove that there is an united consciousness behind all the apparent diversity of people in the world. Penrose in his theory has attributed noncomputability in thought processes of the brain to a certain quantum effects. Nagel has emphasized the necessity of knowing by being and has brought the subjective element into the understanding of the human mind. From the above description however, it seems that AI has taken these concepts only at the surface level, and this superficial impact could be deepened by inputs from Sri Aurobindo's theory.

For example in Quantum computing, the understanding should be that no element howsoever minute, speedy and complex, can solve the issue of noncomputable and supralogical decision-making. Fuzziness, although accepted in AI, needs to be cleared of the impact of uncertainty and chaos theories and instead should be used to stimulate transcendence of the mental level to intuitive and creative thought. Penrose and Nagel may be helped in their respective philosophies by replacing the indeterminacy element of Penrose or the 'being' element of Nagel by the truth of higher mind. The role of AI is crucial as a rational application of science. Taking the points from the previous section wherein it was explained that Sri Aurobindo has shown how science has played a crucial role in human progress and saved it from barbaric relapse, and at the same time, how it has created a greater danger of vital and mental barbarism, we can see what AI can do in this regard.

On the benevolent side, AI can bring light to the ignorant, can protect knowledge from barbaric attacks, can raise the intellectual capacity of the race, can help in the perpetuation and preservation of knowledge and culture. It can arrest relapse to physical barbarism by spreading civilization and technology to all on the planet. On destructive side it can also lead to vital and economic barbarism as explained by Sri Aurobindo. This AI can do very efficiently and in fact is doing it by intelligently enticing these faculties to remain perpetually engrossed in their limited satisfactions, resulting in overall chaos, sensationalism, conflicts and nihilism.

Sri Aurobindo, like some other yogis and sages of India, has applied scientific rigor to the study of consciousness. Yoga is a science of "the within" and this direction of research will be inevitable for AI as its psychology at present is based on physiology and is only an extension of physical science dealing with material things. This way it cannot reach the end of its exploration and thus needs an alternate science to go further. Sri Aurobindo's integral yoga theory and practice may be seen as that step ahead. In theory, AI theorists are struggling to answer fundamental questions such as why life and mind appear in matter, how matter is not illusive and simply a product of the mind, how reason can be surpassed, how qualia theories explaining emotional / vital part are incorrect after a point as they equate a pattern with a qualia (i.e. sense experience.) These attempts will get enriched by impacts from a higher psychology as elaborated by Sri Aurobindo.

Thought experiment is a tool used in Quantum mechanics. AI is using thought experiments very successfully, as for example, in the qualia experiments of Chalmers and others, and in the twin earth experiments of Putnam. Here the truth is searched purely from thought, as laboratory experiments are not possible at such subtle levels. Although neither Sri Aurobindo or any other philosopher has gifted these tools to AI, the use of pure thought and inference to search for the ultimate reality has been a hallmark of eastern philosophies from the time of the Vedas, and in

modern times we find an efflorescence of this method in the writings of Sri Aurobindo. By pure thought one reaches to the truth (the Path of knowledge or *Jnanmarga* of Yoga).

In a wider context, scientific progress can be understood as the empowerment of mankind and its emancipation from the unconscious. Man is no longer so dominated by the external forces of nature but to some extent has learned to rule over matter, life and his own mind. His spirit is being freed from the shackles of nature and he is taking evolution into his own hands. However, instead of liberating man from his lower vital and physical propensities, science often serves to make him a more sophisticated slave of his lower nature.

Following are some recent examples from AI field showing that AI has yet to take this benevolent path seriously and learn from cautions against a path leading to what Sri Aurobindo has called a relapse to vital and mental barbarism:

1. Online chatting involves dummy friends with false identities, there are cases when this has led to financial or even criminal offences. At times, there is no real person and only a program is pretending to be a person.
2. Animation and cartoon films on TV and theater are a sign of prowess in AI. They are elegant, entertaining and intelligent. They have thus captured minds, especially of children. However, it is now proved that the subtle elements of violence like killing, hitting, and sex in these films are making children insensitive to real world situations.
3. In several games played on the computer and internet, children are terrorists, thieves, neighbours from hell, and there is objectionable confusion created between good and evil, between naughtiness and cruelty.
4. Three-D films are promoting ghosts, prehistoric animals and giant forces destroying planets; there is marketing of fear, insecurity and helplessness. There are some exceptions where issues like second identity or avatar and power of mind as well as kinesthesia are handled. But majority is thriving on negative emotions.
5. Data mining field of AI helps to find data of all citizens secretly and then filter it to find prospective customers with trustworthy credit history for selling goods, loans and even insurance policies. This is encroachment on personal lives and loss of all secrecy in personal and family lives. When the IT giants are secretly moving a person through their intelligent mechanism to unconsciously make a particular buying decision, they are ultimately nailing his free will. He is ultratech equivalent of a slave of medieval ages.
6. By being continuously in a virtual world created so well by AI, children, and even adults are facing psychosomatic disorders while struggling to cope with the real world.

Following two are samples of such happenings.

7. “Scientists have been aware of the potential side-effects of VR (Virtual Reality) systems for some time. A number of studies have examined what is sometimes referred to as “cybersickness” or “sim sickness” (short for simulation sickness). These feelings explain



why some people feel sick in 3D movies.” [www.livescience.com](http://www.livescience.com) › Tech Feb 3, 2015

8. “The experience can cause nausea, eyestrain and headaches. Headset makers don’t recommend their devices for children. Samsung and Oculus urge adults to take at least 10-minute breaks every half-hour, and they warn against driving, riding a bike or operating machinery if the user feels odd after a session.
9. Apart from the physical effects, Stanford University professor Jeremy Bailenson says his 15 years of research consistently have shown virtual reality can change how a user thinks and behaves, in part because it is so realistic. ” (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/what-does-virtual-reality-do-to-your-body-and-mind-1451858778>)
10. No doubt Neuro Fuzzy or Geno Fuzzy hybrids are giving better solutions. However, to explain how supervised clustering can be a better model, Kosko gives a hypothetical case of a monster waking up at JFK airport and attempting to learn languages by clustering one by one. Then he is helped say by Frankenstein in learning this (Kosko, 1999, p. 170).
11. Neural Fuzzy systems are used by a Japanese company to control Rolling mill producing steel strips.
12. They have big application in Stock Market where patterns and trends in a data are learned by neuro Fuzzy or Geno Fuzzy system and then future buying or selling decisions are made. The experts also add their experience to make these patterns more optimal. The new math tools have also turned some Swiss bankers into gamblers and currency speculators. Most large banks and credit firms now trade derivatives to hedge risks. They sweep fixed rate loans to variable rates or they buy and sell ‘swaptions’ options to sweep such loans.
13. Financial Frankenstein: Many central banks have sold gold reserve and replaced it by inflation derivatives. Even governments hedge and speculate in interest-rate derivatives. The residents of California’s Orange County learned this hard way when their county went bankrupt in late 1994. The media blamed the mysterious tools like derivatives but the fault lies with gambling users. The above tools are easily picked up by finance experts for they are statistical in nature and user-friendly. Only sometime series data is enough to paint a risk-profile of a user based on his past decisions or to pick a stock based on ratio analysis with AI tools like Neural nets, Fuzzy systems and Geno Fuzzy systems. These tools are now indispensable for modern day financial market analysts..

Kosko explains (p. 176) that these new tools have made analysis of financial arenas more chic and swift. However, he explains that technology is mere tool, most such tools fade away in few months as new tools appear. Betting on technology is dangerous. The recession followed with the near collapse of the US and European financial markets. The bankruptcy of banking giants like Goldman Sachs and Citibank and the widespread subprime loan scams resulted from greed overtaking legitimate use of efficient AI decision-making tools like Neuro Fuzzy Geno networks.

In areas like entertainment, governance, warfare, finance, stocks and business, the

algorithmic complexity of underlying AI tools on one side and enchanting simplicity of their usage on the other is a characteristic feature. It is boon for a right cause and yet a potential hazard. It is almost to the point where just a click of a button is needed to wipe out a major city, or cause the Sensex in financial market to tumble down, washing out billions of dollars in a minute.

No doubt there are benevolent applications of AI: Some of them are elaborated in a later section. The help they give in education, medicine, dissemination of knowledge and individualization, in achieving of the ancient ideal of equality, liberty and fraternity cannot be overstressed. Their benevolent role needs to be stressed more in AI applications so that science may play its destined role in evolution.

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***The intuitive mind is a sacred gift  
and the rational mind is a faithful  
servant. We have created a society  
that honors the servant and has  
forgotten the gift.***

***Albert Einstein***

## BEAUTY AND DELIGHT



**There is no excellent beauty  
that hath not some strangeness  
in the proportion.**

**Francis Bacon**

# AN ECO-MARXIST READING OF SRI AUROBINDO'S POEM - "CHARLES STUART PARNELL"

*Oeendrilla Guha*

"Charles Stewart Parnell" was authored in 1891, when Sri Aurobindo was a mere lad of nineteen summers. The poem, named after the Irish revolutionist, does credit to its title. The small poem of six lines reflects the short life of the character, who died aged forty-five, resulting in the poet hailing him as "O pale". (CWSA-2: 17) It could be assumed that the reasons Sri Aurobindo chose to eulogise Parnell were four. The first was that both Parnell and Sri Aurobindo joined politics approximately at the same age: Parnell at twenty-nine (1846-75) and Sri Aurobindo at thirty (1872-1902). The second was Parnell and Sri Aurobindo went against the wishes of their families: by seeking land reforms in favour of farmers, Parnell defied his family's position as landed gentry and Sri Aurobindo, who "felt no call for the I.C.S. and was seeking some way to escape from that bondage" (CWSA-36: 31) resisted his father's wish to serve the British. The third was India, like Ireland, was a victim of British colonialism and the fourth was that Sri Aurobindo, like Parnell (the leader of home rule for Ireland within the Great Britain and Ireland), championed home rule or self-government or *swaraj* and wanted to free his motherland from British tyranny, which resulted in him failing "to present himself at the riding examination and was disqualified for the Service" (CWSA-36: 6) despite having passed the open competition for the Indian Civil Service in 1890. On meeting the Gaekwar of Baroda, who was then in London, Sri Aurobindo obtained from him an appointment in the Baroda Service and left England for India in January 1893.

Parnell insisted on home rule in Ireland, a right that Sri Aurobindo himself demanded of the British in India and in the process if one were to die, as did many, it would be "a sweet and noble thing" (CWSA-6:103) and "no small privilege to suffer illegal violence, arbitrary imprisonment & cruel oppression" for the sake of one's motherland. (CWSA-6:103) Sri Aurobindo himself was imprisoned for a year in Alipore jail for sedition against the British.

Parnell, with interest, also aimed to pass a bill in the Irish Parliament to reform land rights so that the Irish farmers could own their own land, despite being born into the landed gentry. As Karl Marx's contemporary and follower, living during the second phase of industrial revolution, he witnessed an Ireland which discriminated its poor and sentenced it to centuries-long cruelty and suppression; unfortunately, the law did not come into force during his life. Sri Aurobindo would have felt for the similar conditions of the colonized Irish and the Indians and the state of the poor in both the countries.

Karl Marx (1818-83) was born at the backdrop of the first phase of industrial revolution, which had taken Europe by storm. Initiated into romanticism, he soon rejected it to become a Hegelian and opposed the Prussian autocracy. Marx's view of history was influenced by French socialism and Hegelian dialectic. French socialism, championing the cry of "liberty, equality and fraternity" during the French Revolution, advocated an equal share of the capital by the employer and the employee. The Hegelian dialectic, founded on the theory that human history could be studied by its gradual movement from a limited and divided understanding towards



a coherent and synthetic rationality (often challenging the existing state of affairs) was given a materialistic reading by Marx to suit his social, political and economic agenda. According to Marx, human history witnessed the privileged few (aristocrats) enjoying wealth and power for centuries. Marx and his followers were the first to challenge the existing state of affairs by demanding a distribution of this power and wealth among the poor. In the twentieth century, laws to equal rights of food, shelter and education, to vote, to own property, saw the light of day. Thus, human history marked a movement from a limited and divided understanding of politics, society and economy towards a coherent and synthetic rationality of politics, society and economy.

In *Capital*, Karl Marx states, "...Capital cares nothing for the length of life of labour-power. All that concerns it is simply and solely the maximum of labour-power...It attains this end by shortening the extent of the labourer's life, as a greedy farmer snatches increased produce from the soil by robbing it of its fertility." (265) He challenged the nineteenth century capitalistic ideology of large-scale industries and large-scale agriculture which bolstered intensive exploitation of the soil by exporting native products. The industrial revolution of the eighteenth century saw the rich exploiting the poor who came to cities to find jobs, the aftermath of a sudden economic boom. One such example is *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens, which in a limited manner records the life of the escaped convict, Abel Magwitch. Magwitch, an escaped convict, first sinned by stealing food, which hardened him into a criminal. A 'fearful man', he frightens Pip (the protagonist) into stealing food and drink for him but later willingly takes the blame for Pip's theft, which was considered a hanging offence in the eighteenth century England. Even though Magwitch is ultimately condemned to a life as a criminal in Australia, he pays his gratitude to Pip (for stealing food for him) by anonymously educating the poor and orphaned Pip with his hard-earned money in Australia. It can be assumed that Magwitch educates and makes Pip into a gentleman as an act of self-cleansing for he saw in Pip his unfortunate childhood self and what he could have been even he was given an opportunity (Magwitch was an orphan).

Through the character of Magwitch, Dickens, an exponent of Marxism, denounced the degenerative industrial revolution by passing on the social message that poverty sired crime. Sri Aurobindo maintained a Dickensian stand for he called the industrial age "the economic age" or "economic barbarism" as it made humanity want and desire and accumulate "wealth and more wealth, the adding of possessions to possessions, opulence, show, pleasure, a cumbrous inartistic luxury, a plethora of conveniences, life devoid of beauty and nobility, religion vulgarised or coldly formalised, politics and government turned into a trade and profession, enjoyment itself made a business, this is commercialism." (CWSA-25: 79-80)

Sri Aurobindo reiterates Marx's adage by saying, "The vitalistic or economic barbarian makes the satisfaction of wants and desires and the accumulation of possessions his standard and aim" (CWSA-25: 79-80) and by supporting the Irish cause of home rule and Parnell's demand to pass a bill in favour of the Irish farmers owning their own land. Sri Aurobindo highlighted these events in the revolutionist's life in the lines "O pale and guiding light, now star unsphered, Deliverer lately hailed,..." (CWSA-2: 17) The poet commenced the poem with a figure of speech of apostrophe "O pale and guiding light", thus saluting Parnell as the moonlight which lights illumines the night sky and its engulfing obscurity. The night sky and its surrounding darkness

represent the Irish psyche, which was dormant under the British *diktat*. One such example is the sixteenth century forceful reformation of Catholics into Anglicans (Irish were strictly Catholic) and the increasing influence of the English language in the native tongue. In the nineteenth century, Parnell not only challenged the British supremacy by insisting on home rule by entreating the dormant Irish psyche (people) to wake up and support his fair demand but sought to pass land reform bill in the Parliament on favour of his compatriots.

Kishore Gandhi in *Social Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the New Age* observed that Sri Aurobindo's two greatest contributions to sociology were his denial to separate social philosophy from social thought, much like he denied to differentiate Matter from the Spirit, including the growth of the individual in society in his concept of social thought and social philosophy. In social thought, he made his readers aware of the reasons of the pervading differences in countries, clans, castes, between the individual and the collective. In social philosophy he gave them the answer to solve these differences and what the ideal humanity could be. For Sri Aurobindo as long as humanity in general remained "an ignorant mental being misusing or not effectively using his knowledge, moved by ego and governed by vital desires and passions and the needs of the body, unspiritual and superficial in his outlook, ignorant of his own self and the forces that drive and use him" (CWSA-21: 917) and as long as human beings saw each other as potential threats to realizing vital interests, and not raise their consciousness and realize the ultimate truth that they are emanations of the same Divine, they would continue to exploit Nature and labour; no political or social measures taken up by sociologists could correct the segmented environment. Sri Aurobindo said that humanity must rise above its ego-consciousness and realise that the natural world as well as humanity existed "by the virtue of God." (CWSA-22, 718)

Sri Aurobindo's social philosophy is thus intricately linked up with his spiritual philosophy and both must be analysed in their totality of vision for he believed that it was the consciousness of the individual that determined the material existence and that the perfect society would encourage and nurture the perfection of every individual. In "Charles Stuart Parnell" Sri Aurobindo provided an answer to this self-inflicted social, political and economic crisis as the result of lack of harmony between social and spiritual philosophy in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, Sri Aurobindo applauded Parnell-who despite being born into the landed gentry, rose above his ego-consciousness to realize that his empowered class had robbed the farmers of their rights and medium of earning a living and leading a descent life-and held the opinion that basic equality had to be provided to every class.

On having analysed Sri Aurobindo's take on Marxism one may now deliberate the term Eco-Marxism, a derivation of Marxism, which has its roots in Marx's social theory of "historical-environmental-materialism". Also known as 'metabolic' relation, it urges nature and human society co-exist and co-evolve. Sri Aurobindo himself has not analysed the eco-Marxist school of thought or eco-criticism (eco-Marxism is a political sub-group of eco-criticism) for that matter as the theory was not born in his time but he has also dealt in great detail on the common relation between humanity and nature.

Before delving into eco-Marxism, it is imperative to explain eco-criticism and its history. Aldo Leopold, an American environmentalist, as early as 1949 advanced the argument that "Is

education possibly a process of trading awareness of things of lesser worth?" (20) in *A Sand Country Almanac: With Essays on Conservation From Round River*. He was the first ecologist to posit that humanity has abused nature by regarding it "as a commodity". He thus advocated a moralistic approach towards nature by encouraging human society to regard land as a conscious presence that had to be 'loved and respected' as an 'extension of ethics'. (Leopold Foreword)

The eco-critical movement took flight with Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962). Carson, a biologist with a literary background, again sounded the ecological alarm (after a decade) by raising the issue of the environmental degradation-particularly in America-the fatal consequence of using pesticides to maximize food and crop production. Cheryll Glotfelty in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996) remarked that the reason why eco-criticism as a school of thought took almost thirty years to be recognised since its inception in the 60s is because it was not an engineered movement of a school. But as more and more eco-critics and eco-theorists emerged in eighties and nineties, a school of thought emerged, called the eco-critical school. Therefore, with the growing popularity of ecology in the sixties and seventies, intellectuals did not want to remain detached from its influence. Since then, literary, political, economic and social critics have joined the wagon to expedite the ecological revolution.

Eco-criticism studies and interprets the relation between plants, animals and people in literature. Eco-critics, with the assistance of ecologists, opined that natural exploitation or exploitation of the non-human by the human being was the cause of environmental degeneration and provided answers to maintain an amicable relationship between the natural force and human-made force. They pointed out the versatility of literature to bring about a friendly relationship between the two forces.

In *Ecocriticism*, Greg Garrard defines the term eco-criticism as "...The study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term "human' itself." (5) By sub-dividing eco-criticism into two basic theoretical groups: philosophical and political, he pointed out the interdisciplinary nature of eco-criticism and its comprehensiveness and expansive role to affect change across and through all disciplines. The philosophical, further dividing into the pastoral and the apocalypse, speculates on the discourse of ecology and religion. The political sub-group includes the schools of thought of eco-Marxism and eco-feminism, which aim to bring about a visible change in the society by replacing old and obscene social and political practices.

Eco-Marxists could be said to protest "against the tedium of the merely economic attitude toward land" (Leopold 203). Greg Garrard writes, "...Eco-Marxists argue that there is a structural conflict between workers and the owners of the means of production, in which the latter cream off the surplus value created by the labour of the proletariat. This objective exploitation is at the heart of all other forms of exploitation and oppression..." (32) According to eco-Marxists the annexation in human and natural symbiosis, which was as the result of a capitalist economy and production, carved a distinct pathway to arrive at a comprehensive understanding and engagement with human-nature relationship. Thus, they reviewed the power structure formed in society which is the result of "metabolic rift", a term coined by John Bellamy Foster-an American editor and professor-after Marx's theory of "historical-environmental-



materialism that took into account the coevolution of nature and human society.” (Forster 373)

In the poem, “Charles Stuart Parnell”, there are three interpretative possibilities to the phrase “tragic earth”. (CWSA-2: 17) Firstly, Parnell died an early death and the earth could not see one of her loyal subjects grow into a ripe age; secondly that earth was “tragic” for she knew that after the death of Parnell the Irish cause of home rule would lose its momentum and wilt away without its champion; and thirdly Parnell’s demand to restore the land to the farmers was one of the ways to recharge the soil and make humanity connect with Nature and stimulate an external and internal change. The reason why the writer chose to read the poem from an eco-Marxist perspective is because of the third interpretative possibility for Marx explained in *Kapital* that “the blind desire for profit” during the age of industrialisation and colonialisation has “exhausted the soil”. Marx stated his concern that colonies saw their land and soil being indiscriminately shipped to the colonizing countries without so much as allowing “its cultivators the means for making up the constituents of the soil that had been exhausted”. (504)

The apt example of the exhaustion of the soil due to “the blind desire for profit” is the Irish potato famine (1845-49). The reason of this famine was that Ireland’s farmers, who were not legally allowed to own land and were rented out land by rich landlords, struggled to provide for their families for they had to supply the British market with crops. In fact, during the famine, the Irish prime minister permitted the exportation of grains to Britain. Potato had become a staple diet in Ireland by the eighteenth century, especially for the poor, for it grew easily in Irish soil and contained dense calories. In 1845, a blight, brought accidentally from North America, rotted the potatoes and with each year the disease worsened due to heavy reliance on the Irish Lumper (a type of potato), which weakened its genetic variety and land fertility.

Coming back to the poem, the fifth line “Thou too wert then a child of tragic earth” (CWSA-2: 17) justified the very first line, “O pale and guiding light, now star unsphered” (CWSA-2: 17) in which the poet made a comparison of the nationalist to the heavenly body of moon, reiterating on the man-nature or ‘metabolic’ relationship that Parnell sought to initiate through the land reform bill. Aldo Leopold explains, “Geological accumulation of soil fertility paralleled the diversification of flora and fauna; stability and diversity were apparently interdependent.” (Leopold 192-3) Thus, a lack of diversity of crops and a continuous tillage of potato from the same land destroyed its regenerative capacity, leading to soil exhaustion and the unfortunate Irish famine. Parnell, born in 1846, was too young to recall the three years that saw a million die and a million or two immigrate to America; besides, he was born into the landed-gentry and so the famine did not affect his family to a fatal extent. He nevertheless would have grown up hearing the worst and latest story of famine, not only of the nineteenth century Irish history but European history and in turn scripted a law in favour of the tenant farmers as a symbolic act to reverse the famine and for the law never came to force.

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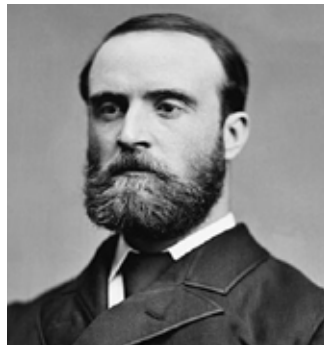
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**Charles Stewart Parnell**  
**1891**

O pale and guiding light, now star unsphered,  
Deliverer lately hailed, since by our lords  
Most feared, most hated, hated because feared,  
Who smot'st them with an edge surpassing swords!  
Thou too wert then a child of tragic earth,  
Since vainly filled thy luminous doom of birth.

**Sri Aurobindo**

# ANANDA BUDDHA

*Deepshikha Reddy*



# SANSKRIT AESTHETICS IN THE LIGHT OF SRI AUROBINDO

*Shruti Bidwaikar*

Sri Aurobindo's literary genius is unparalleled when compared with the creative and critical activities in the West and in India. He is a perfect example of what T.S. Eliot calls "Tradition and Individual Talent". Being a yogi he had developed the quality of synthesis. His vision would not segregate the old and the new, the East and West. Not that he was blind to the differences between the two, but he had the capacity to synthesize them in his consciousness and writings.

While reading his critical treatise and letters on art and poetry we realize that Sri Aurobindo had read and mastered Indian/Sanskrit as well as Western literary texts and their critical traditions. They are so beautifully synthesized in his consciousness that we get a reference to *rasa* here and a mention of *katharsis* there. All the essential movements in literary appreciation he has attended to and have mentioned it *en passant* as if. However, because of his comments and mentioning of such literary terms we have been able to cull out a few concepts and definitions which help us understand how he has conceptualized the terms like *rasa*, *dhvani*, *sphota*, *riti*, *alamkara* etc.

The terms mentioned above form an integral part of Indian/Sanskrit aesthetic tradition. Each of these terms and concepts has give rise to a school of aesthetics which developed its theory and applied it to art in general and poetry in particular. We intend to study various schools of Sanskrit aesthetics in the light of Sri Aurobindo. There have been attempts to see the modern western criticism in his light. We would here try to see what Sri Aurobindo says about the schools, of their essential concepts and how he has adapted or superseded them.

It is significant to note that the Indian aestheticians judged or commented upon poetry depending upon where they thought lay the soul of poetry. For example the *rasa sampradaya* or school considered *rasa* to be the soul, whereas, *Alamkara sampradaya* considered the figures of speech to be the soul of poetry. The schools have got their names based on what the aestheticians highlighted as the soul of poetry.

## **Rasa Sampradaya**

This school of aesthetics is the ancient most and was developed by Bharatamuni. Scholars differ with regard to the time in which he existed and wrote *Natyashashtra*. *Natyashashtra* is usually translated as Dramaturgy – the art and science of stage performance. Like Aristotle's Poetics which detailed the delineation of a theme on the stage, Bharatmuni too delved deep into the subject and wrote about how emotions are conveyed on the stage, how the script is written, what stage directions and what are the key sentiments and emotions that the audience should capture.

Bharatamuni identified eight basic emotions in all human beings that he calls *sthayi-bhava* out of which the eight *rasas* take birth. All his endeavours and writings only lead the reader towards one aim: the performance of *rasa* such that the audience who is *sahrydaya* or one-hearted with the performer would identify the same *rasa*. *Rasanishpatti* therefore becomes the primary aim of poetry or stagecraft. This was because Bharatamuni believed in the famous dictum of Taittiriya Upanishad: "*Rasovaisah*" – *rasa* is the basis of all. According to Bharatamuni's poetics – *rasa* is the soul of poetry.



The concept of rasa as was understood in the ancient times was just not emotive. The Upanishads did not mean to tell us the emotive essence is the basis of creation; but this rasa referred to the Ananda rasa. It is for this rasa that manifestation took place. And therefore realizing Ananda rasa and becoming one with it was the primary aim of all life. However, rasa as it was delineated in art and poetry often remained on the emotional level. It is in this form that it has come down to us.

Sri Aurobindo, a great Vedantin goes back to original and brings out the real essence of this term and tells where it is restricted but how it has to be transcended and experienced especially in poetry. In one of his letters on *Savitri* he writes:

Aesthetically, the delight takes the appearance of Rasa and the enjoyment of this Rasa is the mind's and the vital's reaction to the perception of beauty. (CWSA 27: 700)

By aesthesis is meant a reaction of the consciousness, mental and vital and even bodily, which receives a certain element in things, something that can be called their taste, Rasa, which passing through the mind or sense or both, awakes a vital enjoyment of the taste, Bhoga, and this can again awaken us, awaken even the soul in us to something yet deeper and more fundamental than mere pleasure and enjoyment, to some form of the spirit's delight of existence, Ananda. (CWSA 27: 40)

Sri Aurobindo reaffirms the meaning of rasa as was believed in the ancient time. The aim of every art according to him is to take us to the ultimate Ananda. *Raso vai sah* too means that Ananda is the essence, the rasa of all existence and one should try to reach and express that in all arts and act.

### **Alamkara Sampradaya**

Bharatamuni had elaborated much about the importance of alamkara, riti, meaning etc. of poetry while keeping *rasanishpatti* at the centre of his theory. However, there were aestheticians like Bhamah and Uddbhata who considered figures of speech to be the soul of poetry. They emphasized that unless the figures of speech are not in place poetry cannot deliver the desired rasa. Although the deliverance of rasa was their central motive but they emphasized on the manner of its delivery and impact created by words and images rather than the rasa itself.

This school believed in the fact that the figures of speech, the rhyme, rhythm and technique all enhance poetry. They are the embellishments of any text. These embellishments are called "*alamkāra*" in Sanskrit. The aesthetician Bhāmaha, was the one who emphasized that *alamkāra* is the soul of poetry. He stressed that the word and its meaning are equally important. "*Shabdarthasahitaukavyam*" (S. Murali, *Mantra of Vision*: 106). He laid down a theory explaining the qualities of these *alamkāra* classifying the ornamentation of words (*shabdālāmka*) to that of meaning (*arthālamkara*). The figures of speech such as similes, metaphors, alliterations, assonances, rhymes and other methods enhance poetry and reach out to the reader through their beauty and suggestive nature. It is suggested by the Indian aestheticians that these tools may be employed for the enhancement and promotion of the meaning; it should not be decorative for its own sake. This was the school which stood complementary to the rasa school even though it developed much later.

### **Riti Sampradaya**

Style or *rīti* of poetry also played an important role in determining the meaning of poetry.

Aestheticians Dandin and Vamana believed that the style of the poem shaped its meaning and even its *rasa*. Vamana classified three major styles namely *vaidarbhi*, *gaudiya* and *pāñchāli*. Style of the poem was based on the quality of words used. He identified ten qualities of words and sense – *ooj*, *prasād*, *slesh*, *samatā*, *samādhi*, *mādhurya*, *saukumārya*, *udārata*, *arthvyakti* and *kānti*. The nature and quality of words here mean the weight, the stress and the meaning they convey. For example the poem presenting the *veer rasa* i.e. the chivalrous aspects, should have words that are sonorous and are dense, while the one expressing the *sringararasa* of that of romantic or erotic love should be soft and smooth. Such was the distinction made by the Indian aesthetician. The choice and placement of words in the poem determined its style. *Vaidarbhi* is a soft style, presenting subdued emotions. *Gaudiya* presents the crude and the rude emotions identified as having “largeness and profusion” (*Essays in Sanskrit Criticism*: 215); and *pāñchāli* is a mixture of these two styles. Dr. Krishnamoorthy explains that the former style is more precise and aims at clarity of thoughts and images, whereas the second style is more ornamented and has vivid imagery and it is less sharp than the former. Vāmana developed the dimensions of style in his writings and believed – “*ritiratmakavyasya*”, “style is the soul of poetry” (Sreekantaiyya 122).

While the Indian aestheticians believe that style is the soul of poetry, Sri Aurobindo wrote that when the highest kind of poetry comes into being it brings it form, style and substance with itself. Here is a long passage from *The Future Poetry* where Sri Aurobindo elaborately describes the role and instrumentality of technique in a poetic creation:

...technique, however indispensable, occupies a smaller field perhaps in poetry than in any other art,—first, because its instrument, the rhythmic word, is fuller of subtle and immaterial elements; then because, the most complex, flexible, variously suggestive of all the instruments of the artistic creator, it has more—almost infinite—possibilities in many directions than any other. The rhythmic word has a subtly sensible element, its sound value, a quite immaterial element, its significance or thought value, and both of these again, its sound and its sense, have separately and together a soul value, a direct spiritual power, which is infinitely the most important thing about them. And though this comes to birth with a small element subject to the laws of technique, yet almost immediately, almost at the beginning of its flight, its power soars up beyond the province of any laws of mechanical construction: and this form of speech carries in it on its summits an element which draws close to the empire of the ineffable.

Poetry rather determines its own form; the form is not imposed on it by any law mechanical or external to it. The poet least of all artists needs to create with his eye fixed anxiously on the technique of his art. He has to possess it, no doubt; but in the heat of creation the intellectual sense of it becomes a subordinate action or even a mere undertone in his mind, and in his best moments he is permitted, in a way, to forget it altogether. For then the perfection of his sound-movement and style come entirely as the spontaneous form of his soul: that utters itself in an inspired rhythm and an innate, a revealed word, even as the universal Soul created the harmonies of the universe out of the power of the word secret and eternal within him, leaving themechanical work to be done in a surge of hidden spiritual excitement by the subconscious part of his Nature. It is this highest speech which is the supreme poetic utterance, the immortal element in his poetry, and a little of it is enough to save the rest of his work from oblivion. (CWSA 26:13)

This clearly informs us that that poetic creation has to be an act of the soul for which the outer

instrumentation of technique and style has to be ready. As and when the inspiration comes it will utilise these instruments which have been polished and kept ready and would create poetry which may rise up to become rhythmic Word according to Sri Aurobindo.

The above mentioned schools of aesthetics specifically aimed at finding the meaning through *rasa*, *alamkāra* or *riti*. The relation of word and meaning gained more importance when aestheticians brought out the fact that it is not the literal meaning of the word that is important. The problem or the issue addressed here is ‘where does the meaning lie?’ What can be the meaning of the text? This question brought forth many theories. *Vakrokti* (deviant meaning), *dhvani* (suggested meaning), *auchitya* (appropriateness in *rasa*), *anumiti* (inferential meaning) and *chamatkara* (charming or striking element giving meaning) and the relation of word and meaning as explained by Bhartrhari in his *sphota* theory all address the question of meaning and its relation to the word. Word here is the “linguistic expression as a whole” (Tandra Patnaik, śabda: 63). We shall try to examine some of the major schools like Dhvani and Sphota in the light of Sri Aurobindo.

### **Sphota Theory**

*Sphota* means bursting forth with the interaction of the text with the reader; meaning is grasped through the interaction of vibrations. Bhartrhari was a grammarian. He describes four kinds of speech (*vāk*) that have different intensity and force and act differently on human beings. The four kinds of speech *Para*, *Pashyanti*, *Madhyama*, *Vaikhari*, pertain to four different levels of consciousness and require certain amount of preparation for its reception as the word becomes more and more laden with power and force.

Sri Aurobindo takes cognizance of the potential of words to affect a change. In his commentaries of Kena Upanishad he writes:

That Word is creative in a deeper and more original sense than human speech and with a power of which the utmost creativeness of human speech can be only a far-off and feeble analogy. (CWSA 18: 29)

He differentiates between ordinary speech which belongs to *madhayama* and *vaikhari* levels from that of the revelatory speech that pertains to *para* and *pashyanti*. Para vak is beyond expression but pashyanti is believed to be seeing speech. And the highest kind of poetry is mantric, it is a revealed Word according to Sri Aurobindo. About Mantra he writes,

The theory of the Mantra is that it is a word of power born out of the secret depths of our being where it has been brooded upon by a deeper consciousness than the mental, framed in the heart and not originally constructed by the intellect, held in the mind, again concentrated on by the waking mental consciousness and then thrown out silently or vocally—the silent word is perhaps held to be more potent than the spoken—precisely for the work of creation. (CWSA 18: 30-31)

This is how we see that Sri Aurobindo has either revived the old concepts of mantra and Word or have built upon the old, the future poetics.

Another school of thought which finds some reference in Sri Aurobindo’s works is Dhvani.

Anandavardhan and Abhinavgupta, the Kashmiri aestheticians emphasized the concept of *dhvani* and said that it is the soul of poetry – “*kāvyaśyatmadhvanih*” (Sreekantaiyya 126). Eminent



critic and scholar, S. Murali explains the point further in his book *Mantra of Vision* – “suggestion in the word which is different from the denotative power, *abhidā* and from the power of connotation *lakshanā* and from the intention *tātparya*. The process of *vyanjana* of the word is *dhvani* which culminates in the aesthetic relish, *rasa*” (106).

Sri Aurobindo does not directly refer to *dhvani* but he does dwell upon the concept of the interaction of reader with the text and the outcome of the meaning as is emphasized by the *Dhvani* school of aesthetics. This school gives much freedom to the reader or spectator to decipher his own meaning or *rasa* from the text or performance. Indeed there is an intended delivery of *rasa* but the reception of the same is much dependent on the preparation of the reader, listener or spectator. Therefore later in this school the concept of *rasa dhvani* became much popular and was accepted among other aestheticians. It may also mean that the meaning that the reader assigns to the text would determine its *rasa*. *Dhvani* refers to the suggestive meaning of the text: the meaning that is beyond connotation and is specific to the reader’s response.

*Dhvani* also brings us close to the modern day reader-response theory which says that the text gets its meaning from the reader only. Sri Aurobindo combines the aspect of *dhvani* and *sahridaya* and writes that the text can have multiple meaning depending on the preparation of the hearer. He responds to the relation between the poet, reader and critic on similar lines but giving it a concrete role and definition. In *The Future Poetry* he writes:

...there is also the personality of the poet and the personality of the hearer; the one gives the pitch and the form of the success arrived at, the other determines the characteristic intellectual and aesthetic judgment to which its appeal arrives. The correspondence or the dissonance between the two decides the relation between the poet and his reader, and out of that arises whatever is personal in our appreciation and judgment of his poetry....That which we can appreciate in poetry and still more the way in which we appreciate it, is that in it and us which is most helpful to us and therefore, for the time being at least, right for us in our attempt to get into union either with universal or transcendent Beauty through the revealing ideas and motives and suggestive forms of poetic creation. (CWSA 26: 43-44)

Here we see that Sri Aurobindo demands a tuning of the poet and the reader to the universal beauty, delight and truth. If the poet receives the universal beauty and delight and expresses them, and if the reader is able to rise high enough to see the soul of beauty and delight only then the real meaning of poetry can come out. Until then it is all open-ended interpretation of the text.

## Pratibha

Nearly all the Indian aestheticians emphasized the importance of genius or *pratibha*. Dandin however, did not agree to this view and opined that practice and study are responsible for making an individual a poet. The role of genius cannot be negated; the role of practice can neither be dismissed. In his essay, “Tradition and Individual Talent” T.S. Eliot highlights both. Tradition does not necessarily mean imitating the ancestors, it means a systematic study of art. Individual talent is that genius of the poet through which the latter can surpass the ancestors in the poetic/artistic creation. However, the two are incomplete without each other. Genius though is inborn, needs pruning and training through study and contemplation. All great poets studied the pre-existing works and developed their own individuality for the same. The study is a kind of preparation of the ground for the seed of talent to sprout. It is also true that without practice

genius cannot produce the same quality of poetry as it would when aided by study and labour. Sri Aurobindo has written in his letters about the role of genius and study.

He writes – “Poetic genius – without which there cannot be any originality – is inborn, but it takes time to come out – the first work even of great poets is often unoriginal.” (CWSA 27: 104) He too gives full credit to genius while acknowledging the importance of practice and labour. This axiomatically makes it clear that one who is not born with the poetic genius cannot become a poet and cannot produce the highest order of poetry. This rule is applicable to those who strive and struggle to write poetry mechanically. They usually end up writing verse and not poetry. Sri Aurobindo calls it the “ordinary rule”. However, he says that the one who is involved in yoga, may experience the opening of unmanifest dimensions of his/her personality and can become a poet. Nirodbaran was one of the disciples of Sri Aurobindo who was into the profession of medicine had no seeds of poetry in him. But through yoga Sri Aurobindo helped him become a poet of a high order (he was able to draw inspiration from the higher realms of consciousness) and now his collection of poetry is available for the readers. About the birth of a new quality he writes, “in Yoga poetic originality can come by an opening from within” (CWSA 27: 104). Therefore, when Dandin said that there is no role of the inborn genius and that poet can be made by practice and labour is true in the context of yoga. It might not be possible for the ordinary life, but highly possible in yogic life.

In the above analysis we may note that Sri Aurobindo had complete knowledge of the Indian aesthetic tradition but he did not mention them to prove his scholarship. These concepts, terms and ideas had become a part of his poetic vision and expression. They are woven into his writings quite organically and form an integral part of his aesthesis.

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# DANCE OF BEAUTY

*Shruti Bidwaikar*



# LIFE



**The whole life turned towards the Divine,  
offered to the Divine,  
at the service of the Divine,  
to become little by little an expression of the Divine.**

**The Mother**

# A PERSPECTIVE OF LIFE IN THE LIGHT OF SRI AUROBINDO'S "THOUGHTS AND APHORISMS"

*Falguni Jani*

All of us are born and live on the same planet called earth. But are we looking at the same world around us? Does the beauty of Nature arouse a similar feeling of Peace and Bliss in all? It does not because we live psychologically in the world of our own making. The contact with the outer world gives rise to different responses in every individual. Therefore, for each person the life on earth is pleasant or painful, smooth or rough, easy or challenging according to one's own world-view. For some it is like sailing on the sea and enjoying the cool breeze, while for others it is like climbing a rocky mountain. There are people who complain about every situation in life, be it the weather or the normal duties and responsibilities. Rarely do we meet a person who is joyful without any reason, just experiencing the pure delight of existence; similar to a flower blooming in the garden or a bird chirping and dancing on the branches of the tree. Nowadays it is a pleasant surprise to meet someone who is completely happy with all the aspects of life.

The concept of life evolves with our growing awareness of self and the world. Age and experience are great teachers, but one's inclination towards the knowledge of one's true self and aim of life are important factors in the integral growth of personality. By this we mean the development of our physical, vital, mental and psychic growth. Various circumstances and situations mould the way we look at it. It is interesting to know that the subjective element in our feeling and perceiving is very strong which unconsciously forms our beliefs and prejudices. All of us go through trials and tribulations. The difference between a believer in God and an atheist is in the attitude that one has in confronting them and the conclusions drawn thereafter. Therefore, the attitude we take influence and determine the choices we make. It depends on the level of awareness one has while executing the action. Depending on the issue at hand or as per the circumstances people, either act impulsively on the spur of the moment or make a conscious and well planned action. The teachings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo guide us on this journey. I have chosen the Pearl of wisdom packed in small but succinct words in the Thoughts and Aphorisms that light our path and pierce right through the ignorant mind, reluctant heart and indolent physical. Although divided in the three sections of Jnana, Karma and Bhakti every aphorism provides a complete understanding of our earthly nature. They need to be pondered upon and to let their light go deep inside our subconscious mind so that gradually we are free from the bondage of ignorance and suffering and wake up permanently to the new dawn preparing in us the life divine along with it a new perspective to see and experience the world around us. We know that our minds are limited, but forget that this instrument also distorts facts and lead us astray from our goal.

Most of the issues that a person faces in life are often due to ignorance resulting in wrong thinking. It is like seeing from broken pieces of glass thereby believing the part for the whole. Sri Aurobindo says that Truth is perceived only by the soul. What we call knowledge is most of the time information and data collected from media and mass opinion. Therefore, he says,

**What men call knowledge, is the reasoned acceptance of  
false appearances. Wisdom looks behind the veil and sees. Jnana 7**



Besides, one is never completely liberated from choices and preferences, the subtle influences from outside and age old beliefs. We are under the illusion that our minds are open and free from prejudice. Hence, lets us know once and for all that,

**What the soul sees and has experienced, that it knows; the rest is appearance, prejudice and opinion. Jnana10.**

All of us are wearing a kind of mask, a persona, which hides the true Self. This egoistic personality on the surface is in communication with the world outside, and interferes in our journey toward the true Self, the Soul. It has a natural tendency to take things not suitable to it as negative, unpleasant and painful. The ego makes a huge emotional drama over failures to fulfil desires or ambition for material success and power.

Here is a wonderful way to describe the ego as an eternal fool. On reading this gem of a wisdom one immediately detects the source of disturbance and wakes up to joy and lightness.

**When I pine at misfortune and call it evil, or am jealous and disappointed, then I know that there is awake in me again the eternal fool. Jnana 25.**

The integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo teaches us to take every experience as a lesson to go forward in life. Nothing is useless or negative in an absolute sense. The following aphorism gives us a new light to understand the so called calamities in our lives. Every one of us faces some or the other issues that seem to crush us down and halt our march. We may feel that our efforts towards progress remain futile. However hard we try, the success, the happiness and the health we desire eludes us while others are thriving in every way. We often and say that this is not what I deserve after so much effort and all bad things are happening in my life alone while the corrupt and unscrupulous are always enjoying the fruits of their labour. The difficulty in life can arise in any area. The problem may be financial disaster or death of a near and dear one or an incurable disease, but Sri Aurobindo lifts us above by saying,

**O Misfortune, blessed be thou; for through thee I have seen the face of my Lover. Jnana 35**

Further, human beings are naturally inclined to bask under the glory of their achievements as well as consider themselves full of virtues of every kind. For instance, people often discuss their generosity or kindness towards the less fortunate .Will boast about their charities and benevolence. Or indulge in a false sense of greatness. Here, he punctures our bloating ego and pushes us towards the freedom from both sin and virtue.

**Sin & virtue are a game of resistance we play with God in His efforts to draw us towards perfection. The sense of virtue helps us to cherish our sins in secret. Jnana 69**

At the same time, he tears apart the beliefs which make us feel good about ourselves. We gloat over our so called virtues of being nice, charitable or humble etc. We forget that more often than not our personality reflects the opposite of these. For example we are angry, jealous, ambitious, miser and selfish on many occasions, but conveniently forget and live in the illusion of our goodness. Spiritual progress has nothing to do with either virtues or vices. Since both are



binding and displayed solely for social recognition and appreciation. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo says,

**Altruism, duty, family, country, humanity are the prisons  
of the soul when they are not its instruments. Karma 234**

Besides, how often we indulge in gossip and criticism, considering it as mere sharing with friends or just idle talk. This happens almost unconsciously because of our socialization in a hypocrite society which gives value superficial achievements and morality. The Mother has often warned us against these loose talks. We are required to be vigilant every moment as a slight neglect can bring down the level of consciousness.

Therefore, the Master admonishes,

**Examine thyself without pity, then thou wilt be more  
charitable and pitiful to others. Jnana 70**

In doing so we would be free from unnecessary preoccupation and begin a journey towards freedom and joy. The Mother calls us all to break away from the old pattern of living in a prison of our own making and invites us to soar upwards in freedom and light.

Like all adventures, this too is fraught with difficulty as well the discovery of the new and wonderful world. True heroism certainly lies in overcoming the inner obstacles. When all deeds are done for the Lord, life becomes a constant discovery of inner strength, joy, Peace and creativity.

**O soldier and hero of God, where for thee is sorrow or  
shame or suffering? For thy life is a glory, thy deeds a consecration,  
victory thy apotheosis, defeat thy triumph. Karma 278**

In doing so, one encounters hostile forces. The battle is tough and the negative forces are awaiting us at every corner. The following aphorism admits the tough process, nevertheless calling us to attempt it. It is not easy to fulfil the duties of life perfectly as a householder with financial, emotional and social responsibilities. Here the Master wants us to take up the challenge, not abandon it for purely spiritual pursuits. The Integral Yoga embraces life in all the aspects. Hence, inner detachment in the Spirit of Bhagavad Gita is advised, not an escapism from the world. One is reminded of the Aryan culture of ancient India wherein one is called to conquer the outer and inner world for the establishment of Truth. Once again we are reminded of the lofty ideal in a short and powerful way.

**Hard is it to be in the world, free, yet living the life of ordinary  
men; but because it is hard, therefore it must be attempted  
and accomplished. Jnana 107**

In India, since ancient times there has been a tradition of renunciation. A sanyasi wearing an orange robe and living on the mountains is revered. In fact spiritual practice was synonymous with rejection of material things and worldly life. It is still believed that an escape from the world of relationships and responsibilities is easy for the pursuit of the Divine. Therefore, the above aphorism is so relevant in the context of Integral Yoga. Both the Mother and Sri Aurobindo

attempted the impossible and paved the path for future. They have made our accent to the life Divine easy and joyful, provided we follow the sunlit path. In this context the Mother's observation hits right on the nail,

To be free from all attachment does not mean running away from all occasion for attachment. All these people who assert their asceticism, not only run away but warn others not to try! This seems so obvious to me. When you need to run away from a thing in order not to experience it, it means that you are not above it, you are still on the same level. Anything that suppresses, diminishes or lessens cannot bring freedom. Freedom has to be experienced in the whole of life and in all sensations. As a matter of fact I have made a whole series of studies on the subject, on the purely physical plane.... In order to be above all possible error, we tend to eliminate any occasion for error. For example, if you do not want to say any useless words, you stop speaking; people who take a vow of silence imagine that this is control of speech—it is not true! It is only eliminating the occasion for speech and therefore for saying useless things. It is the same thing with food: eating only what is necessary. In the transitional state we have reached, we no longer want to lead this entirely animal life based on material exchange and food; but it would be foolish to believe that we have reached a state where the body can subsist entirely without food—nevertheless there is already a great difference, since they are trying to find the essential nutrients in things in order to lessen the volume. But the natural tendency is to fast—it is a mistake! For fear of being mistaken in our actions, we stop doing anything at all; for fear of being mistaken in our speech, we stop speaking; for fear of eating for the pleasure of eating, we do not eat at all—this is not freedom, it is simply reducing the manifestation to a minimum; and the natural conclusion is Nirvana. But if the Lord wanted only Nirvana, nothing but Nirvana would exist! It is obvious that He conceives of the coexistence of all opposites, and that for Him this must be the beginning of a totality. So obviously, if one feels meant for that, one can choose only one of His manifestations, that is to say, the absence of manifestation. But it is still a limitation. And this is not the only way to find Him, far from it! It is a very common tendency which probably originates from an ancient suggestion or perhaps from some lack, some incapacity—reduce, reduce, reduce one's needs, reduce one's activities, reduce one's words, reduce one's food, reduce one's active life—and all that becomes so narrow. In one's aspiration not to make any more mistakes, one eliminates any occasion for making them. It is not a cure.

But the other way is much, much more difficult. (CWM 10: 194-195)

In order to accomplish the most challenging task in life, one must understand the world and its ways. We often live in an illusion and take appearances for real. Therefore, we stumble, get hurt and disappointed.

To know the Truth and live according to it is the only way to empower ourselves amidst the countless forces. Hence, let us ponder on the following:

**Accept the world as God's theatre; be thou the mask of  
the Actor and let Him act through thee. If men praise or hiss  
thee, know that they too are masks & take God within for thy  
only critic and audience. Karma 249**

Here again, we have a simple advise from the Mother, "The best way to achieve this is to direct one's whole aspiration towards the Divine Perfection, to give oneself to it without reserve and to rely on That alone for all satisfaction. All the rest will follow as a result." (CWM 10:285)

In order to move on the path of perfection, we require a lot of perseverance and patience. We are often troubled by the falsehood around us in the form of corruption, deceit and violence. Our Master's words are comforting in such situation. He says,

**Be not repelled by the world's crookednesses; the world is a wounded and venomous snake wriggling towards a destined off-sloughing and perfection. Wait; for it is a divine wager, and out of this baseness, God will emerge brilliant and triumphant. Karma 295**

Besides, we are asked to see the presence of the Divine everywhere even in the very opposite conditions. There is a definite aim towards which all is moving whether through failure or success, good or bad, construction or destruction. Our vision is limited and cannot see beyond the data given by the senses. Hence our interpretation of the events is also faulty. We are asked to have patience because eventually the evolutionary impulse will emerge revealing the victorious Godhead .

This world is the creation of The Supreme Lord who knows every step and plans each event according to His vision. It is comforting to read the following aphorism which says that,

**When one has the vision in the heart, everything, Nature and Thought and Action, ideas and occupations and tastes and objects become the Beloved and are a source of ecstasy. Bhakti 429**

Besides, He explains in Ishopanishad, that the Lord is always present in the world, as "All this is for habitation by the Lord, whatsoever is individual universe of movement in the universal motion" (CWSA 17: 5). Further, He is in us as well in all. When the eye of true knowledge opens one can see HIM in everything at all times. This will remove the illusion all sorrows and pleasures in life. Human life becomes a joyful journey towards the fulfilment of the highest ideal. The body is no longer an obstacle on the path but becomes the supreme vehicle to manifest his glory on earth. As individuals we fulfil our spiritual mission on earth through knowledge, works and devotion.

**Discipleship to God the Teacher, sonship to God the Father, tenderness of God the Mother, clasp of the hand of the divine Friend, laughter and sport with our Comrade and boy Playfellow, blissful servitude to God the Master, rapturous love of our divine Paramour, these are the seven beatitudes of life in the human body. Canst thou unite all these in a single supreme & rainbow-hued relation? Then hast thou no need of any heaven and thou exceedest the emancipation of the Adwaitin. Bhakti 475**

*The number at the end of each aphorism is as per the sequence in which they are documented in the book Essays Divine and Human (CWSA 12).*

## PRANAB-DA TOLD ME...

*Deepshikha Reddy*

The year may have been the end of 1999 or the beginning of 2000, I don't remember exactly, when Pranab da returned from the Nursing Home after recovering from his so-called heart problem. It was then that Chhanda, Shobha and I were told to cook his food for the next three months of his convalescence at Praveen's house just in front of Kishorlalji's house or the Ashram Kindergarten section.

We three friends were taking turns and cooking around twice every week. We were known to be cooks in the Corner House of the Ashram. One day Dilipda and Gayatri, the two doctors had told us to be rather careful and cautious with oil, frying, too many spices, much sugar items etc. We were old enough to know all of this and with all the regulations we too tried to serve him a good variety in the food items as he was very aristocratic in his taste buds.

He was always highly appreciative of all of us to the extent of a pretty high exaggeration at times that embarrassed us. On the whole he always looked most content, happy and cheerful. One day he asked me: "do you remember, you used to make very nice Dhakai parothas sometime for me?" I said, "certainly I do but now at this point of time, I am quite not allowed to make any of those as they require a lot of ghee, maida and also a bit of frying." He said, "leave alone those instructions Deepshikha, listen to me, I am not a sick man. I agree precaution is good but I did not have anything serious like you all are thinking. It was nothing dangerous or severe". I replied, "but dada, heart is a delicate problem and one must be careful with food specially. Don't they say that?" He said "yes, of course, but for those who have a heart problem. I am fine. I needed a little rest so the Mother caused all of this so that I can be behind the veil for a while. You better make some of those parathas today. It's long since I had those."

I was quite puzzled but also knew that he was a very different person, indeed very special and he knew what he was talking about. It was neither greed nor control – it was just a wish. I knew very well about his power of control, so I decided to obey him humbly without saying a word to anybody.

After that normally he would eat everything like an obedient child barring a few requests. He looked so bright and handsome with his white pyjamas and short length kurtas that I never ever felt he was ever ill.

Since he told me that he was not sick, later that day I asked him as to what had actually happened to him and that I heard he had seen a vision prior to this incident. He told me he had seen a vision a few days before having the heart attack or the heart episode. It is not that he connected the two or took the vision as a premonition but roughly what I remember is that he had seen a river somewhat like Baitarani that one crosses after death to reach the heavens, flowing at a distance in his vision. This river was far and the bank on its side had a huge sandy beach where there was a big house. Many people of all ages were passing by from there, some with their National flags.

Then he saw that he was sitting amidst very expensive treasure of gold and pearls and diamonds. The atmosphere was tranquil and peaceful. Then he saw many people coming to him

with lots of gifts and gift boxes. He recognized only two of them being Tinkorida (the music teacher in the ashram) and Vasudha ben (the Mother's attendant). Then he saw a dark looking, big, stout man on his bedside, carrying a gift. But he kept on crying continuously. Then there was also a lady wanting to give him an envelope which after repeated effort, the third time disappeared into thin air. Both this man and the lady disappeared soon after.

Then finally he saw a foreign lady facing her back to him and a foreign gentleman looking at her very sternly. They had been standing there for long till dawn. But he felt that the dark big man perhaps was the man of sorrow.

The most interesting part for me was that he was seeing this whole episode with wide open eyes – not in a dream or sleep. I asked him if he felt afraid seeing the man of sorrow and the Baitarani river. He simply said he never felt afraid under any circumstance. He had become used to leaving everything at the feet of the Mother. He never feared anything in life ever.

I remember once I had to take leave from the department of Physical Education for three days due to fever. When I returned on the fourth day I told dada about a very bad experience I had with an elderly Bengali couple whom I had met four days ago. As they were new they started asking me many questions. I too started replying to them with patience and sympathy. But I found that they were becoming more and more critical and negative about many things here. In my feverish effort to convince them about the goodness we all enjoy here, I might have thought myself to be quite a messiah, I mean somewhere ego had cropped up. Dada said that I was highly vulnerable without any protection, hence their negative forces hit me hard to make me sick.

Then he said that before we meet anyone whom we do not know or go to a new place or face new circumstance or even when we go out into unknown crowds or hotels or marriages, we must concentrate and ask for the Mother's protection to envelop us tightly so that nothing can pierce through us. He said to me that he did that each time, not only for himself but for all those around him. It was indeed a wonderful advice that I tried to follow and as much as I could, later in life.

However, soon after this vision within a few days he had the chest pain and he had to be admitted to the Nursing Home forthwith. His heart stopped beating totally at 7 in the evening and it took a great effort with manual pumping and electric shocks to revive it in minutes. What I had heard was that he survived longer without the heart beat than most of the ordinary people could. We considered it an intervention by the Mother. He agreed saying that once you leave all to Her she does Her will as he had absolutely no fear at all. He was then wondering, in full consciousness, if that was what could be called death, then he remembered the Baitarani river he had earlier seen in his vision.

But unfortunately his health took a very serious turn when no blood circulated in his brain at around midnight. Till then he was fully conscious but after that an injection put him to sleep and he didn't remember anything further.

Then he said that the Mother once told him that heart never stops or takes any rest. If for any reason it ever stops and starts functioning again, it gets renewed strength and vigour. Then he joked saying "so I told you to make these special parathas, I can digest everything now. Why do you have to give me soup so very often?"

I laughed and said that I am afraid of death. It feels like a huge shock when someone leaves us. Even otherwise knowing well that death is a necessary intervention between lives and all the philosophies about it, I hate it and almost refuse to accept it. I know I am wrong but have to suffer it.

Dada became serious and said that it is the truth of our life that we must accept very naturally without remorse. It is a test of our surrender to Her. Trust in the Divine is the only means by way of which one can get rid of any such fear. Without surrendering to the Mother it is perhaps not possible to achieve this. He was wondering why I, having lived here since my young day when the Mother was there in the physical, could not yet feel the warmth of Her protection around me. That spoke a lot and I felt quite ashamed. Obviously I understood that I have a long way to go in my journey to Her.

You are here for long many years now. I knew you as a young girl of 13 or 14, isn't it? How come you have not yet been able to surrender all your fears and reservations to Her till now? By now you should have been able to be absorbed in Her in a manner that you felt Her protection as a constant warmth around you. She should have been a part of your breathing by now. It is only she who can rid you of your baseless fears and that needs a deep surrender.

I had till date never heard such a firm tone in his voice. He meant business. He understood that I was feeling pretty helpless, nervous and sad as well. To cheer up my mood immediately said that it was not uncommon that many people were afraid of death. That is primarily due to our attachment to life in every form. But to put my fears to rest he gave me a five point formula that the Mother had told him to understand the problem of death and thereby overcome it. I wrote these points briefly so that I did not forget them.

1. The first one was to try to understand the riddle of life logically with intellectual arguments. We must understand that life is continuous and an unending progression.
2. The second necessity is that of a total trust and a complete surrender to God.
3. The third method is to realize that in our innermost chamber there is a Light with which we have to unite or identify ourselves. Philosophically you may say it is to realize the psychic being within us.
4. Fourth remedy is to be a hero warrior in life and always remain conscious of the only goal and strive towards it knowing through knowledge that death is nothing but a mere age-old bad habit. Life is a battle and he has to live it through this like a brave warrior.
5. The last one, it seems, the Mother said that it is only for a selected few who are truly initiated. It is not meant for everyone to follow and understand as much. It is to take a conscious decision to get into the cave of death, fight out the issue there, and to turn to this earth victoriously to participate in its working again.

Most often, we saw that dada through his stories and jokes, through his memories of innumerable incidents with many around him, almost in passing by, would utter some deep philosophical truth that we do not get in books or certain tips for life that sometimes prove to be so valuable that I always felt blessed to have been in close contact with him for so long.



# SOME MANAGEMENT LESSONS FROM INDIAN WISDOM

*Ashok Kumar Bhatia*

After the 2008 economic meltdown, the management world has discovered that CEOs need to follow not only a Business Compass but also a Moral Compass to steer the enterprises they happen to head. Improving one's Spiritual Quotient is now a sheer business necessity, and shall be more so in the decades to come.

It is here that Indian scriptures and sages provide a ready template for managers of all sizes and shapes. Let us consider a few facets of some of the pearls of Indian wisdom which find ready application in the realm of management.

## **Some pearls of Indian wisdom**

### *Ramayana*

- The entire narrative highlights the importance of values in our lives. Businesses which follow a policy of righteousness and conduct their operations in an ethical manner enjoy tremendous brand equity in the market. This rubs off on their products as well as on their employees.
- Lord Rama decides to leave his comfort zone for fourteen years and ends up connecting with lesser mortals better. Likewise, CEOs and marketing honchos of today who travel through the hinterland to get a better first-hand feel of the customer's pulse do a far better job of servicing the market.
- An alliance with Sugreeva, coupled with an out-of-the-box unconventional army, eventually leads to Sita getting traced and Ravana getting vanquished. Mergers and alliances based on mutual respect and trust leads to better market share. Mighty objectives can be achieved even based on frugal resources.
- Beware of sycophants. A couplet in Sundara Kanda of Ramcharitmanasa clearly advises us to ignore the advice of a paid deputy, a doctor and a teacher who speak positively out of either fear or expectation of a gain. A king who acts upon such motivated advice loses his kingdom, his body and his righteousness (dharma) as well.
- When Sita gets banished from the kingdom, Rama's role is not much different from that of a true-blue CEO whose loyalty to the company's overall welfare is unflinching.
- CEOs and managers who entertain amorous intentions in respect of women team members and managements which look the other way just because they accord a higher priority to business goals than to the character of their top honchos could take a leaf out of Rama's conduct.

### *Mahabharata*

- The attachment of Dhritarashtra, the blind king, to his evil son, Duryodhana, proves to be highly destructive in nature. The entire Kuru clan gets eliminated. CEOs who promote their kith and kin without assessing the overall welfare of an organization get doomed likewise. Same holds true for many a political outfit.
- Arjuna's skills in archery are well-known. He achieves mighty feats based on his power of intense concentration on the job at hand. Multi-tasking, a misleading buzzword in current business parlance, has no place in his dictionary.

- The perseverance of Pandavas eventually pays off. Repeated setbacks do not deter them from seeking their share in the kingdom. War follows only when even a settlement with five villages also gets turned down by Duryodhana. The tenacity of bouncing back in the face of adversity that Pandavas display is worth emulating by MNCs which try to penetrate the Indian market.
- The unity of purpose amongst the five Pandava brothers is exemplary. Theirs is a unified and invincible family which goes through its trials and tribulations as a single unit. Likewise, large conglomerates like Tatas draw their strength from a set of core values. Each company within the group's fold has a unique place in the market. The companies operate in fields as disparate as salt and software. Yet, all of them are connected by a common value system and a similar business philosophy.
- The manner in which Krishna persuades a demoralized Arjuna to take up his arms by enunciating the basic principles of life in the Bhagavad-Gita is exemplary.

### ***Bhagavad-Gita***

- One of the basic concepts enunciated by Krishna in the Bhagavad-Gita is that of the everlasting nature of the soul. The concept of a soul now finds a resonance even in modern management literature. In 'The 8th Habit', Stephen Covey urges professionals to pay heed to their 'inner voice'. While proposing the whole person paradigm, he speaks of the four dimensions of a person – spirit, body, heart and mind.
- Over its eighteen chapters, Krishna propounds the intricacies of different forms of Yoga, a philosophical system which treats all life as a management enterprise. It exhorts managers to be impartial, not favouring any one goal, any one mode any one or group of persons.
- A manager's goal is the total overall good, in keeping with environmental necessities and societal requirements.
- He is not swayed by happiness or sorrow, ego or nepotism, greed or desire.
- He is not swayed by external temptations of tangible, material success and thus attains a state of happiness, peace and contentment. He radiates positivity and his decisions bring happiness sooner or later to maximum number of people.
- In other words, detachment is the key takeaway from Bhagavad-Gita. Detachment from the rewards of any work or action taken results into a neutral state of mind.

### ***Thirukkural***

This is a classic Tamil 'sangam' (3rd century BC to 4th century AD) literature composition. It has 1,330 couplets or 'kural's. It was authored by the renowned poet Thiruvalluvar. It is replete with words of wisdom. It is simple and contains profound messages.

Thirukkural has 133 chapters, each containing 10 couplets. Broadly speaking, all the 133 chapters can be divided into three sections: Righteousness, Wealth and Love. Even though the contents are meant for kings of yore, many of the messages are equally relevant for CEOs of business world.

#### **Consider these 'kural's:**

- It is not good to forget the benefit received; but it is good to forget then and there the injury done by another. (108)
- Those who alienate friends by back-biting may have forgotten the art of making friends through suavity of speech. (187)

- Entering an assembly without sufficient knowledge is like playing at a dice board without its knowledge. (401)
- Men of foresight who guard themselves against coming events know no distress. (429)
- A king must act after measuring the strength of his plan, his own resources, the strength of the enemy and that of the ally. (471)
- Let men be chosen with deliberate care; when once the choice is made, let no suspicions crawl into your soul. (509)
- Strict enquiry and impartial justice mark the rule of a just monarch. (541)
- The greatness of a person is proportionate to the strength of his will power. (595)
- What you have clearly decided to do, do it without hesitation and delay. (668)
- An unfinished deed and an unfinished fight will, like a half-extinguished fire, cause ultimate harm. (674)

Each 'kural' is complete in itself. It deserves to be meditated upon, one at a time, and imbibed in our day-to-day lives. One wonders at the keen observations of the poet, his sagacity and the effort he has taken to collate and compile this beautiful work, replete with words of wisdom which continue to be as relevant today as they were in the days of yore.

### ***Chanakya Neeti***

Chanakya is a well-known Indian teacher, philosopher, economist, jurist and royal advisor. He is said to have lived from 350-275 BCE. He authored the ancient Indian political treatise, the Arthshastra. He is considered to be a pioneer in the field of political science. He assisted the first Mauryan emperor, Chandragupta, in his rise to power. He is widely credited for having played an important role in the establishment of the Mauryan Empire.

One of his seminal works happens to be *Chanakya Neeti*, or Chanakya's Aphorisms. It is a treasure trove of wisdom and speaks of the criteria to be used to judge people, the need for keeping one's intentions confidential, the value of continued learning situations wherein it pays to be a hypocrite, the supremacy of one's duty, and the like.

He draws an interesting analogy between the animal kingdom and those who waste their time criticizing others. He holds such persons to be worse than the crows amongst birds and dogs amongst animals.

### **Sri Aurobindo**

One of the prominent Indian seers of modern times, Sri Aurobindo, spoke of four aspects of the Divine Mother: Perfection, Harmony, Strength and Wisdom. Analyze the conduct of any business leader and one is apt to find the underlying presence of all these elements. It does not matter whether a manager handles marketing, finance, production or human resources.

- It is by striving for perfection that one achieves excellence in results. Being perfect implies putting our best foot forward and doing our best under the given circumstances. It is the striving for perfection which assumes significance.

When Apple launches a new product, the whole market is abuzz. The toil and hard work which goes into creating and launching a new product is exemplary indeed.

- A harmonious conduct with respect to all key stakeholders is essential for sustained success in business. Relations with financial institutions, regulatory authorities, customers, distributors, suppliers, staff and labour need to be based on a harmonious blend of business needs and the principles of natural justice.

The manner in which the Taj Hotel management responded after the 26/11 terror attack is a shining example of harmonious conduct of business.

- Use of power with a sense of responsibility, that too for the greater good, leads to higher brand equity for a business. Marketing prowess can influence customers' decision making, and has to be directed at their needs and not wants. Financial strength can also be leveraged to do something useful for the society. Administrative authority comes with a great deal of responsibility.

The case of Dr Pachauri being shown the door by TERI in a sexual harassment case is just one of the several examples of how the high and mighty should not exercise the power at their command.

- Wisdom in decision-making leads to a sustainable business, which gives back to the society and the environment what it draws from the same.

In September 1898, Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata decided to set aside half of his wealth as an endowment to establish a university of science. His donation was worth Rs. 30 lacs in those days. The other half he left for his two sons. The Indian Institute of Science eventually came up in 1911, paving the way for quality research and teaching in India.

This is the kind of unique learning which an aspiring manager receives in her formative years in the Eastern world.

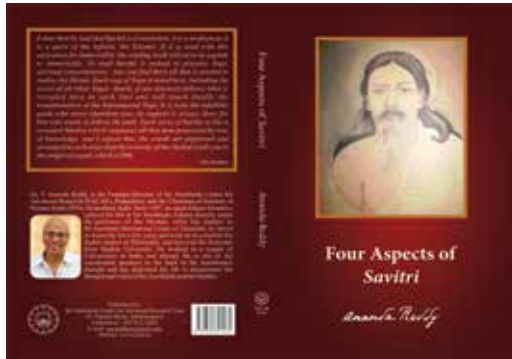
### **Managers with a Western Mind and an Eastern Heart**

Successful CEOs and managers of the future would need to be those who have a Western Mind and an Eastern Heart.

The success of the likes of Satya Nadella (currently the CEO of Microsoft) and Sundar Pichai (currently the CEO of Google Inc) goes on to show the growing importance of managers who are not only exposed to the Western models of management but also steeped in Eastern wisdom in the realm of management.

## BOOK REVIEW: FOUR ASPECTS OF SAVITRI

Shraddhavan



**Four Aspects of *Savitri*, by Dr. V. Ananda Reddy, Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, Puducherry, 2016. ISBN 978-93-85391-06-4; pb; 204 pages.**

Before even opening this handsome paper-bound volume, our eye is arrested by a charming portrait of Sri Aurobindo on the cover, made in the ‘Shantiniketan’ style by his younger brother, whom we had not suspected of being such an accomplished artist. Below it stands the title, and then the author’s name in the Mother’s handwriting.

When the book is opened, after the title page we find the facsimile of a handwritten message in French from the Mother to Ananda Reddy in September 1964, when he was still a teenager. The translation is, “You can be sure of my blessings for truly understanding *Savitri* in its deep and magnificent meaning.”

The Author’s preface recounts how the remembrance of this wonderful message of the Mother emboldened him to give a series of talks on Sri Aurobindo’s epic at a study camp at Van Nivas, Nainital in 2006. This book is the outcome of those talks, transcribed, revised and edited for publication, but retaining their original simple and direct tone.

It has been honoured with a Foreword by none other than Dr. Prema Nandakumar, herself the first scholar to make *Savitri* the topic of a Ph.D. Thesis, which in book form was the first study of the poem in its entirety; it was first published by the Ashram in 1962, and has since been republished twice; it remains the most comprehensive and detailed amongst all later explorations of the epic, and Dr. Reddy acknowledges that it has been an inspiration to him since his student days.

As we go further into the text, we find that we have been launched into a unique and many-sided study of Sri Aurobindo’s epic. Although it has only 204 pages of text, this slim volume contains a mass of informative insights. Dr. Reddy is a well-known speaker on *Savitri* as well as on other topics related to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, their lives, work and vision, and over the past decade he has organised several seminars and workshops on the epic at his institute SACAR, The Sri Aurobindo Centre for Advanced Research, so it is a surprise to note that this is his first book on *Savitri* – one well worth waiting for!

The main body of the book consists of six chapters. The first two of these, like the first two

cantos of the epic itself, are of an introductory nature. Chapter One, entitled 'An Epic of Truth, Beauty and Delight', is a perceptive introduction to these three key aspects of Sri Aurobindo's poetic masterwork, illustrated with representative passages from the poem.

Chapter Two leads us through a perceptive sentence by sentence examination of Sri Aurobindo's 'Author's Note' to *Savitri*, delving deep into the wider implications of each phrase making up the key given by the Master to the symbolism of the ancient Legend which he chose to make the revelatory vehicle of his vast and profound vision. Ananda Reddy looks at 'A Story of Conjugal Love' – the simple legendary tale which has been revealed as a symbol of the conquest of Divine Love over Death. Then he takes up 'A symbolic myth of the Vedic cycle' which forms a bridge across the millennia from the intuitions of the ancient rishis to Sri Aurobindo's vision and message for the future of the earth and mankind. Then the significance of Satyavan in the epic is explored with the help of guidance from the Mother. The author then shares with us four descriptions of Savitri gleaned from the poem, as 'the Divine Word'; the 'daughter of the Sun'; the human Savitri revealing her divine aspects as the daughter of Aswapathy; then Narad's words about her, and finally a long section on her as the 'Goddess of the supreme Truth' as revealed in Book Ten, Canto Four. Then Aswapathy's symbolic role and significance is explored, followed by that of Satyavan's father Dyumathsena, referred to in Sri Aurobindo's Note as 'the Divine Mind, here fallen blind ...' Here Dr. Reddy draws on his studies of *The Life Divine* to help us understand the deeper significances of this phrase. He then takes up the theme of 'The Mother and Sri Aurobindo in relation to *Savitri*', closing this chapter with responses to some questions brought up during the original study camp.

The remaining four Chapters take their titles and keynotes from the Mother's identification of four main themes of the epic:

1. The daily record of the spiritual experiences of the individual who has written.
2. A complete system of yoga which can serve as a guide for those who want to follow the integral sadhana.
3. The yoga of the Earth in its ascension towards the Divine.
4. The experiences of the Divine Mother in her effort to adapt herself to the body she has taken and the ignorance and the falsity of the earth upon which she has incarnated.

Thus Chapter Three is entitled 'The Daily Record', and consists of a fascinating exposition of parallels between experiences evoked in *Savitri* and Sri Aurobindo's diary notes in his '*Record of Yoga*'. In this chapter, Dr. Reddy draws on the research of Richard Hartz of the Sri Aurobindo Archives, who has not only been able to collate and date the multiple manuscript versions of *Savitri* created between 1916 and the mid-1940s, when Sri Aurobindo had to take up the aid of Nirodbaran as his scribe for the later stages of the poem's composition, but also to explore the daily diary notes on his yoga-practice kept by Sri Aurobindo from 1912 to 1920 and beyond – we are told that the last entry in his '*Record of Yoga*' is from October 31, 1927. The huge transformation of the early versions of *Savitri* from 'A Tale and a Vision' into 'A Legend and a Symbol', from a narrative poem into the epic it became, apparently took place after this date, from the early 1930s onwards. But we have the work. (*Savitri* p.476.)

It is a wide-ranging exploration of Savitri's yoga not only as described in Book Seven, The Book of Yoga, but also in the later Books, where the nature and importance of Supermind is



revealed. This Chapter too closes with interesting Questions and Answers raised at the Nainital Study Camp.

Chapter Five takes as its theme ‘The Yoga of the Earth’, starting in Section I with ‘The Evolutionary Destiny of the Earth’ – a unique theme of Sri Aurobindo’s Vision and Teaching. Under this heading, Dr. Reddy writes of ‘Earth – A Symbol’, and then goes on to examine the topical question ‘Emergent Evolution or Special Creation?’ Next the theme of ‘Supermind in Evolution’ is investigated, leading on to a discussion of ‘Earth’s Goal’ which closes this first Section. Section II then explores the way in which the ascension towards the Divine has been imaged in the Indian tradition of the *Dashavatar* – the succession of ten avatars. In Section III, the theme of ‘Earth’s Goal’ is examined ‘As Symbolised by the Protagonists in *Savitri*’ – that is by Savitri and Satyavan, whose roles are paralleled by those of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. This Chapter too closes with a few ‘Questions and Answers’ from the Study Camp.

Chapter Six is entitled ‘The Experiences of the Divine Mother ...’, referring to the last of the four aspects of *Savitri* characterised by the Mother: “The experiences of the Divine Mother in the effort to adapt herself to the body she has taken and to the falsity and ignorance of the earth upon which she has incarnated.”

Dr. Reddy has chosen to divide this Chapter into two parts, the first of which deals with the Divine as a human incarnation and discusses the efforts of the Mother to adapt herself to this ignorant earth by taking upon herself immense sorrow and suffering. For this part he is able to select abundant illuminating passages from *Savitri*, but more than this, he has shared with us his profound research into the nature of the sufferings accepted by both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as part of their mission for the upliftment of earth and humankind – this is one of the most moving parts of the book. The second part dwells upon the work of physical transformation taken up by the Mother in order to prepare for the next evolutionary step of the earth-consciousness, emphasising the efforts made by her human body in the process of its transformation into a divine body. For this part the author relies upon the Mother’s *Notes on the Way* and other writings to provide details about the Mother’s work on the physical transformation of her own body, and here too Dr. Reddy shares with us many illuminating passages and fascinating insights. He also adds a third section focussing on the sadhana of the Mother’s body, saying:

Here she is a sadhak and not the supreme Avatar: she is working exclusively on her body. As a sadhaka she is constantly asking the Lord for his help and the Lord helps. Whatever happens in her body has an action in someone’s body on earth, may be the body of the earth itself.

He shares an interesting incident from his own experience, when in 1972 he asked her to listen to a paragraph in an article he had written, in which he dared to speculate that it might take her 50 years, that is until 2025, to achieve the transformation to a golden body. He narrates:

After listening to it, she touched her left hand and said “This physical body transformed... by then? Well I don’t know. I am not sure what will happen.” Saying so she slightly pinched her left forearm.

He continues:

I was so overwhelmed by her simplicity and utter surrender to the Lord. She had taken up that stupendous task of physical transformation, a work which none had ever dared to attempt and yet she was so humble and surrendered. We, the ordinary human beings, learn a lesson of humility. We ought to learn the powerful effect of surrender.

Ananda Reddy then shares with us the Mother's description of how she worked on the cells of her body one by one, concentrating on them and opening them up one at a time to the transforming light of the divine consciousness, and her description of the work of transforming the bodily organs one by one "so that the outer means of subsistence by something will no longer be indispensable... they will draw energy from the Universal Force.

This last Chapter too concludes with a fascinating series of answers to questions raised by participants in the Nainital *Savitri* Study Camp of 2006, and finally a Select Bibliography rounds off the volume.

It is hoped that this brief summary of the contents of Dr. Reddy's book will make clear that his approach to the study of *Savitri* is unique in several ways, so that even readers who are very familiar with Sri Aurobindo's mantric epic and the literature which has sprung up around it since its first publication are sure to find in it many new and inspiring insights, as it weaves together explanations given by the Mother to Huta, Mona Sarkar and others, with relevant quotations and information gleaned from other authoritative sources – including of course Sri Aurobindo's letters on the poem and the Mother's books – enhanced by perceptions born of the author's own detailed study, reflection and understanding of the 'deep and magnificent meaning' of *Savitri* gifted to him by the Mother's promised blessings.

I found this volume unusual, informative, and profoundly personal – a book which could have been written by no other *Savitri*-lover – and a valuable addition to the growing body of studies that are becoming available to those who aspire to join the 'fit readership' which Sri Aurobindo hoped would one day be formed to appreciate his unique testament to humanity, the supreme revelation of his vision which is *Savitri – a legend and a symbol*.

A vaster Nature's joy had once been hers,  
 But long could keep not its gold heavenly hue  
 Or stand upon this brittle earthly base.  
 A narrow movement on Time's deep abysm,  
 Life's fragile littleness denied the power,  
 The proud and conscious wideness and the bliss  
 She had brought with her into the human form,  
 The calm delight that weds one soul to all,  
 The key to the flaming doors of ecstasy.

*Savitri*

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**Tentative Schedule**

**DAY ONE : 22<sup>ND</sup> APRIL**

9:00– 9:15 : Invocation  
9:15 – 10:15 : **Dr. Alok Pandey**  
*The Pathways to Delight*  
**10:15 – 10:45 : Tea Break**  
10:45 – 11:45 : **Mr. James Anderson**  
*Happiness and depression:  
A personal Saga*  
11:45 – 12:45 : **Dr. Falguni Jani**  
*Be Simple...Be Happy*  
**12:45 – 2:30 : Lunch**  
2:30 – 3:30 : **Dr. Yogesh Mohan**  
*Inner spaces of Joy –  
a journey and discovery*  
**3:30 – 4:00 : Tea**  
4:00 – 5:00 : **Dr. Yogesh Mohan**  
*Inner spaces of Joy –  
a journey and discovery*

**DAY TWO : 23<sup>RD</sup> APRIL**

9:15 –10:15 : **Dr. Debabrata Sahani**  
Growing with  
Happiness  
**10:15–10:45 : Tea Break**  
10:45 –11:45 : **Mrs. Deepshikha Reddy**  
Detachment as the  
Way to Happiness  
11:45 – 12:45 : **Dr. Arati Sharma**  
Health and Happiness  
**12:45 – 2:30 : Lunch**  
2:30 – 3:30 : **Ms. Margot. Esther Borden**  
Working with the breath:  
a key to happiness  
**3:30 – 4:00 : Tea**  
4:00 – 5:00 : **Dr. Soumitra Basu**  
Working through  
depression

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Landmarks: Masimagham Road, Near Mother’s House

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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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