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Sri Aurobindo's Birthday Special



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Founder Editor : (Late) Prof. V. MADHUSUDAN REDDY

Editor-in-Chief: V. ANANDA REDDY

Assistant Editor: SHRUTI BIDWAIKAR

Cover Page Image: Courtesy Internet

Designing: VIPUL KISHORE

Email: newracejournal@gmail.com; Phone: 040 27098414

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From the Editor's Desk...

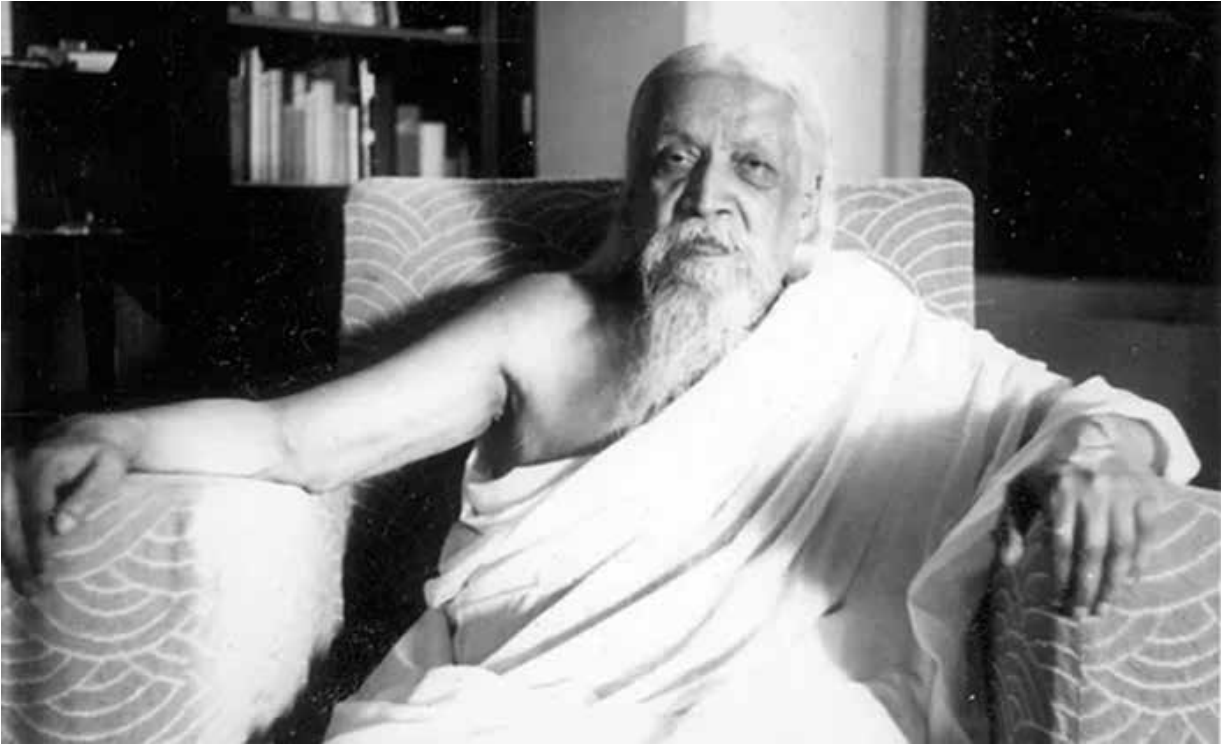
15th of August, 2021 marks the 149th birth anniversary of Sri Aurobindo. India too celebrates her 74th year of independence. “August 15th is my own birthday and it is naturally gratifying to me that it should have assumed this vast significance. I take this coincidence, not as a fortuitous accident, 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. Indeed, on this day I can watch almost all the world-movements which I hoped to see fulfilled in my lifetime, though then they looked like impracticable dreams, arriving at fruition or on their way to achievement. In all these movements free India may well play a large part and take a leading position” (CWSA 36) wrote Sri Aurobindo in his message to free India in 1947. Surely, it is not a coincidence again that the time has been so well arranged that India celebrates her 75 years of independence with 150th years of Sri Aurobindo’s birth anniversary.

The deliverer of India was born exactly 75 years before the birth of free India. It is indeed his efforts and dreams that gave India her freedom for she is to become the leader of the world. The dreams that Sri Aurobindo saw for the nation are slowly and steadily moving towards their fulfilment. India’s strength and contribution is being recognised all over the world and people look forward to India for solutions. Did not Sri Aurobindo once say that India has the remedy of all the maladies that inflict the world! He said so not because of his patriotic feeling for the nation, but because he saw the deep rooted spiritual foundations of India through his vision. For him India was not a piece of land but a Mother, a living entity with a soul. It is this soul of India which Sri Aurobindo has released and it is this that will deliver the world too.

While we celebrate these two occasions, it is time to remember and imbibe the greatness of India and her son who worked incessantly for the country and the world.

Shruti

SRI AUROBINDO: THE AVATAR



The Messiah or Avatar is nothing but this, the divine Seer-Will descending upon the human consciousness to reveal to it the divine meaning behind our half-blind action and to give along with the vision the exalted will that is faithful and performs and the ideal force that executes according to the vision.

Sri Aurobindo
(CWSA 13: 118)

The Mother on Sri Aurobindo

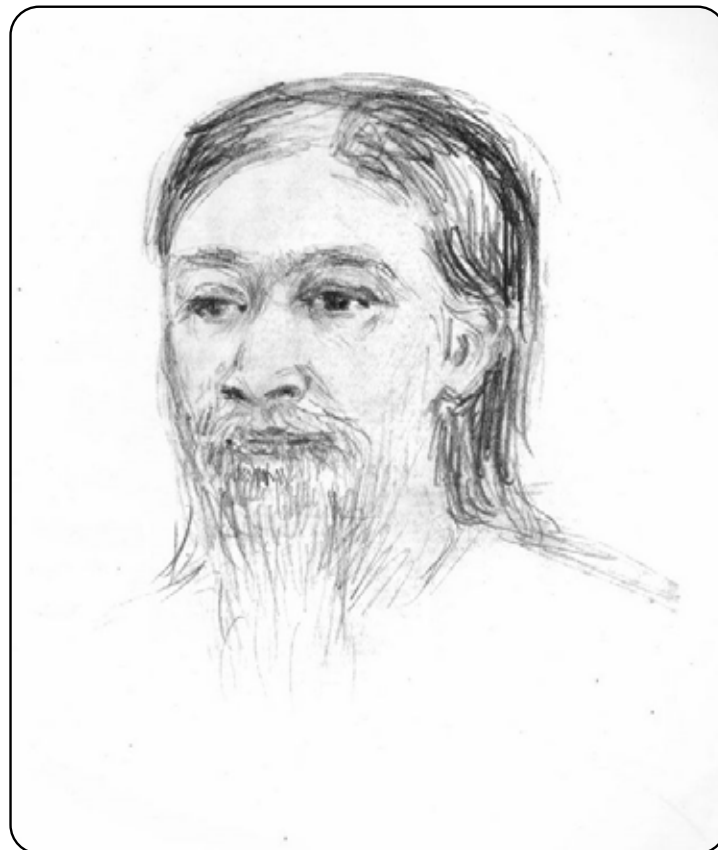
In the eternity of becoming, each Avatar is only the announcer, the forerunner of a more perfect realisation.

And yet men have always the tendency to deify the Avatar of the past in opposition to the Avatar of the future.

Now again Sri Aurobindo has come announcing to the world the realisation of tomorrow; and again his message meets with the same opposition as of all those who preceded him.

But tomorrow will prove the truth of what he revealed and his work will be done.

*21 February 1957
(CWM 13: 22)*



Sri Aurobindo's Sketch done by the Mother

Courtesy: Internet

Sri Aurobindo is an emanation of the Supreme who came on earth to announce the manifestation of a new race and a new world: the Supramental.

Let us prepare for it in all sincerity and eagerness.

*20 June 1972
(CWM 13:19)*

On Avatar*

Sri Aurobindo

When did I say that you are not an Avatar? On the contrary I wrote to you that you are an Avatar.

You don't say, but if your theory or description of the Avatar is right, I am not one. I am proceeding on the necessary consequences of your logic.

I did say that the difficulties and struggles of the Avatar are all shams, put on, so to say.

If they are shams, they have no value for others or for any true effect. If they have no value for others or for any true effect, they are perfectly irrational and unreal and meaningless. The Divine does not need to suffer or struggle for himself; if he takes on these things it is in order to bear the world-burden and help the world and men; and if these sufferings and struggles are to be of any help, they must be real. A sham or falsehood cannot help. They must be as real as the struggles and sufferings of men themselves—the Divine bears them and at the same time shows the way out of them. Otherwise his assumption of human nature has no meaning and no utility and no value. It is strange that you cannot understand or refuse to admit so simple and crucial a point. What is the use of admitting Avatarhood if you take all the meaning out of it?

I never said that there could be no Avatars nor that they are failures.

Good Lord! You said most emphatically that they were all failures and that is why the Divine had to come back again and again—to “atone for his failures”.

If your argument is that the life, actions, struggles of the Avatar (e.g. Rama's, Krishna's) are unreal because the Divine is there and knows it is all a Maya, in man also there is a self, a spirit that is immortal, untouched, divine, you can say that man's sufferings and ignorance are only put on, shams, unreal. But if man feels them as real and if the Avatar feels his work and difficulties to be serious and real?

I don't think I said that there is no divinity in man. In the quotation I gave from the Gita it is said that man is made out of the divine substance but has a thick coating on him.

If the existence of the Divinity is of no practical effect, what is the use of a theoretical admission? The manifestation of the Divinity in the Avatar is of help to man because it helps him to discover his own divinity, find the way to realise it. If the difference is so great that the humanity by its very nature prevents all possibility of following the way opened by the Avatar, it merely means that there is no divinity in man that can respond to the divinity in the Avatar.

You make a flourish of reasonings and do not see the consequence of your reasonings. It is no use saying “I believe this or that” and then reasoning in a way which leads logically to the very negation of what you believe.

I admitted that Avatars have many difficulties, but because they know, as Mother did, that

*Title given by the editors.

they are Avatars, because the “real substance” shines through the alloy in all that they do, they have a fixed faith and conviction that they will never fail.

You think then that in me (I do not bring in the Mother) there was never any doubt or despair, no attacks of that kind. I have borne every attack which human beings have borne, otherwise I would be unable to assure anybody “This too can be conquered.” At least I would have no right to say so. Your psychology is terribly rigid. I repeat, the Divine when he takes on the burden of terrestrial nature, takes it fully, sincerely and without any conjuring tricks or pretence. If he has something behind him which emerges always out of the coverings, it is the same thing in essence, even if greater in degree, that there is behind others—and it is to awaken that that he is there.

The psychic being does the same for all who are intended for the spiritual way—men need not be extraordinary beings to follow Yoga. That is the mistake you are making—to harp on greatness as if only the great can be spiritual.

Regarding the divinity in man—what is the use of this divinity if it is coated layer after layer with Maya? How many can really become conscious of it?

Exactly! Why admit any divinity then at all, if their humanity is an insuperable bar to any following in the Way pointed out by the Avatar? That was your contention that humanity and divinity are irreconcilable opposite things, that it is no use the Avatar asking others (except Arjuna) to follow in his Path— they, being human, cannot do it.

You had defeats, struggles, but had at the same time the spirit of absolute surrender, faith which we find shining through Mother’s prayers as well. Did you not leave your great work for the country at one word of Krishna?

Lots of people leave things at the word of a human being like Gandhi, they do not need the word of Krishna.

Does the average man have this faith, etc.? If he has not, but has instead struggles, sufferings etc., picture what his condition would be!

If absolute surrender, faith etc. from the beginning were essential for Yoga then nobody could do it. I myself could not have done it if such a condition had been demanded of me.

This is only to refute the points you found implied or explicit in my letters.

Let me make it clear that in all I wrote I was not writing to prove that I am an Avatar! You are busy in your reasonings with the personal question, I am busy in mine with the general one. I am seeking to manifest something of the Divine that I am conscious of and feel—I care a damn whether that constitutes me an Avatar or something else. That is not a question which concerns me. By manifestation of course I mean the bringing out and spreading of that Consciousness so that others also may feel and enter into it and live in it.

7 March 1935

(CWSA 35: 416-419)

Some Clarifications on the Supramental Avatar

K.D. Sethna

Supramental Avatar and Physical Transformation

You have put me a number of important questions arising from what I wrote to you on the Agenda and the Divine's Will.¹ I must not delay to answer them to the best of my ability.

(1) *"How far limited in their workings are the Avatars who have brought down the Supramental World into this lower triple universe?"*

I suppose you mean Avatars who came with the mission of establishing the Supermind in mind, life and matter on the earth. For, surely the Supramental World has not yet been brought down. Some Light, Force and Consciousness of it manifested in the subtle-physical on February 29, 1956 and the Supermind was at work in both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, but there was no substantial establishment of it in the stuff of their bodies. The process of transforming the cellular consciousness was going on in the Mother but there seemed to have been no definitive supramentalisation of the physical stuff. The difficulty lay in the fact that these Avatars had assumed human nature with all its fundamental difficulties, the human constitution as evolved in the course of millennia, for then alone whatever change they would achieve in themselves would be meaningful for us, be a hope and a promise for our transformation. The limits accepted were immense. The Supermind's power too was great and its extraordinary action went on constantly, but except at certain times it was not exercised in an apparently miraculous manner. I say "was not" rather than "could not be" — and this brings me to your second question.

(2) *"Are the 'luminous interventions', which you have mentioned in your last letter, law-bound or do they have their own laws not to be understood by intelligence or in mental terms? Nolini Kanta Gupta, just after the Mother's passing away, said in his message that 'further was not possible'. Not possible even if Grace intervenes?"*

The Supramental Avatars come from the Transcendent — that is, from beyond the cosmic law. So they cannot be cosmically law-bound. They obey cosmic laws for their own reasons but they are free and omni-capable. When I showed to the Mother soon after December 5, 1950 a short write-up, for the readers of Mother India, on Sri Aurobindo's departure from his body, she picked out the phrase: "the mortal remains of Sri Aurobindo" — and said: "You cannot say this. There was nothing mortal about Sri Aurobindo. He did not die of physical causes. He had complete control over his body." This was a staggering eye-opener. Although I had instinctively felt the same way, the direct explicitness of the Mother's statements was like a lightning flash. It amounts to saying that neither Sri Aurobindo nor the Mother would be compelled to leave the body. If physical maladies came about and if they were responsible for the deaths of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, everything happened by their consent and for a purpose of their own. Nolini's message I take to have been worded from what we may call the absolute point of view: since nothing further was done, it was the Divine's Will that it should not be possible. Perhaps "possible" is an inadequate term and one could have said: "further was not chosen." Here enters your third question.

(3) *“Is there any concrete explanation why the new process of ‘mutation’ culminating in complete divinisation of the body was, as Nolini later declared and as you agreed, ‘postponed’ when originally the Mother as well as Sri Aurobindo had been sure of it? Of course, I know the answer is sometimes given along lines indicated by Sri Aurobindo once: what if the apparent failure suits the Divine’s plan better in the long run? But to me this is a mystifying answer just consoling rather than concrete.”*

I think we have to look at the situation from two angles. There is the Avatar’s transcendent self and there is his or her cosmically manifested or embodied self. The Avatar acts by being in touch with the Supreme Truth above and with the evolutionary conditions and needs below. In his embodied state he may not act with full knowledge of that Truth: whatever is required for his action is held by him in his consciousness. At any moment his own transcendent being, which is ever-free and whose ever-freedom is essentially present also in his cosmically incarnate form, may send a command running counter to what was decided to be necessary before. As you know, the Mother said in effect: “Somewhere it has been decided whether this body is going to be supramentalised or not, but this body is not yet given to know the decision.” I am convinced that when the Mother came to know the decision of her own highest self, she let the accepted physical troubles take their course and lead her to leave her body. Why the Transcendent reversed the trend we had been taught to affirm is hardly possible to gauge fully. All we can say is that somehow it was for a greater future benefit to the Divine Mother’s beloved children. Your fourth question seems to fumble towards an idea of this benefit, but, according to me, too hastily.

(4) *“Why has the Mother to reappear on earth — as you envision — in order to supramentalise the human body? Is not the Divine free to complete her mission through any other body she may choose, a body which we are not aware of at the moment and which may not be known for a prescribed period?”*

You do not appear to realise the tremendous pre-requisites. Sri Aurobindo² tells us: “The psychic and spiritual transformation must come first, only afterwards would it be practical or useful to discuss the supramentalisation of the whole being down to the body.” Again, we learn from him³: “One has first of all to supramentalise sufficiently the mind and vital and physical consciousness generally—afterwards one can think of supramentalisation of the body.” Who is capable of the full preparation? I have not come across anyone who can sufficiently represent the Mother or Sri Aurobindo. But that is precisely what is wanted. Is there any sadhak with their oceanic knowledge, their light of intuition, their infinite peace, their occult force, their profound immediate understanding, their vast impartiality and compassion?

Moreover, has not Sri Aurobindo clearly outlined for his followers the necessity of the Guru’s physical nearness to enable them to do the Integral Yoga, observing to the full all the conditions laid down for it? Here are a few words of his:

“In this discipline, the inspiration of the Master, and in the difficult stages his control and his presence are indispensable — for it would be impossible otherwise to go

through it without much stumbling and error which would prevent all chance of success.”⁴

“The guidance of one who is himself by identity or represents the Divine is in this difficult endeavour imperative and indispensable.”⁵

Q. — *“Is there any special effect of physical nearness to the Mother?”*

A. — It is indispensable for the fullness of the sadhana on the physical plane. Transformation of the physical and external being is not possible otherwise.”⁶

The refrain in the three passages is the word “indispensable”, referring to the physical presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother or of at least one of them as the sole condition for the disciple’s doing the Integral Yoga with the hope of complete success in overcoming all obstacles: that is, of going right up to the body’s total transformation which will fulfil the Integral Yoga.

The central reason is that the Supramental Force which alone can effect the fulfilment cannot be brought into sufficient action without an Avatar of the Supermind being in our midst.

Certainly we can go a long way — even in bodily changes — by our self-dedication to the subtle presence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and by drawing upon the power they have established on the earth in general and in the Ashram in particular, but I am afraid the logic of their revelations can conduct us only to one conclusion: the Mother has first to come back in whatever manner and stand before us physically transformed before we can reach the last stage of Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga of Supramental Descent and Transformation.

29.5.1982

Notes and References

1. “Two Clarifications”, Mother India, July 1982.
2. On Yoga II, Tome One (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1958), p. 101.
3. Ibid.
4. Sri Aurobindo on Himself and on the Mother (1953), p. 253.
5. Ibid., p. 523.
6. Ibid., p. 566.

(Aspects of Sri Aurobindo 180-184)



Seven Doubts

Here is my attempt to answer your “seven doubts”.

1. It is according to Sri Aurobindo that Sri Krishna is known to have revealed what you designate “the plane of Purushottama” in the Gita. I venture to suggest that he could disclose Sri Krishna’s ultimate status because he was himself Sri Krishna in a past birth: the status of an Uttama (supreme) Purusha beyond either the Kshara (mutable) or the Akshara (immutable) Purusha. The existence of Purushottama was part not only of Sri Aurobindo’s philosophical knowledge but also of his own experience. Both he and Sri Krishna were Purushottama incarnate, the latter using, in consonance with the need of the time, what Sri Aurobindo has called the Overmind, the highest Cosmic Consciousness, as his instrument of manifestation while the former used the Supermind, the transcendent creative Truth-Consciousness whose hour in spiritual history has struck now. The Supermind is directly an aspect of Purushottama, the Overmind is indirectly so. To divide Purushottama from the Supermind as something higher is a mistake.

2. Every Avatar has a special divine aspect to incarnate and a special plane to employ as his instrument of manifestation. It was Sri Krishna’s purpose, according to Sri Aurobindo, to manifest the Bliss-Self, the Anandamaya, through the Overmind. Other Avatars had other purposes. An intense expression of the Bliss-Self through their particular planes of manifestation was not a part of the purpose of any of them who came before Sri Krishna.

This is not in disagreement with Sri Aurobindo’s evolutionary vision that there is a progressive incarnation, each Avatar descending from a higher plane than his predecessor, even though all the Avatars may be regarded as coming ultimately from the Bliss-Self.

3. Chaitanya was, as you say, a case of possession, but in the highest sense of that word: he was possessed at intervals by Sri Krishna. Perhaps the more correct way of putting the matter would be to say: “Chaitanya was an emanation of Sri Krishna and manifested not only the Lord himself but also an extreme relationship of the psychic-emotional being in the human consciousness with the Lord.”

4. After the incarnation of the Supermind, the Bliss-Self has to be incarnated — but not necessarily in a new Avatar. The Supramental Avatar can serve in the future as the vehicle and tabernacle for the Bliss-Self because Supermind and Ananda are front and rear of the same Transcendence.

The Bliss-Self may be considered the final phase in the sense that it carries in itself the Self of Chit-Tapas and the Self of Sat, but these two Selves would not be in the fore from the beginning. They would emerge later in human history, but, again, not necessarily in another Avatar. If we like, we may count them to be further phases of the Bliss-Self.

5. The soul — Chaitya Purusha or Antaratman — in the body which is destined to hold the Avatar’s descent would feel itself essentially one with its own supreme Jivatman counterpart but would not fuse with it in the sense of disappearing in it. Its existence as an entity is needed for the Divine’s manifestation upon earth through the human individuality.

6. I don't follow your phraseology here. What is meant by "the involutory being" and by its "embodied state" or "disembodied state"? The Avataric being has a subtle form of its own and this form may be thought of as achieving its presence within the physical body in which the soul destined to receive the Avatar is itself housed.

7. I do not know Valmiki's Ramayana sufficiently to pronounce whether he pictures Rama as conscious of the Divine born in him from the beginning of his life. This phenomenon is not essential. The Avatar-being is, of course, present from birth, but there is no fixed rule as to when it would manifest in the outer personality. The Mother appears to have been more aware of her Avatarhood, or rather the essence of it, in her outer personality from childhood than was Sri Aurobindo in his. Still, even she went through the stages of a progressive awareness. And such stages were indispensable — along with certain human experiences — in order that there might be a manifestation of what we may term "evolutionary Avatarhood" — a type of incarnation peculiar to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother because they came to start a new race, the next step in earthly evolution, a job none of the other Avatars had come to carry out. The very idea of "evolution" as understood and expressed by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in our present post-Darwinian age could not be there in the times of Rama or Krishna or any other Avataric descent. (*Aspects of Sri Aurobindo*: 185-187)

For there are two aspects of the divine birth;
one is a descent, the birth of God in humanity,
the Godhead manifesting itself
in the human form and nature, the eternal Avatar;
the other is an ascent, the birth of man into the Godhead,
man rising into the divine nature and consciousness,
madbhavam agatah;
it is the being born anew in a second birth of the soul.
It is that new birth which Avatarhood
and the upholding of the Dharma are intended to serve.

Sri Aurobindo
(CWSA 13: 148)

SRI AUROBINDO ON HIMSELF



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... This is not a new feeling in me, not of recent origin, I was born with it, it is in my very marrow. God sent me to the earth to accomplish this great mission..

Sri Aurobindo

(Bengali Writings: 353)

About his leaving Indian Politics*

Sri Aurobindo

Now I have too much work on my hands to waste my time in the leisured ease of an involuntary Government guest. But even if I were assured of an entirely free action and movement, I should yet not go just now. I came to Pondicherry in order to have freedom and tranquillity for a fixed object having nothing to do with present politics—in which I have taken no direct part since my coming here, though what I could do for the country in my own way I have constantly done, — and until it is accomplished, it is not possible for me to resume any kind of public activity. But if I were in British India, I should be obliged to plunge at once into action of different kinds. Pondicherry is my place of retreat, my cave of tapasya, — not of the ascetic kind, but of a brand of my own invention. I must finish that, I must be internally armed and equipped for my work before I leave it.

Next in the matter of the work itself. I do not at all look down on politics or political action or consider I have got above them. I have always laid a dominant stress and I now lay an entire stress on the spiritual life, but my idea of spirituality has nothing to do with ascetic withdrawal or contempt or disgust of secular things. There is to me nothing secular, all human activity is for me a thing to be included in a complete spiritual life, and the importance of politics at the present time is very great. But my line and intention of political activity would differ considerably from anything now current in the field. I entered into political action and continued it from 1903 to 1910 with one aim and one alone, to get into the mind of the people a settled will for freedom and the necessity of a struggle to achieve it in place of the futile ambling Congress methods till then in vogue. That is now done and the Amritsar Congress is the seal upon it. The will is not as practical and compact nor by any means as organised and sustained in action as it should be, but there is the will and plenty of strong and able leaders to guide it. I consider that in spite of the inadequacy of the Reforms, the will to self-determination, if the country keeps its present temper, as I have no doubt it will, is bound to prevail before long. What preoccupies me now is the question what it is going to do with its self-determination, how will it use its freedom, on what lines is it going to determine its future?

You may ask why not come out and help, myself, so far as I can, in giving a lead? But my mind has a habit of running inconveniently ahead of the times,—some might say, out of time altogether into the world of the ideal. Your party, you say, is going to be a social democratic party. Now I believe in something which might be called social democracy, but not in any of the forms now current, and I am not altogether in love with the European kind, however great an improvement it may be on the past. I hold that India having a spirit of her own and a governing temperament proper to her own civilisation, should in politics as in everything else strike out her own original path and not stumble in the wake of Europe. But this is precisely what she will be obliged to do, if she has to start on the road in her present chaotic and unprepared condition of mind. No doubt people talk of India developing on her own lines, but nobody seems to have very clear or sufficient ideas as to what those lines

are to be. In this matter I have formed ideals and certain definite ideas of my own, in which at present very few are likely to follow me, since they are governed by an uncompromising spiritual idealism of an unconventional kind and would be unintelligible to many and an offence and stumbling block to a great number. But I have not as yet any clear and full idea of the practical lines; I have no formed programme. In a word, I am feeling my way in my mind and am not ready for either propaganda or action. Even if I were, it would mean for some time ploughing my lonely furrow or at least freedom to take my own way. As the editor of your paper, I should be bound to voice the opinion of others and reserve my own, and while I have full sympathy with the general ideas of the advanced parties so far as concerns the action of the present moment and, if I were in the field, would do all I could to help them, I am almost incapable by nature of limiting myself in that way, at least to the extent that would be requisite.

Excuse the length of this screed. I thought it necessary to explain fully so as to avoid giving you the impression that I declined your request from any affectation or reality of spiritual aloofness or wish to shirk the call of the country or want of sympathy with the work you and others are so admirably doing. I repeat my regret that I am compelled to disappoint you.

Yours sincerely,
Aurobindo Ghose

Pondicherry is my place of retreat

I need some place of refuge in which I can complete my Yoga unassailed and build up other souls around me. It seems to me that Pondicherry is the place appointed by those who are Beyond, but you know how much effort is needed to establish the thing that is purposed upon the material plane. . . .

I am developing the necessary powers for bringing down the spiritual on the material plane, and I am now able to put myself into men and change them, removing the darkness and bringing light, giving them a new heart and a new mind. This I can do with great swiftness and completeness with those who are near me, but I have also succeeded with men hundreds of miles away. I have also been given the power to read men's characters and hearts, even their thoughts, but this power is not yet absolutely complete, nor can I use it always and in all cases. The power of guiding action by the mere exercise of will is also developing, but it is not so powerful as yet as the other. My communication with the other world is yet of a troubled character, though I am certainly in communication with some very great powers. But of all these things I will write more when the final obstacles in my way are cleared from the path.

What I perceive most clearly, is that the principal object of my Yoga is to remove absolutely and entirely every possible source of error and ineffectiveness, of error in order that the Truth I shall eventually show to men may be perfect, and of ineffectiveness in order that the work of changing the world, so far as I have to assist it, may be entirely victorious and irresistible. It is for this reason that I have been going through so long a discipline and that the more brilliant and mighty results of Yoga have been so long withheld. I have been

kept busy laying down the foundation, a work severe and painful. It is only now that the edifice is beginning to rise upon the sure and perfect foundation that has been laid.

12 July 1911

[2]

My Yoga is proceeding with great rapidity, but I defer writing to you of the results until certain experiments in which I am now engaged, have yielded fruit sufficient to establish beyond dispute the theory and system of yoga which I have formed and which is giving great results not only to me, but to the young men who are with me. . . . I expect these results within a month if all goes well.

20 September 1911

[3]

A great silence and inhibition of action has been the atmosphere of my Yoga for the last year and it is only now beginning to lift from me. The most serious part of my difficulties,—the inward struggle,—is over; I have conquered, or rather One whose instrument I am has conquered for me. I am turning now to the outward struggle, preparing my powers for it, awaiting the time and the signal to begin. The details I will not write to you now; the hour has not yet struck; for the enemy in the subtle parts of the material world, although beaten, is still struggling desperately to prevent my Yoga materialising in the objective plane. I await the issue of the struggle, towards which every day of the Yoga brings me nearer with a long stride.

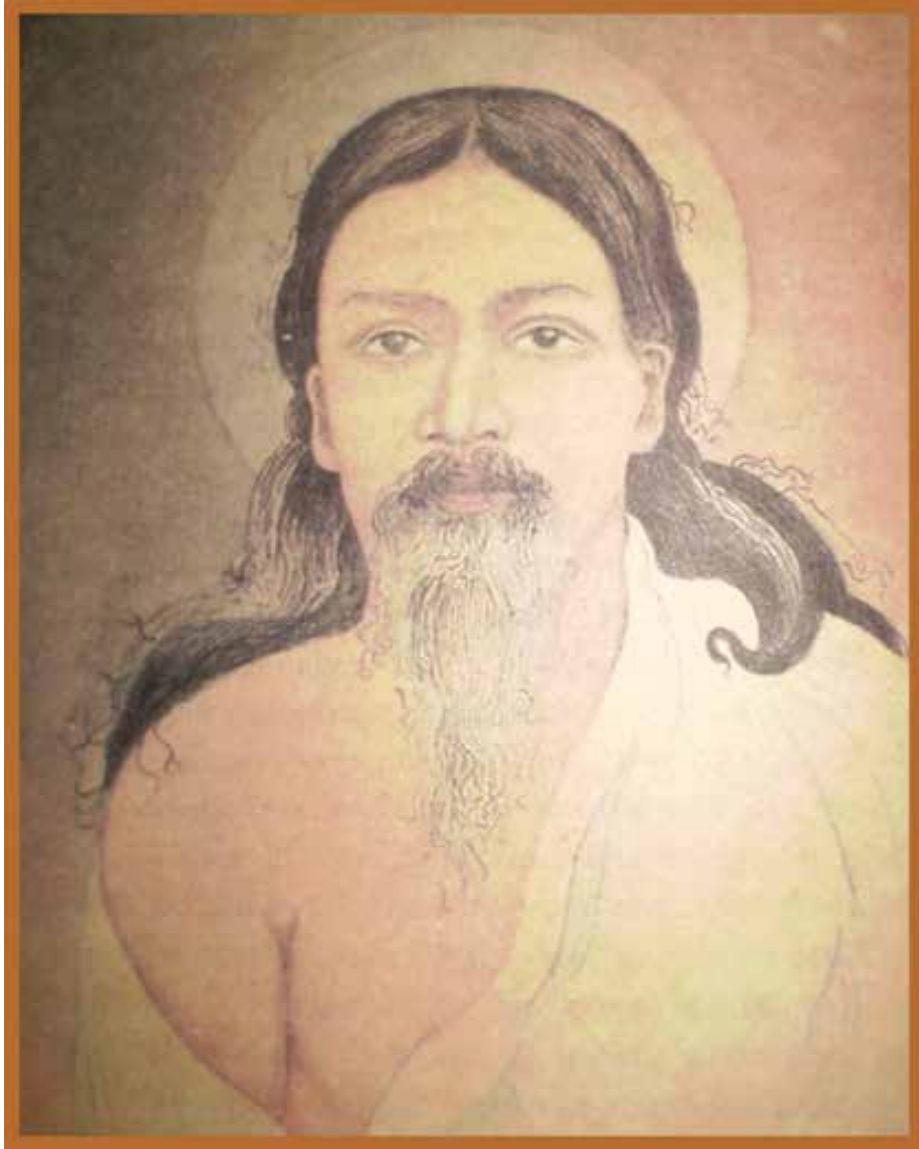
* * *

In spite of that, however, my work in its foundations proceeds. There are means in this world, fortunately for the humanity, which Govts & authorities cannot touch or prevent. For the outward work, I see now, why it has been held back. It was necessary for me to have myself a perfect knowledge & power before I seriously undertook it. My knowledge and my power are now making rapid strides towards the necessary perfection and, once that is secured, it will be impossible for the material difficulties to remain.

(CWSA 36:283-285)



TRIBUTES TO SRI AUROBINDO



Who art thou, warrior armed gloriously
Like the sun?
Thy gait in an empire and thine eye
Dominion.
Sri Aurobindo
(CWSA 2: 220)

The Greatness of the Great

I

The greatness of a person is the greatness of the Impersonal in him. He has little concern about himself. His thoughts, feelings and acts are in relation to a wider frame of reference. The wider the frame, the higher the status of the being; there is an ascending scale in the structure of human life and society. There are gradations that mount from narrower ranges, moving towards vaster and vaster ranges, taking the person into greater and purer degrees of impersonality. We start, for example, from the lowest and narrowest range, namely, the family, and extend ourselves more and more to the next range, the nation, then to mankind and then still farther to transcendent ranges.

Sri Aurobindo from his very birth was such an impersonal personality—and, in the very highest sense. He had never the consciousness of a particular individual person: all reference to a personal frame of his was deleted from the texture of his nature and character. There was some reference to the family frame in a very moderate way, almost casually: the stress was much more on the next higher frame, the national. In its time the national frame was very strong and played a great part; and yet even there it was not an end in itself, the frame of humanity always loomed large behind. In fact it was that that gave a greater and truer value and significance to the national frame. The national is but a ladder to humanity, it is a unit in the human collectivity. It serves as a channel for international and global welfare, but there is yet a still larger frame, the frame of the spirit, the transcendent consciousness. Indeed it was this that lay at the bottom of Sri Aurobindo's consciousness as the bedrock of his being which gave the whole tone and temper of his life, its meaning and purpose. Even when not overt and patent this noumenal personality was always there insistent from behind; it gave a peculiar rhythm and stress, newness and freshness and a profound element of purposefulness to the whole life, even to the activities of the earlier and narrower frames. For it was like viewing everything through the eyes of infinity and eternity, the eye wide extended in heaven as the Vedic Rishi says, the third eye.

In other words, the yogi, the Divine, the Impersonal man in Sri Aurobindo was the real person always there from the very birth. Thus we see him starting life exactly with the thing where every one ends. In his inner being he had not to pass through the gradations that lead an ordinary person gradually towards the widening ranges of consciousness and existence. In all the stations of his life, in every sphere and status Sri Aurobindo was doing his duties, that is, his work—*kartavyam karma*—selflessly, which means with no sense of self, or perhaps we should say, with supreme Selfhoodness; for such is the character, the very nature of the born yogi, the Godman. The duties done for and within a frame of life tend always to overflow, as it were, the boundaries and do not always strictly follow the norm of the limited frame. For example, even while in the family life, in the midst of relatives and close friends he was never moved by mere attachment or worldly ties, he was impelled to do what he had to in

the circumstances, unattached, free, under another command. Again, when he chose the larger field of national life, here too, he was not limited to that frame, his patriotism was not chauvinism or a return to the parochialism of the past; his patriotism was broad-based upon the sense of human solidarity and even the broad-based humanity was not broad enough for the consciousness in him; for humanity does not mean mere humanitarianism, charity, benevolence, or service to mankind. True humanity can be or is to be reached by pushing it still farther into the Divinity where men are not merely brothers or even portions of the Divine but one with Him, the self-same being and personality.

Thus, Sri Aurobindo was an ideal worker, the perfect workman doing the work appropriate to the field of work according to its norm, faultless in execution. As a family man, as a citizen, as a patriot, he carried out his appointed function not in any personal sense with the feeling or consciousness of any individual personality but a large impersonal personality free from ego-sense which is the hallmark of a luminous cosmic consciousness, based upon a still higher and transcendent standing.

Sri Aurobindo was a man of action absolutely in the Gita's sense of the word. He set an example, he was an exemplar showing by his life his way of "standing and walking" as the Gita puts it—the actions that should be done and the way of doing according to the stage and the field given to oneself. This does not naturally mean that one has to be bound to the current frame, bound to the conventional, attached to what is customary, transitional and formal; on the contrary as I have said, Sri Aurobindo in his stride was always transgressing and overflowing the borders, he was a revolutionary, even an iconoclast, for nothing short of the supreme and complete and integral truth satisfied the urge of consciousness in him; in this sense each step of the scale served as a jumping board to the higher, indeed to the highest inherent or hidden in every one of them.

It was this secret ultimate truth that overshadowed, brooded over all these stages and steps and occupations he passed through: they only led up to that transcendent reality, but it was the sense, constant sense of that reality that lent a special character to all his karma. This urge towards the supreme reality, this transcendence, did not mean for him a rejection of the domains passed through: it is a subsuming, that is to say, uplifting the narrower, the lower status, integrating them into the higher: even as the soil at the root of the plant is subsumed and transmuted into the living sap that mounts high up the plant towards its very top, to the light and energy above.

In the scheme and pattern of human existence in the hierarchy that is collective life, Sri Aurobindo sought to express the play of the supreme Truth, express materially that which works always in secret and behind the veil. The Supreme Reality is not merely the supreme awareness and consciousness, but it is a power and a force; and it holds still a secret source that has not yet been touched,—touched consciously by the human consciousness and utilised for world existence. Man's genius has contacted today in the material world material forces which are almost immaterial—the extra-galactic radiation, the laser beams and other energies of that category which are powerful in an unbelievable unheard of 'degree. Even so in the consciousness, there is a mode of force which is not only a force that knows but

creates, not only creates but transforms. That force at its intrinsic optimum can enter into dull matter and transforming it, transform into radiant matter, radiant not only with the physical, the solar light but the light of the supreme Spirit.

This is the force which Sri Aurobindo has disclosed and put at the disposal of mankind. This is the force he has set free that is creating a new world,—reorganising and remoulding, through a great travail indeed, our ancient sphere that will cradle the earth of the golden age.

II

In Sri Aurobindo particularly the impersonalisation is in reality a re-personalisation. Impersonalisation need not mean de-personalisation, that is to say, a complete negation and annihilation of all personality: impersonalisation really means the negation of the ego or rather the replacement of the ego by the true person, the ego being only a deformation or degradation. The basic ego-sense lies in the individual; but it has its formations in the collectivity also at all the different degrees and levels of consciousness. We have spoken of the mounting frames of reference, and accordingly there is a family ego, a national ego and even there is a humanity ego. The collective ego is as strong as the individual ego. It is only in the transcendent consciousness, the consciousness of the Divine who is the one true Person, that the inferior egos are eliminated or sublimated and can find their true person.

Thus the true process of impersonalisation is re-personalisation; in other words, to be conscious of, to grow into and become the true reality of the being behind the ego formation. It means divinisation of the person. The individual divinises himself into the individual Divine and then around him, first of all, in his inner consciousness, the frame or field changes also into a divine structure. Thus even the family for such a consciousness changes not only its connotation but even its denotation. We may in this connection remember Christ's words with regard to his true family. The nation too assumes its Divine reality, a transcendent personality appears as an expression of the Divine afflatus, each one a particular mode of fulfilling the cosmic purpose. Humanity too undergoes a sea-change and its personality attains a glorious stature in the sahasra-shirsha Purusha as hymned by the Vedic Rishi.

This is the cosmos that Sri Aurobindo has expressed, created in his consciousness and therefore in the consciousness of the cosmos itself. This transcendent formation the future is holding ready-made in the womb of the World-Purusha (or rather World-Prakriti) and the day is approaching when this new creation will manifest itself upon earth. The true truth of things is always there up somewhere in the Supreme—in the Parabrahman—from time sempiternal: the question is when and how to bring it down. He who does that is the Avatara, he who comes down and embodies it.

To recapitulate: Impersonalisation involves or culminates in divinisation which means the descent of the Divine, the supreme Person, from above or His emergence from within (both mean the same thing), with the result that all other inferior or external formulations are subsumed, integrated into the supreme Reality forming one single body and personality.

Such is the content of Sri Aurobindo's consciousness, such is the work that is being

pursued under the stress of that consciousness towards the realisation of a new, a divine world.

We end as we began, only giving a positive turn to what we said: the greatness of the Great is the greatness of the Divine in him.

In conclusion, here is, in his own words, what he stood for and worked for, what he promises for the future of earth and mankind:

All then shall change, a magic order come
Overtopping this mechanical universe. ||155.37||
A mightier race shall inhabit the mortal's world. ||155.38||
On Nature's luminous tops, on the Spirit's ground,
The superman shall reign as king of life,
Make earth almost the mate and peer of heaven
And lead towards God and truth man's ignorant heart
And lift towards godhead his mortality. ||155.39||
Nature shall live to manifest secret God,
The Spirit shall take up the human play,
This earthly life become the life divine. ||155.71||

(Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta: Vol.5:3-8)

Sri Aurobindo's influence on Hindi poets like:

Sumitra Nandan 'Pant' and Ramdhari Singh 'Dinkar'

This indeed is an invitation to power of passion and to light of thought. Few of us could accept it. But one man did. It was Sumitranandan Pant, himself a seeker of light. It was not for power of passion so much as for light of thought that Pantji discovered his affinity with Sri Aurobindo..

Sri Aurobindo could be all things to all men. And if Pantji approached Sri Aurobindo for the light of thought, Ramdhari Singh Dinkar went to him for the power of passion. In his powerfully passionate poem, Urvashi, Dinkarji seems to have been inspired by Sri Aurobindo's own original poem of the same name and by his translation of Kalidasa's play on the theme. But more than these, Sri Aurobindo's poem, Love and Death, may have cast its spell on Dinkarji's images of power and passion. Dinkarji's metaphysics of love may also be traced to Sri Aurobindo's impact on his mind. For some of his ideas on the creative process and the future of poetry, Dinkarji may perhaps be indebted to Sri Aurobindo...

If Pantji was reassured by Sri Aurobindo, Dinkarji was stimulated.

K.R.S. Iyengar

https://motherandsriaurobindo.in/_StaticContent/SriAurobindoAshram/-03%20The%20Ashram/Special%20Visitors/Sumitranandan%20Pant.htm

3

ଆମିନି ଲିଖିତ
କାଳକ୍ରମେ

ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ, ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ ସମ୍ବୋଧନ !
 ତେ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର, ତେ ନକ୍ଷତ୍ର, ସୁନ୍ଦର-ଆଶ୍ରୟ
 ଶ୍ରୀ-ସ୍ଵର୍ଗ ଓଷା ! ତୋର ନାମ ନିଜେ ମାନ,
 ନିଜେ ଚିନ୍ତା, ନିଜେ ମୁଖ; ତୋର ମୁଖ ନିଜ
 ଚାନ୍ଦିନୀ, ତୋର ମୁଖ ଚାନ୍ଦିନୀ; ତୋର ନାମ
 ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ଅପ୍ତମାନ ! ଆଜି ତୋର
 ନାମ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ଅପ୍ତମାନ, -
 ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ-ନିଜ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନିଜ
 ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ; ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ
 ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ, ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ
 ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ, ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ; ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ
 ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ, ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ; ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ
 ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ, ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ; - ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ
 ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ - ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ -
 ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ,
 ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ,
 ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ। ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ
 ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ? ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ

କାହାଣୀ କଣ ? ତୋର ମନେ କଣ
ତାହା କି ଦିଲେ ଆଜି କଣ ମନେ
ହୁଏତ ମନେ ନିଜ, ମାନବ ମନେ,
କୃତ୍ରିମ, କି କଣ ତୋର ମନେ
ହୁଏ ତୋର ମନ ? ଯା, ତେ ଯା !
କେ ମନେ ଦେଲେ ମନ, କେ ନିଜେ ଯା,
ମନେ କଣ ମନେ କେ କି ମନେ
ନିଜେ କଣେ ଯା ! କେ ମନେ
ତୋର ମନେ ହେତ ନା ମନେ ଯା !
ମନେ, ମନେ ମନେ, ମନେ ମନେ !
ନିଜେ ନିଜେ ମନେ ମନେ ମନେ
ମନେ କଣେ, ମନେ, କେ ମନେ
ମନେ ମନେ ଦିଅ ! ମନେ ମନେ
ମନେ ମନେ କି କେ ମନେ -
କେ ମନେ କେ ମନେ । କେ ମନେ
ନିଜେ ମନେ ମନେ ମନେ ମନେ
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ମନେ ମନେ । ମନେ ! ମନେ ମନେ
ନା ମନେ ନା ମନେ ମନେ ମନେ
ନିଜେ ନିଜେ ମନେ ମନେ ମନେ,
କେ ମନେ ; - ନା ମନେ କେ ମନେ

ଅନିମିତ୍ତ-ସ୍ୱର୍ଗତ ଧାରକ ବିଚିତ୍ର କୁମ୍ଭୀର
ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟତଃ ଶୟ ବି ଅନ୍ୟା; ଅନ୍ୟକାର
ଅନୁଭବ; ବିଚିତ୍ର ବିକ୍ର ଅସିମିତ,
ଏ ବିଚିତ୍ର ଚର; ଧାରକ ଶବ୍ଦ ଅସିମିତ
ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ; ଅନିମିତ୍ତ ଶବ୍ଦ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ;
ଧାରକ ହୃଦୟ ଧାରକ ଶବ୍ଦାନ୍ୟ,
ଅନ୍ୟ ଧାରକ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ, ଧାରକ ଅନ୍ୟ;
ଧାରକ ଶବ୍ଦ ଅନିମିତ୍ତ ବିଚିତ୍ରାନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ
ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ-ଧାରକ ବିକ୍ର-ଧାରକାନ୍ୟ ।
ଅନିମିତ୍ତ-ଧାରକ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ
ଧାରକ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଧାରକ, ଧାରକ ଶବ୍ଦ
ଧାରକ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଧାରକ; ଧାରକ
ଧାରକ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ, ଧାରକ ବିକ୍ର-ଧାରକ
ଧାରକ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ । ଧାରକ ଧାରକାନ୍ୟ,
ଧାରକ, ଧାରକ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଧାରକ ଧାରକାନ୍ୟ
ଧାରକ ଧାରକ ଧାରକାନ୍ୟ ବିକ୍ର-ଧାରକାନ୍ୟ, -
ଧାରକ ଧାରକ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ, ଧାରକ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ,
ଧାରକ ଧାରକ, ଧାରକ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ! ଧାରକ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ
ଧାରକ ଧାରକ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଧାରକ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ,
ଧାରକାନ୍ୟ ବିକ୍ର-ଧାରକ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଧାରକ
ଧାରକାନ୍ୟ ଧାରକାନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ, - ଧାରକାନ୍ୟ
ଧାରକାନ୍ୟ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଧାରକାନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ।

এ উদাত্ত সঙ্গীতের তেঁপে মাঝার,
অসীম, অসীমের লহ নন্দনর!

এই পাত তৈরি করি, সিকি কীর্তিমালা
সাঁইন মূর্তি সঙ্গী প্রাণ-অনাম,
মৃত্যু হাত দেব জান, সিন্দুর হাতে
সম্মাদিত করিব মানব, হামিমালা
জাতক পাঠ্য দেব মন-কল্পনা
সিঁড়ি হামি মন-মাঝে হামি মন-মাঝে।
সিকি নানা হামি মন-মাঝে হামি মন-মাঝে,
মন-মাঝে হামি, মন-মাঝে হামি,
মন-মাঝে হামি - "হামি মন-মাঝে,
হামি মন-মাঝে, হামি মন-মাঝে, হামি মন-মাঝে;
হামি মন-মাঝে, হামি মন-মাঝে হামি,
হামি মন-মাঝে, হামি মন-মাঝে হামি,
হামি মন-মাঝে, হামি মন-মাঝে হামি,
হামি মন-মাঝে, হামি মন-মাঝে হামি!

১৯২৪

Translation of the Poem

Rabindranath, O Aurobindo, bows to thee!
O friend, my country's friend, O voice incarnate, free,
Of India's soul! No soft renown doth crown thy lot,
Nor pelf or careless comfort is for thee; thou'st sought
No petty bounty, petty dole; the beggar's bowl
Thou n'er hast held aloft. In watchfulness thy soul
Hast thou e'er held for bondless full perfection's birth
For which, all night and day, the god in man on earth
Doth strive and strain austerely; which in solemn voice
The poet sings in thund'rous poems; for which rejoice
Stout hearts to march on perilous paths; before whose flame
Refulgent, ease bows down its head in humbled shame
And death forgetteth fear; - that gift supreme
To thee from Heaven's own hand, that full-orb'd fadeless dream
That's thine, thou'st asked for as thy country's own desire
In quenchless hope, in words with truth's white flame afire,
In infinite faith, hath God in heaven heard at last
This prayer of thine ? And so, sounds there, in blast on blast,
His victory-trumpet? And puts he, with love austere,
In thy right hand, today, the fateful lamp and drear
Of sorrow, whose light doth pierce the country's agelong gloom,
And in the infinite skies doth steadfast shine and loom,
As doth the Northern star ? O Victory and Hail !
Where is the coward who will shed tears today, or wail
Or quake in fear? And who'll belittle truth to seek
His own small safety? Where's the spineless creature weak
Who will not in thy pain his strength and courage find ?
O wipe away those tears, O thou of craven mind !
The fiery messenger that with the lamp of God
Hath come - where is the king who can with chain or rod
Chastise him? Chains that were to bind salute his feet,
And prisons greet him as their guest with welcome sweet,
The pall of gloom that wraps the sun in noontide skies
In dim eclipse, within a moment slips and flies
As doth a shadow. Punishment? It ever falls
On him who is no man, and every day hath feared,
Abashed, to gaze on truth's face with a free man's eye
And call a wrong a wrong; on him who doth deny
His manhood shamelessly before his own compeers,
And e'er disowns his God-given rights, impelled by fears

And greeds; who on his degradation prides himself,
Who traffics in his country's shame; whose bread, whose pelf
Are his own mother's gore; that coward sits and quails
In jail without reprieve, outside all human jails.
When I behold thy face, 'mid bondage, pain and wrong
And black indignities, I hear the soul's great song
Of rapture unconfined, the chant the pilgrim sings
In which exultant hope's immortal splendour rings,
Solemn voice and calm, and heart-consoling, grand
Of imperturbable death, the spirit of Bharat-land,
O poet, hath placed upon thy face her eyes afire
With love, and struck vast chords upon her vibrant lyre, -
Wherein there is no note of sorrow, shame or fear,
Or penury or want. And so today I hear
The ocean's restless roar borne by the stormy wind,
Th' impetuous fountain's dance riotous, swift and blind
Bursting its rocky cage, - the voice of thunder deep
Awakening, like a clarion call, the clouds asleep.
Amid this song triumphant, vast, that encircles me,
Rabindranath, O Aurobindo, bows to thee!
And then to Him I bow Who in His sport cloth make
New worlds in fiery dissolution's awful wake,
From death awakes new life; in danger's bosom rears
Prosperity; and sends his devotee in tears,
'Mid desolation's thorns, amid his foes to fight
Alone and empty-handed in the gloom of night;
In diverse tongues, in diverse ages speaketh ever
In every mighty deed, in every great endeavour
And true experience: "Sorrow's naught, howe'er drear,
And pain is naught, and harm is naught, and naught all fear;
The king's a shadow, - punishment is but a breath;
Where is the tyranny of wrong, and where is death?
O fool, O coward, raise thy head that's bowed in fear,
I am, thou art, and everlasting truth is here!"

The English translation by Kshitish Chandra Sen, was first published in the
"Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual", Calcutta in 1944.

http://www.sriurobindoinstitute.org/saioc/Sri_Aurobindo/tributes/namashkar_from_rabindranath_tagore

Sri Aurobindo and the Seeing World

Sisirkumar Mitra

Too vast and too deep for the human mind, Sri Aurobindo has ever been a Truth and a Power active in the subjective world. And those open to him have been able to sense something of what he is. The bulk of the race, though more or less influenced by the Power, have yet to rise to the height which can help them to a clearer perception of his work. Happily, however, there have been seeing minds here and there who have already had some glimpse.

Says Rev. E. F. F. Hill in the *World Review* for October 1949:

“Aurobindo is the greatest contemporary philosopher and great in the company of the greatest mystics of all time.... Aurobindo’s psychological insight is so sharp and clear, and the universe which it explores is so vast that, in comparison Western psychology, even the work of Freud, when one allows in full the measure of its greatness, is like the groping of a child in the dark. The work of Aurobindo compels, not comparison, but concordance with the Fourth Gospel. Here are two men, peers in their right in the realm of highest knowledge, and peers in relation to each other. Separated by twenty centuries, drawing their sustenance from different cultures but their inspiration from one spiritual source, ‘ye shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free’, is one common aspect of their message....

“It is not surprising that, while to many of his countrymen he is the greatest single influence in the recovery of the great soul and spirit, ‘the living embodiment of all the past spiritual achievement of India and also the Master-Leader of her future spiritual destiny’, his originality is, at the same time, seen to lie in the way in which he has created a synthesis between her past spiritual achievement and modern European thought, so that the future spiritual destiny of India and the future destiny of Europe are inescapably the same destiny....

“We are at a turning-point in the spiritual history of man. Aurobindo is the embodiment of a revolution in human life which new knowledge, new powers, new capacities, are creating at this hour.... Because Aurobindo is in this world, the world is becoming able to express progressively Unity and Diversity instead of Division, Love instead of Hatred, Truth-consciousness instead of Falsehood, Freedom instead of Tyranny, Immortality instead of Death; it is becoming progressively that which it is: a movement of the Spirit in itself.”

Says Dr. C. R. Reddy, Vice-Chancellor of the Andhra University, in his address at the convocation, December 1948:

“In all humility of devotion, I hail Sri Aurobindo as the sole sufficing genius of the age. He is more than the hero of a nation. He is amongst the Saviours of humanity, who belong to all ages and all nations, the Sanatanas, who leaven our existence with their eternal presence, whether we are aware of it or not.”

Says Sir Francis Younghusband in *The Times Literary Supplement* of July 8, 1944:

“Of all modern Indian writers Aurobindo—successively poet, critic, scholar, thinker, nationalist, humanist—is the most significant and perhaps the most interesting... He has written, if one may say so, at unconscionable length, on ultimate problems... that even his early essays are full of fertile ideas. And he has crystallised the mellow wisdom of a lifetime into a luminous prose in *The Life Divine*, which, it is not too much to say, is one of the master-works of our age. The book has length, breadth and height. In a real sense, it enriches our experience.”

In a letter to a disciple of Sri Aurobindo, published in the Indian press, the same writer says: “I really do quite genuinely consider *The Life Divine* the greatest book which has been produced in my time.”

Says Gabriele Mistral, Chile’s Nobel Laureate, in the *The Aryan Path*, February 1947:

“While Tagore awakened the latent music in me, another Indian, Sri Aurobindo, brought me to religion. He opened the way to my religious consecration. Indeed my debt to India is very great and is due in part to Tagore and in part to Sri Aurobindo.”

Says Prof. F. Spiegelberg, Department of Asiatic Studies, Stanford University, California:

“In 1947 I read Sri Aurobindo’s *The Life Divine* and was completely knocked over. I have never known a philosopher so all-embracing in his metaphysical structure as Sri Aurobindo, none before him had the same vision.” *Mother India*, September 17, 1949.

“I can foresee a day when the teachings—which are already making headway—of the greatest spiritual voice from India, Sri Aurobindo, will be known all over America and be a vast power of illumination.” *Mother India*.

Says Prof. Pitirim A. Sorokin, the world-famous social thinker, Chairman, Department of Sociology, Harvard University:

“From the scientific and philosophical standpoint the works of Sri Aurobindo are a sound antidote to the pseudo-scientific psychology, psychiatry, and educational art of the West. Sri Aurobindo’s *The Life Divine* and other Yoga-treatises are among the most important works of our time in philosophy, ethics and humanities. Sri Aurobindo himself is one of the greatest living sages of our time; the most eminent moral leader.”

Says Morwenna Donnelly, an Irish writer, in the London quarterly *The Wind and the Rain*, Vol. V, No. I:

“Since he is a poet as well as a mystic, Sri Aurobindo’s vision is both creative and prophetic. I believe there is no greater mystical thinker in the world today.”

Says Prof. Raymond Frank Piper, Department of Philosophy, Syracuse University, U.S.A.:

“The greatest gift of Sri Aurobindo to me as a philosopher is his magnificent perspective of existence, in three directions: the dignity and destiny of man; the meaning of long-time evolution, the laboratory of the Divine; and the universal dynamic of Cosmic Intelligence....

“I could pick a thousand sentences from his writings and say of any one of them: trace

its implications and you will be led into the deep wonderlands of philosophic wisdom. I have never read an author who can compact so much of truth into one sentence as this master. Gandhi is the greatest saint, Tagore the greatest poet of modern India, but Sri Aurobindo is the greatest thinker, indeed has attained incomparable triune greatness, as poet, philosopher, and saint.”

Says Prof. Tan Yun-Shan, Director of the Chinese Department of the Visvabharati University, in his foreword to Sisirkumar Mitra’s book *Sri Aurobindo: A Homage*:

“I was exceedingly happy when I was able to go to Pondicherry in November 1939, and pay my deepest homage to Sri Aurobindo, the Maha-Yogi of India.... I returned from Pondicherry with a heart full of feelings too deep for words. From what I have seen and felt there, I am convinced that Sri Aurobindo has evolved a practical philosophy of life which is singular in the history of man’s spiritual achievement, and which is sure to fulfil its purpose, viz. the inner regeneration of man.”

Says Dorothy M. Richardson in her letter to Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar:

“Has there ever existed a more synthetic consciousness than that of Sri Aurobindo? Unifying he is to the limit of the term.”

(The Liberator: Sri Aurobindo – India and the World 211-214)

After his darshan of Sri Aurobindo in April 1950, K.M. Munshi wrote:

“A deep light of knowledge and wisdom shone in his eyes... He was the absolute integration of personality, the Central Idea in Aryan culture materialised in human shape, one of the greatest architects of creative life.”

In his *India on the March*, Romain Rolland described Sri Aurobindo as

“the completest synthesis that has been realised to this day of the genius of Asia and the genius of Europe... the last of the great Rishis holds in his hand, in firm unrelaxed grip, the bow of creative energy”.

K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar
Sri Aurobindo: A Biography and a History: 17

Sri Krishna and Sri Aurobindo: The Nation Builders

V. Ananda Reddy

Pranams to Yogeshwara Sri Krishna and Mahayogi Sri Aurobindo, whose birthdays happen to be in August.

Today I plan to speak on Sri Krishna and Sri Aurobindo and their work on the outer level as well try to understand what they both came to manifest on earth.

We see, Sri Krishna, declaring about his own birth in the Bhagavad Gita.

Though I am the unborn, though I am imperishable in my self-existence, though I am the Lord of all existences, yet I stand upon my own Nature and I come into birth by my self-Maya. For whensoever there is the fading of the Dharma and the uprising of unrighteousness, then I loose myself forth into birth. For the deliverance of the good, for the destruction of the evil-doers, for the enthroning of the Right I am born from age to age. (CWSA 19: 146)

We have all heard about this great secret that Lord Sri Krishna reveals about himself. But I do not know if many of us have given a deeper thought to it! Normally, we think that the divine incarnates for upholding the dharma, as is said by Sri Krishna, but Sri Aurobindo, has a different interpretation. He says that upholding of the dharma cannot be the sole mission of the coming of Avatar on earth. In fact, Sri Aurobindo explains that there are two aspects of the descent of the Avatar. One, a descent, the other an ascent. Descent is the birth of God in humanity and ascent is the birth of man into Godhead. Now, we see that there are two reverse movements, the descent and the ascent. And this second part is as much important for all of us because that's how the Lord, the Avatar, the incarnate, comes very close to the human beings.

In fact, "If there were not this rising of man into the Godhead to be helped by the descent of God into humanity, Avatarhood for the sake of the dharma would be an otiose phenomenon", (Ibid: 148-149) writes Sri Aurobindo. He argues that if it is just a question of delivering a new dharma, it could be done by great men or movements or sages or religious teachers. The Avatar need not descend into the human body, into the physical. So, what is important is that the Avatar comes also for the purpose of the birth of man into the Godhead. So, when he descends there are different roles he plays. He is not just a religious or a spiritual leader but also "the political leader, the great educationist, the regenerator of society, the captain of cooperative industry, with the soul of the poet, scholar and artist." (CWSA 8: 249). In the light of this explanation, we will now analyse Lord Krishna's aspect as a political leader and see how he attempted to take human society to greater heights.

When we speak of the human society, we know that there are five different stages in its evolution. Primarily, we are only the family formed around – the individual, then comes the clan and the nation followed by the human collectivity. These are the five stages of human evolution. In the light of this, what we see is that in ancient India, we had well established and strong clans. And then there was a kind of an obstruction or a blockade, when there was the need of the clans emerging into a nation. They were a big impediment because "Each

of these different clans either claimed descent from a common ancestor, or even though growing out of different families was accepted as born of a single ancestry”. (*Bengali Writings* : 138) There was a time when the powerful clans like Kurus or Panchala or the Koshala or the Magadha ruled this country for centuries. Now, the problem was that they became so very powerful in themselves, that they did not allow the next step in evolution – that is, the creation of a nation.

They became very rigid and parochial and did not allow any changes in their ancestral traditions. That was the big problem in the times of Sri Krishna – the whole of India could not become one single big nation though (there prevailed a common culture). When we talk about Bharat’s bygone centuries, we speak not of a country but of a common civilization, a common sanatana dharma. Relationships like marriages or some festivals etc. were common, but we did not have a geographical unit called nation as such. As we understand, the making of a nation was to be the next step in the evolution of a society. This was Sri Krishna’s political objective, apart from the role of an Avatar: to build a great single nation called Bharatvarsha.

Here the main obstacle, as we have already said, was the proud and powerful family of the Kurus. We don’t have to get into the history of the Kurus as we are well aware of their disputes and problems. But they had a long “hegemony”.

That is, a position of pre-eminence and leadership among a number of independent peoples of equal status—to that the Kurus had an ancestral right. As long as the pride and power of this people remained intact, unity would never be established in India. Sri Krishna came to realise this. (*Bengali Writings*: 139)

Sri Krishna took up nation-building as one of the most important works of his time. If he had to achieve the next evolutionary step in the collective living, that of a group consciousness beyond the clan consciousness, then it was but an absolute necessity that the Kauravas had to be removed. There was no other choice. But then, Sri Krishna did not go about executing his plan immediately. He was a very patient politician and he respected the law of the country.

So he followed the law and chose Yuddhisthira for the kingship. Although, left to himself, he might have given the kingdom to Arjuna. But, according to the custom of that time, the eldest of the family had to be given the crown. Yudhishtira, by himself was eligible for the kingship by being a very honest, truthful and wise person. Indeed, he was the rightful claimant. That is why, the first plan executed by Sri Krishna was to install him as the king. He advised Yudhishtira to take up the Ashvamedha yajna by which an emperor gains power and support of all the kingdoms and could establish himself as the king of all. But then, there was a great defect in this rule. That means an emperor could be there for a while, but as soon as he died, the subordinates, the other kings, kingdoms would collapse and the empire would fall apart. Hence, it was a temporary arrangement. So, Sri Krishna thought that if he could establish Yuddhishtira through the Aswamedha yajna, this too will fail after a certain number of years. Hence, that was not the best solution!

Being one of the greatest revolutionists of the age, he realised that unless and until he

brought in a new policy, a new way of dealing with this Kurus, the old rules of the game, might not work. The imminent next yuga was that of the Kaliyuga. And in the Kaliyuga, the rule of the Dwapara yuga will not work. That means the moral rules and ideals of that yuga cannot be implemented in the Kaliyuga.

So, he decided to use the statecraft suitable in Kaliyuga. What does it mean? The Kaliyuga emphasizes on war and strife, therefore, he directed his efforts towards making the future of the empire, free of obstacles using war as a medium. It is easy to say that, but we also understand that with the coming of the Kaliyuga, the new principle of war was set forth. And, we see that till today, though centuries have gone by, this method of war and strife remain the predominant mould of collective life. So Sri Krishna's plan for realising one nation, one India had to come by war. This is how the politician in him, the righteous person, the great man of law, changed his approach which resulted in the inevitable war. That's why it is said that Kurukshetra war is the result of Sri Krishna's policy. This is something very difficult for some of us to accept, but he is surely the designer of the Kurukshetra for achieving a higher step in evolution.

Personally, he may not have been against the Kauravas; he had nothing to do with importance of this clan or that clan. But any clan that stood against this new principle of a greater unity of India had to be destroyed. Of course, he did have the intention of trying out one more method, that of peace. But that also did not succeed. So what we see is that having tried out several different ways of approach, including that of peace, when all of them failed, Sri Krishna had no choice but to work towards the Kurukshetra.

In this Kurukshetra, he chose Arjuna as his instrument. And if Arjuna had really collapsed, as he did in the beginning, what would have happened? That was a crucial moment, not only for Arjuna, also for Sri Krishna because he was planning to win this war. It is as if, if this war was not fought by Arjuna, as his disciple, the whole plan of Sri Krishna would have come to a naught, and then the great evil of the Kauravas would have forever overtaken the future of the Bharatvarsha.

That's why, Sri Krishna himself says that Arjuna's role was crucial, because had he not done his part, the whole history of India would have been quite different today. That's why Sri Krishna takes utmost pain and trouble to convince Arjuna to fight, because this was to be the very turning point in the history of the land. And of course, we see there are some critics who say – what about the immense destruction in the Kurukshetra war? Millions of people were killed, thousands of wives became widows, children became fatherless – was such a war really the plan of Sri Krishna? It is difficult to accept.

It turns out to be a very logical question. However, can this question be answered in the light of what we are discussing? We have to look at the events and we have to understand things on a deeper level: a nation cannot be great if it is founded solely on the strength of the Kshatriyas. This is a very important point to consider in order to appreciate the Kurukshetra war. All the fourfold powers of the four orders of society form the basis of a country's greatness. However great a nation maybe, just one clan, one caste cannot make up for the four castes or the four levels of the society – the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishya and

the Sudras. All of them have to come together and flourish; that would be the true greatness of a country. Sri Krishna feels that one cannot allow any one class to dominate and rule the country. Basically, there has to be both the castes helping each other – the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. The Sattwic power of the Brahmins keep alive the Rajasic Kshatriya; if the Kshatriyas are bereft of Brahmin's sattwic strength, they turn brutal and uncontrollable. This has been the main problem. Even the wisdom of great sages like Bhishma Pitamah could not control the Kauravas, nor the asuric nature of the Kshatriyas on the Kaurava's side.

Therefore, Lord Krishna had to really deal directly with the Kshatriyas because, as Sri Aurobindo notes here; "In the age of the Mahabharata the earth was groaning under the load of titanic power. Neither before nor after, was there in India such an outbreak of strong and powerful and violent Kshatriya power, but there was little chance of that terrible power being turned to good purpose. Those who were the vehicles of this power were all of them of an asuric nature, vanity and pride, selfishness and self-will." (*Bengali Writings*: 148)

So we see that from the point of evolution, this period of Mahabharata was really one of those periods when the earth was groaning under the load of the Titanic power. This was the age when Sri Krishna descended in order to destroy this Titanic asuric power, which was full of vanity and pride and selfishness.

Sri Aurobindo warned that without the war, "India would have fallen prematurely into the hands of the barbarian". (*Bengali Writings*: 148) It was after two thousand five years that the first successful invasion of barbarians could reach on the other side of the Indus. Thus, had not Kurukshetra war taken place, the barbarians would have attacked India long many years ago and India would not be the country that it is today.

To recapitulate all that we have discussed - why was Kurukshetra war so important? First, because the Kauravas were an obstacle in the establishment of the Dharma. And second, if the asuric forces had not been wiped off, the new balance could not have been established. A new balance means – the balance between the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. If this balance was not established, India would have been swept away by the barbarians. So, we have to see that although there has been the great destruction, it was a destruction meant for the future good of the country. That means India got rid of a very evil asuric force, which would have really dominated our country killing her soul and culture. And here, it is noted, that because of this renewed balance established by Sri Krishna that there was a possibility of the kingdoms of Chandragupta or Pushya Mitra, Samudra Gupta, Vikramaaditya, Sangham Singha, Pratap, Raja Sangha, Shivaji – all these galaxy of mighty warriors and rulers. They possess the true Kshatriya power, not the power of egoism and selfishness, like the Kauravas. What Sri Krishna establishes is a new Kshatriya power of control of the Brahmins and their great wisdom.

Therefore, now we understand what a great role Sri Krishna had played by destroying the Kauravas. Well, the basic thing we have to understand is that although in modern times we criticise Sri Krishna for the battle of Kurukshetra, he did not extinguish the Kshatriya power in India in the bloodbath of Kurukshetra. On the contrary, by destroying the Titanic power he saved both the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas. And this is where we see Sri Krishna's role

becoming prominent. He gave our country a future and brought about the first collective consciousness of India as a nation. Such an act could have been undertaken only by an Avatar.

Well, whatever the criticism, Sri Aurobindo says that God never comes to destroy humanity. So we should never criticise Kurukshetra as something negative that happened in India's history. So he says, "God never descended on earth to bring about a downfall. The Incarnation is for saving the Law, the world and men. Particularly in the Kali age does God incarnate Himself in full. The reason is that in Kali there is the greatest danger of man's downfall, there is a natural increase of unrighteousness." (*Bengali Writings*: 149) So, we understand the role played by Sri Krishna as a political figure. Well, we can discuss about Sri Krishna's many aspects but this was the most prominent aspect apart from his being the Avatar. On the physical level, he was a political genius who brought in for the first time the consciousness of one single country Bharat.

Well, what then happened between the age of Sri Krishna and that of Sri Aurobindo? India experienced golden periods of cultural peaks as also despicable periods of utter stagnation. This is a long history which we cannot now go into, but I am sure the purport will be clear for all.

The spirit and ideals of India had come to be confined in a mould which, however beautiful, was too narrow and slender to bear the mighty burden of our future. When that happens, the mould has to be broken and even the ideal lost for a while, in order to be recovered free of constraint and limitation. (CWSA 8: 247-248)

There was a beautiful period, but slowly the great creative aspect of Indian vitality, of the Indian mind started waning. In fact, in one of his books Sri Aurobindo would explain that because of the thousands of years of creativity, there was a kind of fatigue that came over our country. This fatigue could not be stopped. There set in the conventional age, a rigid mould of customs and ideas which had to be broken. For that, Nature chose a very easy means -- it brought in the English, the British to occupy India. The work of re-moulding India was best suited for the British. Why? Because, the British have a stubborn individuality, and a great streak of commercialism and materialism in them. Therefore, they were chosen by Nature for their unrivalled efficiency and skill to organize an individualistic and materialistic democracy.

However ugly and unacceptable the reign of the Britishers in India, we have to accept that from the point of view of evolution it was an inevitable step. We see that we had in the beginning, the Brahminic age, followed by the Kshatriya age and then we had this age of the Vaishyas where commercialism, individualism and other skills, came to the forefront of our culture. That means, on the material plane, an aspect of Mahalakshmi who brings in a balance and an equal distribution of wealth was ushered in India. So that is what had happened with the coming of the colonialists. But then, the most important thing is that they brought about the first steps of democracy which was important for our country. Sri Aurobindo writes that, for the future of humanity true democracy is required. We have got to perhaps get rid of individualism and materialism. And democracy is what we are left

with. We should now propagate democracy in our own light not try to imitate the West. Basically, democracy is not necessarily a Western concept. It may be so politically, but from the point of view of an ideal, we in India, already had this idea of democracy.

India was passing through this stage and slowly the freedom movement set in our country. Here begins a new chapter, when the country was gearing up for a new phase in its life. It is at this revolutionary juncture when India was breaking the shackles of Conventionalism and taking a new form of liberty, equality and fraternity, that Sri Aurobindo came upon the rising wave of Indian revolutionary spirit. Like Sri Krishna, Sri Aurobindo too was a Yogeshwara, a master of yoga. He had launched himself on the yoga of self-perfection, on the advice and guidance of Sri Krishna. There is a direct link between Sri Krishna and Sri Aurobindo. We see Sri Krishna himself advising Sri Aurobindo about his yoga, about his work and what he should be doing for the freedom of the country. And it was Sri Krishna, who had placed the Gita in his hands, when Sri Aurobindo was in the Alipore jail in 1907. Sri Aurobindo says, in his famous Uttarpara speech –

His [Sri Krishna's] strength entered into me and I was able to do the *sadhan* of the Gita. (CWSA 8: 5)

Their connectivity is very obvious. So Sri Aurobindo starts his life, his political and yogic life, on the lines given by Sri Krishna himself. That is why, he says, I was able to do the sadhana of the Gita and practiced it in the jail: “I was not only to understand intellectually, but to realize what Sri Krishna demanded of Arjuna”. Let us analyse these words closely – intellectually, we may try to understand here and there but then, Sri Aurobindo says, he realised:

“...what Sri Krishna demanded of Arjuna and what He demands of those who aspire to do His work, to be free from repulsion and desire, to do work for Him without the demand for fruit, to renounce self-will and become a passive and faithful instrument in His hands, to have an equal heart for high and low, friend and opponent, success and failure, yet not to do His work negligently”. (CWSA 8: 5-6)

Inner realisation may be a long way but the work of the ideal divine worker –detachment, equality, samata – all of that he realised right in the prison. Even the question of “*sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekam śaranam vraja*” (Bhagavad Gita, Ch.18, Ver-66) was really practiced and realised in the jail itself.

And all those realisations within one year! That is what gave Sri Aurobindo the strength to do the work that he did after coming out of the jail. And then there was the question of being a faithful servant in His hands. Those of us who have read Sri Aurobindo's life know very well as to how he really followed the advice of Sri Krishna. When Sri Krishna told him go to Chandannagore, he left all his works and within ten minutes he was at the ghat to catch a boat to Chandannagore. Then again, when Sri Krishna says ‘Go to Pondicherry,’ Sri Aurobindo left everything and proceeded. So, every time he was a faithful instrument in the hands of the Lord. That is why we say Sri Aurobindo realised the entire yoga of the Gita. And that too directly under the instructions of Sri Krishna himself. So what more

do we want? What is more wonderful is, long before he had received this instruction from Sri Krishna in the Alipore jail, he had written to his wife,

I know my country as the Mother, I worship her and adore her accordingly... 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... God sent me to the earth to accomplish this great mission. (*Bengali Writings: 352-353*)

Here was a person who believed that he had the strength to uplift this fallen race. Yes of course fallen during the times of the British – we were at our lowest because centuries of serfdom had broken our back, our confidence, we had no faith in our own culture. That is why he uses these words ‘fallen race’. But then through what means? “Not Kshatriyahood, not the power of the soul, or the gun, but the power of knowledge.” This reminds us exactly what Sri Krishna himself had done in the Bhagavad Gita, during the Kurukshetra war when the Kshatriyas had lost their inner values. It is the wisdom, the knowledge, that Sri Krishna used to awaken the Kshatriyahood.

Similarly, the same means were applied by Sri Aurobindo – the power of the Brahman, the ‘Brahma teja’, as it is called. And when he returned to the Kshetra, the Indian freedom struggle, he leaped into the movement with the mantra of ‘Vande Mataram’. So these are the two things that we should remember. He had a great mantra in his hand, “Vande Mataram” and he had a great Yantra – the journal of ‘Bande Mataram’. Hence, with these two things, he leaped into the fray. Long before, it was the Kurukshetra, Sri Krishna, leading the war; now it was the freedom of the country being led by Sri Aurobindo. He provided the vision of independent India with which he awoke in the masses the spirit of nationalism.

He gave the call for “Purna Swaraj” – the goal of the whole freedom movement. He not only gave the vision but he gave also the practical operational tool. What is important is that he gave us the vision of why India should be free: is it only for the sake of its own freedom like many other nations which have become free from their colonial despots? No, not at all. India’s Independence has a deeper meaning. Her freedom is not only for herself, but for the whole world and humanity.

It is because of this great spiritual vision that today we all say ‘India will be the guru of the world’. But it is not an easy task. He has written volumes of articles arousing the Indians to understand and distinguish and discriminate between who we are and the foreigners. He wrote about their true culture, the aim of their life etc. Perhaps, in the time of Sri Krishna it was easy to arouse the dormant section because there was only one section of people called the ‘Kshatriyas’ who were to be transformed. But, now the times have changed – it is now the spirit of democracy which believes in, the rule of by the people, by the people, for the people. Therefore, the whole freedom movement had to be done with the help of the people and by the people.

Hence, here was a greater task – to awaken the masses, not a class of people, this party or that party, nor the elitists. Now the country had to demand ‘Poorna Swaraj’ on the grassroot level. And for that work, to start that work, Sri Aurobindo went to Bengal. That’s because

Bengal was the one state where people had almost forgotten their own culture. They were imitating the West blindly. And so that was the real “Kurukshetra”; that was the place where the first awakening had to take place!

Here was a person who had given both the Brahmatej as well as the Kshatriya power, the way to act under the given circumstances. His revolution was similar to that of Sri Krishna who believed that we have to face the enemy up front, and not succumb and submit ourselves to the dark forces. Sri Aurobindo was the Gita yogin and the Gita warrior, he preferred facing the enemy and to give in submission of satyagraha. And then, suddenly Sri Aurobindo left Bengal and withdrew to Pondicherry. Most people do not understand the deeper reason for this withdrawal. Here is Aurobindo’s own explanation.

As his vision of the future grew clearer, he saw that the eventual independence of India was assured. The eventual independence of India was assured by the march of Forces of which he became aware, that Britain would be compelled by the pressure of Indian resistance and by the pressure of international events to concede independence and that she was already moving towards that eventuality with whatever opposition and reluctance. (CWSA 36: 64)

Having realised this – the pressure of international events – Sri Aurobindo felt that there would be no need of armed resurrection, insurrection, and that the secret preparation for it could be dropped without injury to the nationalist cause. The revolutionary spirit that was aroused by him would be sustained. Most important, he realised that his own personal intervention in politics would therefore be no longer indispensable. Here was a person who, like Arjuna, did not want to run away from the battle of Kurukshetra. He had done the work apportioned to him and he felt that he cannot be wasting his energies to lead the independence movement which would be accomplished by others in the given time. He had foreseen that the leaders who would come after him would take more or less the same path. And all of those efforts would finally culminate in the freedom of the country.

However, when the independence of India came, it was not along the lines he had dreamt about. In his address on the 15th of August 1947, he wrote that one of his dreams was to see India free and united. Unfortunately, India was free but not united. Sri Aurobindo did not accept that division had settled forever. This, I think, the countrymen, the younger generation, especially should know this truth as seen by a great visionary. Sri Aurobindo did not accept this division between India and Pakistan and other smaller nations as settled forever. He said that the partition must and will go. And not only that, even he foresaw that there would be a reunion of Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan in a new form of a confederation.

Like Sri Krishna, who had tried to build a united Bharat, here was another “politician” who had worked for a free and united India. Sri Aurobindo had taken a further step in his political agenda: to work for a united world. In this march towards its union the world may have to face many difficulties, and even catastrophies may intervene, writes Sri Aurobindo, “But the final result is sure”. “...human imbecility and stupid selfishness may delay but will not cancel it.” In one letter he also wrote: “I’ve never known any will of mine for any major

event in the conduct of the world affairs to fail in the end.” (CWSA 35: 26) So this possibility of human unity, with the outer form of a world union may take time, because the world forces are trying to destroy the world and disunite it. But here is a man who has seen its success and has emphasised that his foresight will not fail. This is his deep prophecy. Besides getting freedom for India, Sri Aurobindo wanted to achieve for humanity freedom from slavery and bondage to ignorance.

Then for achieving the next step of human unity, a new power, a greater power, a greater consciousness unheard of in human annals had to be brought in. And that is what he calls the Supramental consciousness. All that the past had given him through his realisations, he utilised for the freedom of our country, and all that he needed for the human unity was a new power which he manifested, which he brought down with his intense tapasya in Pondicherry.

In a way, He took forward Sri Krishna’s mission and went beyond the building of a nation, by initiating the work towards the next step in human evolution – the step towards world union. No wonder, Sri Aurobindo told one of his disciples that the work of Sri Krishna is being continued by him in the Ashram in Pondicherry. He is continuing that work both on the physical and spiritual levels. On the physical level, we see the continuation of his work: from the freedom of a country to the freedom of humanity. On the spiritual level, we know that Sri Krishna had established a new Yuga-dharma, the Overmental consciousness whereas Sri Aurobindo established a new step in earth’s evolution. So, we see that there is a close relationship not only between their outer work but also in their consciousness. Beyond the mind there is the Overmental consciousness, which is the range and realm and possession of Lord Krishna. Beyond the Overmental consciousness, there is a Supramental consciousness of which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are the harbingers. So there is a continuum from Sri Krishna to Sri Aurobindo.

Therefore, in this month, I wanted to offer my obeisance, my pranams to Yogeshwara Krishna and to Mahayogi Sri Aurobindo, who seem to be the same soul in different forms in different ages!

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Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy of War and its Relevance Today

Madhumita Dutta

Sri Aurobindo's thoughts on war as spelt out in his books *War and Self Determination*, *The Ideal of Human Unity* and other writings are highly relevant today considering the situation we are in. The years 2020-21 are the years of another pandemic when we are in a state of war, the complexity of which eludes our intelligence, comprehension and all our calculations. It is a war without weapons, war without borders, war without war zones, as the entire world is one war zone, fighting a deadly battle with a powerful enemy. We are in the middle of a war at a very subtle level. We can say with Yogi Aswapati of *Savitri* that we are in:

“...a no man's land of evil air
A borderland between the world and hell.”¹

It is as if we are experiencing at the physical level the evil forces that Aswapati experienced when he was exploring the darker regions of the consciousness. As our dimensions are almost dissolving, more and more we are being compelled to live in a virtual world, when all around is crumbling, it is in trying times like these that we must turn to the prophet, the visionary, one like Sri Aurobindo. He has explained in detail all issues regarding war, its means and motives, its causes, its consequences, the reasons of our failure to wipe out war, and also predictions of future wars in sharp and well defined language. Interestingly however, he does not ask us to stop all battles, does not ask us to end war, and here we meet with a great paradox, for Sri Aurobindo was never for ‘useless non-violence’. A careful study and understanding will help us to resolve the paradox. More than a century ago, he had felt and wrote: “...the whole international condition of the world is a chaos...”²

This was the situation during the times of the First World War. Today, it is a bigger chaos on all fronts. Wars and battles are going on. As for the Corona virus pandemic, crusts of myths have woven around it, and for a moment even if we take it that it is the handiwork of man, Sri Aurobindo's words of long ago become all the more relevant, as he had prophesied that wars in future shall be fought with the mind, not with weapons. We see and watch almost helplessly how the invisible enemy is indiscriminately claiming its victims and taking a toll on our mental and emotional health. Sri Aurobindo was so astute a politician, so keen an observer, so accurate in his predictions. And so far ahead of his times was he. Whatever he has said has resonances today. In post-modern times the world is more in need of his reassuring words, and more do we need to take lessons on peace and unity from Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, when the world is visibly being torn apart by evil forces of egoism and intolerance. The poet Rabindranath Tagore had written in one of his mystical songs, ‘*Anondodhara bohichhe bhuvane*’ ---waves of bliss are floating all around. It may have been the transcription of a very subjective experience, but today only one shut out completely from the outer world may perhaps be able to experience and write something like this. There is so much of negativity all around, the *asuric* powers seem to have conquered and drowned the music of bliss in the earth. For this, man himself is responsible.

Sri Aurobindo in his lifetime witnessed two World Wars. After the first he had predicted the second war, a more massive outbreak. His prophecy did not take long to come true. In *The Ideal of Human Unity*, he wrote:

“... it would be vain to hope that the principle of international control will be

thoroughly effective at first or that this loose formation, which is likely to be in the beginning half form, half nebula, will prevent farther conflicts, explosions, catastrophes”³

This was written during the times of the first Great War. All that he wrote more than a hundred years ago, all his ideas and thoughts, especially on war, are palpably materialising today, throbbing with an eerie truth, and give us the uncomfortable feeling that Doomsday may perhaps be at hand, if we are not careful. The warning is clear enough, and we shall choose to ignore it at our own peril:

“Two stupendous and world-devastating wars have swept over the globe and have been accompanied or followed by revolutions with far-reaching consequences which have altered the political map of the earth and the international balance,... and changed the whole future. A third still more disastrous war with a prospect of the use of weapons and other scientific means of destruction far more fatal and of wider reach than any ever yet invented, weapons whose far-spread use might bring down civilisation with a crash and whose effects might tend towards something like extermination on a large scale, looms in prospect ...”⁴

Ours is a period of rapid change. We are, to say the least, at a critical point in historical time, when everything we have fought for and sought for seems to be at stake. A brief look backwards in time will show us how costly our wars, our defeats, and victories have been. Then we shall be able to analyse and reflect on Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of war in a better way. The two major wars in modern times were meant to 'end' all wars. Far from it. Taking even 1945 to be the starting point, we see how many disastrous wars we have waged, how much of destruction we have caused to human and natural resources. To name just a few--we have had the Korean war, Vietnam war, the Cold war, two Gulf wars, Balkan war, Armenia-Azerbaijan, Indo-China, Indo-Pak, the Israel-Palestine conflicts. Some of these are ongoing ones. Even the dread of the pandemic could do nothing to curb the war-tendencies of human nature. It is because, as Sri Aurobindo said, the actual enemy resides inside us. The devil, the Asura, the demon is within, not outside. Much before he wrote out his social and political philosophy on war and national and international politics, he had realised this truth of human nature, and in his journalistic writings time and again pointed this out. In his encounter with British imperialism, he was quick to realise that the foreigners were not the only enemies; the greater cause for the oppressed and downfallen state of the Indians was their *tamasic* nature. In that context he had written:

“Our actual enemy is not any force exterior to ourselves, but our own crying weaknesses, our cowardice, our selfishness, our hypocrisy, our purblind sentimentalism.”⁵

He was not a full-time Yogi then, only a beginner in politics. But these thoughts and ideas find a continuation in the writings of the *Arya* period. Sri Aurobindo says that war continues because we have the means and motives for war present within us. He tells us also why we have failed to eradicate war from the terrestrial consciousness, and of course, as a visionary, has offered a radical solution to the problem too.

With the growing advancement in science and technology, we have more and better means of playing savage. This Sri Aurobindo had realised as early as the beginning of the last century. He wrote in his book *War and Self Determination*:

“Science may well make war of the present type with shot and shell and mines and

battleships an impossibility, and yet develop and put in their place simpler or more summary means which may bring back an easier organisation of warfare.... the new war, or the old one continued in another form ... will be fought more with mental trenches and bomb-proof shelters, with reconnaissance and batteries and moving machines of thought and word, propaganda and parties and programs, with mangling of the desire-souls of men and nations ...”⁶

These words are not only self-explanatory, but it is exactly what we are experiencing today. How very apt and relevant these thoughts are when we come to think of it, that at the mere press of a button, sitting in the luxury of our home and office, we can wipe out a whole nation, a landmass, a huge crowd of people anywhere anytime! Sri Aurobindo contrasts the natural violence of the past with the legalised, planned, organised crimes of modern societies, which may well include our regular strikes, lockouts, party strife, wanton killings, civil wars, to say the least. Wars go on at the global level, national level, domestic level and at the individual level too. Wherever there is lack of harmony, there will be conflict. Men are divided by exclusiveness, hatred, jealousy, antipathy, anger, and all these make way for clash and conflicts on many grounds. Thus, we have wars, not only at different levels, but of various types too. Apart from physical warfare, we have our bio-chemical wars, economic wars, racial wars, religious wars, the strife instigated by identity politics, our fractured identities, coloured identities, all leading to so many mutual conflicts. And it is we who are the architects of these. It is the ‘cultured elite’ of today, who are the economic barbarians, the average sensational man, according to Sri Aurobindo. He said:

“The Rudra powers still govern our destinies and the Lords of truth and justice and the Lords of Love have to wait for their reign.”⁷

Sri Aurobindo also predicted that wars will continue as long as the ‘motive’ for war is present in the human consciousness. This is central to his philosophy of war. Of the different motives governing the psychology of man, two obvious ones are the economic motive and the political motive. These are the human lust for wealth, control of markets, lust for power, exploitation of helpless people. According to Sri Aurobindo it is ‘the inrush of blinder unsatisfied forces’ that lead men to act savagely. Subjection of the normal mind to egoistic, vital interests, inevitably lead to strife and not union. Then there’s what he terms ‘habits of pretence’, which impel men and nations to pursue their own interests. This is the ‘selfish motive’, which makes us fight for personal, communal, religious interests, even for our ideals and principles. And collective egoism is more powerful and dangerous than individual egoism. All our ideological systems are bound to fail at a certain point. Nevertheless, we clamour for peace, while all the time we are paving the way for war, consciously or unconsciously. Sri Aurobindo says that the elimination of war is one of the cherished dreams of mankind. How very true this is, especially in today’s context, when what is foremost on the global mind is to end the war with the virus, to see the end of the pandemic era. Anyway, history tells us that we have tried many times to end wars, but have failed. Sri Aurobindo gives us some reasons for this failure, based on his observations of the world wars he witnessed in his lifetime. At first it was thought that extension and expansion of trade and commerce would mean extinction of war, as it will replace military warfare. Trade and commerce were taken to be the natural enemies of militarism, at the global level. But the lust of gold cannot be the substitute for the lust of power, and the foolishness of the idea proved itself only too soon. ‘The Dharma of the Vashya’ would drive away the ‘Dharma of the Kshatriya’, it

was thought; but just the opposite of the intended happened. The desire for commodities, money, market capture, in fact, the very reign of commercialism became the cause for other wars, when commercialism joined hands with militarism. Perhaps even now we have not realised the danger and folly of replacing one evil with another. In *The Ideal of Human Unity* Sri Aurobindo wrote:

“War is no longer the legitimate child of ambition and earth-hunger, but the bastard offspring of wealth-hunger or commercialism with political ambition as its putative father.”⁸

Another illusion was that the growth of democracy would lead to pacifism, as it was assumed that wars were due to the lust and greed of dynasts and autocrats. Here too the ignorance of man was exposed, as commoners became the accomplice of diplomats and all drove each other to war. Then, it was hoped that growth in Science and technology would mean an end to war by making it physically impossible. As Sri Aurobindo wrote:

“...two equal armies would fight each other to a standstill, attack would become impossible except by numbers thrice those of defence...”⁹

Men found means of overcoming this obstacle too, and war thus remained a great possibility. So, war---for conquest, for domination, commercial expansion---went on, and shall go on, as long as we believe in the sovereign power of machinery, and have enough motives in our minds. Sri Aurobindo points out:

“The battle-fury of man is superior to the fury of his death-dealing engines.”¹⁰

War is not made impossible; it has only changed its character. Thus far in human civilisation, all measures have failed to build a permanent system of peace. Why is it so? The answer to this is to be found in a perennial philosophy relating to human behaviour and psychology. Here again, let us ponder on the eternally relevant thoughts of Sri Aurobindo, the visionary politician and psychologist. A hundred years ago he thought out and predicted the consequences of mechanisation of life, of Americanisation too. He said:

“... the destinies of mankind cannot be turned to order in an American factory.”¹¹

Today we depend on machines and tools, we live in obedience to ego and passions, and false ideas and self-deception govern us. And we clash at every step because we ignore the spirit in man, and the deeper inner law of our being. We all want freedom, liberty, peace---nothing wrong in that, it's natural. But the great error lies in the fact that we want it only for our little selves, to satisfy our egoistic impulses. Our selfish desires are bound to lead to strife and conflict with my neighbour---as with individuals, so with nations. Sri Aurobindo says, ‘freedom is a convenient elbow room for our desires to satisfy themselves.’ I want freedom, power, wealth, but the same desires I cannot tolerate in others. We cannot tolerate the self-assertiveness of others. In our bid to satisfy our ego, we make the arrangements of war and conflict. And what goes by the name of ‘Union’/‘Unity’, is only mechanical unity, not true mutuality. Foreseeing all, Sri Aurobindo had prophesied:

“War is no longer, perhaps, a biological necessity, but it is still a psychological necessity; what is within us, must manifest itself outside.”¹²

He further said:

“So long as war does not become psychologically impossible, it will remain or, if banished for a while, return.”¹³

This we may take to be a prophetic warning. War cannot end war. War entails expense, horror, disturbance of normal life, we know that. After every war, we, in 'weariness and disgust', build peace-organisations. But these break down, not by bombs and missiles, but 'under the stress of human passions', as Sri Aurobindo says. What a profound, thought-provoking idea by Sri Aurobindo! In *War and Self Determination* he writes:

"Great has been the havoc and ruin, immense the suffering, thick the blood-red cloud of darkness enveloping the world, heavy the toll of life, bottomless the expenditure of treasure and human resources, and all has not yet been worked out, the whole price has not been paid ..."¹⁴

True, we are still paying the price, and shall continue to do so till we have exhausted all 'motives' for war. To arrive at a lasting and permanent solution to this problem, we must get rid of the inner causes. Otherwise, our well-mechanised cosmos of international order, security, peace becomes meaningless. We shall live in 'fallacious period of artificial peace'. It is not skill of machinery and safety of institutions, but the truth and sincerity of our inner being which shall enable us to do away with war in the future. We have to become aware of the deeper psychological and spiritual factors that transcend the human ego. We have to discover the inner, larger self other than the ego, and guided by that ensure that individual self-fulfilment does not separate us from others, but calls for unity. Sri Aurobindo always was for reconciliation of the individual and society. We have to respect each other's freedom, but what we actually do is pose obstacles in that path, or boost each other's ego to maintain peace. Sri Aurobindo says, our chief imperfection is our egoistic idea of self, which reappears enlarged in the collective egoism. So, the remedy, and perhaps the only one, is to affect a major and radical shift---from without to within, and explore and encourage the secret unity between our self and the self of others:

"Only when man has developed not merely a fellow-feeling with all men, but a dominant sense of unity and commonality, only when he is aware of them not merely as brothers, ... but as parts of himself, only when he has learned to live, not in his separate personal and communal ego-sense, but in a large universal consciousness, can the phenomenon of war,... pass out of his life without the possibility of return."¹⁵

In *War and Self Determination* Sri Aurobindo mentions the Mahabharata war, where Sri Krishna himself was the charioteer of Arjuna the warrior, encouraging the latter to fight. But, as Sri Aurobindo has explained, in the end Lord Krishna appears to Arjuna not as a mere teacher, or Divine Destroyer, but as the 'Friend of Man'. He tells Arjuna not to shrink from battle, but to fight for Truth, Justice, Righteousness, to establish the *Dharma Rajya*. That was the final message of Sri Krishna: "Therefore, arise, destroy the foe, enjoy a rich and happy kingdom."¹⁶

Today, we are waging war after war. What is the *Dharma Rajya* we are trying to establish --- Militarism, Commercialism, Socialism, Dictatorship, our very many idealisms? These are the wrong motives, the wrong causes for war, and therefore we have to bear the sorry consequences. We misuse the truth of the spirit for our narrower ends, for our selfish motives. To quote a few adjusted lines from *Savitri*:

"It is a world of battle and surprise.
All who are there live for themselves alone.
All war against all, but with a common hate."¹⁷

Nothing can be nearer the truth than this picture of the 'settled anarchy of established things' that Sri Aurobindo draws for us in his epic *Savitri*. Our rendezvous with war is far from over. Sri Aurobindo actually asks us to fight--- to wage a conscious war. He himself admitted that he was by no means a Pacifist or a worshipper of Ahimsa. This was in the context of India's freedom struggle, when attaining political freedom was the immediate goal. Having achieved that, war does not end. We must fight for our spiritual freedom now. We must uproot evil, first from within ourselves, and then from the terrestrial consciousness. We have to fight the enemy within, we have to war with ourselves first, and defeat the evil powers which retard our progress. We have to fight with the right motive. We have to awaken the Durga in us, the Kali in us, the Shakti inherent to fight the demons within. Again and again we must re-enact the myth of evil slaying through rituals and daily practice. We have to get rid of our selfish, narrow, parochial motives which cause major wars. If the means and causes of strife remain, so will opportunities and excuses. As Sri Aurobindo says:

“Commercial ambitions and rivalries, political pride, dreams, longings, jealousies are not going to disappear as if by touch of a magic wand. The awakening must go much deeper, lay hold upon much purer roots of action...which will eliminate war and international collisions from our distressed and stumbling human life”.¹⁸

Only then can we wipe out war from the map of human consciousness. Or else, we must wait for the Tandava of Rudra or the mad dance of Kali to destroy and annihilate and then regenerate us.

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Sri Aurobindo's Language: An Expression of "the real or spiritual"

Oeendrila Guha

Macaulay's Minute of 1835, an extension of the systematized Eurocentric theoretical practices, enforced English as the official language of India, thereby checking the use of the various indigenous dialects and vernaculars across the Indian subcontinent which were ecologically-conscious. It sought to homogenise and "tyranise and subsume the East into the dominant West". (S. Murali 93) English was the surest way to achieve social and political mobility in the subcontinent. To protest, many writers continued to write in their vernaculars but to no avail. English garnered enough publicity to build up a chain of colonial policies, disrupting the traditional way of Indian life.

In such a colonial-minded setting, Sri Aurobindo was born and raised. It was in Baroda, on touching his native soil in 1993, that he learnt Sanskrit and his mother tongue, Bengali. He realised that to reach masses and to awaken them to the ideal of independence, he had to inspire their beings with fierce love and respect for their country, her flora and fauna. English did not do justice to these feelings; Sanskrit and the vernaculars did. At the same time, he recognised the importance of using English to challenge the British government and its policies, thereby establishing himself in the midst of a diverse community. But Sri Aurobindo used English differently.

Sri Aurobindo, aware of language as a cultural artifact, considered it as a medium of expressing experiences or insights of the individual consciousness. Language, as an extension of the individual consciousness, can be appropriated as a tool to shape the collective consciousness, thereby, fulfilling the greatest role of shaping an ideology, a lifestyle. Sri Aurobindo's English is anti-hierarchical as it is largely influenced by the environmentally-friendly Sanskrit language which framed the Vedanta thought.

According to Sri Aurobindo, Sanskrit does not suffer from "singularity of meaning" because every vowel and consonant has

a number of primary roots, out of which secondary roots were developed by the addition of other consonants. All words were formed from these roots, simple words by the addition again of pure or mixed vowel and consonant terminations with or without modification of the root and more complex words by the principle of composition. (CWSA 16: 476)

Sanskrit validates four levels of being/consciousness: *para* (prior to manifestation), *pashyanti* (after manifestation/sound and sense take shape), *madhyama* (selective sound), and *vaikhari* (external form). Therefore, it has captured the fundamental sounds of humanity and is the *para-vac*, or the Supreme Word. Mantric in quality, Sanskrit sings in high praise of the pulsation of a Consciousness in every species on earth. Sri Aurobindo calls it "the language of the Satyayuga based on the true and perfect relation of vak and artha." (CWSA 16: 476)

Mantric in quality, Sanskrit sings in high praise of the pulsation of a Consciousness in every species on earth. Sri Aurobindo's English, garnered favourably with the essentialist

metaphysic of the Vedas, Upanishads and the Sanskrit vocabulary which is "the outcome of a culture that founds itself on a metaphysic of cosmic unity and harmony" (S. Murali 162), impresses the native and non-native speakers with his artistic activity, and universality of spirit, thereby under-writing the Judeo-Christian God as "one masculine potentate as creator, conceived under a metaphysic of power, dominance and subjugation." (S. Murali 164) His English is not one of power-discourse between God, humanity and nature.

Sri Aurobindo says that language or speech can express two elements: "the outward or instrumental and the real or spiritual". (CWSA 26: 18) The outward element is merely a medium through which "the real or spiritual" element is expressed. Language expresses "the real or spiritual", it has the inherent quality to capture the soul of the subject at deliberation. Therefore, it is neither arbitrary nor stable but is constantly changing by defying boundaries that have been allocated to it, and writers have the creative license to expand this boundary. To him, words, which are "physical sounds", have a purpose beyond this external use; it possesses an inherent "suggestive turn, aptness and vividness and richness and beauty" (CWSA 26: 272) to manifest the "home of Truth, *sadanad rtasya*" which is "the inherent divinity of the manifestation". (Orton 288) He calls this creative force and truth in language "Nature-Force" which the ancient Vedic thinkers identified as "*Vak*, the goddess of creative Speech". (CWSA 26: 289) It is a given that such a language must be "a profound enlightening idea and creative interpretation of the world and Nature and all that man is and does and thinks and dreams" (CWSA 26: 275), and by its very definition necessarily invalidates transcendence-immanence and humanity-nature dualisms.

The Future Poetry, which records Sri Aurobindo's critical genius, analyses this role of language, poetic language in particular, thus charting out "its evolution from the objective to the subjective approach and from the subjective to the spiritual." (Gokak 112) It also observes an English language that must unite the ideal and the form and celebrate the soul of humanity and nature. Sri Aurobindo, who employs such English in his writings, effectively reverses transcendence-immanence and humanity-nature dualisms. His nature images and symbols celebrate a symbiosis of God, the natural world and humanity.

His language, which is a combination of English and Sanskrit, naturally defies the hierarchical infliction of English by subtly incorporating the environmental ethics of an ecologically-sensitive Sanskrit language. For instance, Sri Aurobindo uses the word "Vishnu" in the poem, "In the Moonlight", to indicate the Divine's part in maintaining balance in the universe or "enring the earth". Lord Vishnu is the immortal Will who "In Asia like a dove immaculate/ He lurks deep-brooding in the hearts of men." (CWSA 2: 239) He is revered as the "preserver" because he "wars for the world and its ultimate years". (CWSA 2: 202) He thus symbolises "Heaven's claim upon the toiling earth" as one worthy of immortality. (CWSA 2: 244) This idea is singularly Indian and ecologically-insightful. Lord Vishnu has no counterpart in the Western tradition. S. Murali notes, "Ecological wisdom is as old as the oldest religious traditions in the world." (171) So, Sri Aurobindo says that Europe is delusional because she

Knows not, nor any of her schools
Who scorn the higher thought for dreams of fools;

Riches and joy and power meanwhile are gained. (CWSA 2: 239)

Similarly, everything is the Brahman because all existence is divine delight or ananda, as elucidated in the poem, "Shiva", in the lines:

On the white summit of eternity
A single Soul of bare infinities,
Guarded he keeps...His mystic loneliness of nude ecstasy.
But, touched by an immense delight to be,
He looks across unending depths and sees...
Life springs in her and Mind is born; her face
She lifts to Him who is Herself, until
The Spirit leaps into the Spirit's embrace. (CWSA 2: 609)

"A single Soul of bare infinities" is Lord Shiva who is beyond the cosmic play. He participates in the universal/cosmic creative process out of "an immense delight to be" (CWSA 2: 609). Lord Shiva has no counterpart in the Western tradition since the Judeo-Christian tradition maintains that creation rose out of chaos and darkness. The concept of a God who punishes his creation is missing in Hindu religion because a God cannot punish the same creation which he created out of an "immense delight to be". (CWSA 2: 609) Thus, Sri Aurobindo speaks of a God who affirms "on Nature's soil His sovereign rights". (CWSA 2: 613)

By raising his consciousness above superficial reasoning, Sri Aurobindo fine-tunes the English language with the help of the ecologically-nuanced concepts of Indian thought. Thus, his English reverberates with ecological wisdom, reinforcing the divinity of nature. Sri Aurobindo liberates the English language from the clutches of a discriminatory 'logos' that maintains nature is inferior to humanity because it does not adhere to a language that ascribes primary position to human speech and human values. (Manes 24) Such a language is not free of logocentric politics and cannot be ecologically humble.

On other hand, a non-verbal language makes itself heard through "silence, and solitude and learning how to listen". (Kheel 63) Sri Aurobindo hears this non-verbal language of nature in "silence, and solitude" by incorporating the Sanskrit vocabulary, such as Brahman, *Purusha*, Ishwara, Maya, *Prakriti*, *Shakti*, *Dharma*, *Karma*, and others into the English language in order to retain their spirit and essence, thereby expressing his 'Hindu' experiences in a foreign *language* which least recognises the 'Hindu' experience of universal unity and harmony. He is one of the earliest authors to set this trend, thereby influencing Mulk Raj Anand and his generation to use vernaculars in their English writings. Anand used Hindi; Sri Aurobindo infused the logo-centric English with the ecologically-humbled linguistic of Sanskrit. But merely using the vernacular in English to give it a native colour and smell (Indianised English) is not enough. The writer must not use it merely as a literary tool, and the speaker must not solely use it as a tool of random communication. Instead, language must be an apparatus to measure the level of consciousness of a writer or speaker. So, if a speaker were to sexualize a language, it is a sign of him externalizing his ego, thereby, working the language as a tool of vulgarity and oppression. Therefore, the speaker must affect an inward change in his consciousness to speak a language which has the capacity to decode any superficial dualities and embrace them not as opposites but the same. Based

on this logic, it can be assumed that the interpreters of the Bible—constrained by an overtly moral religion, born of a divisive mind (reason as the finest medium of experiencing God in Christianity), penned down a scripture replete with fear of God: shame of humanity, and despair of nature.

Savitri: a Legend and a Symbol is the poetry of tomorrow, and its language is the language of tomorrow. The Mother called it “the supreme revelation of Sri Aurobindo’s vision”. This modern-day epic comprises almost twenty-four thousand lines: the longest in the history of the English language. It is mantric in its quality to invoke the Divine Consciousness to manifest in matter and nature and transform all life as into a Divine Truth. The very first line of *Savitri*, “It was the hour before the Gods awake” (CWSA 33: 1) is mantric as it points out not an event which happened once in history but “to one that constantly and repeatedly happens”. It is a truth which took a religio-mythic turn as “a part of India’s temple-life for millennia: the daily awakening of the Gods.” (Shraddhavan 13-14) This line proves that Gods reside in nature as her manifold powers and expressions and help to perpetuate “the harmonious functions by which the universe moves on its progressive path.” (Shraddhavan 14) Thus, Sri Aurobindo invokes Usas, the Goddess of Dawn and Light, to bring upon a new day and enlighten his being and speech and in matter’s grey breast kindle the immortal Light which is why he titled the very first chapter of *Savitri: a Legend and a Symbol* as “The Symbol Dawn”.

Sri Aurobindo was aware of the difficulty of using a foreign tongue replete with indigenous similes, metaphors, images and symbols which are Vedic in proportion in their rendering of supraphysical planes of beings and consciousnesses. Yet he outbraves the challenge, thereby, transforming the hierarchal English language to reflect the occult and mystic truth of word or language as revelation or *vak*. Sri Aurobindo hails Savitri as the bearer of a new language, the Chit-Tapas behind transforming the very material or nature of the pre-Aurobindonian English language into a mantra of tomorrow in the lines:

O living power of the incarnate Word,
All that the Spirit has dreamed thou canst create:
Thou art the force by which I made the worlds,
Thou art my vision and my will and voice. (CWSA 34: 693)

Dante’s Beatrice, who represents beatific love, is limited in her capacity to make Dante love her only for one lifetime. Milton’s Satan is only capable of making the readers feel remorse and anger at a fate which is unconquerable. The kind of supramental experiences that Savitri undergoes by conquering Death and recognising that immanence and transcendence are one and the same makes her realise that conquering one’s ego and affecting an integral change in one’s inner and outer nature is not only explicit in its detailed descriptions but incomparable in its depth of seeking and realising the Divine in “the worlds”. Sri Aurobindo’s *Savitri* must be lauded for her spiritual prowess for taking upon herself the sorrows of the world and affecting change in matter which has been repeatedly shunned for its incapacity to mould and respond.

Sri Aurobindo says that Savitri’s “thoughts and actions” are “graved in Nature’s book”. (CWSA 33: 19) This is the reason why Shraddhavan observes that they have “a long-lasting

evolutionary significance and effect". (120) She also says that to the realised, nature reveals herself as a "divine Presence, a Godhead". To conclude, *Savitri: a Legend and a Symbol* is "the incarnate Word" which manifests the collective transformation of humanity and matter into a measureless reality of the Delight to be. Thus, Sri Aurobindo's *magnum opus* effectively dissolves any dualisms, be it of transcendence and immanence or God, humanity and nature.

Hailing from the East, his roots entrenched deep into Indian philosophy, Sri Aurobindo bridges the Western ontological gap between transcendence and immanence and God, humanity and nature. In the words of S. Murali, Sri Aurobindo's integral philosophy, founded on the tenets of the Vedanta thought, bases itself on the mindset of the erstwhile Indians and seeks to inculcate in them a practice to venerate nature. His vision "is grounded in a distinctly non-Eurocentric tradition, and any approach to his work has to take into account this factor." (S. Murali 100)

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“Find out thy soul..”

Shruti Bidwaikar

In *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo lays out a clear guideline for an inner and vaster journey. These steps could act like goalposts for the one who takes to Integral yoga. One would know the stage at which one is. It is worthwhile to quote all the three steps, although we intend to limit our analysis only to the first step of finding the soul as it corroborates with a few cantos in *Savitri*. The first step, he writes is:

In the spiritual knowledge of self, there are three steps of its self-achievement which are at the same time three parts of the one knowledge. The first is the discovery of the soul, not the outer soul of thought and emotion and desire, but the secret psychic entity, the divine element within us. When that becomes dominant over the nature, when we are consciously the soul and when mind, life and body take their true place as its instruments, we are aware of a guide within that knows the truth, the good, the true delight and beauty of existence, controls heart and intellect by its luminous law and leads our life and being towards spiritual completeness. (CWSA 21-22: 653)

Further he says, “The next step is to become aware of the eternal self in us unborn and one with the self of all beings” (Ibid: 654). Next, he says, “The third step is to know the Divine Being who is at once our supreme transcendent Self, the Cosmic Being...” (Ibid)

This paper intends (3rd person) to study only a few Cantos from Book Seven of Sri Aurobindo’s epic *Savitri*, which are related to the finding of the soul. The above quote from *The Life Divine* is more for a reference to bear in mind that the journey to find the soul is only the first step in sadhana.

In Canto One of Book Seven, we get a beautiful and vivid description of the loving relationship of Satyavan and Savitri. It brings out the joy that Savitri experiences when she is with Satyavan, and the sorrow of her heart that she has not expressed to anyone. While the doomsday is nearing Savitri’s longing for Satyavan increases and she is unable to think of what she can do to save him. She becomes like a “dumb priest” – one who knows her mantras very well, but is as if unable to articulate them. For some time, she becomes the human Savitri, who has, as if, forgotten her real identity and the purpose of her birth upon earth. There is a point where Savitri cries “My strength is taken from me and given to Death. /Why should I lift my hands to the shut heavens...” However, despite this sorrow she is quiet and has the patience and openness to listen to her inner voice. This inner voice reminds her of her mission on earth.

Nolini Kanta Gupta explains briefly about this condition of Savitri and the guidance she receives:

But a thunderous voice descends from above shaking Savitri to the very basis of her existence.

“And what shall thy soul say when it wakes and knows
The work was left undone for which it came?”

Thus, a crisis very similar to that which Aswapati had to face now confronts Savitri

also. Both of them were at the crossroads away from the earth in the pure delights of the heavens or in the world labouring on earth's soil. Savitri's soul was now revealed to her in its fullness. She viewed the mighty destiny for which she had come down and the great work she had to achieve here upon earth, not any personal or individual human satisfaction or achievement but a cosmic fulfilment, a global human realisation. The godhead in Savitri is now fully awake, established in its plenitude – the Divinity incarnate in the human frame. (NKG 4: 243)

The above explanation makes it clear that Savitri had a mission to accomplish and she is reminded of it right when she has apparently forgotten about it.

A mighty Voice invaded mortal space...
Why camest thou to this dumb deathbound earth,
This ignorant life beneath indifferent skies
Tied like a sacrifice on the altar of Time,
O spirit, O immortal energy,
If 'twas to nurse grief in a helpless heart
Or with hard tearless eyes await thy doom?
Arise, O soul, and vanquish Time and Death. (Ibid: 474)

We see here that already the soul within commands her "Arise, O soul, and vanquish Time and Death." Savitri is reminded that she has not come down to earth to just live and die; her mission is to conquer time and death. And that is why she needed a reminder. So, when she is in that dreary mood, a voice reminds her of her transformative mission even though she says that her strength is taken away from her and given to death. The voice again replies:

Remember why thou cam'st:
Find out thy soul, recover thy hid self,
In silence seek God's meaning in thy depths,
Then mortal nature change to the divine.
Open God's door, enter into his trance.
Cast Thought from thee, that nimble ape of Light:
In his tremendous hush stilling thy brain
His vast Truth wake within and know and see.
Cast from thee sense that veils thy spirit's sight:
In the enormous emptiness of thy mind
Thou shalt see the Eternal's body in the world,
Know him in every voice heard by thy soul,
In the world's contacts meet his single touch;
All things shall fold thee into his embrace.
Conquer thy heart's throbs, let thy heart beat in God:
Thy nature shall be the engine of his works,
Thy voice shall house the mightiness of his Word:
Then shalt thou harbour my force and conquer Death." (Ibid: 476)

It is important to note here Sri Aurobindo provides us with all the details of the journey to be undertaken. Here above, as if we get a synopsis of this journey, an itinerary. He will also take us through all the hills and valleys to find out the soul, all based on his own experiences.

Here, we may recollect that the Bhagavad Gita which tells us to have command over

oneself. One has to become the *swarat* and then only one can become *samrat*, have control on external circumstances. So, Savitri's journey in the four cantos (from 2-5) portrays her as a master of her nature. At the same time, she has to do more intense tapasya, make more efforts because the task ahead of her is much bigger and greater.

Now let us move on to the steps she is taking. Draw your attention to this line “In silence seek God's meaning in thy depths.” What Savitri does is “She looked into herself and sought for her soul”. (Ibid: 477) She is quiet for she has started the journey. And now what she gets is the revelation of the cosmic past. This is again very interesting because here she is able to visualise the entire evolution of how the earth was formed, how life evolved from matter and how animals slowly evolved into human beings. In fact,

Sri Aurobindo here gives us the trajectory of how the primitive man evolved into the thinking man. The small details of this process are mentioned in canto 2. Now,

A dream disclosed to her the cosmic past,
The crypt-seed and the mystic origins,
The shadowy beginnings of world-fate: (Ibid: 477)

So, we see here how evolution has taken place. In order to conquer the outer nature, which is the aim of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo's yoga, one has to find the psychic being. And that is also mentioned in these lines:

Earth must transform herself and equal Heaven
Or Heaven descend into earth's mortal state.
But for such vast spiritual change to be,
Out of the mystic cavern in man's heart
The heavenly Psyche must put off her veil
And step into common nature's crowded rooms. (Ibid: 486-87)

This is exactly what the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have been telling us all through, that we have to first find our psychic being before we can take up the yoga of ascent into the higher worlds like Aswapati did in his climbing of the “world stair”. Sri Aurobindo himself has emphasized:

It is certainly better if the psychic is conscious and active before there is the removing of the veil or screen between the individual and the universal consciousness which comes when the inner being is brought forward in all its wideness. For then there is much less danger of the difficulties of what I have called the intermediate zone. (CWSA 30: 307)

Sri Aurobindo has been through these intermediate zones which he came across during the ascent and therefore, in “The Book of Yoga” he emphasizes that finding the psychic being is of utmost importance because it can protect us from all dangers.

Now we proceed to canto three which marks Savitri's entry into the inner countries. What she does is to “Open God's door, enter into his trance”. (CWSA 33-34: 476) Initially her mind is very quiet as when we meditate – the physical consciousness is almost suspended. For example, when we go to the Matrimandir, at times we are almost engulfed by the silence

and we lose the sense of the surroundings. However, after sometime our minds become a market-place of thoughts. This is what happens with Savitri when she has an inward look.

At first out of the busy hum of mind
As if from a loud thronged market into a cave
By an inward moment's magic she had come. (Ibid: 488)

When we enter a cave, there is quietude and it is a little dark. So, when Savitri enters her inner cave, she meets with negative temptations, desires, angers, passions, monsters, etc. that are there in the lower vital. She is going to meet all these beings. But she hears: "Back, creature of earth, lest tortured and torn thou die." (Ibid: 489) There are beings in occult level connected to the vital who dissuade her from taking this journey. That is where she comes across the first resistance. Savitri meets these stark resistances within. In this space she is not even able to breathe. It is extremely painful and she feels claustrophobic. These beings try to push her out of that zone but she moves on with all her will, strength in silence. She moves forward and reaches the second level.

A start of finiteness, a world of sense:
But all was still confused, nothing self-found. (Ibid: 490)

She has reached a place where she was unable to breathe. But, "At last she broke into a form of things" (Ibid) and now this place where she knocks, has the door to enter the subtle physical world which is pell-mell. But at last, she comes out to a place where she finds something that has a specific form. Previously, there was no form but now there is form. Sri Aurobindo uses the word "mob" very distinctly: here he says that no voice is clear, it is like standing in a stadium filled with people who are all shouting at the same time. Nothing is clear: "a hood of sounds defied significance", he writes: there were so many sounds that they "defied significance". This is the world of senses that Savitri comes across.

Next comes the world of lower vital which is even more dangerous than the world of senses because it is inhabited by growls and terrifying beings. There are witches who attempt to chide Savitri by telling her not to undertake this kind of a journey. We need to remember here that Sri Aurobindo has used images of the outer world to convey Savitri journey to the inner world. It is extremely difficult to express one's inner experiences in mental terms but Sri Aurobindo, the master craftsman has been able to do so. He has been able to ignite our imagination to this inner world.

In this vital world there is resistance but it is here that we find strength and power to go forward. There is a longing to know something that is not known in this world.

A search for the glory of the impossible.
It dreamed of that which never has been known,
It grasped at that which never has been won,
It chased into an Elysian memory...
Its fear and joy and ecstasy and despair,
Its occult wizardries, its simple lines
And great communions and uplifting moves,
Its faith in heaven, its intercourse with hell.
These powers were not blunt with the dead weight of earth,
They gave ambrosia's taste and poison's sting. (Ibid: 492-93)

Our vital feels intense joy and sorrow. It pulls us to the heavenly heights and brings us down to hell too. So, it makes us taste the ambrosia of the life and the poison of pain and suffering. It is interesting that in a few lines Sri Aurobindo has explained the lower vital, the life force and the higher vital. Another important characteristic of this vital is that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have constantly mentioned that we have to be extremely vigilant when we take up the path of sadhana because there are forces, beings and lights which can be deceptive. Sri Aurobindo does mention them here:

Mind's voices mimicked inspiration's stress,
Its ictus of infallibility,
Its speed and lightning heaven-leap of the Gods. (Ibid: 493)

We talk of inspirations and intuitions that we get when we sit down to write poetry or do a painting and we immediately feel as if we are connected to the level of intuition or inspiration and feel a thrill to do this kind of work. But Sri Aurobindo does warn us that we have to be extremely vigilant because these could be the vital voices or the voices coming from the vital world and they can deceive us and we would not even realise that they are not from the higher levels of consciousness. They are so beautiful that one may be led to believe that they are from the higher worlds. They become like those who are wearing the light of intuition and guide us for the time being. But if we are not vigilant then we are trapped in that and what is important is that Savitri does not get trapped in them. She is just an observer and is not carried away by these apparent intuitions and inspirations. Sri Aurobindo also writes that the vital is an agent and not the master; they serve life's desires. So, we also know that he has mentioned in one of his letters that the vital is a good servant but a bad master.

Savitri is able to wade through this level. She shifts over to a stage which is slightly more organised has more control over the vital. It is the level of the mind. Up till now there was no control of the mind. The vital was refusing the control of the mind but on the mental level it is controlled. We can imagine of a child who is utterly playful; the mother has to bring it under some control. Similarly, we have seen or read in the history books as well and novels that princesses in many cultures, be it Queen Elizabeth, Rani of Jhansi or even for that matter Ahilyabai Holkar, when they were unmarried, were very playful, flamboyant and vivacious as they were allowed to be themselves. The moment they became a queen, they were not allowed to be themselves; they were not allowed to behave the way they wanted to. And Sri Aurobindo does use this imagery in the lines:

Or like a high-bred maiden with chaste eyes
Forbidden to walk unveiled the public ways,
She must in close secluded chambers move,
Her feeling in cloisters live or gardened paths. (Ibid: 496)

So, we see how the vital "like a high-bred maiden" who is under control or "forbidden to walk unveiled the public ways". That is where we see that the vital is under control. Going further what Savitri meets? Too much of regimentation has taken place and the vital has come under control of law and order. This is the region where Savitri moves to.

Next, she comes to a place where it is the pure mind. And here she meets the beings of the mind. They also tell her about the pride that the mind has. And Sri Aurobindo is very

careful in mentioning these because we know that we are very proud because we consider ourselves better and higher than animals and plants. We can have control over nature. All this has filled the human mind with a lot of pride. What does he tell Savitri?

Traveller or pilgrim of the inner world,
Fortunate art thou to reach our brilliant air
Flaming with thought's supreme finality.
O aspirant to the perfect way of life,
Here find it; rest from search and live at peace. (Ibid: 498)

So, the mind takes pride in being the last rung of creation. Now all our searching and quests come to an end here: "This is the end and there is no beyond". (Ibid: 499) This is how the mind has perceived the world. This is the end when it has created a theory in science. There cannot be anything beyond the mind! It thinks that it has passed the law. This is the end and there cannot be anything beyond it.

Savitri does not align herself with what this voice tells her; she is not happy but she is just quiet, in fact she knows that she has to simply move forward. What she states:

Happy are they who in this chaos of things,
This coming and going of the feet of Time,
Can find the single Truth, the eternal Law:
Untouched they live by hope and doubt and fear. (Ibid: 499)

Now we have to address the three to four qualities that Savitri mentions and she herself possesses them.

Happy are men anchored on fixed belief
In this uncertain and ambiguous world,
Or who have planted in the heart's rich soil
One small grain of spiritual certitude.
Happiest who stand on faith as on a rock.
But I must pass leaving the ended search,
Truth's rounded outcome firm, immutable
And this harmonic building of world-fact,
This ordered knowledge of apparent things.
Here I can stay not, for I seek my soul. (Ibid)

What do we have in our mind and in our heart? A "spiritual certitude" and a "fixed belief". They are all in the domain of the mind. Happiest are those who have faith. But she cannot rest with this mental faith and heart's certitude. She has to move forward to find her soul. However, Sri Aurobindo does give a small description to clarify this idea:

So she fared on across her silent self.
To a road she came thronged with an ardent crowd
Who sped brilliant, fire-footed, sunlight-eyed,
Pressing to reach the world's mysterious wall. (Ibid: 500)

This is the zone or stage where Savitri comes across those elevated beings who have an aspiration like Savitri to forge ahead but cannot proceed because of their mental formations or intellectual rigidity. Thus, they are incapacitated, but they are overjoyed to see that there is one being, Savitri, who is able to go beyond, go forward, asking them to show her the way because Savitri does ask them:

O happy company of luminous gods,
Reveal, who know, the road that I must tread. (Ibid: 501)

She asks for the road and goes forward. Now while she advances, she has an inclination of “One felt the silent nearness of the soul”. (Ibid: 502) She starts feeling that she is approaching the soul somewhere.

Now we come to canto 4 called “The Triple Soul Forces”. It is important to understand that Savitri has moved to a certain level within herself and she has come to a stage where an ascent is required to be made. She is ascending to these triple soul forces. In fact,

Sri Aurobindo does mention in the opening lines of this canto:

Here from a low and prone and listless ground
The passion of the first ascent began; (Ibid: 503)

As she is ascending, she comes across the three Madonnas: Madonna of suffering, Madonna of might and Madonna of light. And at the same time, we have to remember that the movement is within. She meets these three Madonnas but there is a voice which tries to pull her down and those are the three voices: the man of sorrows, the man of ego and the man of ignorance. So, they are the counterpart to Madonnas; every time she moves forward, there is a force pulling her down. We need to remember that when we are on this path of sadhana, we might encounter these forces and beings of light and darkness or dinginess. These soul forces are a part of Savitri’s journey towards realising her soul; they tell her not to go further into these levels. There are the three Madonnas who are incomplete for one doesn’t have the strength, the other doesn’t have the compassion and the third doesn’t have the power to transform. And Savitri gives them the assurance that “One day I will return, His hand in mine”, and “There shall be light and peace in all the worlds”. (Ibid: 521)

Canto 5 “The Finding of the Soul” depicts an extremely difficult picture of these beings within. It is difficult to even think because the way Sri Aurobindo has described here, “As if in a rock-temple’s solitude hid, / God’s refuge from an ignorant worshipping world”. (Ibid: 523) These lines remind us of the beautiful Indian temples, especially in South India. So, he compares Savitri’s inner discovery to the painful carving of a temple. Both the processes are time-consuming and difficult. This also gives us an understanding of what we read in *The Foundations of Indian Culture* for Sri Aurobindo says that temples are built upon the image that one sees within. These temples are carved out by somebody who has found something within.

An awful dimness wrapped the great rock-doors
Carved in the massive stone of Matter’s trance.
Two golden serpents round the lintel curled,
Enveloping it with their pure and dreadful strength, ... (Ibid: 523-24)

Now, Savitri has come to that stage where she has completely surrendered herself. Next,

In a simple purity of emptiness
Her mind knelt down before the unknowable.
All was abolished save her naked self
And the prostrate yearning of her surrendered heart:
There was no strength in her, no pride of force...

Her self was nothing, God alone was all,
Yet God she knew not but only knew he was. (Ibid: 522)

In this surrendered condition, she reaches the “rock-doors” and within them she sees formations. When she reaches a chamber, she sees beautiful gods and goddesses. In fact, Sri Aurobindo mentions “And found herself amid great figures of gods/ Conscious in stone and living without breath.” (Ibid). She goes further inwards from one door to another like we go inside a temple. And finally, she meets her soul going from one tunnel to another.

In the last chamber on a golden seat
One sat whose shape no vision could define;
Only one felt the world’s unattainable fount,
A Power of which she was a straying Force,
An invisible Beauty, goal of the world’s desire,
A Sun of which all knowledge is a beam,
A Greatness without whom no life could be.
Thence all departed into silent self,
And all became formless and pure and bare.
Then through a tunnel dug in the last rock
She came out where there shone a deathless sun.
A house was there all made of flame and light
And crossing a wall of doorless living fire
There suddenly she met her secret soul. (Ibid: 525-26)

Finally, Savitri meets with her secret soul. Sri Aurobindo describes about the psychic being and its size and the difference between the soul and the psychic being. What happens is now that her psychic being has been realised and it comes forwards. When the psychic being comes forward, it helps with the opening of the heart chakra. And it is important that the heart chakra opens first. Sri Aurobindo has responded to a letter regarding which centre one should open and what are its benefits and dangers:

One can concentrate in any of the three centres which is easiest to the sadhak or gives most result. The power of the concentration in the heart-centre is to open that centre and by the power of aspiration, love, bhakti, surrender remove the veil which covers and conceals the soul and bring forward the soul or psychic being to govern the mind, life and body and turn and open them all—fully—to the Divine, removing all that is opposed to that turning and opening. (CWSA 29: 307)

Savitri’s psychic being has come forward and so automatically her heart chakra has opened up. But what is most important is that when her heart chakra opens, she does not try to force open the other chakras. She invites the Divine Mother there. This is what Sri Aurobindo keeps on insisting, that let the Mother come in and let her do the yoga on our behalf. And so “Calling the mighty Mother of the worlds/ To make this earthly tenement her house”. (Ibid: 528) She calls the mighty Mother and with that her entire kundalini wakes up and merges with the *sahasrar* chakra or the cosmic forces. Now her kundalini has opened up and it is live and active. There are descriptions again of how each of her centres has responded, how they have become refined. Here what we need to remember is that the kundalini also comes under the impact of the Divine Mother. It is the descent of the Divine Mother’s force that opens these and now they are refined chakras working under the

influence of the Divine Mother and the psychic being. The psychic being is established and "A camp of God is pitched in human time". (Ibid: 531) Savitri has found her soul.

In silence seek God's meaning in thy depths...
Open God's door, enter into his trance. (Ibid: 476)

This in brief was Savitri's journey to find her soul. With this as her base she moves on to experience Nirvana and then the cosmic consciousness.

Reading these descriptions of Savitri's journey is indeed rewarding because they are not just picturesque narrations, but, it is as if Sri Aurobindo has laid down the entire map of the inner worlds before us. When we want to walk on the path, we will have all the milestones and landmarks well charted out so that we do not go astray. No wonder, Sri Aurobindo named this particular book as "Book of Yoga"! He has shown us the path of yoga through this entire Book. Of course, it is left to each individual as and when he/she embarks upon the journey and respond to the clarion call of the poet.



Psychic Offering

It is the spontaneous attitude of the psychic towards the Divine.

Integral Education: A Joyous Alternative

Chhalamayi Reddy

Education as a subject concern us all and can be said to be the cause and solution to all problems of right living. Different generations would look at it according to their perception and what they expect out of it. Unlike other subjects which are intellectual and spiritual in content, education is something to think about with a sense of urgency. It involves all of us. As the paper addresses issues related to the ideals of education, the scope widens and becomes rather complex. This paper will consist of three parts:

- I. The goal and purpose of education
- II. The vision and practice of Integral education
- III. National Education Policy 2020

I. The goal and purpose of education:

To begin with, we need to revisit the goals and purpose of education as is usually understood. The one continuing purpose of education, since ancient times has been to bring people to as full a realization as possible, of what it is to be a human being. This is at best the broader humanistic view.

The other more prevalent purpose which have been widely accepted is to develop the intellect, to serve social needs, to contribute to the economy, to create an effective work force, to prepare students for a job or career and to promote a particular social or political system.

These purposes offered are limited in scope and in some instances, conflict with the broader humanitarian purposes. They imply a partially distorted view of human existence. In India in 1835, Lord Macaulay introduced English education to create a work force of clerks and administrators under the British Raj. This added to the shortsightedness regarding the aims of education.

How was the education in ancient times in India?

A singular feature of ancient Indian civilisation was that the religious or spiritual influence was dominant over the life of the people. These high ideals and spiritual orientations were reflected in the attitudes as well as norms practiced under the framework of Dharma in the social, political, economical and cultural life of the people. In education, this distinctive tendency manifested to its maximum. Education was sought as a means of salvation or self-realization. It was the means to the highest end of life. It was *mukti* or emancipation. Hence, the most ancient literature for a period of thousands of years bore an exclusive spiritual stamp. The Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas and the Bhagavad Gita bear testimony to this.

Ancient Indian education has to be understood in the light of its vision of life and death. Its perspective of the material and spiritual, perishable and permanent values of life has also to be perceived. Education focussed on the fundamental truths of life and not the half-truths or intermediate truths. Ancient Indian education also taught the main sixty-four *kalas* and innumerable vocations in trade, art and crafts.

The Hindu thought conceived of the individual primarily as a soul inhabiting in a body, life and mind. The supreme duty and self fulfilment lay in the realisation of the Absolute. The individual was a potential God, a spark of the Divine. Thus, education primarily had to aid in this self-fulfilment and not in the acquisition of mere objective knowledge. It was concerned more with the subject than the object, the inner than the outer world. Its method was that of Yoga, the process of purification, (*chitta-vritti-nirodha*) through the means of self discipline and meditation.

Over the centuries education changed. Incursions disrupted traditional education systems and foreign armies raided educational institutions. Over time, during the Middle Ages, there was a divide between the spiritual and academic knowledge, although the later balanced science and humanities. The living shifted from the ashrama to the *gurukula*. This was followed by attending educational institutions such as colleges, schools and private tuitions under the British rule.

The present generation is a product of the Post-Independence education, which severed complete ties with the higher aims of life and became aggressively utilitarian in its motives.

The Ashram school at Pondicherry was started by the Mother in 1943 for the children who came with their parents during World War II and sought shelter at the feet of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The Mother herself became the teacher for these children. Over the years it has become one of the unique schools in the country. It was officially inaugurated in 1952 and in 1959 was renamed as Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education.

According to the Mother:

Education does not mean that learning is just for the sake of earning money through one's life, although that too is a necessary objective, but the education should indeed involve all parts of our being, physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual.

Disengaging firstly, from a purely utilitarian motive in the acquisition of knowledge for itself, is an initial step to ensuring it to becoming a joyous experience.

It is not for our family, it is not to secure a good position, it is not to earn money, it is not to obtain a diploma that we study. We study to learn, to know, to understand the world, and for the sake of the joy that it gives us.

It is hard to imagine, looking at the present scenario of educational institutions, whether such an ideal is possible to conceive, leave alone implement it! This very mindset obstructs the possibility of its realization.

Are we stuck with only two ways of thinking about career? The first being to work intensely towards a preconceived goal of becoming an engineer, IT professional, a doctor, a lawyer, an IAS officer and obtain a lucrative job. The second being to be casual and careless, to be a rebel and not pay attention to education in the formal way. In both cases the future outcome is unsure and not guaranteed. Is there another way? This will be addressed it later.

Most people are not satisfied with the present system of education and agree that something radically different needs to be done in this field for a more meaningful life and

better society. What is sown, shall be reaped. How can anything else be expected, other than the mess created in this field of education if its goal is purely pragmatic?

II. The vision and practice of Integral education:

Integral education perceives the child to be a 'soul in evolution' and not as a prospective investment. The general idea of parents is that their child would become the pride of the family. Their child would take care of them, attain a high position in society, become wealthy, successful and famous. Being materially successful cannot be the only goal of life? Awakening and integral unfolding of the spiritual being has to be very purpose of life. This is the true intent of education. A new kind of education that would consciously go beyond the mundane aims of schooling is needed, which would create a growth oriented and evolutionary culture amongst youth. It would need to be distinctly different from being only a practical, functional social education.

It has to awaken the highest and deepest in man; molded by the truth of the soul. It cannot be an education merely for the body, nor the emotions or the mind. All the three domains need to find their inspiration in the light of the soul. The soul being the most important principle in a human being.

It is the education that significantly moulds most beliefs, attitudes and culture. If a new future is to be created, first a new consciousness in our youth has to be created. This means that the education for the future will have to be a consciousness education. It would be an education nurturing the growth of a higher consciousness in all aspects and parts of the being.

An integral education will be an education of the whole person. While most of the education practiced in schools focuses almost exclusively on the 'head'; an integral education addresses the 'head' as well as the 'heart', the 'body' and the 'soul'. The inmost being or the soul or the psychic being, is the growing Divine in each individual that insists always on the Truth, the Good and the Beautiful. It is the psychic being in the child which brings uniqueness and strength and beauty that needs to be brought out in all aspects of her life.

To achieve this end, two things need to be done. The first is the finding of the soul or the psychic being, the seat and the center of our psychological being, within. The next is the training and development of the mind, the emotions and the body that have to be organized around the centre of the individual's identity- the psychic. This implies that the soul will be the pivot of the whole process. The psychic being is what aspires for truth, beauty, harmony and love. It guides to walk the sunlit path of truth and righteousness and the inner strength to face all difficulties. It is the source of true love and joy, igniting the aspiration for constant progress, to self exceed and to bring forth our innate potential.

How do we get in touch with our psychic being?

The starting-point is to seek in yourself that which is independent of the body and the circumstances of life, which is not born of the mental formation that you have been given, the language you speak, the habits and customs of the environment in

which you live, the country where you are born or the age to which you belong. You must find, in the depths of your being, that which carries in it a sense of universality, limitless expansion, unbroken continuity.

What the human mental consciousness does not know and cannot do, this consciousness knows and does. It is like a light that shines at the centre of the being, radiating through the thick coverings of the external consciousness. It is through this psychic presence that the truth of an individual being comes into contact with him and the circumstances of his life.

The Mother

Here then is the other way where education has to prepare the student to discover her or his unique potential, innate capacity, passion and genius; the dream which is in the heart of every child. Education then, has to provide the training and development of the mind, the vital, and the physical of the child to express through any or all of them. It has to be kept importantly in mind that all the capacities need to be organized and integrated around the Soul or true Self which seeks to manifest Truth, Goodness and Beauty through all expressions.

Not many schools speak of such all-round or holistic development. They are different in their developmental approach. If the development is purely on the mental, the vital or physical domains without integrating with the psychic being, the outcome would be of a very capable and successful person who is egoistic in nature. It would result in an individual who glorifies and lives for one's own self.

In ancient times the way to come into contact with the soul was through a process of meditation and tapasya. However, integral education consists essentially of the work of analyzing one's psychological movements and developing an accurate understanding of the domains of one's being and one's psychological dynamics. The first movement of integral education consists in workings of one's personality that will lead to integration and harmony. These psychological tools of the integral process are self-observation, introspection and reflection, culminating in progressive self awareness and self mastery.

What then constitutes the training and development of the mind, the emotions and the body? The Mother and Sri Aurobindo have set ideals and principles to achieve perfection in each of these parts of being. These ideals and principles infuse the higher consciousness in every kind of activity.

Unlike the usual concept of perceiving mental education being merely the receiving and processing of information and teaching of subjects in snippets, it is taken to be the training, development and perfecting of the instruments or powers of the mind and its various faculties such as concentration, observation, memory and judgment, compare and contrast, imagination, reasoning and analysis. In addition, there is a higher purpose of awakening and developing these powers and capacities of the mind as an effective instrument for higher evolution. When students are engaged in conceptual learning by means of sharpening their faculties and not merely to cover the syllabus; the process opens up exploration, discovery

and challenges which stimulate curiosity and the joy to self exceed. The process of self-excellence replaces the need to prove superiority over the other. Competition is replaced by the true joy of the pursuit of excellence by seeking infallible knowledge.

The education of the vital is the domain of life impulses and the emotions. It is the most important field to train and discipline as students predominantly live in it. It is most intransigent in its ways and fixed in its preferences and prejudices, the seat of egoistic desires. This education has two parts: a) The sensitization of the senses extending to their refinement and enrichment by awakening of the aesthetic sensibility; b) the transformation of the emotional nature and character.

There is a great need in schools to provide for this field of development. A large number of activities can be arranged for children of all ages to engage in heightened sensory experience. This can consist of drawing their attention to observing and differentiating details in all the sensory fields. Importance can be given to create an environment which surrounds the growing child with beauty and appreciate its details in Nature.

Next would follow the awakening of the aesthetic sensibility by engaging in various fields of fine arts; art, music, dance, theater, etc. The idea is to educate the senses and create tasteful exposure in music, art, cinema, and literature. When children take interest, they would be very happy to engage in such pursuits.

The second ideal of the transformation of the emotions and character, is more complex in its scope involving a deeper understanding of the emotional needs and the natural rhythms of growth in children. It requires taking into consideration their temperament - rational, emotional or physically inclined; their learning styles- visual, audio, kinesthetic; their nature- Tamasic, Rajasic, Sattwic; and their disposition towards the pursuit of knowledge, power, wealth or service. To understand them and to acknowledge these individual unique traits is to give them a sense of self-worth.

An environment of love, care and encouragement devoid of comparison or judgment wherein there is room to make mistakes and to learn by them, is needed to be created. One of the best means to facilitate their emotional and psychological growth is through self reflection, by making them to becoming self aware and conscious of their thoughts, feelings and action. Children need to be provided enough time and space to be with themselves and give freedom to exercise choice. This process will ensure a delightful journey of growth and enable the experience of power and strength of character.

Physical education is a domain most naturally joyous and closest to the nature of children but also undermined and disregarded in its importance.

“Perfection of the body, as great a perfection as we can bring about by means at our disposal, must be the ultimate aim of physical culture.” The aim is that the body will manifest perfect beauty and harmony by means of a program of physical culture appropriate to different age groups. Games and sports for all will be a regular part of the curriculum. A methodical and comprehensive training of the body through exercises, yoga asana and fitness routine will be designed for the harmonious functioning of the body; not to forget

the personal knowledge of the body (not only biological), its various functions. Further, the practice of good habits, health and nutrition have to be learned.

During the initial years of school, children will be provided maximum opportunity to learn through play and physical activity; learning by doing. Instead of the syllabus being taught through books, children will learn by engaging in sensory and subject games which hone their cognitive skills. Conscious efforts will be made to keep the environment at school clean and beautiful in a simple manner. All these will fulfill the objective of physical education which is to celebrate beauty, strength and harmony of the body.

Importantly, as mentioned earlier, one needs to remember that it is only through the means of integration around the psychic that the mind, life, body can become its conscious instruments. The effort is consciously to bring in this deeper dimension of the psychic touch at every step, in every activity, in every means and form. The training of the parts of the personality of the mind, life, and body will then be complete by aligning them to the psychic so that they become natural extensions or instruments of the soul and manifest truth, goodness and beauty through the mind, heart and body respectively.

III. National Education Policy 2020:

The important question arises as who and how this high ideal of education is to be implemented in educational institutions? The role of the teacher and in Integral Education is daunting to say the least. As the Mother mentions it is not enough for the teacher to be good or learned or competent. The teacher has to be a yogi, that is, a perfected human being. It implies that teachers as well as parents of students of integral education can teach less by instruction and more by example and influence.

What then should be the personal qualities and competencies of the Integral teacher? What attitudes and psychological mindset she needs to bring to her work? Are there any prerequisites for selecting them? How are they to be trained? How are they to teach?

Children are the special gifts of God to parents. They are the ones who enable and provide opportunity for parents to evolve into better human beings. Just as teachers need to inspire children, parents all the more need to nurture by being good examples. Children don't listen to parents' instructions; they learn best by observing and emulating them.

The Mother has given ample guidelines both for parents and teachers in this regard. Sri Aurobindo provides the three Principles of Teaching and has clearly stated the goals of National Education a hundred years ago! It is heartening to note that finally the Education Ministry has considered incorporating in its policies some of those educational principles laid down by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as envisioned in Integral Education.

Sri Aurobindo sets the goal of national education to be thus:

It is an education proper to the Indian soul and need and temperament and culture that we in quest of, not indeed something faithful merely to the past, but to the developing soul of India, to her future need, to the greatness of her coming self-creation, to her eternal spirit.

At the same time, he says, “Our education must be up to date in form and substance and modern in life and spirit.”

Let us briefly select a few points from NEP 2020 and note how it reflects a few ideas and practices of Integral Education, although it is still far from its chore aim.

- i. It declares at the outset that the National Educational Policy envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high- quality education to all, and thereby making India a global knowledge superpower.
- ii. NEP recommends the medium of instruction up to grade 5, and preferably till grade 8 and even beyond to be home language/mother tongue/local language. Also, Sanskrit is to be offered at all levels of school and higher education as an important, enriching option for students, including as an option in the three-language formula.

Sri Aurobindo states: “The mother tongue is the proper medium of education and therefore the first energies of the child should be directed to the thorough mastering of the medium.”

He further asks

...the vital question is how we are to learn and make use of Sanskrit and the indigenous languages so as to get to the heart and intimate sense of our own culture and establish a vivid continuity between the still living power of our past and the yet uncreated power of the future...

- iii. NEP cites holistic development of learners stating that, “the aim of education will not only be cognitive development but also building character and creating holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with the key twenty-first century skills. Ultimately, knowledge is a deep-seated treasure and education helps in its manifestation as the perfection which is already within an individual.” This concept is at the very basis of Integral Education.
- iv. NEP elaborates on how experiential learning is to be adopted in all stages, including hands-on learning, arts-integrated and sports-integrated education. It mentions the need to integrate sports in education, as it serves to foster holistic development. Sports in education promotes physical and psychological wellbeing as also enhances cognitive abilities.

It explains how art integrated education will be embedded in classroom transactions. It would not only create joyful classrooms, but also imbibe Indian ethos through integration of Indian art and culture in the teaching and learning process. NEP also suggests greater flexibility of choice and lesser separation among curricular, co curricular, extracurricular, humanities and sciences, or between vocational or academic streams.

- v. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother spoke extensively about the importance of sensorial education and providing an environment of free play especially at an early age.

NEP has laid exclusive stress on play-based, activity based and inquiry-based learning at the early years of the child with minimal use of textbooks. (From age 3 to 6)

- vi. There has been always an overload of information and content in the present system of education. NEP declares that curriculum content will be reduced in each subject to its core essentials, to make space for critical thinking and more holistic, inquiry based, discovery based, discussion based, and analysis-based learning. In other words, it will encourage creative and critical thinking.

Sri Aurobindo has categorically stated how it is essential to build the powers of the mind and train the mental faculties instead of merely covering syllabus through rote method.

- vii. “Knowledge of India” is a program by NEP which will promote a rootedness and pride in India, its rich, diverse, ancient and modern culture, knowledge systems and traditions. All curriculum and pedagogy from the foundational stage onwards will be redesigned to be strongly rooted in the Indian and local context and ethos.
- viii. NEP will bring in new assessment for student development. It will shift from one that is summative which primarily tests rote memorization skills to one that is more regular and formative. The assessment system will be competency- based, promoting learning and development for the students testing higher order skills.
- ix. Greater autonomy will be extended to teachers in choosing appropriate aspects of pedagogy, they find most effective for the students in their classrooms.
- x. Importantly, NEP states the recognizing, identifying, and fostering the unique capabilities of each student, by sensitizing teachers as well as parents to promote each student’s holistic development in both academic and non-academic spheres.

Clearly, for us students and disciples of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, we see a bright future for education in India, to fulfill itself in the vision of Integral Education as NEP is taking the initial steps in that direction.

Institute of Human Study

2-2-4/1, O.U.Road, Hyderabad 500 044

Email: ihd_hyd@yahoo.com
newraceejournal@gmail.com

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I say no longer that nationalism is a creed, a religion, a faith; I say that it is the Sanatana Dharma which for us is nationalism. This Hindu nation was born with the Sanatana Dharma, with it it moves and with it it grows. When the Sanatana Dharma declines, then the nation declines, and if the Sanatana Dharma were capable of perishing, with the Sanatana Dharma it would perish. The Sanatana Dharma, that is nationalism. This is the message that I have to speak to you.

With my blessings.

27 October 1962