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blessings


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

Editor-in-Chief: V. ANANDA REDDY

Assistant Editor: SHRUTI BIDWAIKAR

Cover Page Image : NARENDRA JOSHI

Designing: VIPUL KISHORE

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

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From the Editor's Desk...

In the last few months India has been witnessing an astounding protest largely from the farmers of Pubjab. The protest was against the three farm laws that were passed by the Parliament of India in its last winter session of 2020. The three laws are basically:

- a) Farmer's Produce Trade and Commerce Act,
- b) Farmer's Agreement of Price Assurance and farm Services Act
- c) Essential Commodities Act

It was indeed a great discovery for us to find that Sri Aurobindo had written between 1901-1905, while serving under Sayajirao Geaekwar, Maharaja of Baroda, some solutions to the farmer's problems in Gujarat. The solutions of Sri Aurobindo given almost 120 years ago, do reflect some of the problems that the farmers in Punjab are facing at present. Hence, we included excerpts from Sri Aurobnodo's Reports in this issue of New Race.

Secondly, February is not only the Mother's 143rd birthday, but also Auroville's 53rd birthday. So we have included here a very deep analysis of Auroville as a city. It is again interesting to see the evolution of the city plan since this article was written long back.

This issue of New Race Volume 7 Issue I, is therefore very contemporary in a way and it may catch the interest of our readers.

Ananda Reddy



TRUTH



Power of Truth in the Subconscious

It can act only when sincerity is perfect.

Report on Trade: Agriculture (Excerpt)

Sri Aurobindo

(Sri Aurobindo wrote this Report between 1901 and 1905, while serving in the Princely State of Baroda. The speeches were intended for delivery by Sayajirao Gaekwar, the Maharaja of Baroda. One of them later was published in a collection of the Maharaja's speeches.)

26. Agriculture Causes.

The main features of agricultural decline are,

- (a) deterioration of the soil.
- (b) deterioration of cattle.
- (c) ignorance of the best methods
- (d) difficulty of procuring capital.

27. Disadvantages of the vighoti system.

The deterioration of the quality of the soil is very marked and arises from the vighoti assessment. The circumstances of the vighoti tenure have several very undesirable results.

In the first place they lead to continuous cultivation of the soil, the land never being left fallow, as assessment has to be paid whether the land is cultivated or not. The soil must obviously lose its productive power under such circumstances. It would be better for the State not to exact assessment from lands left fallow.

In the second place they lead to extensive cultivation, no provision being left for pasture.

Thirdly they lead to more land being undertaken by the cultivator than he can properly cultivate. Its full value is therefore not realized from the soil; less labour and less manuring results in a poorer out-turn over a larger area.

Fourthly they lead to the soil being taken up by Brahmins, Vaniyas and others ignorant of agriculture, the real agriculturists remaining as labourers without any interest in the soil.

A smaller area carefully cultivated by cultivators with an interest in the soil, sufficient land being left for pasture, would be far better than the present condition of large cultivated areas with a poor out-turn, deteriorating soil and deteriorating cattle.

27. *Deterioration of soil. (* This number is repeated in the original report.—Ed.)

With regard to the deterioration of the soil a committee of expert and practical men should be appointed to inquire

- (a) what is the extent of the deterioration;
- (b) what are the elements of fertility which have been lost;
- (c) what are the materials (manure etc.) by which the lost elements can be recovered;
- (d) which of these are the cheapest and most plentiful;
- (e) as to divisions of soil what materials are required for each and in what amounts;
- (f) in what *tapas* to introduce them;
- (g) by what means to impart the knowledge of them to the kheduts;
- (h) in what way to make their use compulsory on the cultivators.

The committee should be empowered to make the necessary experiments and after a year's experience make a report.

28. Irrigation.

The most obvious means of enriching the soil are irrigation and manuring. Wherever there are no talavs, wells, nehers or rivers, Government should sink one pucca well for every 100 bighas; the expenses could be recovered in nine or ten years, an addition being made to the assessment of the fields for that purpose. The same measure should be taken wherever asked for by poverty stricken cultivators. The preservation of the wells should rest with the cultivators.

Abyssinian and Artesian wells should be constructed.

When cultivators dig wells and make the land bagayat they should be excused bagayat assessment for ten years as otherwise they will have to pay both assessment and the interest of Government money.

29. Tagavi.

An universal complaint comes from every taluka against the working of the tagavi rules; it is stated that these are not carried out either liberally or expeditiously; that tagavi is given to new immigrants from outside who decamp with the money while the subjects of the Raj can with difficulty obtain it; that people are shy of taking tagavi because if they cannot pay punctually owing to a bad season or other accident, they are at once posted as defaulters and their credit ruined &c. The Commission can only recommend that a reliable inquiry should be made in the matter.

30. Manuring.

It appears that in several Talukas the people are not allowed to collect manure and in others the material for manure is destroyed under official orders. This is a needless waste, as no harm is likely to result from the collection of manure in the open air of the villages. A place should be fixed on the village padar, as also a place for bestowing the village refuse which should be distributed to the people cheap for manuring. In Amreli the burning of cow-dung should be stopped and the people allowed to take fuel from the Gir. The cultivators should also be persuaded to use bone-manure against which they have some objection but which owing to the plentifulness of bone can be brought into use with great advantage. Finally a heavy duty should be fixed on the export of certain plants that are commonly useful for manure.

31. Deterioration of cattle.

From every division and every Taluka there is reported deterioration in the quality of the cattle, diminution in their numbers and consequent increase in their cost. The following are some of the causes.

(a) Failure of pasture owing to the cultivation of uncultivated and auction of Kharaba land. Consequent to this result of the vighoti system, hardly any land is left for the cattle and what there is, of the very poorest quality so that the cattle can get little nourishment from it. The cultivators are too poor to provide good and sufficient fodder. Some measure must immediately be taken for this; a proper share of the land in each village (one fourth would not be too liberal an allowance) should be left for pasture. Goats should not be allowed to graze in gochar.

(b) Want of good bulls and male buffaloes. The Government should keep cattle for breeding in each village on the responsibility of the Patel and the cultivators should take turns to provide fodder. In Kamrej it is the custom to allow bulls marked as belonging to the village to graze anywhere; under this system there would be no expense of keep to the Government. Where bid is kept for grazing good cattle should be kept for breeding purposes and sold cheap to the cultivators.

(c) Cows laughter. A duty should be imposed on cattle taken to the slaughter houses or to foreign parts.

(d) The shingoti duty upon bullocks and other cattle in Amreli should be reduced.

(e) Neglect, driving of sick oxen, over-driving, over-loading, ignorant methods of pasturing, use of the same cattle for agricultural labour and for conveyance owing to the enforcement of veth. Rules should be issued to put a stop to all this.

(f) Cattle have to be imported. These are brought on credit involving risk, delay in payment and law suits, considerations which increase the cost. An arbitration court should be established for such cases.

(g) Buffaloes are not used for agriculture in many talukas and the males are allowed to die instead of being reared. Revenue officials should be directed to instruct the people in this matter and a yearly patrak should be submitted showing the extent to which the use of buffaloes in agriculture increases.

32. Cattle Farms.

The increasing scarcity and cost of cattle has resulted in an increasing dearness of ghee which calls imperatively for the establishment of farms for milk-giving cows in Songhad, the Gir and other such places.

33. Cattle diseases

Along with deterioration there is a great increase of cattle diseases; for this there is no sufficient provision. There should be veterinary surgeons for each Prant: several boys should be taught for two or three years how to treat cattle diseases and one such qualified student appointed in each Taluka. A light fee might be levied for this expense.

Otherwise the most effective remedy for each of the chief cattle diseases should be ascertained and distributed with a printed list to each village. To very poor cultivators or owners of cattle they should be given free. Ordinary diseases should be treated on the spot and gratis.

34. Agricultural instruction.

Agricultural instruction should be imparted by the following methods:—

(a) Agricultural schools or classes teaching the children of cultivators free and other classes for a light fee. Scholarships should be given and some of the students employed.

(b) Public lectures by competent persons.

(c) Publication of Agricultural pamphlets, books or a magazine.

(d) Skilled cultivators should be sent to Europe along with English-knowing students to learn. They should take implements with them to compare with the European. It is useless to send students alone.

Those who thus study the subject should be intrusted with agricultural improvement and rewarded for any notable success.

(e) Agricultural Exhibitions.

(f) Model Farms.

35. Model farms

If model farms have not had any notable success in the State it is because they have not been carried out under the right conditions. The following methods should be adopted.

- (a) Cultivators knowing local and foreign methods should be appointed to teach.
- (b) The method of comparative experiments should be adopted to show the cultivators
 - I the superiority of improved methods and manures;
 - II the effect of nehers and wells;
 - III the difference between well-fed cattle and cattle nurtured by themselves and between their milk, butter and ghee.
- (c) The profit of cultivating by steam-ploughs should be shown to the zamindars and the use of European machinery to the students.
- (d) The conditions under which coffee, tea, cinnamon, cloves etc., are grown should be taught to the cultivators.
- (e) Model farms should be opened under varying climatic conditions.
- (f) A model Farm should be opened with specimens of all the chief crops of the world.
- (g) An annual or biennial agricultural exhibition of the crops thus produced should be held.
- (h) The expenses of all such experiments should be published in so lucid a manner that all may understand.

36. Oppression of Sowcars.

Means of procuring capital easily and at easy rates, are, as has been said, the first condition of improvement. In the poorer talukas the oppression of the sowcars is very great, sometimes as in Mahuva driving the people over the border. Other talukas are greatly indebted, the sowcars force the people to mortgage their fields and houses and these are put to auction at the first failure to pay. A rule should be made that the sowcars must receive their dues by installments.

37. Assessment.

Complaints of lands being too heavily assessed come from different quarters. It cannot be said how far these are true, but it is certain that the limitation of the settlement to 15 years leaves the cultivators little power to make improvements. The collection of the assessment at an unfavourable time and its enforcement in bad years has been prejudicial to agriculture; in Mehsana especially these hardships have led a great number of people to abandon agriculture. Leniency should be shown in bad years, and collection should only be made when the crops are ready.

38. Cultivation of padtar.

Agricultural expansion depends partly on the cultivation of uncultivated land and partly on the growth of new crops. Where the kheduts are unable owing to their poverty to bring uncultivated soil into a fit state for cultivation, the State should first get it turned and then let it out.

39. Introduction of new crops.

In pushing on the introduction of new crops the following considerations must be kept in view.

- (1) The crops which are cheapest in sowing, are most profitable.
- (2) Those crops should by preference be introduced which have to be bought dear from outside.

(3) A new crop should not be introduced near a place where it is already largely grown.

(4) No new crop should be so introduced as to drive out of production any crop which is already largely and profitably grown or the loss of which would have to be made up by purchases at a high price from outside.

To settle this point a good cultivator should be got to sow both old and new in his land. The loss and profit of both should be carefully compared and the results published among the cultivators. Those who are exceptionally successful in introducing new crops, should receive grants.

40. As in many places there is a want of vegetables, an attempt should be made to introduce the growth of potatoes in each division, the State selling the seed. The introduction of Italian potatoes and bhoy mug might be successfully carried out, but the experiment is too costly for any one except the Sarkar, unless special facilities in the nature of patents, &c. are given.

GENERAL

41. Special agricultural officer.

A special officer should be appointed to watch over agricultural improvement, as the continual change of officers is a great obstacle to success.

42. Revenue reports.

Subas, Naib Subas and Vahivatdars should be asked to send in with their collections an account of the state of the people, and also of any rules &c., which weigh heavily on trade and agriculture, together with the reasons.

43. Printing of the Commission's report.

Copies of the Commission's Report should be printed and circulated broadcast throughout the talukas.

Note.— A State Factories department.

The Commission has a suggestion that for articles over which Government has to spend thousands and lakhs of Rupees, it should start State factories; and as these must be conducted on business principles and not by official rules, a special Department should be created for them.

(CWSA 1: 734-41)



The Role of Divine Consciousness in the Integral Yoga Psychology of Sri Aurobindo

Girija Shettar

Introduction

Since everyone present at this conference is familiar with the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo I have taken the liberty of writing a paper that in its nature is strongly metaphysical rather than practical or experiential. In fact the subject I have chosen to speak on is part of the subject of my doctoral thesis, the ideas from which, as you will appreciate, I am keen to share with a wider audience.

The significance of this question for this section of the conference lies in the synthesis that we seek to make between the highest consciousnesses of the Spirit – or the Divine as the Mother and Sri Aurobindo call the highest spiritual reality – and our phenomenal (or psychological and material) being. This synthesis has various levels, and the psychology that we can derive from integral yoga/philosophy need not be as intricate and metaphysical as this paper may appear to make it. But by considering the ultimate level of a thing, indeed its ultimate aims, the nature and scope of its action at all levels becomes clearer to us.

The Integral Psychology of Sri Aurobindo was never formulated by Sri Aurobindo himself. He stated that such a psychological knowledge existed in his work and that the only reason he did not collate the information was because of a lack of time. So a number of scholars throughout the world have been, since the '70's, researching and trying to formulate the psychology inherent in Sri Aurobindo's works and letters.

Taking his standpoint on consciousness from the Vedantic view that consciousness is an intrinsic part of the Sachchidananda, Sri Aurobindo does not question that consciousness exists. His thrust is rather that consciousness in itself is not known through the methods of modern psychology.

His view is, therefore, that the foremost concern of psychology should be the knowledge, understanding and mastery of consciousness,¹ and his writings on consciousness are elaborate and complex, but not inaccessible.

His views about the creation of a more "complete" psychology² than at present exists are based on a few founding principles. One is that what emerges as nature or evolutionary consciousness has emerged from a vaster and higher, pre-existing (to evolutionary consciousness) set of consciousnesses that he calls the "Descending Scale" (the other set, of evolutionary consciousnesses, he calls the "Ascending Scale").³ Another is that there are what he calls "essential movements" of consciousness.⁴ However, in an apparently paradoxical manner, Sri Aurobindo states that consciousness is: "... not essentially a process, although in mind it appears as a process [it is rather] the very nature of self-existent being ... This self-knowledge has two inseparable aspects, a psychological knowledge of the process of Being, a metaphysical knowledge of its principles and essentiality."⁵ So a third principle would be that the process of Being (to note is the capital 'B') becomes known to us experientially and that the principles and essentiality of this process constitute the basis of the new psychology.

Subject of the Paper

In this paper I will focus on what in my research I have come to consider as some of what Sri Aurobindo has called the “essential movements” of consciousness. In Sri Aurobindo’s view these essential movements are the so-called “processes of Being”, and so my concern in this paper is with the Divine Consciousness and its role in integral yoga psychology.

My suggestion is that a set of supreme Divine principles recognised by integral philosophy act in a unity as a special dynamic principle that is at the core of integral yoga and whose movements are in turn at the centre of integral yoga psychology. The means of transmission of these movements of the Divine to phenomenal consciousness is the immanent individual soul principle called in integral yoga the ‘psychic’. The psychic is the focus of the other main point to be made in this paper. I suggest that the psychic is not just a transmitter but manifests this set of Divine movements as an expression of its own nature and for its own development.

In my thesis I argue for a further point that I will not have time to consider here, namely, that the psychic is also a receptacle of all the aspects of Divine Being that uphold the cosmos and that, for this yoga, it is essential that the individual knows and also embodies. These points are just a fraction of a larger theory that goes on to consider the nature of transformation, but clearly I will not have space to go into that in any manner here.

A. A central dynamic principle of integral yoga/psychology: the set of Divine principles known as ‘integral Brahman’

The aspects of Divinity: So the first point I will consider here is the idea of Divine Being working as a unity, in contrast to it working in a diversity as the “fundamental truths” that are the foundation of universal existence.⁶ As such, the single action of Divine Being is made up of several complementary modes of action that belong to: Brahman Absolute, Brahman Transcendent and Universal, and Brahman Supramental. In one place,⁷ Sri Aurobindo has referred to these as the “four Absolutes’: Tat (‘The Absolute Transcendent’), Sat (‘The supreme self-contained absolute Existence, Sachchidananda’), Aditi or Parabrahman (‘the indivisible consciousness, force and Ananda of the Supreme’), and Parameshwara or Parameshwari.”⁸ Sri Aurobindo also speaks of the three statuses of Divine Being (for ex. *The Life Divine*, p. 342) in contrast to a “triune” Divine Being, thus distinguishing, within Divine Being itself, different manifestations of Divine Being for the practical purpose of its various workings. Sri Aurobindo spends a lot of time in *The Life Divine* explaining how the supreme Divine can be said to exist and function in different statuses of itself without paradox, which would seem to suggest that this is a significant point in terms of practical yoga. That is, that we understand the meaning of the distinction between the highest forms of Divine Being (these four Absolutes) and the different statuses of Divine Being that manifest and that uphold cosmic existence as the Transcendent, Universal and Individual godheads (Brahman, Ishwara and Purusha in Sanskrit terminology).

Methodology: My attempt to understand this distinction so as to come to a greater understanding about integral yoga psychology was conducted through an analysis of the specifically psychological functioning that Sri Aurobindo provides, alongside the

metaphysical explanations. about these highest Divine principles. My method was to specify the processes associated with them, which I then – perhaps too trenchantly, I don't know – gave specific titles to and formed into a set: a set of key principles and processes of integral yoga/psychology.

Principles and Processes: These are: concentration and expansion (which are associated with all the principles and none in particular and so will not be considered in this paper – though I have provided a diagram explaining this movement in the appendix), creative unfoldment and the transformative stand-off (associated with Brahman Transcendent and Universal, and the Absolute, respectively, and which are both included in the Supramental consciousness). I will begin by merely describing the two key terms Brahman and the Absolute before coming to their workings and their significance for psychology.

1. Brahman

Brahman or Sachchidananda is called by Sri Aurobindo the second Absolute, *Sat*⁹, and he maintains that an essential aspect of the nature of Divine Being becomes evident here. This is that Divine Being has what Sri Aurobindo calls “two poles”, active and passive, which are called Nirguna and Saguna Brahman. To speak in this way about the two is to suggest that they are a harmonious working whole, but they are not understood as such throughout the entirety of Indian philosophical thought.

Shankaracharya, for example, does not hold this view. Saguna Brahman for Shankaracharya is dependent upon Nirguna Brahman in the sense of deriving its reality and existence from Nirguna Brahman. However, in integral philosophy, the dependence of Saguna upon Nirguna Brahman does not mean that Saguna depends upon Nirguna Brahman for its reality, or for a valid status of existence. In integral philosophy, their relationship is one of equality.

2. The Absolute

Sri Aurobindo's conception of Divine Being does not deny any aspect of the Divine Reality its valid status of real existence; but how Sri Aurobindo is able to reconcile the contradictions that, on the face of it, threaten such a view with paradox, depends upon his conception of the Absolute.

The Absolute is sometimes spoken of in terms that equate it with the Nirguna aspect of Divine Being because, like Nirguna Brahman, it is beyond what can be described by language. On stricter analysis, however, whereas Nirguna Brahman can be described as formless, it can also be described as Being. Not so the Absolute.

However, this is not to say that the Absolute is a nothing. Sri Aurobindo explains that the Absolute is indeed a void, but a void of a kind, not a mere nothingness;¹⁰ it is a void in the sense that although everything we could ever know exists in it, everything exists there in a form not familiar to us and hence to us it would seem as if nothing was there. What is thus relayed about the nature of the Absolute is that everything exists in it, only in an ultimate form.

The Absolute is said to be where the opposites attain their reconciliation as well as their

separate fulfilment.¹¹ Unlike Nirguna Brahman, then, the Absolute is not simply a state of non-manifestation even though all that it contains is not manifest in the way that it is so in the cosmic order. So the Absolute is where all things have their ultimate reality, and where things attain the ultimate fulfillment of their unique reality.

B. The process associated with Brahman: creative unfoldment and its psychological significance

The two aspects of Brahman, in the view of integral philosophy, are distinguishable in nature as well as function but yet they are identical in essential reality and thus are not in true opposition. Sri Aurobindo explains that:

The silent [Being] and the active [Becoming] Brahman are not different, opposite and irreconcilable entities, the one denying, the other affirming a cosmic illusion; ...¹²

Indeed, they are not only complementary but are creative. I will here present the distinct functions of the two aspects as found in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. The following statement describes this distinction:

... eternal passivity ... makes possible the perfect freedom and omnipotence of an eternal divine activity in innumerable cosmic systems. For the becomings of that activity derive their energies and their illimitable potency of variation and harmony from the impartial support of the immutable Being, ...¹³

The two poles or aspects of Brahman have also been described by Sri Aurobindo as the "double power" that is the mechanism of creation.¹⁴ Sri Aurobindo explains in this place that from the "reservation" of the formless aspect, Nirguna Brahman, come the energies that are manifested by Saguna Brahman and that become the world. But these energies are constantly returned to the reservoir, so the situation that pertains is described by him as a "circuit". Hence there is no absolute distinction between the two aspects, but at the same time they have distinct functions.

Nirguna Brahman impersonal and uninvolved is the basis and support of Saguna Brahman's action of manifestation; furthermore, the passivity of Nirguna Brahman "makes possible the perfect freedom and omnipotence" of Brahman's activity.

Psychology: Translated into psychological terms, this is to say that to possess Pure Being (Nirguna Brahman) is to enable greater power and possibilities of action. Sri Aurobindo explains:

...A stable being is the condition and foundation of the vast action of the force of being. It is when we arrive at something of this silence, stability, immobility that we can base on it a force and energy which in our superficial restless state would be inconceivable.¹⁵

The Mother also states this in referring to the aspect of consciousness reached through Nirguna Brahman, namely, pure Being or Sat:

[Sat has an] EXTRAORDINARY utility: it automatically renews all energies ... It's what enables the body to last: ... one should always keep this in the background of

the consciousness and refer to it automatically to correct or avoid or annul ... all disturbances ...¹⁶

Nirguna Brahman, then, holds the power, is pregnant with the power of creation, which Saguna Brahman then brings forth. For practical purposes, then, it can be said that Saguna Brahman is therefore not the source of that power but is the manifestation of it. Also interesting in their relationship is that Nirguna Brahman endows the possibility of manifestation, worked out by Saguna Brahman, with “omnipotence” and “freedom” of expression. These points explain how integral philosophy’s realism yet stresses the importance of the non-dual, pure Being aspect of realisation.¹⁷ Sri Aurobindo describes his philosophy as Advaitic (non-dual) but modifies this with the term “realistic” (‘Realistic Advaita’)¹⁸ in order to distinguish his view from, in terms of the reality possessed by material existence, the polar opposite view of Shankaracharya’s trenchant Advaitism. For integral philosophy, the dynamic side of Divine Being is the expression of Divine Being and so the Becoming aspect of Divine Being is not inferior or less real than its aspect of Being.¹⁹

Brahman’s two aspects are significant for what they explain about the nature of manifestation. Since everything is a formulation of Brahman, these two aspects are what function throughout manifestation, be it physical, vital, mental, or spiritual. Existence is Being and it is Becoming, and the type of relationship (or interaction) between these two aspects that pertains at any level creates manifest existence, produces the various types of manifest things that exist and thus in turn must dictate the nature of the inherent workings of each thing.²⁰

So according to integral philosophy, Saguna Brahman is the manifestation of the potentialities that exist unformed in the formless Nirguna Brahman. Their relationship is a working relationship, as also one of mutual dependency. Were it not for Saguna Brahman, Nirguna Brahman would not be able to express or manifest what it contains unformed within it. And without Nirguna Brahman the infinite possibilities of manifestation presented by Saguna Brahman would not exist, and as existing could not be infinitely various if the impersonal, immobile support necessary for such an ever-creative action were not there. So for the above reasons the two poles of this aspect of Divine Consciousness are essential to one another and therefore, I would argue, must necessarily be taken into consideration in the metaphysics of integral yoga psychology.

C. The process associated with the Absolute: the transformative stand-off and its psychological significance

“We can only understand [oppositions] entirely if we get to some sense of the Absolute and [also] look at its workings in all the relativities which are being manifested...”²¹

“The human reason is wrong in attaching a separative and definitive value to each contradiction by itself or getting rid of one by altogether denying the other; but it is right in refusing to accept as final ... the coupling of contradictions which have in no way been reconciled ... or have not found their source and significance in something beyond their opposition.”²²

An ultimate negation: At the highest point of Divine Being, Sri Aurobindo states that a negation takes place between Brahman and the Absolute. Sri Aurobindo describes this as “the final assertion of all [Sat] and its negation [Tat].”²³ Sachchidananda or Brahman, if looked at from below upwards, can be described as the last positive assertion of Divine Being, and the Absolute the complete negation of that positive assertion, for although the Absolute is the ultimate origin of all things, it is Non-Being. There is an aspect of deadlock and confrontation between these two highest principles – hence I give the title of ‘transformative stand-off to this process (the transformative aspect I will explain below).

Transfiguration: This process is one of transformation as well as of freedom. In my view this is made clear through Sri Aurobindo’s treatment of the Absolute throughout *The Life Divine*, especially in Chapter Four: ‘Reality Omnipresent’. There it is explained that the Absolute gives the “true truth of individuality, the true truth of cosmic being, and not their denial and conviction of their falsity”,²⁴ for it contains the ultimate reality of all things. Therefore in the Absolute all opposites are not only reconciled but are given their ultimate reality or being, meaning that the relation between the two opponents would not be annihilated by the Absolute, but given their truer form. This is presented as a movement that takes up the opposite principles at work in consciousness (just as the two aspects of Brahman are thus synthesised in the Absolute), effecting thereby their transfiguration in contrast to merely becoming harmonised or effecting a mutual creativity, or simply their transcendence. According to integral philosophy, the Absolute, even in its most ineffable status, has an effect on the phenomenal universe. For, even though by definition the Absolute cannot be said to have a ‘function’, since it is outside Time and Space where the concept of function could have any meaning, it can yet be said to have a function that is provided by its utter non-involvement, by its total freedom.

Freedom and Eternal Progress: Sri Aurobindo points out that:

The Unknowable...continually formulates itself to our consciousness and continually escapes from the formulation It has made. This it does not [do with the intention of] ... leading ... from falsehood to greater falsehood and so to a final negation of all things, but as even here the Wise beyond our wisdom guiding us from reality to ever profounder reality until we find the profoundest and vastest of which we are capable.²⁵

This is also to imply that the Absolute ensures eternal progress for manifest existence. The Absolute can thus be said to provide a guarantee of never-ending evolutionary possibilities. The negation creating what I am calling the stand-off is not negative, destructive, or mutually exclusive. It is described by Sri Aurobindo not as a negation but as an ‘assertion’ of Divine Being (in the ultimate analysis it is an assertion by the Absolute) of its “freedom both from and in [any] status or activity.”²⁶ Occurring at the very origin of all things, this situation ensures, Sri Aurobindo explains, that existence per se is led from “reality to ever profounder and vaster reality”.²⁷ Therefore the stand-off, as a psychological principle, is a principle of progress. It is also creative or rather ‘transformative’ because its “assertion” of freedom and “escape”, through the synthesis of opposites, from formulation, means that it effects a continual mutability. To note is that this is a progressive mutability and not just

changes on a level or variations on a theme. Rather, it makes possible a greater, more superior manifestation each time a formulation is 'destroyed'.

It can be concluded that without this principle of the Absolute and its function of stand-off, there would be no progressive or evolutionary creative unfoldment of Being. In this way too it does not oppose the creative action of Brahman, but rather enhances it. These points are so important for the psychology of integral yoga; for this psychology is centrally interested in evolutionary change. Transformation requires that phenomenal consciousness acquire the capacity of mutating and transmuting itself in an ever-progressive forward movement, even avoiding death.

So these are the movements of consciousness that, I am suggesting, make up the movements of integral yoga psychology – and that come to us via the psychic.

The hypothesis I will consider next is with regards to the relationship between these supreme forms of Divine Conscious-Being and the psychic. I will suggest that the above-mentioned movements can be seen to be the movements of the psychic's own development as well as of phenomenal nature's evolution as effected by the psychic.

There are some important points about transformation and psychic development that I do not have time to discuss in this paper but that I explored in my thesis. For example the conjecture that the psychic is not only a receptacle of the unified action of triune Divine Consciousness but that it also manifests, in its development, the diversified expression of triple Divine Consciousness (Brahman, Ishwara and Purusha). In this paper, too, the effects that the movements of the psychic have on nature, and the significance of this for integral yoga psychology, cannot be gone into in any detail. Here I will merely point to some of the evidence that suggest the psychic manifests these movements.

D. The psychic and the movements of the Supreme Divine Consciousness

Sri Aurobindo has referred to the psychic being as an "instrument"²⁸ of the supreme Divinity that is immanent in the manifest reality, for it is this consciousness that is both the vehicle and bridge between the old phenomenal being and the new spiritual and then supramental being. It is a vehicle because it brings into phenomenal nature higher and Divine consciousnesses, and it is a bridge because it links the old nature to the new, ultimately enabling the avoidance of death and making transformation possible.

As the transformation takes place, the old undivine nature has to be replaced by the new Divine consciousness.²⁹ Now if, as the Mother has stated,³⁰ the psychic becomes the supramental being, this suggests, I feel, that the supramentalisation occurs through an emergence not only via the psychic but also from out of the psychic itself through its own development.³¹ In this way the psychic, plus psychicised nature, could be said to be that which becomes the transitional being mentioned by Satprem.³² This is a point that I do not have time to consider here; solely to be explored in this paper is how the psychic manifests the movements of creative unfoldment and transformative stand-off in its development both of itself and of phenomenal nature, thus reproducing in itself and in nature the movements of Brahman in unfolding its possibilities as the evolving Cosmos.

Obviously it is not possible for me to go through all the evidence that I have put forward in my thesis with regards to this point as it involves long arguments that stretch over several chapters. So I shall here attempt to summarise the main points, and simply describe or, even less: flag up some of the evidence that I have used to support the arguments I have made in the thesis.

Inference from the transcendent Divine's movements to the psychic's movements: In the primary sources as well as in some secondary sources reporting experiential knowledge of the psychic, the psychic appears to manifest both the processes of integral Divine Being spoken of above: the transformative stand-off and the two-poled creative action of becoming, associated with the Absolute and the two aspects of Brahman, respectively. However here I will make just one philosophical reference to a hint made in Sri Aurobindo's writings as to this relationship.

The Descending Scale mentioned in the introduction is described by Sri Aurobindo as "the highest reality involving itself in the lower conditions of being."³³ By stating that the highest reality is involving itself it is suggested that the Descending Scale consciousnesses constitute a process. I therefore conclude that the Descending Scale consciousnesses are a significantly dynamic set of consciousnesses.

Sri Aurobindo says that the descending scale reveals the "true development of the universe."³⁴ He describes the order of the "true" universal development as follows:

Spirit of self-being [Sat] develops self of conscious energy [Cit-Shakti] which supports its self of cosmic bliss [Ananda], which acts on the finite by supermind, which offers its differentiations to mind [= mental consciousness], relates them in life [= vital consciousness], fixes them phenomenally in body of material substance [= material consciousness].³⁵

Sri Aurobindo emphasises the creative role that the Descending Scale consciousnesses have and that they therefore play in the development of our nature. In describing this creative role, he says that the: "universe is created or made sensible to embodied soul."³⁶ I find this statement striking and interesting, for it seems to state that the mechanism of the Descending Scale is what develops the psychic consciousness. For, the psychic is the immanent Supreme and is therefore identical with the Divine Descending Scale Consciousnesses. This statement, then, amounts to a description of the creative action not only of the Divine Consciousnesses at the transcendent but also at the immanent level. Thus it is suggested that the psychic being manifests the above spoken of integral action of Divine Consciousness, both in relation to its own development and in relation to that of phenomenal nature.

Creative unfoldment in the psychic: In the integral metaphysics of Sri Aurobindo, polarity, the movement of consciousness between two opposite but essentially complementary poles, seems to be a key process in Divine manifestation as well as in phenomenal consciousness' development. Sri Aurobindo states that the duality of Conscious-Being and Conscious-Force is "in the being on all its planes"³⁷ He writes:

...In the experience of yoga the self or being is in essence one with the Divine or at least

it is a portion of the Divine and has all the divine potentialities. But in manifestation it takes two aspects, the Purusha and Prakriti, conscious being and Nature.³⁸

The psychic is also a dual principle. Sri Aurobindo explains:

The psychic has two aspects – there is the soul principle itself which contains all soul possibilities and there is the psychic personality which represents whatever soul-power is developed from life to life or put forward for action in our present life-formation.³⁹

The ‘soul principle’ is more commonly called the psychic entity and the developed ‘soul-power’ the ‘psychic being’.

The psychic entity’s relationship with the psychic being seems to be akin to the nature of the supportive and creative relationship that pertains between the two aspects of Brahman. Just as the manifestation of Brahman’s potentialities does not exhaust Brahman, since Brahman is much more than the sum of its contents, so it is with the psychic. Sri Aurobindo writes:

...the psychic entity in us persists and is fundamentally the same always: it contains all essential possibilities of our manifestation but is not constituted by them; it is not limited by what it manifests, not contained by the incomplete forms of the manifestation, ...⁴⁰

More centrally, the development of the psychic reflects the “circuit” nature of the two aspects of Brahman spoken of earlier. The two key points that I have used⁴¹ in considering the development of the psychic’s consciousness are: 1) that behind all things as well as all events are “divine essences”,⁴² and 2) that no development of phenomenal personality or of spiritual entity can consist in a wholly external aggregation, all must ultimately come from within.⁴³

The development is said to consist in the gathering, through life, of elements harmonious with the soul. It is also stated by Sri Aurobindo that the nature of the elements ‘gathered’ by the psychic are divine elements that lie behind phenomenal reality, which suggests that the nature of the psychic’s ‘gathering’ is through identification.⁴⁴ Indeed, Sri Aurobindo describes as “direct” the way in which the psychic gathers knowledge, which term precisely conveys that the method is identification. It would be the psychic entity that would thus identify itself for it is this alone that would exist to begin with, since the psychic being is what evolves as a result of the identification. So psychic development occurs as a result of the psychic entity’s identification with its greater self, the Divine Being behind Existence. Thus the process is one of: reference to essential Divinity followed by a development of Divine qualities and Being from out of essential Divinity (the psychic entity in this case). Then, for further growth, the same process is repeated.⁴⁵

Thus the two-poled process of creative unfolding is evident: identification with the essential reality that is followed by a blossoming of conscious-force (substantial aspect of the essential reality). This, then, is akin to the process that I have called in my thesis the process

of ‘creative unfoldment’, where the two aspects of a single principle collaborate to express and manifest the possibilities intrinsic to that principle.

Transformative Stand-Off in the psychic

In my opinion, proof that the psychic possesses this movement is that it endows phenomenal consciousness with certain key qualities that require just such a movement. These qualities are: ascension, uninterrupted progress of consciousness’ evolution, and mutation of substance. (The latter I will not be dealing with in this paper as there is not the space and, in a way, this quality is implied in the second quality of ever-progressive change). It should be first noted that the Mother gave tremendous importance to the psychic in terms of evolution on earth. She said:

It is only upon earth that the psychic life begins, and it is just the process by which the Divine has awakened material life to the necessity of rejoining its divine origin. Without the psychic, Matter would never have awakened from its inconscience, it would never have aspired for the life of its origin, the spiritual life. Therefore, the psychic being in the human being is the manifestation of spiritual aspiration;...⁴⁶

Transcending Movements: Regarding the effects of the psychic in the evolution of consciousness, the Mother spoke of it as a wholly perceptible phenomenon; she described the psychic consciousness as “concrete, tangible, a solid mass”.⁴⁷ But this consciousness is of course by no means something heavy or binding on the consciousness. In terms of movement, the psychic refines and then literally uplifts the phenomenal consciousness. It does this, firstly, through placing a pressure on phenomenal consciousness, which results in the phenomenal consciousness at first acquiring what Sri Aurobindo describes as: “A certain sensitive feeling for all that is true and good and beautiful, fine and pure and noble...”⁴⁸ Later, nature is given a transcending movement. Sri Aurobindo states that the mind becomes attracted “towards the impersonal”, and the “aesthetic parts join together to offer the soul, the life, the whole nature to that they worship”,⁴⁹ etc.

Progressive Movements: As Sri Aurobindo writes elsewhere, the psychic’s “flame [i.e... Agni] mounts always upward and ... is eager to push the ascent from lesser to higher degrees of Truth...”⁵⁰ Thus the psychic in still into phenomenal nature a progressive movement to ascend and evolve.⁵¹ This progressive movement is not simply a round of creativity on one level – it is a truly progressive movement or an evolutionary movement. The Mother in one place has described the effect of the psychic on phenomenal nature as: “... ever-progressive change, unbroken continuity in the universe of forms.”⁵² And in relating an experience in her physical body she seems to be expressing just this action. She explains: “...instead of sinking back into death, [the body] is rebuilt in a constant aspiration to follow the progressive movement of the divine Truth.”⁵³

The psychic’s function, then, is centrally characterised by its action of ‘turn[ing]’ phenomenal nature “to the Divine”. This action is the most fundamental and most frequently spoken of function of the psychic in integral yoga and is said to be one of the psychic’s first influences on phenomenal nature. In this it differs, as I explain in my thesis, from the Kundalini

Shakti, the other important force or Shakti in integral yoga. Included in this movement is the further quality of ever-progressive change and, though not covered here, mutation of the consciousness into what is called by integral yoga a “psychicised” consciousness. So I would suggest that these actions imply the transformative stand-off process.

E. Conclusion

The field of psychology being largely developed in North America known as Transpersonal Psychology studies unusual types and states of consciousness, with the aim to not only understand their origins and their effects but also to find ways of making them (at least those that are positive and helpful) readily available to people.

However, transpersonal psychology is facing at least two obstacles. One is of the aim of any such psychology – spiritual development or merely a better natural life? Also as to what constitutes a spiritual life or a spiritually harmonious life is still a question under exploration. The other obstacle is that there is no method for organising the extensive and ever-increasing amount of experiential material to be able to make good use of it. Integral yoga psychology has the chance to avoid these two obstacles. My opinion is that Sri Aurobindo’s method of synthesis, which he used for creating his yoga, could and perhaps ought to be applied to the formation of his integral yoga psychology. This method consists in finding essential principles and processes of consciousness and then allowing consciousness to dictate the way these are to formulate the individual’s behaviour and spiritual goals – and on a larger scale: the way society develops and functions. Integral yoga psychology also has the advantage over other systems of Transpersonal Psychology of having a very clear objective and a clear understanding of what, ideally, would be a life in tune with the spirit, namely, a Divine life or Life-Divine (i.e. all aspects of life and of consciousness transformed into their Divine nature). I would hope that studies of this type, namely, focusing on the metaphysical basis of psychology, will help to make clear to all those who are interested in human nature’s transformation the ultimate aims and processes of integral yoga – which are, too, the ultimate aims and processes of integral yoga psychology. For the clearer an idea is to the mind, the closer it comes to becoming a reality.

With regards to the extreme nature of this yoga psychology – the radical ends it seeks – it is true that this development may be said to go through stages, and that one may choose to never take its development to the heights that it can and is supposed to achieve. Indeed, both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had stated that their complex and demanding yoga psychology would be “excessive”, and therefore unnecessary for anyone not interested in the specific aim of human nature’s radical, Divine transformation. However, they also both explained that a psychically informed consciousness that could be developed through more enlightened methods of education was the present psychological future before the world. But with regards to the necessity of knowing the ultimate ends of the psychology as spoken of in this paper, it could be conjectured that such information is important from the point of view of what Sri Aurobindo called a “complete” psychological knowledge. There will be, always, individuals who grow to the point where they require a progress beyond the heights

of material nature's development and that is more comprehensive than the usual ends of spiritual seeking. In such cases, information such as is presented here becomes relevant.

Finally, I will list the reasons why I feel an integral yoga psychology is valuable – if, as Sri Aurobindo said, “excessive” for anyone not deeply interested in transforming their nature.⁵⁴ It provides the greatest freedom to our consciousness while at the same time offering the most dynamic and ceiling-less possibilities of progress to the development of consciousness. It is a very challenging psychology, which in itself is a necessity. At a period of time when many countries are politically at peace within themselves, the psychological situation of their citizens does not reflect the material peace that reigns without. Oftentimes the citizens of these countries exhibit a painful or harmful (to others) inner condition, and most of the prickly problems people face each day stem solely or largely from the imperfections and limitations of human nature. A challenging inner discipline with clear goals could unify and refine human nature and make life throughout the world a far pleasanter place to live in. However, this will not be possible until and unless enlightenment in reference to psychological development occurs en masse. For this enlightenment we seem to wait upon Nature and natural evolution.

One last reason I would give for why such a psychology is needed is that it meets the presently growing demand for a spiritually enhanced life – a life that is full in every sense but not dislocated from the inner being or from higher, deeper, more fulfilling values. Most systems of psychology taken from yoga systems entail or require some amount of division between the spiritual and the material life, but half of the work in integral yoga psychology (maybe much more than half) takes place in and through life, so integral yoga psychology meets this demand perfectly.

References

1. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol.1, pp. 321, 332, 333, 335
2. *Essays Divine and Human*, p.323
3. *Essays Divine and Human*, pp.323, 326, 328-9, 329-30
4. *The Life Divine*, p.501
5. *Essays Divine and Human*, p.323
6. For example: *The Life Divine*, p.323; *The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp.13, 42
7. *The Hour of God*, p.78
8. The latter two principles (Parameshwari etc) would seem to be what Sri Aurobindo later called the Supermind – but this is a point I will not be going into here. I have spoken of it and provided some leads to its further research in my thesis
9. *The Hour of God*, p.78
10. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p.385
11. *The Life Divine*, p.379
12. *The Life Divine*, p.26

13. *ibid.*, p.26
14. *ibid.*, p.574
15. *The Life Divine*, p.336
16. *Mother's Agenda*, Vol.3, p.398
17. *On Himself*, pp.98, 103
18. *ibid.*, p.105
19. *ibid.*, p.86
20. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, pp. 429, 430
21. *The Life Divine*, pp.382-383
22. *ibid.*, pp.383-384
23. *ibid.* p.30. The terms in parentheses are mine.
24. *ibid.*, p.30
25. *ibid.*, p.30
26. *ibid.*, p.30
27. *ibid.*, p.30
28. Doshi (1987), p.42
29. *More Lights on Yoga*, p.56
30. *Mother's Agenda*, Vol.11, pp.245-247
31. At Doshi (1987), p.32 it is suggested that this is not the case, despite the psychic being spoken of as a 'portion' of the Divine. Sri Aurobindo here speaks of (the psychic merely as an 'instrument'). However, Sri Aurobindo's statement here is older (1930's) than the Mother's statement about the psychic becoming the supramental being (1970).
32. Satprem (1968), p.331
33. *ibid.*, p.327
34. *ibid.*, p.328
35. *ibid.*, p. 328-9
36. *ibid.*, p.329
37. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, p.285
38. *ibid.*, p.285
39. *The Psychic Being*, p.37.
40. *The Life Divine*, p.891
41. There could be other lines of research to follow up this point, for example, by studying the statements of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother about the experiential side of psychic development and even its crises, which latter, for example, could reveal interesting processes of this dual consciousness. I have chosen a metaphysical approach to the subject.
42. *The Psychic Being*, pp.134-135

43. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p.48
44. *The Psychic Being*, pp.134-135
45. See also: *The Life Divine*, p.646: "...forms and happenings in the universe are realities significant of Reality; they are self-expressions of That, movements and powers of the Being. Each form is there because it is an expression of some power of That which inhabits it; each happening is a movement in the working out of some Truth of the Being in its dynamic process of manifestation."
46. *The Psychic Being*, p.37
47. *ibid.*, p.43
48. *The Life Divine*, p.893
49. *ibid.*, p.901
50. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 147
51. *The Psychic Being*, p. 103; *Education*, Vol. 1, pp.7-8
52. *Education*, Vol. 1, pp.7-8
53. Satprem, 1985, p.132
54. *Letters on Yoga*, Vol. 1, p.274

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Sri Aurobindo as a Translator

Ramkrishna Bhattacharya

Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950), later known as Sri Aurobindo, is chiefly recognized as a Yogi and founder of an Ashram at Pondicherry. Some informed readers also know him as a mystic, the author of *Savitri* and a number of shorter secular poems, all written in English.

However, there are other aspects of Sri Aurobindo's life which are less known and hence least appreciated. I for myself am not interested in Sri Aurobindo the Yogi, for things superhuman and otherworldly have no appeal for me. Nevertheless, I do believe that Aurobindo Ghose the publicist, writing unsigned articles and notes in the pages of *Bande Mataram* and *Karmayogin* in the first decade of the twentieth century, is a worthy figure to be remembered. The English language that the colonizers taught our forefathers to serve imperialist interest was radically transformed by the nationalists into a weapon turned against the then alien rule.

I propose to deal with another aspect of Sri Aurobindo's works that is even less known than his role as a publicist. I mean the translations he made from various languages. He was a polyglot. I do not know how many languages he had learnt or taught himself. He was fluent in English and French; he had also learnt Greek and Latin in his school days in England and picked up enough Bangla and Sanskrit before taking the Indian Civil Service examination. It is possible that he also knew some other European languages. On his return to India in 1893 he started learning Gujarati, Marathi and probably Hindi. It is interesting to note that during his Pondicherry days he also familiarized himself with Tamil: familiar enough to translate "The Kural", a famous work by Tiruvalluvar and other devotional pieces by Nammalwar, Kulaesekhara Alwar and Andal. They were done with the help of Subramaniam Bharati (Subramanya Bharathi), the famous Tamil poet.

Sri Aurobindo did not translate from all the languages he knew. We have specimens of his translations from the Vedas and the Upanishads, Sanskrit religious and secular poetry, lyrics from Bangla and religious poems from Tamil. Besides these, there are four specimens of his translation from Greek and Latin, three of them harking back to his college days. Many of his translations are lost for ever. Kalidasa's Meghadutam (The Cloud Messenger) rendered into terza rima is one of them. Rest of his translations are to be found in vols. 7-8 and 10-12 (particularly vol. 8) in the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library Edition (1972). The target language is invariably English.

Most probably Sri Aurobindo's translations are the outcome of his efforts to self-examine how much he had mastered the source language, be it Greek or Latin, Sanskrit or Bangla. His first love was poetry and so it is only to be expected that some of his translations would be extracts from the two classical Sanskrit epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. He was so much fascinated by Kalidasa's Kumarasambhavam (The Birth of the War-god) that he rendered a part of its canto 1 in three different styles, employing both quintets (each stanza rhyming abab for each sloka) and then blank verse. Some epigrams of Bhartrihari (belonging to the Nitisataka group) he rendered freely in rhymed stanzas of varying lengths, some in quartets, some in sestets, some others paraphrased and expanded in nine- or ten-

line units. He did not finish the prose translation of the Gita he had undertaken but stopped at Chapter Six. Similarly he began translating Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's Anandamath (The Monastery of Bliss) but stopped at Chapter Thirteen.

As to his translations from Bangla, It is rather strange that Sri Aurobindo never translated a single poem by Rabindranath Tagore, nor any extracts from the epics of Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay or Nabinchandra Sen. He rendered a few Vaishnava lyrics of Vidyapati, Jnanadas and Chandidas, as also some songs by Nidhu Babu (Ramnidhi Gupta) and Haru Thakur (Harekrishna Dirghangi). No poem from the Sakta Padabali has found place in the corpus of his translations. Among his contemporaries, he translated Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das's Sagar Sangit in entirety (forty in all); it was entitled Songs of the Sea. Das himself had translated his own poems in prose while Sri Aurobindo rendered them in rhymed verse. It was, however, a commissioned work, not love's labour. The English translations of Dwijendralal Roy's "Mother India" and a few poems by Sri Aurobindo's own disciples (Dilip Kumar Roy, Anilbaran Roy, Nishikanto, Nirodbaran, Sahana Devi, Jyotirmayee Devi and Aruna Devi) form the last sheaf. There is only one piece of self-translation: Sri Aurobindo had composed a hymn to goddess Durga in Bangla and later rendered it himself into English.

Sri Aurobindo's translations were meant for no definite set of readers but were undertaken in most of the cases for his own pleasure, *svantahsukhaya*, as Tulsidas called it. Hence, Sri Aurobindo does not provide glosses or annotations except on a few occasions. We learn something about Sri Aurobindo's "theory" of translations from some of his letters. "There are two ways of rendering a poem from one language into another," he writes,

one is to keep strictly to the manner and turn of the original, the other to take its spirit, sense and imagery and reproduce them freely so as to suit the new language. (11.07.1937. Letters, 141)

In another letter he says:

A translator is not necessarily bound to the exact word and letter of the original he chooses; he can make his own poem out of it if he likes, and that is what is very often done. (10.10.1934. Letters, 141)

[He defends this kind of transcreation in the following way:] This is all the more legitimate since we find that literal translations more completely betray than those that are reasonably free – turning life into death and poetic power into poverty and flatness. (10.10.1934. Letters, 141)

A perfect translator, he says, is rarely to be met with, for carrying over the spirit of a poem, the characteristic power of its expression and the turn of its rhythmical movement from one language to another is an uphill task, "especially when the tongues in question are so alien in temperament to each other as English and Bengali." (10.10.1934. Letters, 141)

Sri Aurobindo's preference for free translation is quite evident. As a matter of principle he admitted: "The proper rule about literalness in translation, I suppose, is that one should

keep as close as possible to the original...” (10, 10. 1934. Letters, 142). However, he confesses that he did not practise what he preached:

Whenever I translated I was careless of the hurt feelings of the original text and transmogrified it without mercy into whatever my fancy chose. (10.10.1934. Letters, 142)

He acknowledges that it was “a high and mighty criminality which one ought not to imitate.” However, he adds:

Latterly I have tried to be more moral in my ways, I don’t know with what success. But anyhow it is a case of “Do what I preach and avoid what I practise.” (10.10.1934. Letters, 142)

One question that is often asked about a translation is: Should it look like an original poem or should it be recognized and accepted as translation? Sri Aurobindo opts for the former. Literalness in translation is all right,

...provided the result does not read like a translation but like an original poem in Bengali, and, as far as possible, as if it were the original poem originally written in Bengali. (10.10.1934. Letters, 142)

Keeping in mind that Sri Aurobindo was not in favour of slavish literalness, we may compare his prose translation of Bankimchandra’s song, “Vande Mataram” (written in Sanskrit mixed with Bangla) with the verse rendering done by Sri Aurobindo himself. Here are the opening lines of the original:

*Vande mataram.
Sujalam suphalam malayaja-sitalam
Sasya-syamalam mataram
Subhra-jyotsna-pulakita-yaminim
Phulla-kusumita-drumadala-sobhinim
Suhasinim sumadhura-bhashinim
Sukhadam varadam mataram*

Sri Aurobindo himself declares:

It is difficult to translate the National Anthem of Bengal into verse in another language owing to its unique union of sweetness, simple directness and high poetic force. All attempts in this direction have been failures. In order, therefore, to bring the reader unacquainted with Bengali nearer to the exact force of the original, I give the translation in prose line by line. (Translations, 311)

The literal rendering runs as follows: I bow to thee, Mother, richly-watered, richly-fruited, cool with the winds of the south, dark with the crops of the harvest, the Mother!

Her nights rejoicing in the glory of the moonlight,
her lands clothed beautifully with her trees in flowering bloom,
sweet of laughter, sweet of speech,
the Mother, giver of boons, giver of bliss! (Translations, 313)

The verse rendering in rhyme is racier but inevitably far from literal: Mother, I bow to thee! Rich with thy hurrying streams, Bright with thy orchard gleams, Cool with thy winds of delight, Dark fields waving, Mother of might, Mother free.

Glory of moonlight dreams
Over thy branches and lordly streams,—
Clad in thy blossoming trees,
Mother, giver of ease,
Laughing low and sweet!
Mother, I kiss thy feet,
Speaker sweet and low!
Mother, to thee I bow. (Translations, 309)

We should not indulge in nitpicking, for we must remember that both the translations appeared in the English journal, *Karmayogin* (20. 11. 1909) during the last days of the Swadesi movement in Bengal.

Another notable feature of Sri Aurobindo's translation is his experiment with translating prose in verse – a rare thing – in his rendering of Kalidasa's *Vikramorvasi* (Vikrama and Urvasi, renamed *The King and the Nymph*). He defended this unusual practice on the ground that “[t]he beauty of Kalidasa's prose is best rendered by poetry in English, or at least that I found myself best able to render it in that way” (Letters, 143). He referred to the reverse case: when poetry is translated into prose and cited Rabindranath's own English version of *Gitanjali* as a case in point. He approved of Tagore's self-translation and argued: “If poetry can be translated so admirably (and therefore legitimately) into prose, why should not prose be translated legitimately (and admirably) into poetry?” (Letters, 144)

Sri Aurobindo too translated verse into prose. His rendering of the first ten introductory verses (slokas) from the *Raghuvamsa* of Kalidasa is literal to a fault, as the following specimens would show:

For mastery of word and sense I bow to the Pair close-wedded as word and sense, the parents of the world, the Mountain's child and the Mighty Lord.

Wide is the gulf between the race born of the Sun and a mind thus scantily stored! I am one that in his infatuation would cross in a raft the difficult ocean.

Dull of wit, yet aspiring to poetic glory I shall expose myself to mockery like a dwarf who in his greed lifts up his arms to a fruit meant only for the giant's grasp.

Yet into the story of this race a door of speech has been made by the inspired minds of old and through which I can enter as a thread can pass through a gem which the diamond's point has bored. (Translations, 155)

Thus Parvati is literally translated as “the Mountain's child” and Paramesvara as “the Mighty Lord”.

The prose translation of the first six chapters of the *Gita* is equally literal. The archaic way of transliterating the names (reminiscent of William Jones's), however, is somewhat disconcerting. Arjuna becomes Utjoona; Bhima, Bhema; and Kunti, Coonty. Krishna is spared although Pandu turns into Pandou and Kama into Curna.

Sri Aurobindo is in his elements when he translates from prose to prose, specially a novel by his favourite author, Bankimchandra. Sri Aurobindo can be literal without being stilted

and well reflect the spirit of the original as well as the cadence of Bankimchandra's mature style. Sri Aurobindo renders the first paragraph of Anandamath as follows:

It is a summer day of the Bengali year 1176. The glare and heat of the sun lies very heavy on the village of Padachinha. The village is crowded with houses, yet there is not a man to be seen. Line upon line of shops in the bazaar, rows upon rows of booths in the mud, hundreds of earthen houses interspersed with stone mansions, high and low, in every quarter. But today all is silent. In the bazaar the shops are closed, and where the shopkeeper has fled no man can tell. It is market day today, but in the mud there is no buying and selling. It is the beggars' day, but the beggars are not out. The weaver has shut up his loom and lies weeping in his house; the trader has forgotten his traffic and weeps with his infant in his lap; the givers have left giving and the teachers closed their schools; the very infant, it would seem, has no longer heart to cry aloud. No wayfarers are to be seen in the highways, no bathers in the lake, no human forms at door and threshold, no birds in the trees, no cattle in the pastures; only in the burning-ground dog and jackal crowd. (Translations, 318)

That is how Bankimchandra portrayed the desolate picture of a deserted village in the terrible days of Bengal famine in 1769 CE. Sri Aurobindo not only retains the essence of the passage but also brings out the grim reality by matching the common, simple, everyday words and expressions of the original.

Sri Aurobindo believed in the special genius of every language: Bengali, like French, is very clear and luminous and living and expressive, but to such clear languages the expression of the inexpressible is not so easy – one has to go out of one's way to find it. (Letters, 143)

In this connection he cited the case of "Mallarme's wrestlings with the French language to find a symbolic expression – the right turn of speech for what is behind the veil" (Letters, 143). Not that this is a permanent trait of a language, immutable and therefore never to be overcome. Sri Aurobindo is of the opinion that "[E]ven in these languages the power to find it (i.e., symbolic expression) with less effort must come; but meanwhile there is the difference" (Letters, 143). His idea of language as an ever-changing and developing phenomenon acquiring improved traits with the passage of time is worth noting.

Translation to Sri Aurobindo was never of secondary importance or a minor vocation. "The English Bible [of 1611] is a translation," he said, "but it ranks among the finest pieces of literature in the world" (Letters, 148). Yet one conclusion is unavoidable: despite the interest shown by Sri Aurobindo in translation, translation itself was no more than a side activity in his own programme. He used to check the translations made by his disciples and offered suggestions for further improvement, as evidenced by a number of letters (Letters, 141-48, 173-78). On his own part he translated only one work, Kalidasa's *Vikrama and Urvast*) in full. His fancy made him undertake stray verses or at best some minor parts of long narrative poems. Most of his projects remained unfinished (or, even if completed, are lost for good). Yet what he ultimately managed to produce is of no little interest. His theory and practice of translation is worth studying in more details.

I propose to end this note with an interesting anecdote. Sri Aurobindo was once requested to comment on a Bangla translation of Shelley's poem, "One word is too often profaned". The rendering was not up to the mark and Sri Aurobindo patiently pointed out its shortcomings in a letter to the translator. The letter ended with this consolatory remark:

If I make this criticism at all, it is because you have accustomed me to find in you a power of rendering the spirit and sense of your original while turning it into fine poetry in its new tongue which I would not expect or exact from any other translator. (Letters, 147)

It can be presumed from the date of the letter (11. 07. 1931) that the translator was Nirendranath Ray, one of the founders of the new Bangla quarterly, *Parichay*, which had Sudhindranath Dutta as its first editor. Ray's translation was published in the same journal (Year 1, No. 2, Karttik 1338 Bengali Year = 1931 ce) along with Rabindranath Tagore's comments on Ray's translation and an alternative rendering done by Tagore himself. Rabindranath's opinion about Ray's translation was not at all favourable. He pointed out in his letter (20.7.1931) to Ray that his (Ray's) translation was somewhat similar to the original, rather than an exact replica: anurup, not pratirup. Rabindranath's rendering of Shelley's poem is still unsurpassed. Compared with the wooden version of Ray, Rabindranath's version exhibits how a translated poem can appear as an original one. Sri Aurobindo was more at home in English than in Bangla, so he did not try to provide an alternative translation of Shelley's poem. However, he must have agreed with Rabindranath's view and might have appreciated the alternative translation. Sri Aurobindo valued the last eight lines of Shelley's poem greatly. He said: [I]t would be perhaps impossible to find in English literature a more perfect example of psychic inspiration than these_____” (Letters, 147)

Acknowledgements: Amitabha Bhattacharyya, Siddhartha Dutta. The usual disclaimers apply.

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BEAUTY AND DELIGHT



Matrimandir, Auroville (Source: Internet)

‘But to live in Auroville, one must be the willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness.’

It is the explanation of the Matrimandir at the centre. The Matrimandir represents the Divine Consciousness. All that is not said, but that is the way it is.

The Mother

Thoughts on the Symbolism of Auroville

Joseba Martinez

Cities are mankind's greatest creations. The establishment of every beautiful city of the world has always implied the concurrence of multiple disciplines integrated in a harmonious approach. A powerful vision and careful planning as a starting point, the inclusion of innovative architecture, art, engineering, landscaping, and an unending flow of financial resources...these are only some of the most necessary components; to enumerate all would be a tedious exercise. Only when the conjunction of all these ingredients has been successfully achieved can we recognize great cities that awaken our admiration. When we look to the external appearance of a city we enter into contact with the first and most external layer of information. But beyond this first layer there are other layers of information and perception with subtle and deeper meanings. The morphology, the structure, the arrangement of a city's most representative buildings, its residences and life activities, consciously or unconsciously are going to reveal to us the values and ideals, the socio-political order and the image that its citizens have of the cosmos and themselves. It is particularly interesting to notice also that every great culture of the world has attempted to create an Ideal City that could give a material form, a definitive shape to the most relevant aspects of its particular worldview. Ibis was considered extremely important and meaningful for internal and external purposes in many cultures throughout history. From this viewpoint the external shape of every city of the world is a permanent invitation for us to think and speculate from a philosophical perspective about its society and its underlying anthropological and transcendental principles. I believe that the study of the principles and designs used in various moments of history, and its comparison with Auroville, can be an interesting subject because it can help us to better understand the fundamental aspects of the experiment that we are trying to develop here and possibly to shine some light on the uniqueness of Auroville's features in relation with other cities of the world and other experiments of the past. I would like to present these reflections just as a first initial contribution to an area which until now has not aroused much interest and discussion, a very surprising fact for me in the context of Auroville.

To facilitate this analysis I will divide human history into three great periods; each one corresponding to a certain "Vision of life" or broad paradigm. These three periods could be classified as the Pre-modern or Ancient, the Modern and the Post-modern or Trans-modern. All the cities of the world traditionally have served three purposes: spiritual, political and economic. In the Pre-modern period we can find in Greek and Rome a traditional pattern that was followed almost universally in the planning, design and construction of the cities. This tradition was followed later on without interruptions by the founders of the new cities in the Christian Age and was only discontinued with the irruption of modernity. Interestingly, there are enough studies today to indicate that the models used at these times to plan cities have many elements in common with all the archaic civilisations.¹ The main characteristic of the ancient city is that its spiritual, political and economic aspects were incorporated in a unifying model representing its vision of the cosmic order in a hierarchical and geometrical design. The external form was only a symbolic frame, the material support to remind the citizens about and put them in contact with the deeper and latent structures of the inner

and transcendent worlds. The mandala (square or round) was the first diagram utilized universally” in a city-plan to define the master hues of its structure and the order of its different components. The Sanskrit term mandala not only defines a geometric form, it has broader connotations and symbolically includes the notions of symmetry, harmony and totalty.

If we consider the mandala in fig. 1, we can symbolically analyze its elements as follows; the dot at the center represents the sacred, the origin of everything. Around it is the circle. In the past this line marked the location of the citadel walls. But the circle is also the limit or the periphery of the order created, and contains in itself the emanative radiation from the center to every point of its surface. This connection between the center and the periphery is applicable to the dynamics of any territorial system where its coherence will depend on the constant flow of information between the center and the surrounding areas which in that way become interconnected in a meaningful common unity.



(fig. 1)

Normally in the plan of the ancient city, whether square or round (see fig. 2), we will find that the temple is located at the center. The temple lodges the presence of God and



(fig. 2)

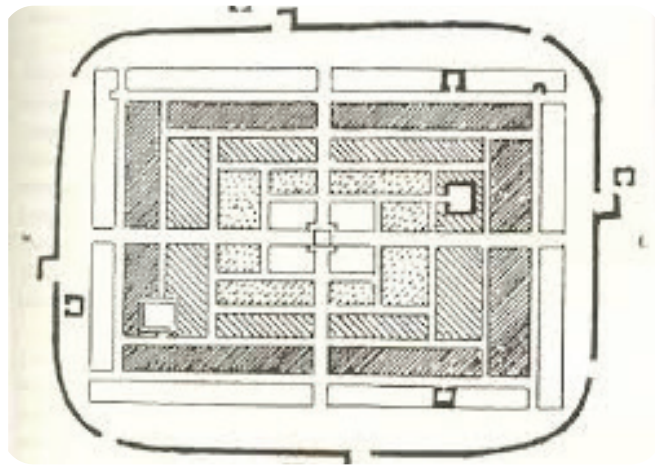
This is a sketch of the old city of Barcelona following the archeological remains.

symbolically represents the centrality that the ancient mentality attributed to the sacred dimension in all the activities of life. This central place will contain its most intimate nucleus: the altar where the principal ritual to be performed will be the sacrifice. Associated with the altar another important element is the fire. The fire and the space around it was the most important place in the life of the families at that time, since it was around its warmth and light

that the members of the families would gather. The fire burning in the altar is an element common to many different cultures and many times we find this element also at the center of public spaces as the Agora or the Senate. Symbolically it has always represented clarity of understanding, the inner light that should illuminate every human being and his/her actions. This inner commitment of the individual to any belief system was considered to be the most stable foundation in which to base the communality of life. Around the center and in a hierarchical order we find the public spaces for the institutions, the government, tribunals etc. And finally following again a hierarchical order we have the spaces for the residences and the economic-commercial activities. All these institutions have the mission

not only to ensure the necessary security, order and good governance but also they guarantee the transmission of the collective knowledge of the city, its foundational ideals, values, laws, traditions, and individual and collective rituals. The participation of the citizens in the public institutions, and the spaces reserved for the ceremonies and rituals was extremely important to encourage their involvement in a shared belief system and the creation of a moral vision holding the city together. Another important aspect existing in many cities of the past was the myth of the foundation. The initiative of founding a new city was believed to have a supernatural origin and the founder of the city to have received the divine inspiration about when, where and how the city had to be founded. In the West, Hercules was the main founder of many of the cities from Hispania to the Far East. The commemoration and the rituals in the mythical foundational data were very important and every year the priests of every city would perform the ceremonies to actualize the commitment of the city to its foundational ideals. We can see another example in fig. 3.

This is a Hindu urban model called Nandyavarta. The axis of the major streets irradiate from the center, where the Vedic altar is situated. From its fire will emanate four concentric square rings which correspond to the four Varnas that shape the social order. The most intimate ring next to the altar is reserved for the priest. The warriors are located in the second ring, protecting the sacred functions. The two following functions, the economic and the residential, occupied the periphery. The plan that has a mandalic structure is organised also in a pyramidal sense to express the concept of hierarchy.



(fig. 3)

These ancient views about planning and the construction of cities were completely discontinued with the coming of the Modern age. Modernity was born in Europe slowly between the 16th and the 18th centuries. This movement brought up a complete shift of paradigm, with this concept I mean that slowly the way of understanding life, the implicit values of the system, the basic way of perceiving, thinking, valuing and doing associated with a particular vision of the reality was changed. In brief, the main characteristics of the new paradigm and relevance for this work could be synthesized thus: the sacred is no longer the center of life and all its activities as it was in the ancient or archaic age; it is only acceptable as a private choice. The society has been secularized and there is a wall of almost absolute separation between the public and the private. Nature and physical reality are not considered any longer as sacred; the world becomes a disenchanted world. In the public spaces there is no place for any manifestation of the sacred aspect. Together with the center, the limiting circle has also gone. The citizens are now free of all the limiting dogmas, morals and conventions of the past. The only accepted limit is a reasonable pragmatism provided by reason. As a

consequence there is a very interesting phenomenon of substitution in which the center and the limit is occupied now by modern man and his activities. God and Goddesses are substituted by Reason and the only accepted methodology and understanding of the reality is provided by Science. The spiritual concept of the community is substituted now for a free aggregation of individuals. In the best case scenario, it is by the social contract established between the citizens that the Modern state is founded and the society reconstituted.

The first consequence of this modern paradigm when applied to the area of urbanism is that the predominant approaches to planning became merely rational and utilitarian. The driving force and the shape of the cities are going to be primarily determined by the economy and by the erratic expansions-contractions of its cycles. During this period the history of Urbanism has witnessed the rise and decline of a number of different types of cities. Now at the beginning of the 21st century we have as a predominant model the global city or the megacity. In 1950, only two cities in the world, London and New York, had populations larger than 10 million; according to the latest reports of the United Nations, in 2015 there will be more than twenty-three of these megacities. Some of these cities, for example in China, are expected to reach populations of 40 million. At the same time there are at least 600 million urbanites in developing countries surviving in squatter settlements, called by various names: *favelas*, *barriadas*, *shantytowns* or *katchi adabis*. Some of these megacities have grown amid persistent economic stagnation as well as social and political dysfunction. Many of them have failed to provide the basic infrastructures to their residents. With the increasing size of the cities these problems are growing exponentially and the situation of many cities is becoming more and more unsustainable. These evident pathologies of the megacities are symptoms pointing to a more severe diagnosis, and that is that the modern paradigm is undergoing a fatal crisis. It is necessary to recognize that Modernity brought up new and revolutionary principles and has contributed immensely to positively shape our societies in a great number of areas. But this movement had also many weak points and insufficiencies. In the last three centuries the importance of these critical points has emerged with more and more force. Modernity helped the human being to develop its external capacities and means, science, technologies, and economy immensely, but all of it without developing simultaneously its inner counterpart, i.e. morality, ethics, and spirituality. This period of time has offered the possibility to test the behavior of societies guided predominantly by the reason in which the importance of the spiritual center and the limiting circle of ethics and morality has been disregarded. In fact it could be pointed out that the majority of the tragedies of the 20th century, with its countless conflicts, wars, and massacres, had their origin in this basic imbalance. It is perhaps becoming more evident now that a society deprived of strong ideals and lacking any clear spiritual goal leads in the end where other similar attempts ended in the past, in an inevitable process of decay and death. It is clear that this way of seeing life is becoming progressively obsolete and one of the most urgent necessities of our present time is to surpass it. This necessity has been recognized in the last decades by an increasing number of people and today we see a flourishing of post-modern or trans-modern approaches in a number of areas that are striving to articulate appropriate alternatives. It is clear to me also, that the real depth of the present crisis has not been sufficiently understood by contemporary

thinking. Sri Aurobindo has substantiated much better its understanding when he defined the present crisis as an evolutionary crisis. This is the real dimension of the problem and only with appropriate answers at this level can we expect to find solutions.

Auroville is one new attempt made by humanity to materialize appropriate answers to this crisis. Surely, it is radical in its scope and comprehensiveness of approach and if this experiment is crowned with success it will have necessarily far-reaching consequences. If we examine some of the principles and symbols that are guiding the manifestation of Auroville as a city we will discover some interesting facts. One of the most striking is the number of similarities between the symbolic pattern followed in the design of the cities in Ancient times and those followed in the design of Auroville. The first parallelism is the presence again of the supernatural as the origin of the initiative to build the city. When the question was put to the Mother as early as 1965 as to who had taken the initiative for the construction of Auroville. Her unambiguous answer was: The Supreme Lord.² The Mother played a decisive role as a mediator; she had in her consciousness a very well-defined vision to be implemented. The next step was to find a person with the necessary qualities to receive and undertake her futuristic vision. From the beginning She entrusted the project to a well-recognized French architect: Roger Anger. “...I had my plan of Auroville. Now I have my general plan; I am waiting for R. to make the detailed plans because from the beginning I have said, “R. will be the architect, and I have written to R.”³ Perhaps the qualities that Roger has demonstrated during all these years, his visionary capacity, inexhaustible creativity, his

permanent quest for the forms of the future and most important, his capacity to synergize his unquestionable professional talent with the Mother’s vision were the reasons for her choice. In any case, they worked together in a symbiotic relationship for several years developing not only the main lines of the project, but also the details of some central elements, as it was done with the most meticulous accuracy for Matrimandir and the surrounding area. Before arriving at the “Galaxy” concept several successive layouts were made, each one representing a different stage in the search for a model that could represent consistently the Mother’s Vision. Two first models were presented at the same time by Roger to the Mother, and studied in parallel, the square one (See fig. 4) and the model called the “Nebula”. (See fig. 5)

One may note that the square model is very similar to the ancient patterns that we have seen before. The interesting fact is that



(fig. 4)



(fig. 5)

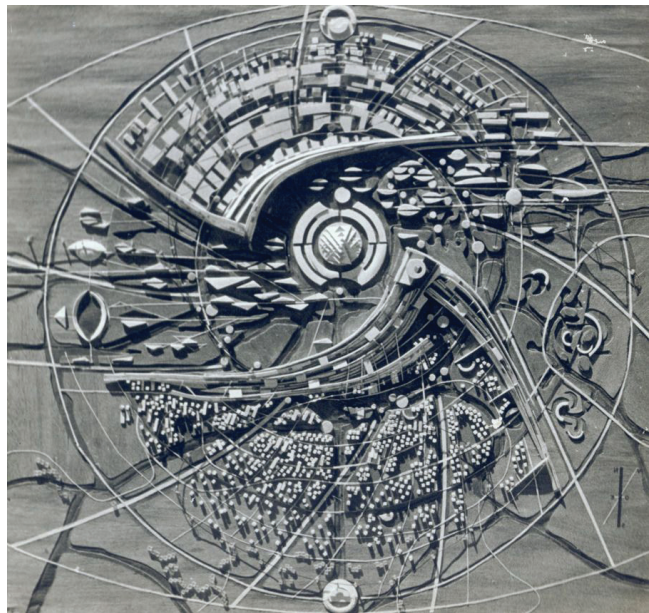
this model was rejected by the Mother and she chose the circular one as starting point. Perhaps those forms were excessively static and unable to represent the strong evolutionary dynamism that The Mother wanted to lay down. But probably the most important reason was that this concept was not expressing what The Mother had come into contact with. In a conversation with Satprem at the beginning of Auroville, she made this enigmatic comment: “...It’s sure to work, I KNOW it exists – the city is already there (it has been for many, many years)... The city already exists... And the remarkable thing is that I simply told R. [the architect] the broad outlines, asking him if he was interested. Then he went back to France and he received my formation (my old formation, which I myself had left asleep); he received it there. I found that very interesting He received it, he said to me, “It came all at a once, I seemed to be possessed by something, and in one night the whole thing was done.”⁴

This design concept was followed by another circular module with two central megastructures. (See fig. 6)

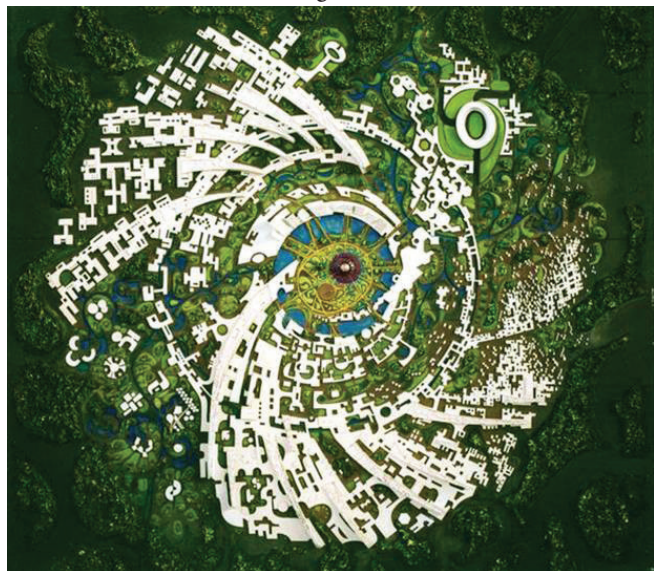
Finally the “Galaxy” model emerged and received the approval of the Mother along with her “blessings.” (See fig. 7)

This model of the city allows for a maximum population of 50,000 people. It has a circular shape with a diameter of 2.5 km. The city area contains four zones: Residential, International, Industrial and Cultural, and it is surrounded by a Green Belt.

According to the hypothesis of this paper, all the external elements of the Galaxy design configure a symbolic geometric model with the power to establish the necessary linkages, the nexus of union between the inner and the outer dimensions of life. The city should be a powerful generator of



(fig. 6)



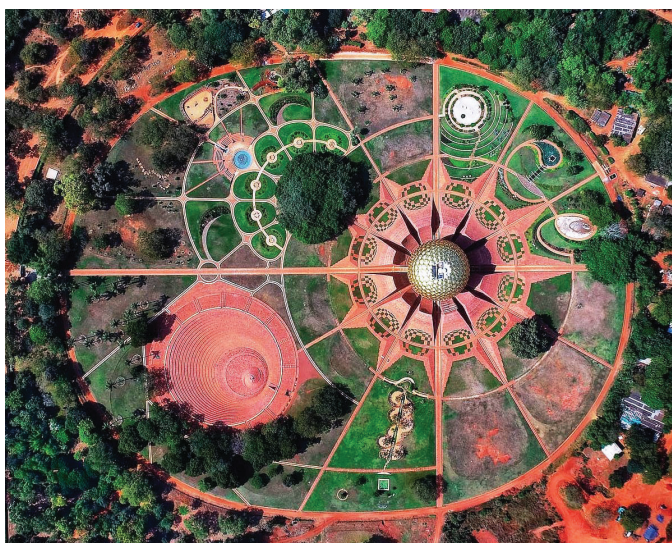
(fig. 7: The Galaxy model)

speculative associations, suggestive references and illuminating revelations. At its highest level, the geometry may form a “Sacred Geometry” with the primary purpose of facilitating the process of inner discovery. This possibility is of paramount importance in a city like Auroville whose mission is to manifest into matter the spiritual vision of Sri Aurohindo and the Mother. According to them the essential meaning and purpose of the entire evolution of humankind is to know and to become one with the hidden Divinity and ultimately to

recreate the Divine Life on earth. Auroville was born after and as a direct consequence of the manifestation of the Supramental Force on Earth. This transcendental event means that the spirit is going to disclose new and supreme powers of consciousness with an unimaginable capacity of transformation that has not been operative in the earth-consciousness until now. The magnitude of this radical spiritual change and the new ideals emerging from it should be expressed ideally in new forms and symbols. The human being from the most ancient times has felt the necessity of expressing through symbols the realities which escape the rational mind.

A symbol, according to Sri Aurobindo, is a form in one plane that represents a truth of another. The greatness of the art of symbol-making depends on the closeness to the truth that is communicated by the symbol employed. Perhaps the highest expression of art is that which can communicate the mysterious, veiled presence of the spirit. The history of the process of the design of the final model for the township and the Matrimandir area shows clearly that from the initial stages of planning the research of the most appropriated forms and symbols for Auroville was of paramount importance. Speaking about the Matrimandir and its area, the Mother highlighted its relevance by stating: “it’s again a symbol. Everything is symbolic.”⁵ The same concern was expressed by Roger in an interview in 1971⁶ in which he underlined its importance, especially in the Matrimandir area, and conveyed his puzzlement at the discovery of the repetition of certain symbols and numbers, concretely 4 and 12, and the answers given by the Mother to his questions about the occult significance of the different components.⁷

Another interesting parallelism with the past is the circular mandala with a powerful center that we find again recuperated under a new form. The most essential characteristic of this mandala is the strong dynamism that it immediately transmits. This is not a static symbol but one charged with an evolutionary impetus. This form can evoke also the analogy of the real galaxies, which are always in an unending movement, rotating around their axis and evolving new and higher forms of life. This city has been designed to be in a perpetual movement of accelerated evolution, radiating from its spiritual center, the Matrimandir. At



(fig. 8)

the center of the city, there is a complex containing three main elements, all placed within an area with the form of an oval. (See fig. 8):

These three elements are the Matrimandir and its petals, encircled by the Park of Unity with twelve gardens, the Banyan Tree, and finally the amphitheater with the white marble lotus bud-shaped vase which contains handfuls of soil from many nations of the world. At the boundaries of this area, there will be tall trees, which will

represent Aspiration and Unity. The encircling oval with its different elements was conceived as a symbol of the fundamental unity of creation. The Mother also gave the overall dimensions of this area with the gardens and the park in relation to the dimensions of Matrimandir. It is 10 times the height of the Matrimandir and 10 times its length (290 and 360 meters). In the future the totality of this area will be surrounded by an artificial lake. This oval was envisaged by the Mother as an island, and the lake will enhance greatly the feeling of isolation and the calmness in the area. The lake should be an integral part – not merely a decorative part – of the Matrimandir area. Besides its symbolic dimension it should have an essential function in the water supply system for the city and the green belt areas.

The Matrimandir has multiple meanings and its crucial significance was declared by the Mother in two concrete statements: “The Matrimandir wants to be the symbol of the Divine’s answer to man’s aspiration for perfection. Union with the Divine manifesting in a progressive human unity.” And “The Matrimandir will be the soul of Auroville. The sooner the soul is there, the better it will be for everybody and especially for the Aurovilians”. In the same interview mentioned before, Roger gives another complementary perspective: “Here is revealed the second spiritual meaning of the Matrimandir: Until now, the consciousness was emerging from the depths of matter. But there is another force, another consciousness, which is secretly similar to the first one. Yes, remember that we spoke of the light coming from above. These are two powers: one is hidden in the sacred heart of things and is at once their reason for being, their basis and their life. It is a rising force; a power breaks open the crust of matter. But there is also a descending power that comes from the height, from the Supreme level, a down-going force that awakens. It stimulates the emergence of an ever new creation. The conjunction, the meeting of these two forces in the heart of the Matrimandir symbolizes the perfect Realization”.

The Matrimandir is supported by four pillars. According to Sri Aurobindo the evolutionary principle of creation is manifested through four main powers: “*Four great Aspects of the Mother, four of her leading Powers and Personalities have stood in front in her guidance of this Universe and in her dealings with the terrestrial play*”.⁸ Consequently, as in a supreme invocation calling for the manifestation of these powers, the pillars were named with the names of these four great aspects: Mahakali in the North, Maheswari in the South, Mahalakshmi in the East, and Mahasaraswati in the West. Even though the totality of the city with all its multiple activities can serve as a channel to contact the spiritual force that the Matrimandir irradiates, there is an area in which the different symbolical elements have been concentrated with the specific purpose to intensify and facilitate a process similar to a “Spiritual Initiation.” Interestingly this is another parallelism with the initiatory rituals and celebrations of the ancient times. In the case of Auroville this process happens through the visit to the Matrimandir area. Roger has described this process: “*This inner pilgrimage which, far some, can end with the visit to the inner chamber begins with the crossing of the bridge that will connect the city area with the island. As in Sri Aurobindo’s symbol, the water represents the multiplicity, the creation. When the pilgrim has arrived, the island will be exposed facing the powerful vision of Matrimandir’s exterior, covered with the golden disks, that seems to emerge from the crater of the earth between the half-opened petals. The second stage begins with the*

discovery of the twelve gardens; each one of them represents a specific state of consciousness: Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, Light, Life, Power, Wealth, Utility, Progress, Youth, Harmony, and Perfection. As the pilgrim moves within the gardens he ought to be able to internalize the experience of this specific state of consciousness. Altogether they reproduce the symbol of the Mother. And this is a kind of seal which is integrated into the whole project. The third stage continues going on a downward path between the petals, a descent leading to the marble “lotus pond” and to the meditation chambers. The Matrimandir’s meditation chambers are again twelve, each one of them represents an attribute of the Mother and has also the corresponding color. They are Sincerity, Humility, Gratitude, Perseverance, Aspiration, Receptivity, Progress, Courage, Goodness, Generosity, Equality, and Peace. It is interesting to note that the first eight concern the attitude towards the Divine, and the last four towards humanity. The upward climb towards the Matrimandir is made via four large stairways inserted in the four pillars that support the Matrimandir. The four entrance doors leading to the passage are self-effacing; they want to evoke in the pilgrim the feeling of being invited into the interior. The fourth stage begins with the circular entrance hall, the access to the vast interior space of Matrimandir is reached by a narrow selective passageway, comparable to the doors of hallowed places. By its form and color, the sheer size, the tinted light, the play of spiral ramps, everything is a preparation to the ascension to the inner chamber. Crossing the platform leading to the two ramps is marked by a difference in level, which creates the pause needed for the accomplishment of the last stage of the journey, the slow ascent to the discovery of Mothers chamber. In this bare room only illuminated with the white light radiated from the crystal ball is the place where the pilgrim will face the Mother’s Darshan”.

We notice that the entire pilgrimage is another metaphor with a double meaning, one external and another internal to give expression to several important characteristics of this new spirituality. One of them is the inevitability of the journey that every human being will have to make sooner or later to his innermost part, to his hearth. As it happens in the Matrimandir, which holds at its very depths the inner chamber, the same happens in human beings where the soul lies deeply inside, silently in the splendor of its own light. The external journey, going through the various symbolic stages facilitates the various levels of experiences, each one contributing with a different power towards the integral realization. The last stage with the visit to the inner chamber, as in the ancient temples of the past, is of transcendental significance because this is the place for the sacrifice. In this case the emphasis is given to the inner sacrifice, the unconditional offering of the entire being to the Supreme Mother. The supramental divine force will descend according to the sincerity and the aspiration of the pilgrims and will grant the necessary boons towards their divine transformation.

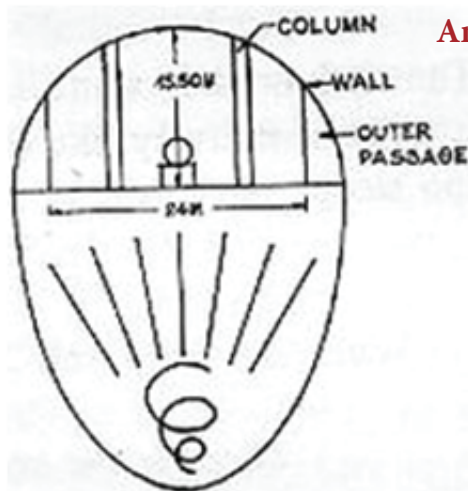
In its insuperable style *Savitri* has suggested the nature of this spiritual metamorphosis thus:

“The supermind shall claim the world for Light
And thrill with love of God the enamoured heart
And place Light’s crown on Nature’s lifted head
And found Light’s reign on her unshaking base.

A greater truth than earth's shall roof-in earth
And shed its sunlight on the roads of mind;
A power infallible shall lead the thought,
A seeing Puissance govern life and act,
In earthly hearts kindle the Immortal's fire.
A soul shall wake in the Inconscient's house;
The mind shall be God-vision's tabernacle,
The body intuition's instrument,
And life a channel for God's visible power.
All earth shall be the Spirit's manifest home,
Hidden no more by the body and the life,
Hidden no more by the mind's ignorance;
An unerring Hand shall shape event and act.
The Spirit's eyes shall look through Nature's eyes,
The Spirit's force shall occupy Nature's force." ⁹

References:

1. Jose Olives Puig "La Ciudad Cautiva", p. 23
2. *Auroville in Mother's Words*, p. 34
3. *Mother's Agenda*, 23.6.65
5. , 10.1.1970
6. Interview Roger Anger, "Journal of the Indian Institute of Architects", April 1971
7. *The Mother*, Vol. 25, p. 359: "Essentially the 12 powers are the vibrations that are necessary for the complete manifestation". *The Mother*, vol. 25, p. 26: "Four is the number signifying a square, fullness, completeness".
8. "*The Mother*" with the Mother's Comments by Sri Aurobindo, p. 22
9. *Savitri*: p. 707



An Old Alternative of Matrimandir

Yes, a dome over the straight wall.

But the dome can be the dome of the egg, and I had thought that the place where the dome comes to join the walls would be on the columns. Twelve columns. And here, for the outside, they can round off their wall like that (Mother draws). It would even be possible to have a space between the outermost wall and the inner wall. To make a space. That is to be seen.

-The Mother, (CWM 13: 311)

On Human Unity: A Spiritual Perspective

V. Ananda Reddy

Having lived in Auroville in the early days from 1970-76, I feel I can speak on this subject a little bit. I have experienced to some extent the spirit and philosophy behind this concept of human unity. I shall speak about the philosophy of human unity as given by Sri Aurobindo combined with the experience that I had in Auroville. Recently one of the professors of the Ashram had given a talk on the ideal of human unity in a university at Hyderabad. At the end of the talk, a student, who was a lecturer in the department, asked a question as to why we need to talk so much about human unity since he felt that it already existed. Apparently the question looked a little silly at that time but giving it a deeper thought you can see that it has a spiritual side to it. Human unity is in fact the truth of our existence. The only issue is that we have yet to realise it consciously. If it wasn't there, we couldn't have dreamt or talked about it or attempted it.

So in a way human unity is a fact of this terrestrial creation as we understand from our ancient Indian philosophy and that of Sri Aurobindo. This philosophy says that there is only one single consciousness of the Supreme. What we see as this multiplicity – call it by any name such as individuals, nations, countries, creed, groups, nationalities – is a myriad expression of that Supreme consciousness which in India is called Sachchidananda.

This truth of oneness behind the multiplicity of creation was already realised by the seers in the Vedic times. It is because of this truth that people in the ancient time spoke of the Satya yuga, the golden age. In the Western philosophy too the Greeks and the Romans had talked about the golden age or the Saturnian age. This kind of a dream of a golden age is quite common to all the major cultures of the earth, be it China, Japan, India or Greece. Somehow this has become a part of the psyche of human nature and this concept of the golden age has been given a name and a description by each one of these cultures.

We do not know with guarantee how far it was true if such an age was there at all. Sri Aurobindo writes here it was “an age of sincere being and free unity when the sons of heaven were leaders of human life and mind and the law of god was written not in ineffective books but on the tablets of man's heart.” (CWSA 25, 634) Many have written about the numerous wonderful qualities of that age. What is important is that this eternal dream has its basis upon some deep subconscious aspiration of man. In the Bible too we see how Adam and Eve were driven out from the Garden of Eden. It was a kind of a fall. This ‘fall’ from eternity to time, from heaven to earth is pretty much there in the subconscious of the human race and it is because of this subconscious memory that he harks back to that golden age, to that radiance and harmony and joy as envisioned in his dream of Satyayuga. Also based on the subconscious memory of humanity is its belief in the ‘the second coming’, ‘the city of god’ and the Dashavatara or ‘the ten avatars’. All these are not just dreams and fancies. It is important for man to look forward and realise the spirit of that great ancient period, the sum and substance of which is, on the social level, a perfected human society.

Now looking at it from the point of yoga, let us consider if we have ever wondered as to why we talk about human unity. We take it for granted that we must have unity but unity

with what? You may think of unity amongst human beings. But exclusive unity among the human beings is not possible. There is a vast implication in this phrase – ‘human unity’. Why do we not talk about animal or plant unity? It is because human unity has a unique possibility of binding the entire creation with the Supreme. This is the sole prerogative only given to man to unite not only among themselves but unite this whole earth-consciousness with the Supreme. This is his mission. It is not for the animal or the plant world to do this work. If you understand this possibility in man, then you will see the secret possibility of human unity too in him. It is such that it is only in uniting with the Supreme that humanity can unite within itself. However much one may come together in groups of nations or civilizations, true unity can be realised only after uniting with the supreme Divine. This is the inner secret of uniting the whole earth consciousness.

This innate dream of man to unite humankind had several expressions. Centuries back, this expression was attempted through political empires such as the Roman Empire. But this experiment of the Roman Empire failed not only because of external pressures, but because it had only the body, the external form without the inner psychological unity. Then came the British empire with its colonisation of nations. Through them Nature achieved a very important mission, that of nations spreading each other’s ‘culture’, connecting one with the other. These empires fulfilled their role, still, this experiment had to be withdrawn after a period of time, once their role was over.

Again, there was an attempt of racial unification that was given a wonderful opportunity when there were movements like Pan-Slavism, and Pan-Arabianism, etc. That too did not last long. Then we had experiments on the basis of religions like Pan-Islamism and before this there was the Pan-Christiandom. So, Sri Aurobindo analysed all these as experiments by Nature – political, racial, religious and the more recent experiment of the unity of the proletariat. Each of these attempts succeeded in spreading culture and values quite extensively. But the recent experiment by Nature was that of a federal grouping where the first attempt was with commonwealth of nations when the British empire had withdrawn from its colonies. It was a good experiment that lasted quite long. Now we have attempts of the European union in our own times. This is only to make you aware that Nature has been always trying to experiment with different kinds of unification but as something was missing in all these attempts, she had to as it were dismantle all, one after another.

The brightest thing that happened in the past centuries, to be precise, in the beginning of the 18th century, was the intellectual religion of humanity or the religion of humanity. This was based on the principle that man must be sacred to man regardless of all distinctions of race, creed, colour, nationality, political status or social advancement. This was the fundamental basis when man became the ideal of worship. He became the most important factor in every field. In all of these different and diverse categories of existence, man became the centre of all attention more than the gods. Out of this we had great philosophies of humanitarianism, where religion lent it a great support and it flourished.

It was this philosophy which culminated in the great mantra of the French revolution:

Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. This, says Sri Aurobindo, is the flowering of the consciousness of the intellectual religion of man.

Some nations took up one quality, that of liberty, while other nations took up equality. Till now there have been many experiments in these two qualities. We know that they became political ideals in the name of democracy and socialist communism. These two ideals turned into political dogmas which were tried out in the last century. We have seen that apart from certain benefits reaching mankind, the philosophy of communism collapsed. Sri Aurobindo had foreseen a logical end to it. He had predicted its natural end. His logical analysis on all different levels – the social, the individual, the psychological and the political – are so fascinating that whenever we read them it feels as if we see the future in the present. He thought that communism had to end because the kind of equality they believed in was an unreal one. This external form of equality as we have seen in the communist countries is a misrepresentation of true equality. Opportunity was given to all and it was to be on an equal basis, but the main power lay with the centre. That concept took away the most important factor of equality. As equality was emphasised at the cost of liberty, this ideology could not sustain for long. Equality has to be well balanced with freedom because freedom is the central birthright of every individual.

This concept has a deep side to it. Sri Aurobindo says in *The Life Divine* that man is a God in the becoming. God delimited himself in the manifestation, self-limited himself and became man. Man is aware of this and therefore all the time psychologically and subconsciously he is trying to break this limitation to experience a greater freedom. So freedom is not a political ideology or wishing to do what he/she wants to do. It is a deep spiritual necessity in man to have freedom to which we have given different names in religion, politics, ethics and morality. It cannot be suppressed for ever!

Now let us take up those countries who took up liberty as their philosophy and called themselves democratic countries. Are they successful? They emphasised upon the freedom of the individual without the principle of equality. There is an absolute hierarchy of rich, richer, poor, poorer classes which causes a serious imbalance in the society. Sri Aurobindo noted that the politicians of the day do not represent the hopes and aspirations of the people. They represent invariably the lowest consciousness of man: his pettiness, selfishness, egoism, self-deception, corruption and pretense. The governance is run by the clash of selfish interest, moneyed classes and business houses who have no sympathy for the masses. So we can understand the pathetic condition of democracy. If such leaders are our representatives, would we then like to be governed by the worst in men? This is exactly the condition of most leaders currently – almost without exception. This is where the collapse of democracy is predicted too. Regarding India, Sri Aurobindo says that democracy is most unsuitable for us. To know as to what should be the new pattern of government, we must read the two books of his social and political philosophy that I mentioned earlier.

Moving further in Sri Aurobindo's analysis, we see that these socialist or democratic or communist countries evolved into great nations in the beginning but after a certain point they became hardened, self-centred and constricted. They left no room to grow and progress.

It was then that Nature brought forth the world wars. In Nature there is always a movement toward the higher and vaster course and unity. A unit which starts just as a family grows into a clan and then into villages and cities and then into states culminating in nations. Likewise, Nature always wants to move on to a vaster unity. So when there was this constriction of nationhood, Nature brought forth these world wars, in order to break up the barriers of the solid nation-egos. Before they became too solidified Nature as though loosened up the national boundaries and national consciousness. It was as if she wanted to show mankind that it was high time it looked forward to the next step in evolution.

The experiment in this unity was with the League of Nations which took birth after the First World War. After the second war we had a better form of unity in the United Nations. It is not important to see how far these bodies are successful but the very fact that the League of Nations was the outcome of the first war is an important factor. It is because Nature wanted us to come together, think together, work together instead of getting shelled up in the nation-egos. Similarly the United Nations is not serving the purpose it was created for, it has also become a tool in the hands of the powerful nation's political body.

Sri Aurobindo further analyses that beyond this UNO there are several possibilities. Out of the many possibilities he thinks that something will emerge which we can perhaps call a 'World Unity':

The first principle of human unity, groupings being necessary, should be a system of free and natural groupings which would leave no room for internal discords, mutual incompatibilities and repression and revolt as between race and race or people and people. (CWSA 25: 429)

The external, political frame of world unity, Sri Aurobindo says, would be a federation of nations. He further works out the details of the world body's judiciary, its executive, its army, its police, etc. He has given us a full framework of this state. But then, as we had stated in the beginning, we should remember that no external form can last long without the indispensable inner factor of a psychological unity. It is not possible for the simple reason that all that the world state may hope to bring about – peace, economic well-being, general security, combination of general social, cultural social activities – are progressive, but they are not sufficient in themselves to create a human unity that would have a long survival. So, he says, "peace and security we all desire at present, because we have them not in sufficiency; but we must remember that man has also within him a need for combat, adventure, struggle, almost requires these for his growth and healthy living; that instinct would be largely suppressed by a universal peace and a flat security and it might rise up successfully against suppression. Economic well-being by itself cannot permanently satisfy and the price paid for it might be so heavy as to diminish its appeal and value" (CWSA 25: 562).

This is rather surprising that peace and security will not satisfy man, nor even an economic well-being. Of course when we read these lines, we remember the present incident of violence in Paris. Now we understand that economic well-being alone will not necessarily bring inner joy and peace. As Sri Aurobindo says, the sense of adventure and combat or

struggle have not yet been transformed. These may come up in the form of the Taliban or Al-Qaeda or by any other name.

Until this inner being of man is given an opportunity to express itself, all efforts are insufficient. To move inwards is the spiritual religion of humanity. The intellectual religion of humanity brought forth a lot of values and challenges, yet was insufficient to change man. Therefore the only factor that can sustain all these unifying efforts is a spiritual religion of mankind. Meanwhile let us not forget the great emphasis on matter, the one major development that has brought mankind together. Materialism has brought us close to each other to the extent that we all know today that the world has become a global village. This sense of unification on the material level has been the contribution of growing material consciousness. Sitting at our computers we already feel close to the people of the USA and Europe, sending and receiving messages from them. In the light of Sri Aurobindo, we already get a taste of what human unity could be like when mankind becomes one.

What science and technology have done for mankind is that they revealed Brahman in matter and united spirit and matter in one form of divine unity. But Sri Aurobindo asks us not to get stuck up in this reality of matter. It is indeed a truth but there are yet higher levels of truths.

The intellectual religion of humanity is a mind-born child of the philosophers. But beyond the mind there is a higher spiritual level and this religion of man is on that spiritual level which is the only one that can sustain a true human unity. I'll read out a definition, brief and condensed, of the religion of unity.

A religion of humanity means the growing realisation that there is a secret Spirit, a divine Reality, in which we are all one, that humanity is its highest present vehicle on earth, that the human race and the human being are the means by which it will progressively reveal itself here. It implies a growing attempt to live out this knowledge and bring about a kingdom of this divine Spirit upon earth. By its growth within us oneness with our fellow-men will become the leading principle of all our life, not merely a principle of cooperation but a deeper brotherhood, a real and an inner sense of unity and equality and a common life. (CWSA 25: 577)

This is the essence of a spiritual religion. First and foremost we realise, as the Upanishadic master had told us, that beyond the reality of matter, life and mind, there is a higher being. We may not have realised it yet but as the disciple Brughu was asked to meditate for 12 years (which has symbolic importance rather than numerical), we too have to meditate or make an attempt to discover this higher truth that exists beyond all our present experience. We cannot reject it just because we haven't as yet experienced it. To most of us all that our senses can register is the only truth. Whatever is beyond this ken of experience is dubious and doubtful. This is where mind brings about a block or an obstacle. Therefore Sri Aurobindo says that "humanity is its highest present vehicle on earth", but the Divine will not stop with this mankind alone. It'll move on. He will reveal greater truths. In that greater consciousness mankind will see a greater human unity. This will be the realisation of the third principle of the great mantra – liberty, equality and fraternity.

Fraternity has not yet been tried at all. No country has yet taken up fraternity on its political agenda. Sri Aurobindo says that deep down it has to be the ideal of India. Therefore he has pointed out the weaknesses of the democratic system in India which is an absolute failure for India's temperament and background. We have also seen that fraternity and spiritual religion of man are synonyms and indeed, for that reason the Mother had told someone that fraternity will be born in India. It is because of the fact that India already has in its soil the innate spiritual essence and qualities that Auroville is being built here and not anywhere else. It is because in the world this third principle belongs to the future, Auroville has to be rooted to India and it has a very specific and an important role to play regarding the future of humanity altogether.

It may take decades to arrive at such a conscious formation of spiritual reality. Sri Aurobindo gives us the essential characteristics of this spiritualised society about which I'd like to draw your attention here in Auroville as it dreams of becoming a spiritual society. It is a city that the earth needs and a city of human unity which is nothing short of becoming a spiritual society. The three creeds of spirituality as mentioned by Sri Aurobindo are God, freedom and unity. This is a special message for all of those who want to dedicate their lives to Auroville. The mantra on the intellectual level that lasted till today is liberty, equality and fraternity. But the mantra of the future is God, freedom and unity.

God is the first necessity. It is only in God consciousness that we get real freedom and in uniting with Him, we get human unity. So long as we do not have the godward consciousness as the pivot of our life, all the various kinds of experiments cannot succeed. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo says that a spiritualised society shall have God as its pivot instead of the human ego that has been ruling us from ages immemorial. The axis has to be turned from ego to God. To whatever extent we reach this godward consciousness, we'll experience the true freedom that we seek for. God is as if the head of the triangle with liberty and unity being the other two points. Unless we achieve that God-consciousness, we cannot achieve the other two in their true form.

It is interesting to see through history that all the prior attempts were made towards this unity in one way or another. This is because it is embedded in the very subconscious of our human race. Looking at it philosophically we know that the central truth of evolution is a drive towards unity. Sri Aurobindo speaks of involution and evolution in which involution is the process of this creation. If we do not understand this process then many things become a miracle for us. To avoid this attitude, Sri Aurobindo takes support of absolute rationalism. He doesn't believe in mesmerising our faith and belief. So like a scientist in the laboratory, he puts before us the entire process. Then it is up to us to believe it or to put it aside. The essence of this process of involution is multiplicity in oneness. One supreme Divine, call it Brahman or Sachchidananda, becomes this multitude in the universe. And the crux of evolution is unity in diversity or multiplicity. This diversity of human creation is moving towards that unity that is the process of evolution. So, involution is the process of oneness to manyness while evolution is the reverse process of manyness to oneness.

It is in this effort towards unity that Auroville has a role to play. In fact, Auroville is just

the beginning of a focussed aspiration towards a large unity. The Mother envisages many such centres in the future which would try to unify mankind.

In the future spiritualised society, there are two conditions that have to be followed to hasten the desired outcome. In this unity based on a spiritual society one is the need of individuals who are able to recreate themselves in the image of their spirit, and the second is the group or the group body. It is not easy for individuals to recreate themselves in the image of their spirit. It is then that the group soul receives what the individuals have discovered and or created. The issue that is notable here is that these two movements have to be simultaneous. Until now we've had great individuals aspiring for liberty, freedom, equality, salvation or the immortal spirit. We have also had wonderful groups likes monasteries, little ashramas, cloisters of retreats, small centres of light. But they were all spaced out in time. Now Sri Aurobindo sees that they have to come simultaneously which is one of the major functions of Auroville. We have all come here at Auroville to create that spiritual centre, that group body. But simultaneously there has got to be the individuals too. It cannot be just the body without the soul. Individuals are the souls and the group is its physical form. Simultaneously the two must exist together. In the Ashram too we have had great individuals who had reached the supramental consciousness, done great tapsaya and recreated themselves in the image of their spirit. But the Mother needed perhaps the group body for which she created this vast international body of Auroville. This new supramental consciousness is perhaps not happy with just a few here and there in different parts of the world. The very essence of the supramental consciousness is humanity itself.

Supermind requires the entire humanity as its footstool. All the other religions could have been satisfied with nations or creeds as their footstools, but Supermind needs a body like Auroville representing a world body. There is no compromise on this. We may not be able to do much at this point of time but the Mother and Sri Aurobindo do envisage several tiers of the evolution of consciousness in times to come. Let us look forward to this lofty ideal even though it may take us centuries to reach there.

If we don't start today building the spiritual foundation of Auroville, we can not reach that wonderful supramental world of tomorrow. Our contribution is here and now. All the problems and struggles in Auroville should not deter anyone from keeping in view the promised future that it fulfils for humanity tomorrow. This is the foundation of the supramental city, the very foundation of supramental consciousness upon earth. It is not a retreat that one should hope for, coming away from the polluted, bustle of cities like New York or Tokyo or Moscow or Delhi. One has to be prepared for a greater challenge here, a more intense inner battle. I am an idealist and following an ideal in its true image is a battle for me. This great ideal that was created with the very creation of man's consciousness itself is linked up with you and me. There is something special that each one of us has to do. The Mother would perhaps say that the most fundamental attempt of each one of us here is to rise beyond our ego. Ego was the helper till the level of man's mental evolution. When man has to travel beyond mind, ego proves to be a bar. Here in Auroville this has to be our very first attempt as it is totally unavoidable and uncompromisable. It is not impossible to

achieve it. Sri Aurobindo has given us a full-scale method in Integral Yoga. But then there is a shortcut to it too. Truth cannot be avoided. This shortcut is to surrender to the Divine. It may be difficult but there is no other way. Surrender is the essence of this Yoga. I'll read out a beautiful passage from Sri Aurobindo: "All must be done for the Divine; all must be directed towards the Divine." That's the meaning of surrender. The Western mind becomes reactionary when we talk about surrender, but let us not be afraid because we are not giving up anything or sacrificing anything. It is just that we have to live godward, looking towards the Divine. Sri Aurobindo continues: "Nothing must be attempted for ourselves as a separate existence, nothing done for others, whether neighbours, friends, family, country or mankind or other creatures merely because they are connected with our personal life and thought and sentiment or because the ego takes the preferential interest in their welfare. In this way of doing and seeing, all life and all work because only a daily dynamic worship and service of the Divine in the unbounded temple of his own vast cosmic existence." (CWSA 23: 113)

So, this is the dynamic worship of the Supreme in his own vast cosmic existence. We are not asked to reject anything. All we have to do is direct everything we do towards Him. Each of our acts and thoughts and feelings when directed to the Divine pave the way for the shortest way to realise one's deeper psychic being or the soul. The essential character of this psychic consciousness is love and unity and being so the more we move towards our psychic being, the more we reach out towards human unity. "It is the divine love which so emerges that ... will be more potent for the perfectibility of life and a more real instrument than the ineffective mental ideal of brotherhood can ever be. It is this poured out into acts that could alone create a harmony in the world and a true unity between all creatures." (CWSA 23: 166)

So you see how this entire philosophy and ideal of human unity is focussed in our own being. It is like by touching my psychic being, I touch the whole universe. This is what Mother says, that by touching a certain point in our body we can touch the points on the earth surface itself.

Possessed with spiritual consciousness if our body itself can become focussed matter, then, by touching the psychic one can touch the unity of the whole mankind. I may not know you by name or nationality, but I shall be one with you when I know my own truth, my soul. It is interesting to read this message from the Mother:

Question: Mother, what is the right way of achieving lasting world unity?

Mother: To realise the consciousness of the One.

In another place she said: "If you want peace upon earth, first establish peace in your heart. If you want union in the world, first unify the different parts of your own being."

Therefore, Sri Aurobindo's ideal is not something that belongs to a far off future or something that we cannot achieve. This is something close to our hearts. This moment which he termed as the hour of God is the most appropriate time for us to connect ourselves with our psychic being. They have brought down that supramental power which can rapidly lead us to our goal, if only we ask for it. Till now it was very hard, almost like swimming against the current. But now the whole supramental force is with us, helping us, pushing us,

as if towards the goal. And it is because of this force that the world unity can soon become a reality. Soon doesn't necessarily denote time, but it is something decreed. The Mother says that because of Sri Aurobindo's work in the subtle physical since 1950, the very concept of the ideal of human unity has become much more acceptable to the world. Today all of us here, coming from so many directions, have been unconsciously or consciously touched by Sri Aurobindo because that consciousness of world unity is his personal dream. In his message of 15th August 1947, he talked about his five dreams of which this was one. He said that he was working towards that.

Friends, this aspiration for human unity represented by Auroville has first to be realised in all of us individually. Therefore it is as if this entire cosmic aspiration of evolution is squeezed into my single psychic being and is relentlessly working towards its goal.

The path is open to each one of us. Therefore Auroville is a city that the future needs. Without this city the future of humanity will be a question mark. Therefore coming to Auroville is coming for a self-transformation. Unless and until we are ready for this self-transformation, we should not take up this experiment. Otherwise we could be anywhere in the world and contribute our little self to the divine work which is pervading everywhere on earth. But here, in Auroville, it is a cauldron of forces at work. Here if we are not very firmly anchored to our single-minded goal, we may be pulverised by the forces. I am only talking about the inner battle. At the same time, why do we need to fear when the leader of this adventure are the Avatars themselves – the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

Auroville welcomes all of you who have decided to take up this unique adventure of light and delight and of oneness and unity!

Description of Matrimandir before its construction

It is a kind of tower with twelve regular facets, which represent the twelve months of the year, and it is absolutely empty... And it must be able to hold from a hundred to two hundred people. And then, to support the roof there will be twelve columns inside (not outside), and right at the centre, well, the object of concentration.... And with the collaboration of the sun, all the year round the sun should enter as rays: no diffusion, an arrangement must be made so that it can enter as rays. Then according to the time of day and the month of the year, the ray will turn (there will be an arrangement up above) and the ray will be directed onto the centre. At the centre there will be the symbol of Sri Aurobindo, supporting a globe. A globe which we shall try to make from something transparent like crystal or... A big globe. And then, people will be allowed in to concentrate — (Mother laughs) to learn to concentrate! No fixed meditations, none of all that, but they must stay there in silence, in silence and concentration.

The Mother

(CWM 13: 291)

LIFE



Life Energy

Powerful and manifold, meets all needs.

Savitri's Encounter with Death

Larry Seidlitz

We can gain some useful insights into death by considering Savitri's encounter with the god of Death in Part Three of the Sri Aurobindo's epic, *Savitri*. To briefly recap the earlier parts of the story, the princess Savitri, whom Sri Aurobindo tells us is "the goddess of the supreme Truth," weds Satyavan, who we are told represents "the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance (Author's note at the beginning of *Savitri*). In one of his letters on *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo explains that Savitri is an incarnation of the Divine Mother (*Savitri*, p. 720). Immediately after their marriage, Savitri learns from the great sage Narad that Satyavan is fated to die exactly one year hence. For one year, Savitri lives as Satyavan's wife in a forest hermitage keeping her foreknowledge of his impending doom secret in her heart. On the fated day, she accompanies Satyavan into the forest where he is suddenly stricken. The god of Death appears and leads him away to his dark abode. Savitri, in her trance, follows in pursuit.

In Book 9, "The Book of Eternal Night," Savitri descends into the realm of death to bring Satyavan back to life. This appears to be a realm of the deep subconscious or inconscient. It is described thus,

A mystery of terror's boundlessness,
Gathering its hungry strength the huge pitiless void
Surrounded slowly with its soundless depths,
And monstrous, cavernous, a shapeless throat
Devoured her into its shadowy strangling mass,
The fierce spiritual agony of a dream. (*Savitri*, p. 583)

Savitri moves through this void and bears its torturing, destroying influence with her "faint beam of wandering Truth" (*Savitri*, p. 585). It is in these bottomless depths, not in the bright light of the mind or the strength and confidence of the vital, that Savitri confronts the god of Death and upholds her claim to Satyavan's life and soul.

Before examining some of the details of this descent into death and of Savitri's war of words with the god of Death, we may ask ourselves what is the general significance of this sojourn into death, into this void, to bring back Satyavan? First, we should dismiss the obvious interpretation that at the time of the death of the body, our souls descend into this void, since Satyavan represents the soul. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have explained that upon the death of the body, the soul briefly transits through the vital and mental worlds, discards its vital and mental sheaths, and then passes to the psychic world to assimilate its previous life experiences and to rest prior to taking up a new birth (e.g., *Letters on Yoga I*, pp. 529-531). They do not mention a passing into the inconscient.

If we reject this interpretation, then what is the significance of this sojourn in *Savitri*? I would suggest the following. The Divine, as the individual soul, as the soul spark as Sri Aurobindo calls it, has descended into the inconscience of matter, into death. The Divine is here in each atom, in the essence of each thing in the universe as its soul spark, a little divine vibration at its core. It is in this sense that the soul has descended into death, and is indeed held in its grip, and it is only through the descent of the Divine Mother into matter,

into the inconscience, that this divine vibration can grow and finally overtake the inertia and darkness of matter and transform it.

But there is perhaps a further significance connected with the soul, or we should say, the psychic being, of human beings. The soul spark mentioned above takes part in the evolution of consciousness from the inconscience of matter through successive life forms up to the human being. During this evolution, it gradually grows and by the time it reaches the human form it has developed a distinct soul personality called the psychic being. This psychic being “ensouls” a new human form in successive human lives, and between human incarnations, passes to the psychic world. When it takes birth in human form, that is, in a physical form, it ordinarily can only influence the outward life of the mind, life, and body only indirectly. The grip of inconscience on the outward life, especially on the body, is strong, and the spiritual light and force of the soul or the divine is not easily visible or fully expressed. Thus, human life is fettered by the inconscience, by death, and so is the psychic being’s free command and expression in the outward life of the human being. In this sense, the psychic being is subject to death, that is, in expressing itself in human life, and it is through the descent of the Divine Consciousness into the inconscient that this subjection may be overcome.

Now the significance of this descent of Savitri, of the Divine Mother, into death may be taken quite literally. Indeed the Mother of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram did literally and consciously descend into death, very much as does Savitri in the poem. In fact, the same thing may be said of Sri Aurobindo before her. When Sri Aurobindo left his body in 1950, he brought down into his body the supramental light and force, and for several days his body had a golden hue and aura that was visible to many who saw it. Moreover, the Mother indicated that at the time Sri Aurobindo left his body, the most material part of him passed into her (*Mother's Agenda*, Vol. 3. p. 27). Also, at that time she realized the Mind of Light, which means the reception of the supramental light in the physical mind (*Collected Works of the Mother*, Vol. 13, p. 64) We can conclude that whatever the reasons for Sri Aurobindo’s leaving the body, in his passing he brought down the supramental light and force into the physical in an important way. Probably it paved the way for the larger descent of the supramental force and light into the earth consciousness six years later on February 29, 1956.

Later, beginning on April 2-3, 1962, Mother herself consciously left her body for a time, accompanied with a total cardiac arrest, but nevertheless her body survived and she regained a connection with it, though perhaps not quite in the same way as before (*Mother's Agenda*. Vol. 3. p. 129) Moreover, at the end of this crisis, during the night of April 12-13, she had a decisive experience:

Suddenly in the night I woke up with the full awareness of what we could call the Yoga of the world. The Supreme Love was manifesting through big pulsations, and each pulsation was bringing the world further in its manifestation. It was the formidable pulsations of the eternal, stupendous Love, only Love: each pulsation of the Love was carrying the universe further in its manifestation. And the certitude that what is to be done is done and the Supramental Manifestation is realized. (*Mother's Agenda*. Vol. 3, p. 131)

During latter part of her life, Mother explained that she was working to transform the

subconscious. When she did finally leave her body in 1973, we do not know what happened on the occult level, but we might guess that then too she used this experience to enter deeper into the depths of the subconscious and inconscient to bring the supramental light there. So we can see from these examples that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother did descend into death in order to bring the supramental light and force there, to transform it.

Now let us turn to examine the Lord of Death's arguments in *Savitri*, his view of reality, his reason for denying God and the ideal of a divine life on earth. And notice how we can hear in these arguments echoes of the prevailing scientific view. Of man and God, Death says,

A fragile miracle of thinking clay,
Armed with illusions walks the child of Time.
To fill the void around he feels and dreads,
The void he came from and to which he goes,
He magnifies his self and names it God.
He calls the heavens to help his suffering hopes.
He sees above him with a longing heart
Bare spaces more unconscious than himself
That have not even his privilege of mind,
And empty of all but their unreal blue,
And peoples them with bright and merciful powers.
For the sea roars around him and earth quakes
Beneath his steps, and fire is at his doors,
And death prowls baying through the woods of life.
Moved by the Presences with which he yearns,
He offers in implacable shrines his soul
And clothes all with the beauty of his dreams. (*Savitri*, pp. 586-587)

Death argues that God is a product of our imagination. The grim reality of our brief, precarious life is so frightening, our impending death is so overwhelming, that we have invented the idea that we continue to exist after the death of our bodies. He continues:

Death only lasts and the inconscient Void.
I only am eternal and endure. ...
I, Death, am He; there is no other God.
The Gods to whom man prays can help not man;
They are my imaginations and my moods
Reflected in him by illusion's power.
That which thou seest as thy immortal self
Is a shadowy icon of my infinite,
Is Death in thee dreaming of eternity. (*Savitri*, pp. 592-593)

Death tells us, look around you, what do you see? You see a world of brief lives spinning in the void. Look at the immensity of the nothingness around you. Look at the infinite, timeless empty space around you, and compare it to your brief, precarious human life. You cannot house the eternal in your frail, ephemeral body. When you come face to face with this void, when it impresses its totality upon your consciousness, and you realize your life is slipping away, its stark reality is overwhelming, irrefutable. Death is the only god: all things come from the void, and to the void all things return. All life and all mind come from matter, and even matter when you look at it up close is only empty space and inconscient swirling

force. Somehow, through an accident of nature, life has arisen, and in it thinking mind. Mind lends a form to inconscient force – material forms in themselves, without the aid of mind, are just the movements of inconscient forces in a void. Being human, you look around and see this eternal darkness, this infinite emptiness waiting to swallow you. This is too much to bear, so you people it with gods and imagine they are going to save you. Face the facts, face reality, don't turn from it. You have your brief life, a little pleasure and a little pain, and then you will return to eternal peace in empty void. Don't resist, it will only make your life more painful. And he continues:

This is the stuff from which the ideal is formed:
Its builder is thought, its base the heart's desire,
But nothing real answers to their call.
The ideal dwells not in heaven, nor on the earth,
A bright delirium of man's ardour of hope
Drunk with the wine of its own fantasy.
It is a brilliant shadow's dreamy trail.
Thy vision's error builds the azure skies,
Thy vision's error drew the rainbow's arch;
Thy mortal longing made for thee a soul. (*Savitri*, pp. 607-608)

Death tells us that the ideal of a divine life is product of the mind, and the mind has built what the heart desires; it will all end with your brief life. In the same way the rainbow is an illusion of your mind, in the same way the blue of the sky is colored by your mind's perception, your soul is a product of your imagination, it is simply a mental projection of the timeless void you see around you, the emptiness that soon will swallow you. He tells us not to listen to the rambling of the saints and sages, they too were self-deceived.

The Avatars have lived and died in vain,
Vain was the sage's thought, the prophet's voice;
In vain is seen the shining upward Way.
Earth lies unchanged beneath the circling sun;
She loves her fall and no omnipotence
Her mortal imperfections can erase,
Force on man's crooked ignorance Heaven's straight line
Or colonise a world of death with gods. (*Savitri*, pp. 609-610)

Death tells us, the Avatars have come and gone, but the earth still spins in the void as it has always done, and mankind still suffers, still dies. Forget about uplifting humanity to some divine status. Humanity is mortal and imperfect and will always remain so. Humanity is not interested in Avatars or a divine life. Humanity is content with its simple, squalid life, in its narrow limits.

Death mocks her claim of immortal love, the love that ties her to Satyavan. This too he says is a product of her imagination, and worse, of her physical need and vital craving. It is her lust dressed up in imagination's bright clothes, and she calls it divine. He says,

This angel in thy body thou callst love,
Who shapes his wings from thy emotion's hues,
In a ferment of thy body has been born
And with the body that housed it it must die. (*Savitri*, p. 608)

He tells us that this love she imagines to be immortal is an illusion with which she covers

over a physical and vital desire. In human love, there is either a small or large part of physical and vital desire mixed in with higher motives. Seldom is love a pure self-giving with no expectation of return. Often, we may be more concerned with our own needs and desires than those of the other person. Death argues, even if love has learned to rein in its desires and look disinterested, physical desire is still its origin; it is neither eternal nor divine. He says:

Love cannot live by heavenly food alone,
Only on sap of earth can it survive.
For thy passion was a sensual want refined,
A hunger of the body and the heart;
Thy want can tire and cease or turn elsewhere. (*Savitri*, p. 611)

After the first blossoming of love with its passion and joy subsides, it is soon replaced by the harsher colors of the vital with its demands and jealousy and treachery. Or else it fades, and is replaced by the habit of a daily routine, a working together for common ends, a common sacrifice for a stable life. Savitri replies to all of death's arguments. Regarding her love for Satyavan, she says,

My love is not a hunger of the heart,
My love is not a craving of the flesh;
It came to me from God, to God returns.
Even in all that life and man have marred,
A whisper of divinity still is heard,
A breath is felt from the eternal spheres.
Allowed by Heaven and wonderful to man
A sweet fire-rhythm of passion chants to love. (*Savitri*, pp. 612-613)

Savitri says that love ultimately has come from God and to God returns. It is the Divine within each of us drawn to the Divine perceived to be outside. It is the Oneness in the multiplicity seeking its unity. It is true that here in the ignorance mankind has deformed love. We have lost our unity with the Oneness behind all existence; we perceive ourselves cut off and isolated from the whole. Therefore, in our ignorance we strive for security, strive to enlarge our ego to withstand the pressures of the world. Instead of opening ourselves up to the Divine, we protect ourselves and seek others to help us in putting up a common defense against the forces of the world we cannot understand nor control. Nevertheless, there still is something beautiful and divine at the core of human love, and when we grow in knowledge and strength, when we begin to purify ourselves of our egoistic motives, more and more of the sweetness and ecstasy of the original Divine Love begins to reveal itself.

One who came love and lover and beloved
Eternal, built himself a wondrous field
And wove the measures of a marvellous dance.
There in its circles and its magic turns
Attracted he arrives, repelled he flees.
In the wild devious promptings of his mind
He tastes the honey of tears and puts off joy
Repenting, and has laughter and has wrath,
And both are a broken music of the soul
Which seeks out reconciled its heavenly rhyme.
Ever he comes to us across the years

Bearing a new sweet face that is the old.
His bliss laughs to us or it calls concealed
Like a far-heard unseen entrancing flute
From moonlit branches in the throbbing woods,
Tempting our angry search and passionate pain.
Disguised the Lover seeks and draws our souls. (*Savitri*, p. 613-14)

All things here are the Divine. He is the pursuer and the pursued, the play of the pursuit is He. This world is his stage. Through the cycles of the evolution he pursues himself in endless forms, always changing. We are caught in the game, mistake the mask for the Person behind, but feel the attraction and the delight of the play. The Divine calls to us in the beloved, attracting us to his delight. We are tossed about in his passionate play, finding sweetness here, finding sorrow there, but always led to new adventure and new delight and new pain. As we grow through this experience, our human love gradually transforms into its divine counterpart. Then the Divine within us unveils itself, and the disguise of our Beloved thins and falls. Love transforms to the Love of the Divine for the Truth within the beloved. We feel our oneness with others, we feel the delight of their essential truth, and participate in the gradual unfolding of their outward perfection.

Savitri gives a long reply to Death's argument about the illusion of God and the vanity of the ideal of a divine life on earth. In her reply, she explains how God immersed his consciousness into matter, into the Inconscient, and is slowly emerging through evolutionary steps. Look at the miracles he has already revealed, the appearance in inert matter of life, of mind in life. Even now man can turn his consciousness to the Divine and open it to a greater Light and Power.

God wrapped his head from sight in Matter's cowl,
His consciousness dived into inconscient depths,
All-Knowledge seemed a huge dark Nescience;
Infinity wore a boundless zero's form.
His abysses of bliss became insensible deeps,
Eternity a blank spiritual Vast.
Annulling an original nullity
The Timeless took its ground in emptiness
And drew the figure of a universe,
That the spirit might adventure into Time
And wrestle with adamant Necessity
And the soul pursue a cosmic pilgrimage.
A spirit moved in black immensities
And built a Thought in ancient Nothingness;
A soul was lit in God's tremendous Void,
A secret labouring glow of nascent fire. (*Savitri*, pp. 621-622)



The Force in Shakespeare's Plays: In Sri Aurobindo's Perspective

Shruti Bidwaikar

For five centuries Shakespeare has occupied the academia and has unceasingly invited new interpretations and insights into his plays. Since the time he wrote, many eminent poets and critics have found something of their interest in them. Each of them approached the plays differently and the parameters they applied too were varied. With their own interests, parameters and insights, they came up with startling interpretations of Shakespeare's plays. In the Post-modernist era, gender studies, psychoanalytical theories, theories on archetypes, deconstruction, reader-response, post-colonial studies, etc. are being applied to the plays in various degrees and dimensions.

Sri Aurobindo, a poet and a critic, commented upon Shakespeare's plays, although there is no theorizing on his part. He approached the plays on the plane on which they worked. He calls it the life plane or the vital plane. Sri Aurobindo observes: "Shakespeare was the poet of life seen through an identity of feeling with it and of thought arising out of the surge of life" (*Sri Aurobindo on Shakespeare*: 69). This may be better understood in what Sri Aurobindo calls the "five suns of poetry", which are "Truth, Beauty, Delight, Life and Spirit" (*The Future Poetry*: 222). Relating all these terms he says, "The enlightening power of the poet's creation is vision of truth, its moving power is a passion of beauty and delight, but its sustaining power and that which makes it great and vital is the breath of life" (*The Future Poetry*: 242). According to Sri Aurobindo, Shakespeare expressed the vital plane most powerfully in his plays. His major characters have the vigor, force, desire, ambition, willpower and such impulses which direct their lives. His characters give out some philosophies of life essentially making sense of the human existence. It is this life plane which strikes the reader; life in its best and worst. Thought is very much there, but the action is based essentially on the level of existence and thought works for the sake of life. It can be better elucidated with Sri Aurobindo's remarks about Shakespeare's plays which this paper aims to apply to Macbeth. A few comments would be culled out of Sri Aurobindo's writings and corresponding lines from the play may be substantiated.

Sri Aurobindo remarks: "In all very great drama the movement and result is really psychological and the outward action, even when it is considerable, and the consummating event, even though loud and violent, are only either its symbol or else its condition of culmination" (*Sri Aurobindo on Shakespeare*: 63). A.C. Bradley writes something to this effect: "The 'story' or action of a Shakespearean tragedy does not consist, of course, solely of human actions or deeds; but the deeds are the predominant factor. And these deeds are for the most part, actions in the full sense of the word; not things done 'tween asleep and wake', but acts or omissions thoroughly expressive of the doer, – characteristic deeds. The centre of the tragedy, therefore, may be said with equal truth to lie in action issuing from character, or in character issuing in action" (7). This psychological drama or expression of the doer is best elucidated in Macbeth's fantasy of the dagger, where he sees the dagger dangling before him

and fails to catch hold of it. Another reaction is to the Ghost of Banquo. He is overwhelmed with fear and his conscience pricks him to have committed two murders, thus his reaction:

Macbeth

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppresed brain? (II. 1: 360)

Avaunt! And quit my sight! Let the earth hide thee!
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;
Thou has no speculation in those eyes,
which thou dost glare with! (II.2: 377)

... ha! They pluck out mine eyes.
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red. (II.2: 362)

Lady Macbeth

... What need we fear who knows it, when none
can call our power to account? – Yet who would have thought
the old man to have had so much blood in him. (V. 1:394)

Here's the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes
of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh! (395)

... What's done cannot be undone. (395)

In these instances Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are aware of the crime they have committed. They have a troubled conscience and cannot get out of this guilt. Macbeth is stolen of his sleep and peace of mind. Lady Macbeth cannot wake up and rest. The horror of killing a life has engulfed them so much that they are not able to come out of those fears. Their souls are awakened to the fact that they have committed the horrendous act, but their minds and lives are unable to bear the burden. This is where Sri Aurobindo remarks that the 'pain of living for the soul that has awakened to the misery of the world' almost becomes nerve-wracking for the two.

Shakespeare's characters come out with startling understanding about life. Sri Aurobindo calls it the 'interpretative vision'. He says "Dramatic poetry" must have "as the fount of its creation or in its heart an interpretative vision and in that vision an explicit or implicit idea of life and the human being... This interpretative vision and idea have in the presentation to seem to arise out of the inner life of vital types of the human soul or individual representatives of it..." Macbeth's speech after Lady Macbeth's death is a realization that dawns upon him. He says:

... Out, out brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing. (V.5: 399)

And Lady Macbeth's confession "What's done cannot be undone" are those interpretations which come from the inner life of these human beings who have suffered at the hands of their ambitions and vital impulses.

In the light of Sri Aurobindo, K.D. Sethna analyses the play of occult forces in the play. The evils done by Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are balanced by the extreme nature of their maladies. Sethna says that both the characters are sensitive and kind and so Macbeth finds the sleeping king "like a new born babe" and Lady Macbeth's awareness of "how tender it is to love the babe that milks one" (*Talks on Poetry*: 434) portrays their kindness. In the somnambulist state when Lady Macbeth utters "Who could have thought the old man to have had so much of blood in him?" and her reference to the perfumes of Arabia not being able to wash the smell of blood from her hands is an indication of her sensitiveness. However, there is a part in them which is evil and dominates all that is kind and good. They are guided by their ambition. Their suffering is in proportion to the evil they do. Sethna observes: "Lady Macbeth who goes to the limit of wickedness with hardly a care in the world is the greater sufferer because we must remember how the forces which are occult are also retributive forces; they can avenge an evil action which has been caused by an intervention of evil occult forces, and it is they who rob Macbeth of his sleep and it is they who make Lady Macbeth a sleep-walker, the very opposite of Macbeth. Macbeth, poor fellow, had to pace up and down because he couldn't sleep: he has very restless. She had to pace up and down because she couldn't wake up and rest! So these are sort of balances and the retribution is according to the amount of evil resolution in either" (435).

Another point that may be mentioned here is about Shakespeare's delineation of minor characters. Sri Aurobindo says: "To the artist nothing is small; he bestowes as much of his art within the narrow limits of his small characters as within the wide compass of his greatest. Shakespeare lavishes life upon his minor characters; but in Shakespeare it is the result of an abounding creative energy; he makes living men as God made the world, because he could not help it, because it was in his nature and must out" (*Sri Aurobindo on Shakespeare*: 44). For example, Shakespeare putting the words of wisdom in Banquo's mouth:

That, trusted home,
Might yet enkindle you unto the crown,
Besides the thane of Cawdor. But 'tis strange:
And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's
In deepest consequence.
Cousins, a word, I pray you. (1.3: 351)

Shakespeare's endowes Macduff with the heart where he wants to avenge his wife's and children's death:

... Tyrant, show thy face!
If thou be'st slain and with no stroke of mine,
My wife and children's ghosts will haunt me still.
I cannot strike at wretched kerns, whose arms
Are hired to bear their staves: either thou, Macbeth,
Or else my sword with an unbatter'd edge,
I sheathe again undeeded. There thou shouldst be;
By this great clatter, one of greatest note
Seems bruited. Let me find him, fortune!

And more

I beg not.
I have no words:
My voice is in my sword: thou bloodier villain
Than terms can give thee out! (V. 7: 401)

It is not only Macbeth who has ambition and remorse and realization of what he does, but other characters are equally imbued with human emotions and feelings, may it be the doctor or the messenger. They have been given the speech which is appropriate to their role and position in the play.

With this elucidation it can be concluded that unlike other critics who dwelt on the structure, use of language and other metrical parameters alone, Sri Aurobindo added a dimension of the plane on which Shakespeare's plays work. Indeed he takes into account the merits of Shakespeare's language, the impact of the age he lived in, his individual genius and his visionary qualities. Shakespeare is able to give the interpretative vision of life.

Sri Aurobindo says: "Shakespeare was a supreme poet, one might almost say, nothing else" (*Sri Aurobindo on Shakespeare*: 9). It is because "Vision is the characteristic power of the poet" writes Sri Aurobindo in *The Future Poetry* (31). It is here that he refers to the ancient idea of Kavi as being the seer-poet. It is not merely for Shakespeare's poetic style that he calls him a poet and nothing else, but for his visionary perception.

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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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Patriotic sentiments are not incompatible with our yoga—far from it—to will for the strength and the integrity of one's Motherland is a quite legitimate sentiment, the will that she may make progress and that more and more she may manifest, in full freedom, the truth of her being, is a fine and noble will which cannot be harmful for our yoga. But one must not get excited, one must not plunge prematurely into action. One can and should pray, aspire and will for the victory of the truth and, at the same time, continue to discharge one's daily duties and wait quietly for the unmistakable sign to come, indicating the action to be done.

With my blessings.

27 October 1962