

Sri Aurobindo: The Avatar-II

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Earlier we had spoken about the birth of the Avatar. We must get a clear idea of the Avatar, the possibility of Avatarhood, and the purpose of the Avatar. Sri Aurobindo, in the Essays on the Gita, explains the main concept of the Avatar. We have seen that the Avatar's purpose is two-fold as we said that the descent of the Supreme Consciousness, the Brahman Consciousness, or the Consciousness of the Sachchidananda into a physical human body. Second he leads humanity towards higher consciousness. The descent that is the descent of God in man entails great sacrifice and suffering because the Supreme puts on himself the nature of humanity that is to say he puts on himself the cloak of ignorance and there is no pretension in that at all. He assumes the outer nature as it is with human beings. So the sufferings of human beings are exactly there in the avatar's body also.

In a way, human being is also an Avatar because the word "avatara" means coming down. Human being is also an avatar in essence because it is the soul which comes down upon the earth and puts on the human body. But when the Supreme Divine comes down and takes upon a human body he is always aware of this inner divine consciousness even from his childhood. And it is only his wish and will when to bring it forth otherwise he is fully conscious. Whereas man although has a divine portion, he is not conscious of the soul.

The Avatar is fully conscious and the human being is fully ignorant of his inner divinity. This is the major difference. The divine although he is inwardly conscious of what he takes upon himself willingly, consciously with external sufferings has a tremendous meaning, because if he does not take upon himself in all its reality, in all its intensity the suffering of mankind, the divine could not or cannot have shown us the path.

Christ took upon himself the suffering of man to show that

this suffering also could be a redemption, a path of salvation; Buddha accepted all the suffering and showed that even through the suffering, humanity can go out of the suffering. So, it is not a question of a show or pretense in any case. Because if there is any kind of insincerity or pretense in the Avatar, then his work would not have a permanent effect on the human consciousness. Anything that goes in the name of insincerity cannot have a divine vibration at all.

So the divine suffers and perhaps he suffers a million times more than we individual human beings. We in our limited consciousness are aware only of our own suffering but the divine being so very cosmic at all times takes upon himself the cosmic suffering. So let us not think that the Avatar's existence is one of a constant Lila or "rasa Lila" that we see in Sri Krishna. Externally, he has given us the "rasa Lila" but the work they do inwardly is constantly that of uplifting humanity. And this is the purpose and the true purpose of the coming of the avatar. What we said is the ascent of man into godhead. So the second important work of the Avatar, the whole purpose or the main purpose is uplifting humanity to a new and higher level of consciousness. But at the same time, we should not forget that the Avatar does great work in the external field also; what Sri Aurobindo describes as the outer work and the inner work. The outer work is done for man to see and to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth on a collective level.

We are going to concentrate on this outward work of the avatar which can be seen and understood by common humanity. It is very difficult to understand the inner work of an Avatar. The inner work as we said, is to bring down the kingdom of heaven within the individual. It is only a great avataric consciousness that can tell about another avatar's inner work. And fortunately for us Sri Aurobindo through his writings and letters has revealed very clearly the inner intention of the "dasavatars"

which though symbolic is very meaningful. He has given us the inner revelation of all these previous avatars. That is how we can guess or understand the work of Sri Rama, Sri Krishna or other avatars. Otherwise, for the human consciousness, it is impossible to gauge the work of a Divine Consciousness. We cannot understand mentally what the divine does in his consciousness. Humanity has been able to see and perceive and understand over a period of time, the external work of the divine Avatar.

There are two aspects of ascent and descent. Ascent is the inner work in man and the descent of the avatar is for setting an example in the collectivity. Outer work is human collectivity whereas inner work is on the individual level. We see in the Gita the famous verse given to us that the avatar comes whenever there is a decrease of dharma. It is not enough for an Avatar just to come for establishing dharma or killing an asura, what is important is whenever there is an inner crisis of consciousness it becomes the most important reason for an Avatar to come. Whenever humanity undergoes an inner crisis, a spiritual crisis, then only there is the necessity of the descent of the divine. External may only be an excuse like the increase of the wrong or adharma of the Kauravas, the truth is that it was a period of an inner crisis in humanity. This is what Sri Aurobindo describes but at present, we see the main cause is a crisis of the mind or the vital. The divine will works it out through the Vibhuti. Sri Aurobindo gives a very good example of the period of Renaissance and Reformation in European history. There was a crisis in terms of intellect but it was not necessary for an Avatar to descend to solve that crisis. There were great painters, musicians and artists, great sculptors and authors who took birth to solve that crisis. It was a kind of greatness of the mind and Sri Aurobindo says, there is a whole flux of the higher Consciousness of a common man to lift him up. Well we have another example in the French Revolution. That too was a tremendous wave of human revolution but remember there was

no avatar at that time as it was not a crisis of Consciousness. It was then a crisis of the intellect, of bringing something new but not on the level of consciousness. Closer home, we could think of the period of India's independence. What happened during the time when Sri Aurobindo was there in politics? At that time the spirit was such that every common man was taken up by the spirit of India's freedom! Everyone was ready to sacrifice their lives. The mother interestingly tells us that great souls came upon the earth during that period to work for Sri Aurobindo. They may have been common men not great poets or scientists or musicians but great souls who were close, to be there with Sri Aurobindo as he was spreading the freedom movement of the country long before the other politicians came upon the scene and took away the credit of being the leaders. It was Sri Aurobindo who gave the momentum which was truly the spiritual revolution that brought about freedom to India. This is the secret of the movements in India. It always begins with a spiritual awakening and truth. It is only later that society and politics took up these movements. What Sri Aurobindo contributed was that spiritual impetus and later it got drifted into the political field and we all know what they did. Instead of keeping the country together, they divided it and brought in other misinterpretations for which we are still suffering. This is because politicians do not have a vision.

These were examples of changes given by Sri Aurobindo when great vibhutis or great men were/are born upon the earth and told us not to expect an avatar each time when there is a kind of adharmā. If we talk of the Mahabharata period, we could also say that the period of the Indian National Movement was also a cruel and unjust one. Whereas the Renaissance, coming out of the Dark ages were periods of crisis but not that of consciousness. We should remember this major idea when we speak about the outer work of an Avatar. Then we understand as to when he needs to come upon this earth.

Now, again we go back to the same verse of the Gita, that the Avatar comes to strike upon a new Dharma. Sri Aurobindo asks us the question as to what do we understand by Dharma? Which is the Dharma he comes to give to humanity? Well, the common meaning of Dharma as we all know comes from the root 'Dhri' meaning 'to hold together. But what is it that we hold together? The Dharma that we hold to and which holds together our inner and outer activities is the true definition of Dharma. 'Dharma' is that particular law that holds our inner and the outer beings together. But at the same time, we have got different levels of its meaning. We all know that India always fights for Dharma, not for human rights which is a Western concept. Dharma is on different levels of morality, spirituality, psychology, sociology, the political field, etc. It encompasses our life. We don't know on which level is Dharma more comprehensive and complex concept than human rights. Well, ethically and practically we see that Dharma is a simple moral law. Socially and politically it is that instrument that balances social and political justice. So purely from the moral standpoint Sri Krishna's verse can be interpreted as that he had come to destroy the evil doing of the Kauravas. It is a superficial reason. That is why Sri Aurobindo has raised a question does the avatar come only to destroy the adharma? From the stories of Sri Krishna, Sri Rama, Vamana etc. we know that they came to kill Kauravas, Ravana and Bali. It is extremely easy to put one against the other. But what has happened to Lord Buddha and Lord Christ? If they are the avatars then which is that asura that they killed? None. There was no such opposition for them to destroy. So then we cannot extend this moral principle to all the avatars. I am making this point clear because we have got to remember this when we come to Sri Aurobindo himself. So there can be and there are exceptions to this rule. So let us not, in a blanket order think that all the avatars come to set right the adharma.

We should understand that each avatar comes to fulfill

their mission for the earth. When you take up the avatars, we see that there is a definite pattern that emerges. And what is that pattern? We may think that Sri Rama and Sri Krishna are mythological characters or are very ancient for us to judge anything. Nevertheless, we understand from their work that they have basically nourished the inner soul or the psychic of India. You can see their influence all over the country. Although we speak of Ramanuja in politics, but today India lives because of these Avatars. That is their essential contribution. Both Christ and Buddha have come more as divine teachers. Sri Aurobindo says the former are divine personalities and the latter are divine teachers, who have left behind a great influence in society and politics. For example, the Buddha as we all know has been kind of rejected in India. Why is that rejection? He has left behind a tremendous impact on the Indian social and political field. What has happened to Christ? Although Christ is there in Europe and not rejected like Buddha from India –still Christ and his teachings were transformed, as Sri Aurobindo would say, into those western values of humanitarianism on the social level and the value of equality, fraternity, and liberty on the level of politics. So in the western world, Christ lives more in the social and political field than in the religious field. And in India Sri Rama and Sri Krishna live on the inner level of humanity than on the external level. Therefore, we see Avatars with different roles, but Sri Aurobindo would warn us that both of these roles are complementary because when we lose the inner effect, Sri Aurobindo tells us that the outer influence of the Avatar remains. Or when at the same time the outer influence of Buddha and Christ fade away they sink into the inner nature of humanity. So what we want to clarify here is that the avatar does not come only for the sake of Adharma. We are time and again repeating only to prove that they came for different purposes also. So far it is on the level of ethics.

Then on the level of social and political life, we see the same

thing that emerges. We see that every avatar left three things behind - the first is the Dharma or the law, the second is the Sangha, and the third their personality. So if you want to see the work of the avatar, you can analyse his external work through three things. Dharma, Sangha and the person himself. Now if we take up the case of Buddha, we know very well that on the ethical level he left behind a Dharma which we call the eight-fold path. That is his contribution to the level of ethics. Now when it comes to Christ, he left behind the Christian living – i.e. the way a Christian should live his life. There are also norms and rules. But when it comes to Sri Krishna, he has not left behind any one Dharma, but he has given us a Dharma stating that every human being must have a godward endeavour which is devoid of desire and ego. This is the Dharma that the Gita teaches us that desireless, detached and egoless. So this is the great contribution of Sri Krishna on the ethical level. When we come to the social level, it is the Sangha, the word used in Buddhism. And when it comes to Christ, the Sangha he left behind is the church. It is a community of people who believe in the Church and in Christianity. In the case of Sri Krishna, the Sangha he left behind is the Lokasangraha which is not a specific community or a church of Sri Krishna that the modern Iskon people are trying to make of the Lord. The idea of Lokasangraha is all those individuals who are practicing the yoga of desirelessness, should work for all humanity after attaining their realization. They must return to society for its welfare. Sri Krishna did not make any specific group and yet he made a differentiation on the level of Sangha.

Then when it comes to the level of the person himself it is easy because Buddha was the central person of Buddhism just as Christ was of Christianity. He also revealed that he and the father in the heaven are the same. Buddha did not believe in any personal deity or God. There are two aspects of the divinity, two aspects of the divine Avatars. One is the line of the Vishnu, the

other in the line of Shiva Avatars. The Mother reveals to us that although Buddha never preached about the personal Godhead, he himself belonged to the Shiva line of Avatars. What does it mean? That the Shiva aspect always destroys first and then takes up creation. So the work that the Buddha did was precisely that, he destroyed the unnecessary encrustations of the Vedic rites which had by then started strangling humanity. They were manmade – not envisioned by the Vedic Rishis. Down the ages, pure Vedic symbolism got encrusted and Buddha had to destroy it.

And Sri Krishna never said that “I am the sole person” he said that I am the immanent Divine, within each one of you. So although Sri Krishna was an individual personality yet he transcended and declared that “I am the Purushottama in each one of you”. Therefore, again we see in him a tremendous universality and transcendentality. So on the social, ethical and spiritual levels we see this. Very peculiarly another level that holds importance is the political level and, on this level, more than the other Avatars, Sri Krishna had a great contribution. Let us remind ourselves that during his period India was passing through a political upheaval and it was divided into many small clans. So we were not at all united. We can understand this when we read Sri Aurobindo’s human cycle in which he explains that humanity passes through five periods of progress. It is the ‘individual’, ‘family’, ‘clan’ ‘nation’, and the ‘world’. India was then passing through the third level of ‘clans’. There were so many such clans like the Kauravas and Pandavas that were strewn all over the country. Sri Krishna was the first avatar who tried to bring about the Unity of the country, sow the first seed of national spirit – a spirit of a national unity. That was the main political objective of Sri Krishna that he was not only there only for the inner work but on the external level as well. He worked for the Akhanda Bharata. And towards this objective, his greatest obstruction was the clan of Kauravas. He was not

against any one person or clan but as it proved itself to be an obstruction in the building of the country he had to destroy that element.

Very diplomatically, like a great statesman, Sri Krishna worked towards that end. All the books we read on Mahabharat or see T.V serials or hear stories from the elders on the external level only serve this single purpose. When you see things in detail, you will see that each happening and incident is moving towards that single objective of the Kurukshetra which was to bring out all the worst through the Kauravas, so that all that can be eliminated in one go. The war field was the best to bring about the offering and transformation. We can say that Kurukshetra was the handwork of Sri Krishna himself. He worked towards it, planned its details and achieved victory. So with one single stroke, he eliminated all the obstructions of the clan mentality, the clan psychology that was prevailing through the ages. This kind of massive social and political transformation needs to be ushered in only by an Avatar. He therefore set the basis of the unity of our country. Now how much of this political ideal could be achieved? Certainly, he started this movement but as Sri Aurobindo would explain, unfortunately, India could not and did not come out of this clan mentality. It remained in the third level, whereas Europe really sacrificed its clans for nationhood and very fast turned itself into a nation, a committee of great nations. India perhaps is still now bogged down by this clan mentality and perhaps on the occult level, this is why India is still struggling hard to become a true Nation. We can understand this by the idealism and speeches given by each party, and the way they express their narrow thinking. This is what Sri Krishna worked for.

I will now come to Sri Aurobindo and see if Sri Aurobindo has done these works as an Avatar and how far he has succeeded. Here we talk about Sri Aurobindo's Avataric works. Regarding

his inner work we are quite clear but let us now look into his external acts for the divine.

I would like to start with a quote from the Mother which gives us the entire concept of Sri Aurobindo as the Avatar. "What Sri Aurobindo represents in the world's history is not a teaching, not even a revelation; it is a decisive action direct from the Supreme". (CWM 13: 4) You see the emphasis here – "a decisive action". So, Sri Aurobindo is there not only for the inner work of humanity, but to transform the external world itself. This outer transformation was his main work. All the Avatars do the inner work. But Sri Aurobindo goes beyond just a desireless action. He wants us to change our consciousness itself, with which we perform these actions. He works for the transformation of the individual – an ideal that takes us further forward than the ideal given to us by Sri Krishna. What Sri Aurobindo has given us in the strictest terms is the "Integral Yoga" a new law of life, a new way of living, and a completely new rhythm that could take us through inner and outer transformation. On the ethical level and moral levels Sri Aurobindo's unique contribution is this new "Integral Yoga".

Then on the social level, we've seen Sri Krishna telling us to work for the "Lokasangraha" which is an individual perfecting himself and working for humanity. But Sri Aurobindo tells us about not only the individual but that there must be a group soul that must perfect themselves. So here too, he has brought in a greater ideal not of the individual liberation, salvation or individual mentality but the work of collectivity. He is not happy with a few individual achievers of the bliss of God but he wants a total transformation. On the level of evolution, Sri Aurobindo is one step beyond the work of Sri Krishna. We must be clear about one thing each Avatar comes to fulfill its mission in the progressive evolution of the earth. In that case, it is natural that Sri Aurobindo will be able to take the work

forward from the point where Sri Krishna had left. It is always that the past avatar paves the way for the next Avatar. We have seen in the spiritual history of India that the Vedic truths came down level by level, from the level of mind during the time of the Vedas and the Upanishads, during the time of the Puranas as the level of emotion and the psychic and then this truth that came from the mind to the heart had to be brought down to the level of the physical. This last level is brought down in the form of Sri Aurobindo. So Sri Aurobindo is again the culmination of the Vedic cycle. All those realizations that began in the times of the Vedas have their culmination in Sri Aurobindo. And for this work, there is one thing that is important which is the bringing down of the new force called the Supramental. Even when we see the ladder of the avatars, there is a great meaning. The force or the power that Sri Krishna brought down is the Overmental consciousness. Before that Sri Rama brought down the ethical consciousness to humanity. The onward march the overmental Consciousness opened the door towards the Supreme so that mankind could achieve the Supreme Brahman. But the Buddha who came after Sri Krishna went on a tangent and reached Nirvana which is the impersonal divinity. He points out that in the ladder of the Avatars, it is the Kalki avatar who continues the work of Sri Krishna. So Sri Aurobindo, as Mother puts it here, is the step which is being added now – “Sri Aurobindo has called the Supramental; as a result of it, the consciousness will be able to enter the supramental world and yet retain its personal form, its individualisation and then come down to establish here a new creation”. (CWM 3: 178-179)

The difference of the avatars and what Sri Aurobindo is doing is that the previous avatars have asked us to go towards the Brahman, towards a higher consciousness, but Sri Aurobindo is the first Avatar who is asking humanity to bring back the divine consciousness on to this earth so that the earth could

get transformed into heaven. This up-and-down connection of the ladder is established by Sri Aurobindo for the first time in the spiritual history of mankind. The Mother has a beautiful addition here. She says "The work of achieving a continuity which permits one to go up and down and bring into the material what is above, is done inside the consciousness". (CWM 3: 179) And then she says that the avatar can work in a hidden consciousness. "He does not need to be recognised, he need have no outward power in order to be able to establish this conscious connection. Once, however, the connection is made, it must have its effect in the outward world in the form of a new creation, beginning with a model town and ending with a perfect world". (Ibid)

As you see this external transformation of the world, she says we begin with a model town and that was the vision of Auroville that the Mother had in mind. A model town that could be a sample for the transformation of the world itself. So on the external level, Sri Aurobindo's contact with the Supramental consciousness has already taken birth in the shape of Auroville. And then lastly for this work to be achieved and completed., there was the immense necessity of the coming down of the Mother because till now all the avatars had come single but it is for the first time in human history that there is the twin avatar of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo - the Purusha and Prakriti the Ishwara and the Shakti. It was absolutely necessary for the twin avatars because we are moving toward the second cycle of evolution. One cycle of evolution that began during those Vedic and pre-Vedic times has ended now. The Satya Yuga that we had has now ended in Kaliyuga. And the Kaliyuga itself has come to an end. So there is a second cycle of evolution now in which the most important factor is to unify the concept of Spirit and Matter. In the first creation, i.e. in the first evolutionary cycle, Spirit and Matter

had been kept apart and separate so that people could either reach the Matter or the Spirit.

The second Satya yuga that is going to come will be based on the unification of Spirit and Matter. So in this transformative work, the Mother herself had to come down because Her divine Shakti has to manifest in the very physical. Till now where there was the question of the change of consciousness, an Avatar could work all on his own – the Purusha. But when there is the question of the basic transformation of Matter, Aditi had to come down herself. So she is the focus of the triple poise of the Supreme Mahashakti as we see in the book *The Mother*. So Her touching this earth is of Supreme importance as Matter cannot change until the divine touches it with his physical body. So Mother's coming was not necessary but absolutely inevitable without which this second cycle could not have taken off at all. And maybe the greatest mystery of Sri Aurobindo's leaving his body has an answer in this aspect that Sri Aurobindo. He brought down the Supramental in his own physical for the first time in 1950 on the 5th December and gave up his body. But why did he do so? There are questions galore and answers none. But may be the Supramental Consciousness in the form of physical had to enter the physical earth itself so that those cells of the supermind could radiate the atoms in Matter.

The atomic contact between Sri Aurobindo's cells and the cells of the earth is perhaps one reason why Sri Aurobindo had to give up his body so that the body of the earth could be touched and transformed by the Supramental force. This is the work of the twin Avatars. To a question that was asked to the Mother – "Is there any connection between the Feast of the Assumption in the Catholic Church and the date of Sri Aurobindo's birth?" (CWM 8: 270) We know the 15th of August. So the question is remarkable if there

is any connection between these two events. The concept of assumption, as you may be knowing, is the rising of the physical body into heaven. And the Mother's answer is "Yes. And he has also said it himself. The Assumption of the Virgin Mary is the divinisation of Matter. And this is the aim of the last Avatar". (Ibid) In Christianity, there is this concept of the Virgin Mary going towards the heaven in her Physical body. That is the symbol of the divinisation of Matter and the Mother says "yes", there is a truth in that. "and this is the aim of the last avatar." So you can see the link between Sri Aurobindo's birth and the ancient Christian concept of the Virgin Mary lifting herself physically to heaven. So, who is the last avatar? The Mother would say herself, "I had always heard that Sri Aurobindo was "the last Avatar"; but he is probably the last Avatar in a human body – afterwards, we do not know..." (CWM 10: 255)

That means beyond him there will not be avatars in the physical. There will be perhaps Avatars in different ways and as Sri Aurobindo himself revealed that

"I have left this body purposely. I will not take it back. I shall manifest again in the first supramental body built in the supramental way." (CWM 13: 9) –meaning not a body born in a human way but a supramental body that will manifest itself fully. So that could perhaps be the next cycle of Avatars. We came to know only because of the Mother that Sri Aurobindo is the last avatar in the physical. As Sri Aurobindo mentions in the Essays on the Gita that "for the last Avatar, Kalki, only accomplishes the work Krishna began..." (CWSA 19: 166) So all the analysis that we have seen is an accomplishment, a fulfillment a furtherance of the work begun by Sri Krishna. Sri Aurobindo has taken this forward on all levels - level of Consciousness, evolution, level of politics, level of society, and on the level of ethics. So there is a great hint about the

Kalki avatar. So some choose to call Sri Aurobindo the Kalki Avatar and others as the Supramental Avatar. But as it is not necessary to give encomiums (?) to the sun, why try to extend appropriation to Sri Aurobindo? It is enough just to call him Sri Aurobindo. The word itself has all the power and consciousness of the Avatar. His birth is eternal, his work is eternal, He is eternal.



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