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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK...

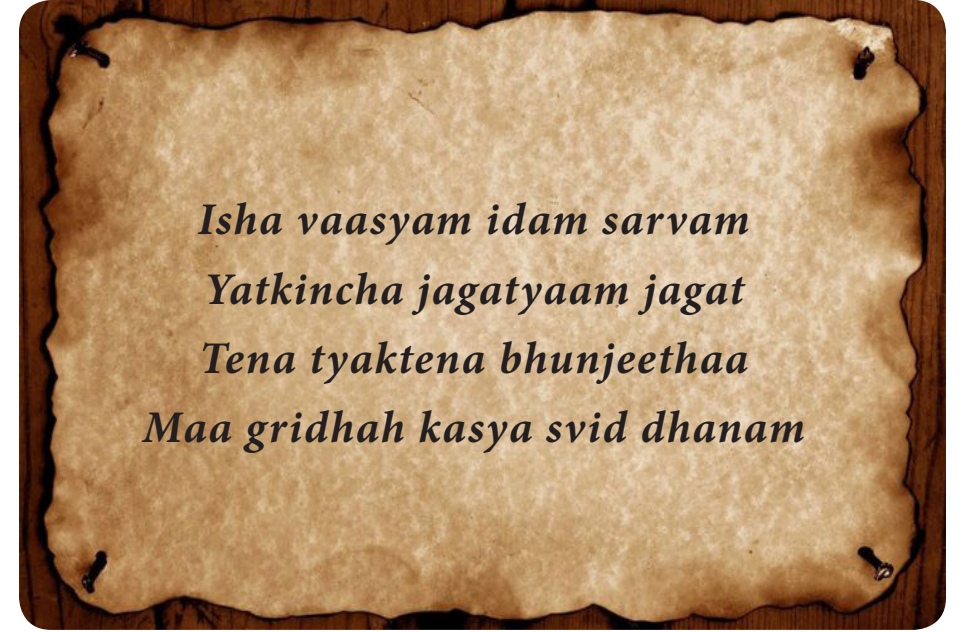
An idea can change your life

When the mobile connection "idea" was launched, its caption was "an idea can change your life". Although it was made for a commercial purpose but it seems that the brain behind this caption had caught some philosophic intuition. The famous Greek philosopher Plato speaks about "Idea" as the source of creation of this world. It was an intuitive truth that he had caught. What was this Idea? Sri Aurobindo explained in his writings that this Idea is the realm of the Supermind. This world manifests from the Supermind and to the Supermind it will return. It is only this consciousness that can change the world, transform the earth. Sri Aurobindo's entire endeavour was to open the earth to this ideative Real consciousness so that it may evolve.

Surely the idea that can transform our lives is Supermind. This consciousness can even effect the change of the physical sheath itself. In fact, it is only when it transforms the physical body can it help in establishing the Divine Life on earth. Therefore in *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo says, "A prayer, a master act, a king idea/Can link man's strength to a transcendent Force". Supermind is such a force, such an idea that Sri Aurobindo has opened this earth to. Did not the Mother say: "He [Sri Aurobindo] has come to bid the earth to prepare for its luminous future". It is left up to us to understand this luminous future, this idea and vision that they have envisaged for the earth, and prepare ourselves for its coming.

Shruti Bidwaikar

TRUTH



*Isha vaasyam idam sarvam
Yatkincha jagatyaam jagat
Tena tyaktena bhunjeethaa
Maa gridhah kasya svid dhanam*

All this is for habitation by the Lord,
whatsoever is individual
universe of movement in the universal motion.
By that renounced thou shouldst enjoy;
lust not after any man's possession.

(Translated by Sri Aurobindo)

THE DIVINE BODY

Sri Aurobindo

A divine life in a divine body is the formula of the ideal that we envisage. But what will be the divine body? What will be the nature of this body, its structure, the principle of its activity, the perfection that distinguishes it from the limited and imperfect physicality within which we are now bound? What will be the conditions and operations of its life, still physical in its base upon the earth, by which it can be known as divine?

If it is to be the product of an evolution, and it is so that we must envisage it, an evolution out of our human imperfection and ignorance into a greater truth of spirit and nature, by what process or stages can it grow into manifestation or rapidly arrive? The process of the evolution upon earth has been slow and tardy—what principle must intervene if there is to be a transformation, a progressive or sudden change?

It is indeed as a result of our evolution that we arrive at the possibility of this transformation. As Nature has evolved beyond Matter and manifested Life, beyond Life and manifested Mind, so she must evolve beyond Mind and manifest a consciousness and power of our existence free from the imperfection and limitation of our mental existence, a supramental or truthconsciousness, and able to develop the power and perfection of the spirit. Here a slow and tardy change need no longer be the law or manner of our evolution; it will be only so to a greater or less extent so long as a mental ignorance clings and hampers our ascent; but once we have grown into the truthconsciousness its power of spiritual truth of being will determine all. Into that truth we shall be freed and it will transform mind and life and body. Light and bliss and beauty and a perfection of the spontaneous right action of all the being are there as native powers of the supramental truth-consciousness and these will in their very nature transform mind and life and body even here upon earth into a manifestation of the truth-conscious spirit.

The obscurations of earth will not prevail against the supramental truth-consciousness, for even into the earth it can bring enough of the omniscient light and omnipotent force of the spirit to conquer. All may not open to the fullness of its light and power, but whatever does open must to that extent undergo the change. That will be the principle of transformation.

It might be that a psychological change, a mastery of the nature by the soul, a transformation of the mind into a principle of light, of the life-force into power and purity would be the first approach, the first attempt to solve the problem, to escape beyond the merely human formula and establish something that could be called a divine life upon earth, a first sketch of supermanhood, of a supramental living in the circumstances of the earth-nature. But this could not be the complete and radical change needed; it would not be the total transformation, the fullness of a divine life in a divine body. There would be a body still human and indeed animal in its origin and fundamental character and this would impose its own inevitable limitations on the higher parts of the embodied being. As limitation by ignorance and error is the fundamental defect of an untransformed mind, as limitation by the imperfect impulses and strainings and wants of desire are the defects of an untransformed life-force, so also imperfection of the potentialities of the physical action, an imperfection, a limitation in the response of its halfconsciousness to the demands made upon it and the grossness and stains of its original animality would be the defects of an untransformed or an imperfectly transformed body. These could not but hamper and even pull down towards themselves the action of the higher parts of the nature. A transformation of the body must be the condition for a total transformation of the nature.

It might be also that the transformation might take place by stages; there are powers of the nature still belonging to the mental region which are yet potentialities of a growing gnosis lifted beyond our human mentality and partaking of the light and power of the

Divine and an ascent through these planes, a descent of them into the mental being might seem to be the natural evolutionary course. But in practice it might be found that these intermediate levels would not be sufficient for the total transformation since, being themselves illumined potentialities of mental being not yet supramental in the full sense of the word, they could bring down to themind only a partial divinity or raise the mind towards that but not effectuate its elevation into the complete supramentality of the truth-consciousness. Still these levels might become stages of the ascent which some would reach and pause there while others went higher and could reach and live on superior strata of a semi-divine existence. It is not to be supposed that all humanity would rise in a block into the supermind; at first those only might attain to the highest or some intermediate height of the ascent whose inner evolution has fitted them for so great a change or who are raised by the direct touch of the Divine into its perfect light and power and bliss. The large mass of human beings might still remain for long content with a normal or only a partially illumined and uplifted human nature. But this would be itself a sufficiently radical change and initial transformation of earth-life; for the way would be open to all who have the will to rise, the supramental influence of the truthconsciousness would touch the earth-life and influence even its untransformed mass and a hope would be there and a promise eventually available to all which now only the few can share in or realise.

In any case these would be beginnings only and could not constitute the fullness of the divine life upon earth; it would be a new orientation of the earthly life but not the consummation of its change. For that there must be the sovereign reign of a supramental truth-consciousness to which all other forms of life would be subordinated and depend upon it as the master principle and supreme power to which they could look up as the goal, profit by its influences, be moved and upraised by something of its

illumination and penetrating force. Especially, as the human body had to come into existence with its modification of the previous animal form and its erect figure of a new power of life and its expressive movements and activities serviceable and necessary to the principle of mind and the life of a mental being, so too a body must be developed with new powers, activities or degrees of a divine action expressive of a truth-conscious being and proper to a supramental consciousness and manifesting a conscious spirit. While the capacity for taking up and sublimating all the activities of the earth-life capable of being spiritualised must be there, a transcendence of the original animality and the actions incurably tainted by it or at least some saving transformation of them, some spiritualising or psychicising of the consciousness and motives animating them and the shedding of whatever could not be so transformed, even a change of what might be called its instrumental structure, its functioning and organisation, a complete and hitherto unprecedented control of these things must be the consequence or incidental to this total change. These things have been already to some extent illustrated in the lives of many who have become possessed of spiritual powers but as something exceptional and occasional, the casual or incomplete manifestation of an acquired capacity rather than the organisation of a new consciousness, a new life and a new nature. How far can such physical transformation be carried, what are the limits within which it must remain to be consistent with life upon earth and without carrying that life beyond the earthly sphere or pushing it towards the supraterrrestrial existence? The supramental consciousness is not a fixed quantity but a power which passes to higher and higher levels of possibility until it reaches supreme consummations of spiritual existence fulfilling supermind as supermind fulfils the ranges of spiritual consciousness that are pushing towards it from the human or mental level. In this progression the body also may reach a more perfect form and a higher range of its expressive powers, become a more and more perfect vessel of divinity. (CWSA 13: 536)

TRAVERSING ATTACHMENT

James Anderson

Attachment can be traced at every level of human existence. It cramps and narrows the consciousness; it produces an underlying feeling of discontent. Humanity is attached to what it claims that it owns: its so-called possessions. Attachment discolours its relationships and drains its precious vitality. The hallmark is a rigidity which is inimical to all integral progress. Attachment runs so deep because man is attached to his conditioning; virtually every step he takes is manufactured by the past.

Only at the summit, with the Divine itself, does attachment have a beneficial effect on the human psyche. At this point, the rigidity dissolves into union. When the 'pulling' desists, a more unconditional joining evolves. This transcends all boundaries, opening the way to an endless peace, bliss and freedom. It is a supreme psychological state, a state also preparatory to the transformation of the body itself.

But every tie below points to a huge malaise. As anything moving inside affects the outside, it drains the health of the physical itself. When authentic control is surrendered to these chains, the body can become so isolated it moves by unconscious, mechanical habit. Every part of the nature shrinks from this affliction. So it is imperative that these ties be addressed if one wants to grow in consciousness. If the growth becomes integral then a happy consequence is a greater integral health.

Primitive attachments

If one is determined to traverse through attachment one has to begin at the bottom rung. There is no other way. Firstly, we address the more surface knots of our nature. There, we will find a myriad of desires, addictions and cravings which we might try to pluck out one by one from their very roots. Very soon one realises that this task is endless: the whole has to be addressed. In the initial phase, the desire for food, for sex, for ease and comfort, for possessions and money, for fame and reputation, for conquest and ambition, all these things, can be changed

by one factor alone: the decision to entirely reverse the direction of one's life. One detaches: that is the beginning. These attachments then have to be overturned, scrutinised, observed, rejected or transmuted time and time again. The process can be extremely laborious; considerable perseverance is required. But the first principal change is one of poise. The whole direction of one's consciousness has to turn around: it has to withdraw from the surface and turn inside.

The problem, however, is that humanity is, by and large, attached to impermanence. It still insists on deriving its satisfaction from the ephemeral. This seems to me a fundamental problem of human existence. Only the Eternal can provide enduring joy. The ironic thing is that the Eternal resides inside us. We don't have to go anywhere to find it. But we are always looking to the outside for our stability. We look at circumstances but not at the ultimate Cause behind them. There can be no enduring happiness in this. It's like trying to build our castle with sand because with one single wave it's all over. But when we have an inkling of what lies inside us, the pull of outer things gradually begins to wane.

So traversing attachment implies releasing the bondage to outside attractions:

“To become indifferent to the attraction of outer objects is one of the first rules of yoga, for this non-attachment liberates the inner being into peace and the true consciousness (1).”

I found that once the decision to surrender was made, the Force gradually stood forward and started to increasingly manage my life. This might take a long time but something in the being profoundly changes as a result of this shift. There are no halfmeasures; the process starts by stepping out of the mainstream even if the rest of society is heading in an opposite direction. If one's upbringing and education has conformed to the social norm, there is no other choice. It's like turning one's life upside down and beginning all over again. Some resolve is required to make this turn. Sometimes a single circumstance is sufficient to precipitate the change. The catalyst may be often crisis

or illness. That was what provided me the decisive nudge. We find the hand of Grace uses countless devices to turn the wheel of progress. The urge for change will always be induced by an ever-growing sense of dissatisfaction. The measure of dissatisfaction indicates the necessity for change. There has to be a calling. The psychic being must be sufficiently evolved to embark on this radical new road. If one is blessed with a more conscious upbringing, there is less upheaval and the transition will be much less acute and painful. If one is brought up in a truer milieu, there may even be something like a seamless progression. Otherwise a fearless determination is required. It is better to start as soon as one feels ready because the energy required to drive this shift is immense. It is no time for procrastination; one has to make the leap.

What has to persist is a sense of resolution. Take, for example, pleasure. Society depends on pleasure. Humanity demands it. The idea that pleasure might be actually harmful, that it might stunt one's growth, seems outrageous in commonplace circles. Man is constantly trying to stay on this merry-go-round of pleasure and it is considered a disaster if he falls off. The pain and bruising is immense. But every time one boards the carousel, there is a certainty that one will continually be thrown off until the lesson is fully absorbed. Are we willing to buck the trend? An inner resolve and poise must be maintained at all times. If one persists, the attraction of pleasure becomes increasingly pale over time. The central knot As one grows in consciousness, the awareness sharpens and a searchlight on attachment directs itself more below the surface. One becomes more conscious of inner movements and starts noticing these ties appearing inside. Gradually, one starts to become aware of how pervasive this affliction really is. As one observes, one sees that every strand of attachment is interconnected and can be traced to a single source. There is a central knot. In the Integral Yoga, the path of works provides the ideal platform for this understanding. A major cause of dissatisfaction and stress in life is the attachment we hold to the outcome of our work. This has been certainly my experience and it indicates a lack of trust. The problem comes down to control: if

'I'm not in command, what on earth will happen?' At the bottom, the urge to control feeds on appropriation: the desire to yield the fruits of one's labour. There is always a hidden agenda behind attachment; a sense of unfulfilled demand and egoism is invariably present. The ego is tugging our awareness down another dead-end.

So "in the path of works action is the first knot we have first to loosen (2)." The knot comes from ego and desire is what fuels the action (3). Releasing this knot can be an extremely lengthy process. It is a time of transition. The nature, once desire-less, will then be moved by something entirely new. Otherwise nothing would move at all. So up to reaching this point, of complete surrender to the Divine Force, one needs to become aware of what one is being moved by. One has to step back continuously to enquire what is going on. One acquires the art of observation. It is practice but ideally it is practice that should become 'everyday life'. In time, through this work, one acquires the ability to distinguish wrong movements from right. In time, any wrong movement will produce a feeling of unpleasantness, a sense of uneasiness or friction. When a wrong movement is initiated, it is as if something foreign is jarring the consciousness. The knowledge of this wrong movement brings true change. There is a spontaneous resonance in the knowing; it turns the darkness into light and automatically transforms wrong into right. When it descends it brings such a feeling of security and peace.

Gradually too, as the *sādhana* unfolds and as one begins to surrender and open, one becomes aware of a presiding support and presence behind the play. We become conscious of the Power that has brought us exactly to where we are. Slowly we realise the source of our inner gaze, the supreme factor behind all meaningful enquiry and observation. The hand of the soul may appear in unexpected glimpses but over time it instils a more balanced, peaceful and harmonious setting to the contrasts of our nature. Indeed, once given the necessary collaboration, the psychic influence will slowly but surely begin to transform it. We then come to understand this influence as the truest agent of knowledge. It provides the definitive seal of the Truth.

The changes may be piecemeal at first but they are markers of true progress. We may lapse and stumble occasionally in between but these steps become foothills to a greater equality established through the spirit. From then, the Force begins to act increasingly on the more equal nature. The important thing is, once the consciousness is sufficiently and broadly awake, the whole gets addressed. The Force increasingly intercedes and starts to master our actions. Slowly, the central knot is loosened and attachment eventually wanes and diminishes. Traversing attachment doesn't necessarily have to be a struggle; it is usually a very long journey but it can always be a joy.

Human relationships

“Human beings are in the habit of basing their relationships with others on physical, vital and mental contacts; that is why there is almost always discord and suffering. If, on the contrary, they based their relationships on psychic contacts (between soul and soul), they would find that behind the troubled appearances there is a profound and lasting harmony which can express itself in all the activities of life and cause disorder and suffering to be replaced by peace and bliss (4).”

The vast majority of relationships that humanity weaves are built on trade. Even with the most revered and engrained of relationships, like those of blood, we are expected to behave in a certain way to fulfil a desire for conformity. Once we step out of line, the trade breaks down and anguish results. As long as the bargain is being met and each person makes the other 'feel good' the pattern continues. Man is attached to the 'return'. He likes to feel important; he enjoys being reminded that he makes a difference. It is a basic vital craving which can manifest in even the most subtle of ways. Inevitably though, the cycle breaks down and it is surely a grace for our learning and growth when this happens. Although the immediate consequence of breakdown is one of dissatisfaction, it is an opportunity although the occasion usually serves for most to try to glue together the pieces again. Humanity is attached to such artificial solutions because its happiness is still based on little more than egoism.

Some people are preoccupied with 'elevating' themselves yet

ignore the character of relationships they create in the outside world. It is an obvious dichotomy. If our consciousness is soaring why shouldn't our relationships follow suit? An essential quality of non-attachment within a relationship is that of psychic disinterestedness. That necessity can surely apply to every relationship we build, not just those selected from a chosen few. If the psychic is coming forward into our lives, it can always be invited into every interchange and discourse we share. The psychic influence needs to spread by contagion: the New Dawn demands it.

As long as we conform to a stereotype, we prolong the attachment even if we might dull the sense of pain. It can be truly a suffocating experience. It is a problem that confronts many of those who cut their moorings in order to embark on a more meaningful life. The decision to break free is often met with bitterness and disbelief. Acquiring this sense of true freedom is no mean feat. One might remove oneself physically of one's origins but sooner or later one may become conscious of an invisible cord, stretching many miles, tying one down to those same old patterns. Furthermore, for a very long time, there is bound to be resonance in what one rejects. From my experience, only love can dissolve these rigid forms. However, our natures over time have been cast into repeated grooves. One cannot break free of one's conditioning overnight and this is probably the most pernicious attachment of them all.

Conditioning is what gives attachment its enduring strength. Over time, many of these patterns and expectations become engrained in our subconscious and lay the deepest roots. Unseen, old movements of attachment will keep reappearing at the surface. They will tend to show their face at unexpected moments when the guard is down. We need to be very awake if these patterns are to be addressed.

However, I have found that with detailed observation, these bindings become more prominent to my awareness. If at least a little psychic influence is present, I may feel these distortions appearing on the body. When they surface, the usual consequence is one

of discomfort or pain. It has to be experienced but observed in a disinterested way. There is a way of connecting the Truth inside with what is being observed. The fusion immediately brings a knowing which simultaneously resolves. It is a supremely liberating experience.

Practice certainly helps but there needs to be also a natural and conscious unfolding accompanying it. The two work very well together. The process starts by keeping the waking parts of our nature as alive and conscious as possible. The influence and light of the higher parts will eventually percolate down to the lower regions, including the subconscious:

“When the higher consciousness is once established in the waking parts, it goes down into the subconscious and changes that also, makes a bedrock of itself there also (5).”

Meanwhile, the process of enquiry and observation serves well if brought into daily life. In truth, the work represents a nonstop, continual process.

The only solution

The only solution is to align oneself with this Truth and Light always. The difficulty of attachment can never be looked upon in isolation. Its central support lies buried deep within the folds of our nature. We begin by turning around the course of our life. We look for the Eternal not the ephemeral. We absorb the Mother’s words:

“It is not the universe you see: it is yourself you see in the universe (6).”

It is only by dissolving the knot of ego that attachment be completely annulled. This is the penultimate stage in the evolution of human consciousness. Only transformation lies beyond. So we have to clear ourselves of the prison-house of ego. The Light is our answer always:

“To catch each thing that should not be done, catch it like that, and then hold it firmly in front of the light until the light can act upon

it to transform it: this is a work one can do all the time. No matter what one is doing, one can always do this work. Each time one becomes aware that there is something which is not all right, one must catch it like this, prevent it from hiding, for it tries to hide: catch it and then keep it like this before the light of one’s conscious will, and then put the light upon it so that it changes (7).”

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INTUITION, KNOWING & KALI THE MOTHER IN THE NEW PHYSICS

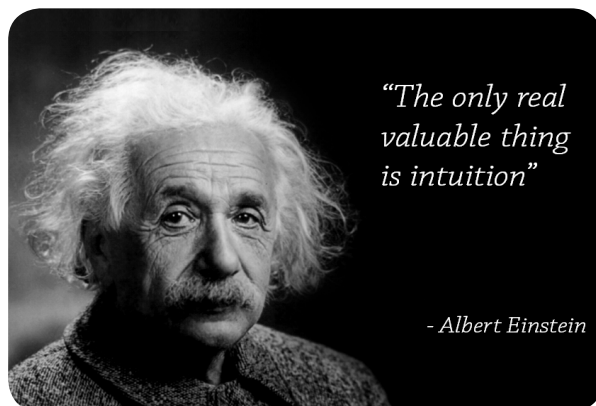
Narendra Joshi

Intuition and Illumination: the essence of knowing ?

The aim of psychology was redefined by forward thinking psychologists as inner illumination (R.D. Laing), self-actualization (Abraham Maslow), and inner transformation (Jacob Needleman). Transpersonal psychology, as interpreted by Maslow and Stanislov Grof, examine "peak experience" and "cosmic consciousness" in which the individual realizes spiritual unity with the rest of the universe.

Einstein's method of theoretical postulation was an intuitive leap from sensory experiences. He argued that such postulation is a creation of pure intuition, never from experiment or experience. For creation of a new theory, the mere collection of recorded phenomenon never sufficed, there must be added the free invention of the human mind that attacks the heart of the matter.

Einstein wrote that the creative principle resides in Mathematics, and in a certain sense he accepted that pure thought can grasp reality as the ancients dreamed. Einstein made strange postulates which were possible only by intuition and not by reason. As Hans Pagels observed, Einstein would never have discovered general relativity if he was really positivist. Hideki Yukawa in his book *Creativity and Intuition* supported Einstein's views on intuition with an example of his own: using intuition he



*"The only real
valuable thing
is intuition"*

- Albert Einstein

predicted the subatomic particle responsible for the super binding strength of the nucleus. Later in 1947, it was discovered and called the 'Pion' (Jitatmananda, 2002).

Philosophy back to the centre stage of science:

Twentieth century physics has taken a course where nothing can be done by logic alone. The only course is to perceive the whole thing intuitively and see through that what is correct. The fact remains that in order to synthesize the contradictions, the whole has to be seen by intuition, or first by imagination and then supported by intuition.

Heisenberg wrote about a great scientific contribution in theoretical physics that has come from a certain tradition of the Far East and forms the philosophical substance of Quantum theory. In an interview by Michael Harwood, Stephen Hawking remarked that although a theoretical physicist deals with curved time and space, it is part of a philosophical and spiritual tradition older than recorded history.

John Wheeler's concept of 'Superspace' and the 'Many worlds' interpretation of Quantum theory is an example of this philosophical trend. He is seeking a unified simple conclusion of all the theories and problems. Timothy Ferris remarked that such physicists are finding that the history and fate of the universe is written in every atom. Ilya Prigogine said something similar when he said that creative evolutionary potential is embedded in the heart of each particle of matter (Jitatmananda, 1991,2002).

Ken Wilber in his Quantum questions accepted the ancient concept of five sheaths of consciousness as matter, life, mind, intellect, and bliss and remarked that in this hierarchy, the higher level does not violate the principle of the lower. It is not exclusively bound by it or explainable by it (Wilber, 1997). Hans Pagels wrote that the universe from the beginning up to now may be viewed as a hierarchy of successively broken symmetries (Jitatmananda, 1991; Jitatmananda, 2002)

According to Wigner, the next important breakthrough will be to

treat physical and mental phenomenon as not divergent or unconnected to each other. Wolman B.W. in his handbook of parapsychology wrote that a number of systems in the Eastern mystical traditions and philosophies have a precise correspondence with formulations of quantum theory. This is an obvious invitation to exhibit the two, Matter and Consciousness, as aspects of an "integrated understanding of the world". Inventor Nikola Tesla agreed with such integrated exploration and prophesized that the day science starts studying nonphysical phenomena it will make more progress in one decade than what was made in many centuries.

From Individual to Cosmic Mind and Cosmic Consciousness:

In the ongoing evolution of matter, life emerges out of non-life, and mind and consciousness emerge out of the higher domains of life. This evolutionary concept does not divide mind and matter as Descartes once did. It reduces reality either to non-living matter as in materialism or assimilates it to a nonmaterial mind as in idealism. It does not keep them perpetually separated and divorced as it is in dualism. Interaction of our mind and consciousness with the Ether / Akash / Quantum vacuum links us with other minds around us and also to the planet. This oneness and relation of our mind with society and Nature has been known to mystics, saints and seers for ages and now this recognition is coming to science. The exchange between our consciousness and the rest of the world is constant and flowing in both directions.

This takes the whole new paradigm to another height where not only are matter, life and consciousness one in essence in each entity, but they are also one in totality. With concepts like cosmic life, cosmic mind, and even cosmic consciousness getting acceptance in rational and intellectual forums, there is more room for debate and experiments in supraphysical domains.

Kali the Mother

Zukav concluded that all this leads to super-determinism. He used an image of Kali and a Buddhist model to explain it (Zukav, 1979). According to him, while it would be naive to overstate the

similarities between Bohm's physics and eastern philosophies, it would be foolish to ignore them. "Reality" means "everything you can think about." This is not "that-which-is." No idea can capture "truth" in the sense of that-which-is. The ultimate perception does not originate in the brain or any material structure, although a material structure is necessary to manifest it. The subtle mechanism of knowing the truth does not originate in the brain.

Zukav further says quoting Bohm that there is a similarity between thought and matter. All matter, including ourselves, is determined by "information." "Information" is what determines space and time. Zukav also points out that if taken out of context, there is no absolute way of knowing whether these statements were made by Professor Bohm or a Tibetan Buddhist. In fact, these sentences were excerpted from different parts of two Physics lectures that Professor Bohm gave at Berkeley in April, 1977.

Zukav further predicts that if Bohm's physics, or one similar to it, should become the main thrust of physics in the future, the dances of East and West could blend in exquisite harmony and the Physics curricula of the twenty-first century could include classes in meditation. The function of eastern religions (psychologies) is to allow the mind to escape the confines of the symbolic. According to this view, *everything* is a symbol, not only words and concepts, but also people and things. Beyond the confines of the symbolic lies that which is pure awareness, the experience of the "suchness" of reality. He then questions: If pure awareness is considered distinct from the content of awareness, in what ways specifically does the content of awareness affect the realization of pure awareness? What types of content prompt the mind to leap forward. What enables it to activate the self-fulfilling capability to transcend itself. To "understand" something is to give up some other way of conceiving it. Therefore, according to this thought, this is another way of saying that the mind deals in forms of limitation. There is a relationship between the content of awareness and the ability of the mind to transcend itself. "Reality" is what we take to be true. What we take to be true is what

we believe. What we believe is based upon our perceptions. What we perceive depends upon what we look for. What we look for depends upon what we think. What we think depends upon what we perceive. What we perceive determines what we believe. According to this thought, the psychological gestalt of physics has shifted radically in the last century to one of extreme openness. In contrast to Kelvin's time, the allegiance of physicists today is to a symbol of extreme openness.

Zukav has quoted Isidor Rabi, Nobel Prize winner and Chairman Emeritus of the Physics Department at Columbia University, who wrote in 1975: I don't think that physics will ever have an end. I think that the novelty of nature is such that its variety will be infinite—not just in changing forms but in the profundity of insight and the newness of ideas. According to this thought, Eastern religions have nothing to say about physics, but they have a great deal to say about human experience.

In Hindu mythology, Kali, the Divine Mother, is the symbol for the infinite diversity of experience. Kali represents the entire physical plane. She is the drama, tragedy, humour, and sorrow of life. She is the brother, father, sister, mother, lover, and friend. She is the friend, monster, beast, and brute. She is the sun and the ocean. She is the grass and the dew. She is our sense of accomplishment and our sense of doing worthwhile. Our thrill of discovery is a pendant on her bracelet. Our gratification is a spot of color on her cheek. Our sense of importance is the bell on her toe. This full and seductive, terrible and wonderful earth mother *always* has something to offer. Hindus know the impossibility of seducing her or conquering her and the futility of loving her or hating her; so they do the only thing that they can do. They simply honor her. (Zukav, 1979)

According to Zukav, these powerful metaphors have application to the developing drama of physics. Although most physicists have little patience (professionally) with metaphors, physics itself has become a powerful metaphor. Twentieth-century physics is the story of a journey from intellectual entrenchment to intellectual openness. According to Zukav, the Wu Li Masters know that physicists are doing more than “discovering the endless diversity of nature.” They are dancing with

Kali, the Divine Mother of Hindu mythology. He further explains that *Tantra* is the Sanskrit word meaning “to weave.” There is little that can be said about *Tantra*. It must be done. *Tantra* transcends rationality. The most profound thinkers of the Indian civilization discovered that words and concepts could take them only so far. Beyond that point came the actual doing of a practice, the experience of which was ineffable. This did not prevent them from progressively refining the practice into an extremely effective and sophisticated set of techniques, but it did prevent them from being able to describe the experiences which these techniques produce. The practice of *Tantra* does not mean the end of rational thought. It means the integration of thought based on symbols into larger spectrums of awareness.

Zukav then says that the development of Buddhism in India shows that a profound and penetrating intellectual quest into the ultimate nature of reality can culminate in, or at least set the stage for, a quantum leap beyond rationality. In fact, on an individual level, this is one of the roads to enlightenment. Tibetan Buddhism calls it the Path without Form, or the Practice of Mind. The Path without Form is prescribed for people of intellectual temperament.

According to this thought, the science of physics is following a similar path. The development of physics in the twentieth century already has transformed the consciousness of those involved with it. The study of complementarity, the uncertainty principle, quantum field theory, and the Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics produces insights into the nature of reality very similar to those produced by the study of eastern philosophy. The profound physicists of this century increasingly have become aware that they are confronting the ineffable. Max Planck, the founding figure of Quantum Mechanics, wrote: “Science means unrelenting endeavor and continually progressing development toward an aim which the poetic intuition may apprehend, but which the intellect can never fully grasp” (Zukav, 1979).

He has quoted Professor G F Chew, Chairman of the Physics Department at Berkeley, in reference to a theory of particle physics,

Our current struggle (with certain aspects of advanced physics) may thus be only a foretaste of a completely new form of human intellectual endeavor, one that will not only lie outside physics but will not even be describable as 'scientific' (Zukav, 1979).

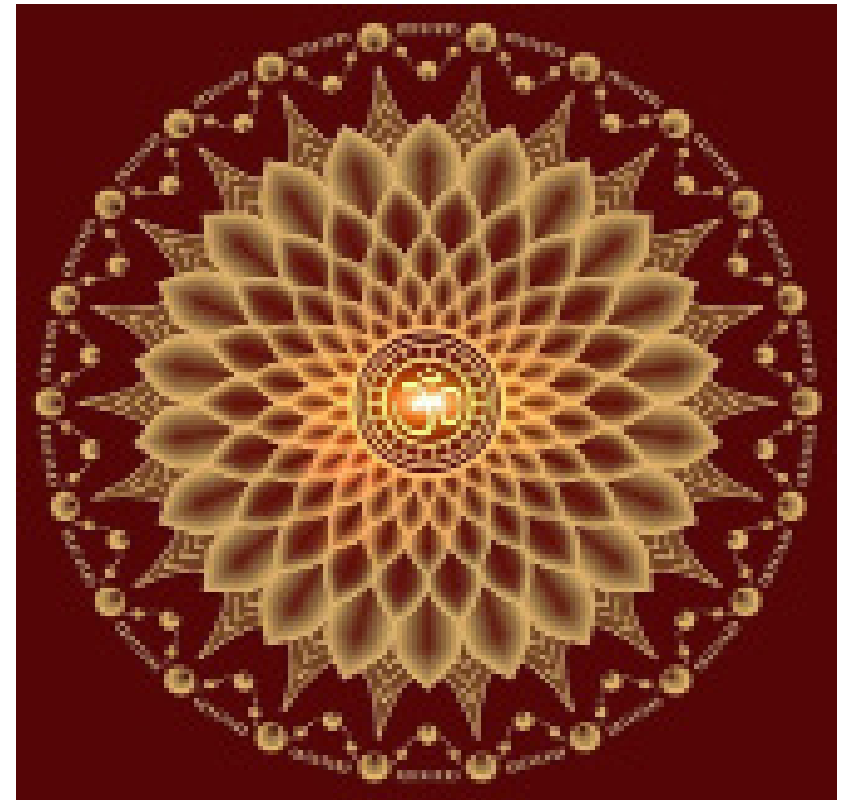
Al Huang, the Tai Chi Master who created the metaphor of VVu Li, once wrote, "sooner or later we reach a dead end when we talk" (i.e. when we limit ourselves to mind, especially rational part of it). Zukav says that he could as well have said that sooner or later we go round in circles when we talk since going round in a circle is one kind of dead end. Zukav further says that we need not make a pilgrimage to India or Tibet. There is much to learn there, but here at home, in the most inconceivable of places, amidst the particle accelerators and computers, our own 'Path without Form' is emerging (Zukav, 1979).

Necessity: At these crossroads of radical shifts and fundamental rethinking in Science, it is important to explore pursuits like Artificial intelligence, which claim to create mind and consciousness in computers or robots. AI has not been immune to these fundamental changes in the world-view. The next chapter explores ways in which AI has incorporated ideas stemming from the new paradigm in science. As the new paradigm has many features in common with ancient spiritual thought, it will also look at some of the revelations of physicists, biologists, psychologists, and cosmologists in the light of the vision and writings of seers and mystics of ancient as well as modern times.

Mind can never be a perfect instrument of knowledge. For even if it could be free from all positive error, even if it could be all intuitive and infallibly intuitive, it could still present and organise only half truths or separated truths and these too not in their own body but in luminous representative figures put together to make an accumulated total or a massed structure.

-CWSA 12: 257

BEAUTY AND DELIGHT



Beauty is Ananda taking form—but the form need not be a physical shape. One speaks of a beautiful thought, a beautiful act, a beautiful soul. What we speak of as beauty is Ananda in manifestation; beyond manifestation beauty loses itself in Ananda or, you may say, beauty and Ananda become indistinguishably one.

- Sri Aurobindo

INDIAN ART: SRI AUROBINDO'S PERSPECTIVE

C. Naganna

Sometime back, we took delight in the phenomenon of “empire writing back” or ‘striking back’. But now we have realized that we cannot strike back at the empire, because it is growing inside all of us, proving that it an “imperishable empire”. In such a situation Sri Aurobindo’s words come as a breath of fresh air. Instead of castigating the half-baked western critics who fail to understand the full-purport of Indian art, we have to make a genuine attempt to comprehend the motive, aim and significance of the Indian art, a treasure that has given an identity to us Indians. We cannot deny the mould of our antique mind which is the crucible of that religion and philosophy which have enabled us to grasp the profundities of the soul.

Sri Aurobindo, reacting to hostile or unsympathetic western criticism of Indian art and civilization, has written about the greatness and uniqueness of Indian art and literature. Disdainful or violent depreciation of its fine arts, architecture, sculpture and painting is the focus of his attention.

Sri Aurobindo’s *Essays on Indian Art* is an answer to Mr. Archer’s wholesale and indiscriminating depreciation of a great literature of India. Since Archer’s voice is the last and the shrillest voice among many such attackers Sri Aurobindo seems to have reserved his choicest words to give a fitting reply to the person.

Sri Aurobindo explains why Indian Art demands carefulness of appreciation as philosophy, religion and central formative ideas have been the foundation of Indian life. The Westerner’s misconception about Indian Art is cleared to a certain extent, especially in the fields of sculpture and painting. According to Sri Aurobindo Mr. Havell and Dr. Coomaraswamy have done it. Sri Aurobindo is aware of the fact that the New mind of India which has

been misled by our alien education, is returning to a sound and true idea of its past and future.

Sri Aurobindo keeps Mr. Archer’s argument at the centre since the latter indulges in a torrent of sweeping denunciation. Since Mr. Archer does not deserve to be answered in greater detail as he is a superficial critic, Sri Aurobindo exercises restraint in his reply. But in spite of himself, the language appears to reciprocate in paying the critic with the same coin. For example, he says that “Mr. Archer’s reply to defenders and eulogise is amazing in its shallowness and triviality, made up mostly of small, feeble and sometimes irrelevant points, big glaring epithets and forcibly senseless phrases, based for the rest on a misunderstanding or a sheer inability to conceive the meaning of spiritual experiences and meta-physical ideas, which betrays an entire absence of the religions sense and the philosophic mind. (p.197)”

What Sri Aurobindo expects is that a critic of Indian Art should possess minimum qualification to talk about this subject. But Mr. Archer according to Sri Aurobindo, is like a blind man discoursing on colours. Sri Aurobindo gives an example of Archer’s ineptitude in understanding the dimensions of Indian sculpture. Broadness of girth and largeness of belly is not peculiar to the Indian aesthetic sense. Archer finds fault with this approach. When Indian poets and authorities on art use the simile of a lion, the western sensibility is offended and concludes that the Indians drew their ideal of heroic manhood from their native jungle. In Kamban’s *Ramayana* the colour and depth of Sita’s eyes are compared to the sea. Sri Aurobindo says that the western sensibility would be further stupefied because it sees in this comparison “a still more primitive savagery and barbaric worship of inanimate nature. When Valmiki describes his heroin’s “eyes like wine” (*madireksana*) this may be construed as the “evidence of a chronic inebriety and semi-drunken inspiration of the Indian poetic mind”.

Sri Aurobindo comes down very heavily on the triviality of this manner of criticism. What he wants is that the discerning critics must understand the deeper motives of the Indian Art. The intelligent

concept about art is what is required. Therefore one must turn one's attention to the philosophy of art; by so doing one will understand that the whole basis of Indian artistic creation is directly spiritual and intuitive.

Sri Aurobindo contrasts the infinite superiority of the method of direct perception and the laboured estimation of art by the intellect and concludes that it is but natural for the rationalistic mind to be offended by direct perception.

When a critic misses the philosophy of art completely then we have to conclude that what he possessed is a blunt instrument. When learned scholars compare the master intuition of Buddha with the great intuition of Newton Archer objects to the parallel because, according to him, the two discoveries deal with two different orders of knowledge. One is scientific and physical and the other is mental or psychic, spiritual or philosophic in nature. Archer believes that Newton's intuition is verifiable whereas the intuitions of Buddha and other Indian sages had no basis in any intellectual process.

Sri Aurobindo disagrees with this position totally, because he believes that Buddha and other Indian philosophers were "preceded by a very acute scrutiny of relevant psychological phenomena and a process of reasoning, which though certainly not rationalistic, was as rational as any other method of thinking".

Archer declares that those intuitions are fantasies "and have sort of value except their vain metaphysical subtlety". Sri Aurobindo displays at this stage his acute understanding of what is happening in the field of science. He is very well aware that even in the field of science there are "conflicting and contradictory results. He directly asks: "What about Newton's 'fantasies'? Aren't they in danger of being upset by Einstein's fantasies?"

Sri Aurobindo's understanding is that "The intuition overtops and admits us to a more direct and luminous power of truth". But, according to him, "in the use of the intuition the poet and artist cannot proceed

precisely in the same way as the scientist or philosopher".

Sri Aurobindo argues that in "art itself there are different kinds of intuition. For instance, Shakespeare's seeing of life differs in its character and aids from Balzac's or Ibsen's, but the essential process of intuition is the same.

Sri Aurobindo's aim is to draw one's attention to the strong and subtle artistic creation of India. Why some western critics misunderstand the Indian art and even dislike it is because, Sri Aurobindo explains, the whole cultural training, natural or acquired temperament and fundamental attitude towards existence dictate terms. One should take care of the width of the gulf that separates the western mind and the Indian way of seeing things. The European mind till recently was unable to understand the motives and methods of Indian art. The European mind that the Indian art was "a thing barbarous, immature, monstrous, an arrested growth from humanity's primitive savagery and incompetent childhood". Because of the sudden widening of the horizon, some change is taking place in people's attitude. Since a more flexible vision and a more profound imagination have begun to superimpose themselves on the old ingrained attitude, the change is being observed.

But still, Sri Aurobindo believes that for a "thorough appreciation of the deepest and most characteristic spirit and inspiration of Indian art" further change in attitude is required. Sri Aurobindo puts it beautifully: "There is little sign of the understanding of the very well-spring and spiritual fountain of Indian artistic creation."

Keeping Indian sculpture, architecture and painting in view Sri Aurobindo says that "criticism of art is a vain and dead thing when it ignores the spirit, aim, essential motive from which a type of artistic creation starts". Sri Aurobindo further says that that kind of criticism is counterproductive if it "Judges by the external details only in the light of quite different spirit, aim, and motive."

In order to illustrate what he means by spirit, aim and motive,

Sri Aurobindo gives the comparison of a feminine Indian figure and a Greek Aphrodite. "The critic tells me that the Indian figure is full of a strong spiritual sense, but the Greek creation can only awaken a sublimated carnal or sensuous delight."

Sri Aurobindo's understanding of Indian sculpture is that "The Indian sculptor stresses something behind, something more remote to the surface imagination, but nearer to the soul, and subordinates to it the physical form".

He is categorical in saying that what we need to demand from art is "the spiritual, the higher intuitive vision". Sri Aurobindo gives his own example as a connoisseur when he encounters the reputed artistic creations of Europe: "I can see the magnificence and power of colouring and design, I can see the force of externalized imagination or the spirited dramatic rendering of action, but I strive in vain to get out any significance below the surface or equivalent to the greatness of the form". Sri Aurobindo continues: "This muscular Adam, the sensuous beauty of this Eve do not bring home to me the mother or the father of the race, this dragon... only a surly portentous beast and an embodiment of monstrous evil".

Sri Aurobindo gives us similar reason why he cannot accept the Christ representations in sculpture: "This Christ with his massive body and benevolent philosophic visage almost offends me, is not at any rate the Christ whom I know".

What Sri Aurobindo demands is that "mere execution however marvellous or beautiful is not enough; the underlying imagination must reveal what lies beneath the surface". (p.204) He expects us to understand the difference between the acquired cultured mind, which may intellectually catch at something more, and the natural being which will not be easily satisfied.

This triumph of life and the flesh and of the power and stir of life is not going to uplift the mind unless something deeper is revealed in the objects. Sri Aurobindo makes bold to say that "I turn away from

the work of one of the greatest Italian masters to satisfy myself with some 'barbaric' Indian or statue, some calm unfathomable Buddha, bronze Shiva or eighteen-armed Durga slaying the Asuras".

Sri Aurobindo's grouse is that the European mind cannot respond properly to "anything ancient, Hindu, Buddhistic or Vedantic in art, on the other hand, it looks at it with a blank or angry incomprehension".

Sri Aurobindo gives an example of blankness of incomprehension. For instance "Mr. Archer sees the Dhyani Buddha with its supreme, its unfathomable, its infinite spiritual calm which every cultured oriental mind can at once feel and respond to in the depths of his being and Mr. Archer denies that there is anything only drooped eyelids, an immobile pose and an insipid, by which I suppose he means a calm passionless face."

Sri Aurobindo expects the western mind to enter into "another kind of spiritual experience and another range of creative sight, imaginative power and mode of self-expression."

All great artistic work, according to Sri Aurobindo, "Proceeds from an act of intuition. It is a direct intuition of some truth of life or being, some significant form of that truth, some development of it in the mind of man". Underlining the divergence between the European artistic and his Indian counterpart Sri Aurobindo says that the European artist sees life, action, passion, emotion, idea, Nature for their own sake and for an aesthetic delight in them; he is not interested in evoking the "Direct and unveiled presence of the Infinite and its Godheads".

"The ancient art's business is to disclose something of the Self, the Infinite, the Divine to the regard of the soul".

Sri Aurobindo shows us how that Indian Art is identical in its spiritual aim and principle with the rest of Indian culture He lays a lot of importance to the intuitive power in an Indian artist. "He has to see first in his spiritual being the truth of the thing he must express."

"The Indian artist", he says, "is not bound to look out first on

outward life and Nature for his model... The line, colour and the rest are not his first, but his last preoccupation, because they have to carry on them a world of things which have already taken form in his mind." A great responsibility is expected to be shouldered by the spectator of the Indian artistic creation and that is, "beyond the ordinary cultivation of aesthetic instinct he needs to possess spiritual insight". Only then he will be able to enter into the whole meaning of Indian artistic creation. In the absence of this spiritual insight we end up getting the surface external things.

Sri Aurobindo leaves us in no confusion at all when he says that the "Indian architecture, painting and sculpture are not only intimately one in inspiration with the central things in Indian philosophy, religion, Yoga, culture, but a specially intense expression of their significance.

Sri Aurobindo has also given us the technique of deriving maximum benefit out of viewing a great oriental work of art. For instance, he says that it "should be seen in loneliness, in the solitude of one's self, in moments when one is capable of long and deep meditation and as little weighted as possible with the convention of material life."

Sri Aurobindo admires Japanese as they are in consonance with this practice: "the Japanese have put their temples and their Buddhas ... away on mountains and in distant or secluded scenes of Nature and avoid living with great paintings in the crude hours of daily life, but keep them by preference in such a way that their undisputed suggestions can sink into the mind its finer moments or apart where they can go and look at them in a treasured secrecy when the soul is at leisure from life."

"To set to any true and discerning appreciation of the art of India we have to take into account the spiritual suggestion, the religious significance, the meaning of the symbols and indications". If we only look with the rational and secular aesthetic mind not much headway we can make in understanding this art.

Sri Aurobindo's appeal is to overcome narrow approach when we begin to appreciate art that is not our own. He is, somewhat, optimistic

that as the culture becomes more and more catholic in its outlook, then the individuals overcome their narrowness. His confirmed opinion is that "Indian art is not different from religion and literature."

Therefore he turns his attention to the Indian viewers time and again because they need to understand what treasure-trove they actually possess: "To appreciate our own artistic past at its right value we have to free ourselves from all subjection to a foreign outlook and see our sculpture and painting, as I have already suggested about our architecture, in the light of its own profound intention and greatness of spirit".

Sri Aurobindo invokes the contrast between the Greek sculpture and the Indian sculpture and asks us to notice the difference: "What Greek sculpture expressed was fine, gracious and noble, but what it did not express and could not by the limitations of its canon hope to attempt was considerable, was immense in possibility, was that spiritual depth and extension which the human mind needs for its longer deeper self-experience."

"The figure of the Buddha achieves the expression of the infinite in a finite image, and that is surely no mean or barbaric achievement, to embody the illimitable calm of Nirvana in a human form and visage."

While reacting to the self-bound European's erroneous estimation of Indian art, Sri Aurobindo has made a plea for a life-giving susceptibility to the artistic creations of other cultures. This will enable us to overcome our readiness to respond only to what is familiar to the eye and obvious to the imagination. "We will learn to recognise that there may be greater beauty existing beyond the circle of which we are accustomed to live and take pleasure."

To Conclude: As you have noticed, in my presentation my observations are minimum, because Sri Aurobindo's understanding of Indian art is full of profound truths. This paper may appear to be one long quotation from the sage and, obviously, I do not have much to add to him.

SWANS IN SERENITY

Shruti Bidwaikar



Excerpt from "The Wild Swans at Coole"

...Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water,
Mysterious, beautiful;
Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day
To find they have flown away?

-William Butler Yeats

KEATS - PRIEST OF BEAUTY

Ananda Reddy

Poets, as poets, do not 'believe' in any particular thing. They are usually obsessed by certain visions and expressions in the light of which they interpret the world around them. It is so with Keats and his great contemporaries. Lord Byron is seized by the zeal for liberty, William Wordsworth is overwhelmed by the tranquil immensities of nature; S.T. Coleridge is enthralled by metaphysical truths; William Blake is overpowered by the subtle world of angels and elemental spirits; P.B. Shelley is entranced by the worker of light and love and Keats is enchanted by the image of divine Beauty: "I feel assured I should write from the more yearning and fondness I have for the Beautiful." (Letter 97) It is through beauty alone that he wishes to ascertain reality: "I never can feel certain of any truth but from a clear perception of its Beauty." (Letter Dec.1818). Anything that was not beautiful was not real. He is the high-priest of the temple of Beauty who "traverses its sculptured and frescoed courts with a mind hued and shaped to her forms and colours and prepares, but is never permitted, to enter the innermost sanctuary." (CWSA 26: 146)

His worship of this Goddess manifests itself in his poetry in the form of Sensuous Beauty, Imaginative Beauty, Intellectual Beauty and often as Spiritual Beauty. Most of the motives, i.e, hellenism, perfection, immortality, that recur in his odes could be well understood and appreciated if we approached them from this angle, and to do so would be my present endeavour.

In his noble allegory of that 'large mansion of many apartments' – the mansion of Life – Keats speaks of Sensuous Beauty as the infant or thoughtless chamber, the chamber in which we remain as long as we do not think. That is, in a perception of sensuous beauty the thing of beauty is admired for its own sake, objectively as it were. The poet does not penetrate into the qualities of things; he presents them as they impinge upon the different senses. He captures in its entirety the rich

taste of the ‘grape’ that is ‘burst’ against ‘the palate fine’; he portrays the voluptuous taste of the beaker “With beaded bubbles winking at the brim”. These images are like still-life paintings, where in, it is said, a bee mistakenly comes to suck at the painted flower! Our senses too are quickened by these sensuous and often sensual imagery and we can almost hear the murmur of the ‘flies on summer eves’ or see the real landscape of “The grass, the thicket and the fruit tree wild”, or ‘feed deep, deep’ upon the ‘peerless eyes’ of ‘the mistress’!

Where Wordsworth spiritualises and Shelly intellectualises nature, Keats is content to express her through the senses: the colour (Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways), the touch (“Imprison her soft hand’), the pulsating music (“The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves), the scent (‘Drows’d with the fume of poppies’) and the taste (‘Whose strenuous tongue/ Can burst Joy’s grape against his palate fine’)

This intense sensuous beauty packed into these images, is, however ephemeral, ‘A burning forehead and a parching tongue’ are left behind by the ‘all breathing human passion’; the ‘high requiem’ of the nightingale becomes a ‘plaintive anthem’ and ‘fades’. Sensuous Beauty ‘must die’ and in its impermanence lies its permanence – its transience is its immortality.

The progress in aesthetic perception from an apprehension of sensuous beauty does not lie in the mere extension of range and multiplicity of objects but in creating a new mental, artificial world with the aid of the imagination. Keats creates such a world of Imaginative Beauty in the Ode to Psyche:

“Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
In some untrodden region of my mind,
...And there by gephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,
The moss-lain Dryds shall be lull’d to sleep;
...A rosy sanctuary will I dress
With the wreath’d trellis of a working brain,
With buds, and bells, and stars without a name ...”

Unlike Coleridge, Keats makes no attempt to analyse or define imagination, except that he distinguishes it from reason. The prerequisite for entering this world of imaginative Beauty is, what Hazlitt called, “the lulling of senses into a deep oblivion”. It is only in such a twilight consciousness between sleep and waking that one is released from the boundaries of reason into the freedom of Imagination.

Imagination, for Keats, is a pure act, recognised in its achievements rather than in its components, defying explanation in terms of cause and effect: “I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart’s affections and the truth of Imagination” (Letters Nov.22, 1817). Here truth is to be found not in rational propositions but in a direct awareness of beauty: “What the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth-whether it existed before or not” (Ibid). This shows that, reality is potentially within the poet who brings it to the objects. This is what Keats had meant by ‘negative capability’ – the capacity of being in “uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.”

Surely, there is a greater permanence in this world of Imaginative Beauty and may be it is because of this that the poet prefers ‘the viewless wings of Poesy’ to ‘Bacchus and his pards!’ However, he soon realise that

“Adieu! The fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fam’d to do, deceiving elf.” (Ode to a Nightingale)

So, Keats quests for something mere permanent (as is depicted in the questions of the first stanza of Ode on a Grecian Urn) and it is this yearning which leads him to the gulf of human sorrow and agony:

“The weariness, the fever and the fret
Here, where men set and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey haves,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;”
(Ode to a Nightingale)

This is the dark night of the soul for the poet. In the words of Keats himself, his vision is now “Sharpened into the heart and nature of man” and his nerves are “convinced that the world is full of misery

and heartbreak, pain, sickness and oppression” (Letters 1819)

This empathy leads Keats to the level of Intellectual Beauty. The world is Shelley’s. But we have to remember that Intellectual Beauty is not merely the beauty of the intellect. It is only when a poet apprehends intuitively a law or an archetype and proves it in his blood and brain that he emerges from the slough of despond. This process, this transformation of his self is the meaning of Keats’s “Ode to Melancholy”. He knows while the bee sips the honey it turns it to poison, that behind every pleasure there is pain, ‘the aching pleasure nigh’ but he has also the realisation that

“...him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy’s grape against his palate fine,
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.”

He experiences ‘leaden-eyed despairs’ and “Beauty that cannot keep her lustrous eyes” and wishes “To cease upon the midnight with no pain.” It is only at this brink of extinction that he catches intuitively the truth, “Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty.” Autumn, ‘the season of mists of and mellow fruitfulness’ also brings home the truth that ‘ripeness is all.’ Keats thus mounts into the world of Intellectual Beauty, “unscathed from the slough of despond!”

But, Intellectual Beauty is not philosophy; it is only a philosophic insight. The next step is the realisation of spiritual Beauty. This is the level of poetic consciousness in which all the principles and archetypes found in the realms of Intellectual beauty are harmonised and reconciled with one another. There are no examples of this poetic achievement in Keats’s Odes, though his Hyperion is perhaps



the most reveling poem of this experience. However, a short extract from his letter to Woodhouse should be sufficient to convince us of his attainment of the consciousness of spiritual Beauty: “It is everything and nothing – It has no character – it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated. A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence; because he has no Identity – he is continually in for – an filling some other Body” (L 93)

His dictum, “Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty’ is which could be heightened and transformed into ‘Beauty is Ananda’, for, what we speak of beauty, is it not Ananda in manifestation, through love, in ‘The Sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women? And beyond manifestation, don’t they – beauty and love lose themselves in Ananda and become indistinguishably one?

Excerpt from "Ode to Autumn"

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too, –
While barrèd clouds bloom the soft-dying day
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn.
 Among the river-sallows, borne aloft
 Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

John Keats

TULA

Sushila Prakash



"The balance" in essence is something we have heard of too many times in too many places. This mandala, is a depiction of the inner complexity and the outer calm. But is that balance? No, it is the first step, the initiation to define our inner stance that is "The Tula".

THE SOUL OF BEAUTY IN POETRY

Shruti Bidwaikar

Satyam Shivam Sundaram is a celebrated mantra in India. In common parlance it is translated as that which is true is Shiva or pure or God and that in turn is beautiful. Perhaps we may also say that beauty and purity are the qualities of truth or truth and godliness define beauty or that which is truth and beauty is God. When we apply this definition to the study of poetry some more clarification is required on the subject. Essentially, we are dealing with the topic of "beauty" its definition, its nature and relation to other virtues and its relation with poetry.

Beauty usually is associated with the visual art. Usually we say a painting or dance is beautiful whereas, poetry and music are referred to as being delightful. We shall link the two as we go along the paper. It is also true that beauty is quite subjective. What is beautiful for one may not be beautiful for the other. It also differs from culture to culture. However, is there a possibility of seeing something beautiful that is Universal and Permanent? It depends on two conditions the level of consciousness from which the art is manifested and the level from which it is perceived. This paper aims to explore the objective and subjective elements of beauty and see how far these elements help to reach the soul of beauty in poetry. There are certain elements through which beauty can be judged for they are easy to grasp and see. However, there are a few which reveal beauty and help us experience it.

In his Socratic writing "Harmony of Virtue" Sri Aurobindo discusses the way in which beauty can be judged. There are three ways: Colour, Form and Perfume. These are universally applicable to all art forms. Colour though is related much to painting and sculpture the sense of colours is often vividly seen in literature. A few examples of the same are Shakespeare's plays, Coleridge's "Rime of Ancient Mariner",

Sri Aurobindo's poem "God's Labour". There are innumerable examples but we will cite only a select few here.

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. (*Macbeth*)

Or Iago saying "Green-Eyed" monster, or Burns writing "My love is like a red red rose" or Wordsworth defining daffodils, "When all at once I saw a crowd,/A host, of golden daffodils;..."

Similarly, Sri Aurobindo in his poem "A God's Labour" makes ample use of colours to suggest the level of consciousness that he is in.

I have gathered my dreams in a silver air
Between the gold and the blue...
I had hoped to build a rainbow bridge
Marrying the soil to the sky...
I shall leave my dreams in their argent air,
For in a raiment of gold and blue...
Like flames to the kingdoms of Truth and Bliss:
Down a gold-red stairway wend
The radiant children of Paradise
Clarioning darkness' end.... (CWSA 2: 534-538)

In these lines we get the suggestion of the mood or emotion or vision of beauty through the colour. Colour of sea, flower or any level of consciousness. Colours have their own significance and it would be interesting to study how use of colours makes poem so very beautiful and aids in creating the atmosphere of the poem.

Similarly, another element which help us judge a work of art is form. Form includes symmetry, proportion, technique and style. In poetry symmetry of the form of poem may not be of much importance. It is the form of meter that is used that demands symmetry. If we take the poetry of Classical Greek and Latin, they were in perfect

metrical harmony. Similarly, interesting examples are Dryden's poem "Absalom and Achetophel". Or Pope's Mock Epic "Rape of the Lock". The form of their poems has absolute symmetrical rhythm of iambic pentameter. If we were to judge the beauty of poetry through the sense of proportion it becomes a little difficult. For in the formal structure it is not possible to evaluate poetry in terms of its proportion, but if we see the proportion in which content has been dealt in the poem we might get some idea of the proportion of the same. For example, In Shakespeare's play "Hamlet" it was required to give lot of time to Hamlet's soliloquies in order to prove the weakness of his mind and to justify the reason of his procrastination. In the same play Ophelia's death is not given that length of description yet it has been given the depth of emotion. One may also try to see if the theme of theme of the poem is applicable to the form in which it is presented. Like a theme of Love conquering Death requires a massive canvas of epic poetry to justify itself. To convey one's personal experience sonnets may be considered the best vehicle etc.

Perfume is an interesting concept that Sri Aurobindo uses to judge beauty in art. Perhaps one can judge a flower by its perfume but how to evaluate poetry or music. For that too he explains "character or emotion is the perfume of the human form" and "sound is the perfume of poetry and music". Keeping this definition in mind we can see how in poetry a character or an emotion is delineated. Robert Browning's poem "Andrea Del Sarto" and Tennyson's poem "Ulysses" are examples of beautiful character portrayal. We see the dilemma of the protagonist, their need to progress, their aspirations and desires. One can draw a perfect character out of these descriptions though the aim of poem was not their character portrayal. The character emerges out of the descriptions of the poets. If we take Indian epics – Ramayana and Mahabharata, we see beautiful character portrayal of various character more through the work they do and words they speak. Another example of a powerful portrayal of character are the characters of Shakespeare's tragedies. Each one of them is an example of beauty of character.

According to Sri Aurobindo beauty is also expressed through emotions and if they expressed well then that gives rise to the rasa to the creator and the listener both. It involves both rasabhivyakti and rasanubhuti by the poet and the reader. The quality and affectivity of emotion delineated would qualify the thing of beauty. This was seen on a larger scale in Greek plays. The poets then would give a single emotion of sorrow or mirth in the play and that would continue to haunt the work. For example, Oedipus Rex, it creates an atmosphere of horror and disgust throughout the play. However, if we look at the plays of Kalidasa, he is known to create poetry of love commonly known as sringara rasa. Similarly, Sri Aurobindo's poem "Baji Prabhou" evokes a strong sense of patriotism and chivalry. All these examples are beautiful because they fulfill the purpose of delivering one or more emotions.

The perfume of music is sound. It applies equally to poetry. Poems with repetition and refrain have an entirely different impact on the reader. Not only that, depending on the plane from where sound comes, it touches the chords of our inner being. For example, a wonderful ballad of Coleridge: Rime of Ancient Mariner. One enjoys it for its sound and rhythm as much as for its imagery. However, if we see the sound of Vedic or Upanishadic chanting it gives a completely different spiritual atmosphere. One may understand it or not, one feels the atmosphere created by these word-sounds. *Savitri* too has this quality of creating a sound vibration when read aloud.

Having seen all the examples of colour, form and perfume it is important to note that they are rarely found exclusive of each other. In fact the examples quoted in each have more or less all the elements. It is only for the sake of clearer understanding that they have been dealt with separately. Sri Aurobindo mentions in his writing "Harmony of Virtue" that the poet or artist must strive to harmonize the three and only in their harmony lies the manifestation of beauty. In isolation they may not evoke beauty.

II

Having discussed the parameters of beauty we may now study qualities and expressions closely associated with it. Beauty is generally associated with good. We assume that all that is beautiful has to be good. It may or may not be, depending on the level at which beauty is expressed. Beauty has close connection with Delight, Truth, Love, Unity and Vastness. Sri Aurobindo writes: "Delight is the soul of existence, beauty the intense impression the concentrated form of delight". (F.P 256) In another letter he says, Art is a thing of beauty and beauty and Ananda are closely connected – they go together. If the Ananda is there, then the beauty comes out more easily – if not, it has to struggle out painfully and slowly. That is quite natural. (CWSA 27:699)

Similarly he finds a close connection of Truth and Beauty. He quotes Keats' line "Beauty is truth, truth beauty" is true on a plane of consciousness that is called Overmind. In fact in Indian philosophy sachchidananda understood has the One who is Pure state of existence, consciousness and Bliss/delight. We have seen how delight and beauty are connected. Sri Aurobindo therefore tells us that on the lower planes of consciousness it is possible that truth and beauty would express themselves separately but on a certain higher consciousness they are all one. A wonderful example of truth and beauty combined together can be seen in the verses of Upanishad and Gita. The verses of these text are expressions of the revelation of truth received by the rishis. The form in which they have been present to the common humanity is beautiful not only structure but also in thought and the message that they convey. It is important to note the ancients in India did not take to writing poetry to instruct the adults as was done by the Greek poets. They were concerned in ascending the scales of consciousness and were only interested to record them so that those travelling after them may find some guidance or confirmation.

From this link if we analyse we will see that truth is connected with the Universal rhythm and vastness – *satyam rtam brihat*. Therefore,

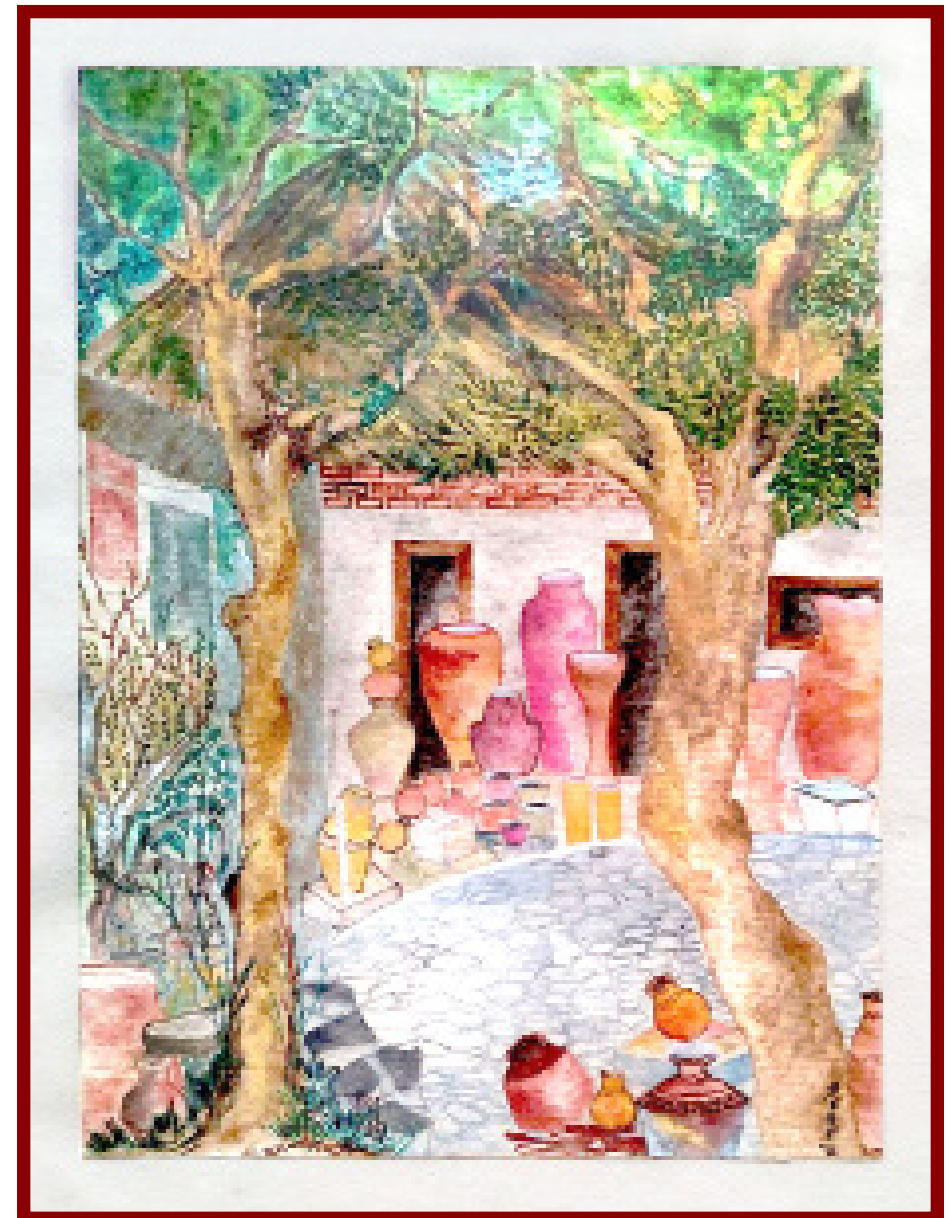
beauty at its highest is one with the universal harmonies, vastness, truth and delight. If poetry has all these elements then automatically it gives rise to the feeling of love and unity. For example our epic poems: Ramayana and Mahabharata and *Savitri*. They all represent certain plane of consciousness, of truth. Their scale is vast as they embrace the evolution of whole of humanity. In fact *Savitri* is known as a cosmic epic. So we can understand the vast canvas on which it is painted. All the epics have a harmony of structure and rhythm that correspond with the universal harmonies. If we generalize it would mean that it took the vastness of life in its fold and tried to solve the problem prevalent then: whether it is moral-ethical code of conduct, establishing a new dharma or Immemorial quest of Immortality, these epics have justified the subject they chose and were much in harmony with the needs of consciousness of the time it was written. These epics in general spread a message of unity and love for human beings and God. Mahabharata taught us to love Sri Krishna, the Divine friend. *Savitri* describes the grace of the Divine Mother and therefore connects us with Her love. Ramayana too teaches us the love for one's country and people.

We can therefore see that beauty is inseparable from delight, truth, unity, harmony, love. If we go back to *satyam shivam sundaram* we may conclude that all the elements and associations of beauty mentioned above unite in an utterance which comes from the higher realms of consciousness. In the lowers ones one of the other element could be missing. It would not then be the perfect perfection which Sri Aurobindo has mentioned. We may cite there Sri Aurobindo's observation: "To find highest beauty is to find God; to reveal, to embody, to create as we say highest beauty, is to being out of our souls the living image and power of God." (CWSA 25: 145)

The soul of beauty in poetry can be discovered when "the soul of beauty in us identifies itself with the soul of beauty in the thing created and feels in appreciation the same divine intoxication and uplifting which the artist felt in creation." (CWSA 25: 143) With this analysis it is clear that the search for the soul of beauty takes us to our own soul. Only when we discover our souls can we connect to the soul of object in observation and only then can we truly appreciate the creation – whether nature or art.

A VILLAGE POTTER'S HOUSE

Deepshikha Reddy





Purified Dynamic Life Energy
Superb, indomitable, all-powerful in its purity

*I spread life's burning wings of rapture and pain;
 Black fire and gold fire strove towards one bliss:
 I rose by them towards a supernal plane
 Of power and love and deathless ecstasies.
 -Sri Aurobindo*

*A LONGING FOR THE BEYOND**

Amal Kiran

Very dear friend Phani,

3.7.92

Speech is the usual mode of communication and togetherness. But silence need not be self-enclosed and separative. When it is full of memories and anticipations it is no more than a formative pause between past utterance and future word, an active potentiality of communication, a warm preparation for being together again. Such has been my state when no letter passed from me to you. Last night the call suddenly came to write to you and the subject is one of the strangest that can be associate with me.

A number of nights back I had a dream in which I exclaimed: "Oh I am so unhappy, so unhappy!" It was a surprise and yet a tinge of recognition mixed with it. At once there was a quiet pressure on the inner being to divulge the reason for this cry from some depth of discontent. And the answer arose like a far phantom trying to take shape. When I looked into the distance I read the words: "There is some coldness between you and the Mother"- and behind this immediate disclosure I discerned a vast tract of the still unrealized dimensions of the Divine.

My aim through day after day has been for years a quiet joy emanating from the heart because of a constant contact with the Mother's presence within- a contact which brings about a radiant sense of her presence all around. A glory and a greatness and a grace wake in the inmost to meet the light, the power, the love that are, as the Mundaka Upanishad says of Brahman, "before us and behind us, to the north and to the south of us and above and below and extended everywhere". But after the dream-discovery a few nights ago I see at the same time the need to repair the slight sinking of the Motherward flame and to widen the receptivity to her manifold mystery. The living touch with her is so important- so much the all-in-all- that even a slight slackening of it makes all life dust and ashes and wrings from the whole

being a note of utter tragedy. What the slight slackening brought about along with this note is the accentuation of something I have felt for a long period. I remember writing to my sister many years ago and I have repeated it to friends intermittently that I have been waiting eagerly for a certain breakthrough. The fire of loving and self-giving aspiration has often burned intensely and yet failed to pierce some barrier that hangs between the luminous yet limited here of God-intimacy and a multi-layered Beyond of plenary God-realisation.

When both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were physically with us this hunger for the Infinite was never so acutely felt- or rather it was not felt as an ardent ache. Their presence and their ambience gave, as it were, a constant promise of that fullness. Perhaps it is more true to say that the Fullness itself appeared to come towards us on their earth-treading feet and with their earth-illuminating faces. Even when Sri Aurobindo withdrew from his body the Mother's incarnate divinity was an assurance that the entire Infinite would be ours and that to look into her eyes and receive her smile and be made by them her own thrice-blessed children was to be brimmed with a bliss that seemed to encompass everything. The sense of what Nirodbaran in a poem has termed with felicity of revelatory expression

Life that is deep and wonder-vast

is still with us as a legacy of the Mother's light and love from her physical past amongst us. Indeed that physical past is still with us in a subtle enveloping form, but the unrealized dimensions of the Divine which were not acutely felt when to see and touch her was to feel that nothing was lacking have haunted me ever since her departure from her body. It is not as though the vivid conjuring up of her subtle reality were not sweet and sublime enough: what is wanting is the surety of receiving those dimensions as a straight gift from her some time or other. That may be due to my own shortcoming in receptivity. Others may not yearn as I do for the immense unexplored. They may be content with having arrived through

.....an aureate opening in Time,

Where stillness listening felt the unspoken word
And the hours forgot to pass towards grief and change.
A spot for the eternal's tread on earth. (*Savitri*: BI.C2)

The dream of my secret extreme unhappiness has made me keenly aware of chasms within me that long to be appeased with more and more of the Mother's empyreans.

Not that I disvalue the precious opening widening by Gurus have made in me. I cannot be sufficiently grateful for the freedom and the joy and the release from self that they have given the thought-hemmed desire-ridden groper after spiritual silence and psychic purity that I was. But Oh how happy, how happy indeed will I be if can break into the endlessness of Sri Aurobindo's Truth, the boundlessness of the Mother's beauty!

With love always,

Amal.

* * *

Note: * Title given by the editors



Psychic awakening in Matter

Matter opens itself to
the spiritual life.

Dodonaea viscosa

Hopseed bush

UNDERSTANDING PSYCHOTHERAPY THROUGH THE BHAGAVAD GITA

Suhani Tanna

As a student of psychology I have always been interested in finding indigenous therapeutic measures for the problems that we face today. Some things are so deeply rooted in our consciousness that mental arguments, empathy and unconditional support cannot help us. Something much stronger and wider is needed. And this base is provided by Indian Scriptures. One of the Scriptures that capture our minds is the Bhagavad Gita. Innumerable commentaries have been given on this scripture. But I have chosen Sri Aurobindo's explanations serialized in his *Essays on the Gita* and have found invaluable insights into the psyche of Arjuna and Sri Krishna's dealing with him.

I wanted to understand the journey of how Sri Krishna helps Arjuna from wanting to give up on the battlefield to participating in the Kurukshetra battle. *Essays on the Gita* gives deeper insight into how a verse can be interpreted on a much deeper level. Sri Aurobindo has helped us understand such depths of this marvelous scripture.

My attempt is to understand each step that Sri Krishna helps Arjuna make from the time of his breakdown to picking up his weapon to fight the battle. Herein, my focus is on the first three chapters of Bhagavad Gita, in reference to Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita*.

When Arjuna asks Sri Krishna to take his chariot to the middle of the battlefield in the first chapter of Bhagavad Gita, it is seen that this Rajasic prince is in full acceptance of the 'joy of battle', with a complete confidence in the righteousness of his cause. He wants to see his teachers, brothers and dear ones who have come to fight for unrighteousness and establish as a rule of life the disregard of law, justice and truth through their selfish egoism. Both the families who have come to fight this epic battle form the Kuru clan which was dominant in India for about 400 years. The entire Kuru clan, of which Arjuna is a prince, was

on the battle field ready to slay each other. Seeing and being a part of this gruesome massacre, that was to follow, causes his breakdown.

Arjuna, one of the greatest warriors of his time was filled with anxiety, guilt and perhaps a feeling of loss and helplessness before the greatest battle amongst the Kuru clan was about to begin. The physical symptoms (succumbing of the limbs and the parchedness of the mouth) mentioned were triggered when his chariot was placed in the middle of the battlefield, and he could see his entire clan, on the verge of destruction. Arjuna was born a Kshatriya, trained to become a great warrior, but he was also a Pandu prince, a brother, a disciple who was about to fight and lead a war which would destroy his entire clan. This realization resulted in an emotional breakdown in Arjuna, as there was a loss of his sense of identity. 'There is no moral standing-ground left, nothing to lay hold of and walk by, no dharma', with these lines Sri Aurobindo summarizes the psychological state of Arjuna. This indicates a weakness and a disorientation of which Arjuna is unable to take stock of.

Identity is the perception of sameness in time, and is connected to the perception of the others. It represents self image. A loss of identity results in crisis which leads to role confusion, according to Erikson as he explained in his psychosocial stages. Here we see the crisis affecting the entire being of Arjuna and hindering his work or duty. When he goes to Sri Krishna seeking guidance in the seventh verse of the second chapter, it indicates crisis erupted due to the dissolution of the old sense of identity. The old sense of identity was favoring the narrow self-interest of the identified ego.

In Chapter 2, verse 7 we see that Arjuna has lost belief and cannot see the rationale in the ordinary standard of conduct. This destruction of his old sense of identity seems to be preparing Arjuna for the higher knowledge.

This is the first stage which Arjuna reached, i.e. shedding of his old sense of identity, which was based on ego. The hints of this are very subtle in the verses, if we look at Arjuna's character holistically there are

hints of his identification with the great clan that he belongs to. Until now Arjuna's actions were governed by his narrow sense of self i.e. ego. Thus, his reasons to fight the war were more ego based and were coming from his surface mind and surface vital. For example, Pandavas were cast away from their own kingdom, were humiliated in the royal court, their wife was disrobed and disrespected in a formal gathering all out of spite, jealousy, insecurity and through unfair means by their own cousins and distant family. Herein, the vital is '...the man of desire and sensation, the man of force and action, the man of passion and emotion, the kinetic individual...' (CWSA 21-22). The transition in the thoughts of Arjuna indicates the growth of his consciousness.

In Chapter 1, verse 34-35, Arjuna gives reasons for not fighting the war explaining the worthlessness of the kingdom and the pleasures, which he would gain as a result of victory in the battle; without his dear ones to share it with. Mutual slaughter is a sin and there cannot be anything just or right about it. When the ones to be slain are the natural objects of reverence and love; without whom one would not care to live, and by doing so would violate these sacred feelings, there can be no virtue; living without them can only be a heinous crime, even for a warrior. Battle is fought against enemies, not against one's own family and kinsmen. If war is fought for the family's morals, social law and the law of the nation, then the fighting of a gruesome war itself is a destruction of these standards. The civil war in its wake will cause disruption of family, tribe and laws, ethical degradation and guarantee pain for all involved. These thoughts, though contradictory to what made Arjuna and the other Pandavas fight the kauravas; are more Sattwic in nature and are governed by his inner mind and the inner vital.

There is a degradation of the ignorance in Arjuna and the transition is facilitated by Sri Krishna. We see that as there is a change in the thought pattern of Arjuna, there is also a simultaneous change at the emotional level. In the surface nature, the vital self governs the mental self. The transition from ignorance of self into Self being or the supreme self entails transfer of concentration of the faculty from vital to the mental self. The points that are contradictory in nature are in effect a reflection of

the growing consciousness of the individual and this can be said because Arjuna is now questioning the purpose of violence, suffering, palaces, kingdoms for which the war was being fought. This difference in the perception of war, violence and suffering indicates an internal change that Arjuna is undergoing. While the new sense of identity is gradually establishing, the old sense of self being is being destroyed, putting him in an unsteady ground.

A new way of working can only be established once the old learning is extinct or destroyed. Right at the beginning, Arjuna realizes with the help of Sri Krishna the fragility of his old dharma or the way of working. Once the old law of working is destroyed, Sri Krishna can begin to establish the new dharma.

(The author is an inquisitive learner who is looking forward to do her research further in the field of psychotherapy based on the Bhagavad Gita)

The Teacher of the Gita is therefore not only the God in man who unveils himself in the word of knowledge, but the God in man who moves our whole world of action, by and for whom all our humanity exists and struggles and labours, towards whom all human life travels and progresses. He is the secret Master of works and sacrifice and the Friend of the human peoples.

-Sri Aurobindo (CWSA 19: 19)

A LIFE RE-ALIGNED

Deepshikha Reddy

“Hai Ammu! do you recognise me? Aren’t you Ambika?” Happily surprised I looked at him with a smile still unable to bring him to my memory. “Somewhat known but not really”. “I am Joshua. Remember I had come in 1972 and worked with you in setting up the kitchen at Aspiration community in Auroville! We all had great fun working together and doing so many things. Please try to remember. I came from Germany. You used to sing to us. Do you still sing?”

“Yes! I do.” I muttered almost mechanically. “Wasn’t there a young girl from England too with us?” He nodded happily. “There you are. We were in touch with Malisa for some time. She later went back to England. Remember, meeting me, you said you did not meet many Jews in your life.”

That was like letting off the lid of a secret box hidden in the past. I got him back clear in my memory. At the age of 29, Joshua had left his home country Germany where he was living with his father. They were rich and pretty well-to-do but social changes, changes in ideology and values, were almost bringing about a revolution amongst the younger generation then. Tension prevailed and the generation gap became wider. Unrest was visible. Several parents were going through grief and remorse. It is at such a time that Joshua declared to his father that he wanted to leave and carve out his own future. First and foremost, he told his father that he would abandon his religion. His tormented father couldn’t take that religious betrayal anymore and told Joshua to leave the house immediately.

Youngsters in Germany were angry and depressed. Many had changed their religion, many had abandoned their moorings and many had lost faith in the social structure, their age-old culture and parents’ grooming. It looked as if the revolution was at the

bend when Joshua finally left his father’s abode. Being affluent, he carried some good money with him. After some cool thinking he wanted to leave Germany altogether and come to India which he heard was the land of enlightenment.

His father was a war veteran who had gone through the holocaust. He saw his whole family murdered in front of him save Joshua, the youngest one. He brought him up with faith and fortitude. He had gone through the horrors of the concentration camps and vowed to save and keep to his religion. Joshua’s leaving the religion was the last straw on his back.

Coming in India, Joshua hopped from guru to guru, Ashram to Ashram, *Pathshalas* to *Dharmashalas* – in search of enlightenment. They were all places of hop-step and jump for him. Sooner or later he had to leave all of those. It was through such a transition that he landed in Auroville where we met. That was in 1972. Kitchen was just being set up; we used to go to cook something for the resident children and these passersby used to come to help us out in our new venture. I was a young teacher then serving in the Aspiration School. It was fun meeting such others from the West. We shared a lot of information and time didn’t seem long to make friends. Now when I remember those carefree, happy days when having no possession of our own, we felt like kings participating in the building up of a dream city like Auroville under the Mother’s care and love. Even after four and a half decades those days do not seem distant. Joshua plugged me into such a sweet past which I always love to cherish proudly. However, now the other half of his story completes.

After leaving Auroville Joshua lived in India for ten long years and finally settled in the holy city of Banaras where he met Susan, a like-minded traveller in search of Truth. They became friends and started sharing their lines. All seemed well till one day through a friend from Germany he came to know that his father had died. What really shocked him more than his passing was the fact that he

went away pining for his only son in great remorse. In his last few months he had kept muttering that “he will surely come to see me.”

Joshua completely changed after hearing this news. He was no more the same going to the Ashram for learning and serving, sweeping and picking flowers for the Lord. He would sit hours beside the Ganges cogitating mutely without a smile. His look became distant and disinterested and it was clear that he was going through certain deep pangs of separation.

He now found sense in his father’s reaction towards him leaving his religion and almost convinced himself that it was he who was solely responsible for his tragic death. No one could bring him sense that death is an occasional visitor to all and he need not torture himself over that. It is the law that we all have to submit to. No, no amount of advice and pacification could embalm his wound. He sank into an unknown hole and one morning telling Susan that “my soul-alignment with you is over now” – he left for the unknown destination of Palestine which his father very often used to refer to when he was growing up.

Susan loved him a lot. She went through her share of suffering being unable to bring him around to certain normalcy. There Joshua went from place to place, day after day, untiringly walking the streets of Palestine. One day he finally reached the famous Wailing Wall where all one’s prayers get answered. He had heard about this famous pilgrimage from his dear father. Day in and day out he had been praying God for his father’s forgiveness. He had no other mission, no other vision, no other solution. He just most humbly asked for forgiveness. Nothing interested him in life, food, fun or friends. He lost all and the world lost him.

The Wall was big and huge and full of small little crevices wherein people from all over the world had pushed in their appeals and entreaties to God. The belief was that the living God practically fulfilled everyone’s wishes. Joshua was also guided to write his wish on a piece of paper and stick it in one of the thousand crevices.

Wiping his eyes several times, between frequent sobs and cries, he wrote the last note to his father for forgiveness. Unmindful of the world around, with wobbling feet and shivering hands he went on feeling some space in all the crevices. They were tight with prayer notes, lending no space for his. “I have to fix mine in here, come what may, even if I have to feel each one of the crevices”. Hours passed by without any compassion. Suddenly he felt he managed some little grace for his prayer. Barely could he fix his note in there, behold, O Lord, he had displaced another note out of its place. Feeling very guilty and embarrassed, he picked it up only to fix it back. But suddenly he felt an irresistible pull to open and read it. Knowing it is unethical he resisted but not for long. With trembling fingers and a numb heart what he read shocked him and he collapsed. The note read:

“Almighty Lord, ever merciful, please see that my dear son Joshua gets to know that I have forgiven him with all my heart and my love shall be with him forever.” (Francis Jacob)

Joshua retraced his steps to Banaras. Susan, overjoyed at the unbelievable sight, asked him: “Has the soul realigned itself now?” Happy and contented as before they continued with their life of devotion to the Lord. It was later that when he came to Auroville for a second visit with Susan that he met me to complete his story.



**Placing notes in the Western Wall (Wailing Wall or Kotel),
the Old City of Jerusalem.**

A RECKONING

Oeendriila Guha

I woke up one morning with shining eyes to face the bright world that smiled at me and beckoned me as a daring lover. It was autumn. My cousins, the flowers in the colours of pink, red, yellow, vibrant in the myriad shades of the rainbow, died to leave the trees bare. It seemed as if a beautiful bride, once clad in the brilliant shades of wedded bliss, was suddenly widowed. Nevertheless, I was all excitement as I, a sacred fig leaf, felt my once soft, green, velvety skin now turned into a deep brown and I laughed out loud to drink my life to the dregs.

I felt free; the sort of freedom one enjoyed when one realized one's end was nearing and all troubles were at an end. Letting myself sway with the strong wind, I surrendered my social inhibitions. It was a total immersion into the physical, a world of the senses that I realized eventually I was far from home, borne away brutally towards the densely populated city. I panicked as I had never seen such crowds in my life. Practically living the life of a hermit in the seclusion of the woods—a place rarely visited by human beings who considered fast-life and money-making the very breath of their existence and never gave a thought to anything that did not hasten their death—I was a stranger to this happening city.

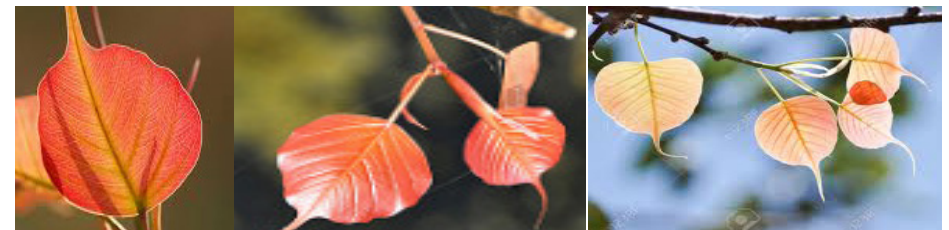
It was not only the crowds that scared me out of my wits but also the vehicles. I choked as the pores on my skin clogged due to the excessive release of dust and smoke. I screamed, all my earlier enjoyment forgotten, but everybody turned a deaf ear. As the wind slowed down its pace, I landed on a vague pavement. I breathed deeply to stop my head from spinning. From my infernal position, I peered at the towering infernos, humankind called skyscrapers.

Afternoon lethargically followed and everything came to a quiet. The sunlight kissed my hoary skin. I lay motionless, wondering how long this state of inactivity would last. It did not last long as good things never do.

Dusk neared and so did the end of me. I felt it as one sensed instinctively an approaching danger. I heard distantly the numerous thuds of oncoming feet, returning home from a long day's work. I held my breath tightly, waiting for the first step to crush the life out of my old, fragile self.

It came...too soon. I shut my eyes and bit my lips from not screaming. But I howled of death. I was crushed the way the wings of a butterfly were by a child. I opened my eyes the last time to face death in the form of a human being. I let out a piteous moan and felt the life ebbing out of me.

I was not the first victim of civilization, which turned humanity into beasts of prey of innocent nature, and forgot that it lived on its very sap.



THE TRAVAILS OF A NON-RESIDENT PONDICHERRYITE

Ashok Kumar Bhatia

A place grows on us. It offers a comfort zone which we get used to. We might dislike the place for so many things. But when we are away for some time, the gravitational pull again comes into play. We start missing the place.

Pondicherry is no exception to this general rule. While here, we might bemoan the lack of civic sense, the streets littered with garbage, the reckless driving on the roads and the absence of adequate parking space in the town area. But take us away for some time, and we start missing it somehow. We yearn to get back to the humidity and the heat of the place.

What is so hot and happening about this quaint little town, perched on the Bay of Bengal, you may well ask.

Consider the following.

A small group of close friends

This is what makes Pondicherry so very special. Friends who are helpful. Friends who are there when you need them. Friends who have helped us make Pondicherry a home, far away from one's roots. Friends who offer constructive criticism. One may not speak to them or see them for quite some time. But the underground cable connections remain in place.

For a nature lover

The restless waves of the Bay of Bengal somehow sweep away all



that bothers one on any particular day. Watching an early morning sunrise is an uplifting experience. Mental peace reigns. Moon

A unique experience is that of watching a golden-hued moon rising out of the horizon a day or so after any full moon day. As it slowly changes its colour from a pale yellow to a light blue and then to its customary bright silver, the shimmering waves below keep dancing in tandem. One simply marvels at the beauty of nature on offer in Pondicherry.



For a pseudo-literary buff

For pseudo-literary buffs like me, it is a cerebral delight to attend book launches which happen at regular intervals. Perhaps inspired by the literary geniuses who made Pondicherry their abode in the not so distant past, authors of all hues and genres make it a point to include the place in their launch itinerary. BookFrontCover

Home grown authors are never in short supply, ready to fling their latest works at an unsuspecting audience. Tamil, French and English books keep popping up at regular intervals.

Even yours truly has gone ahead and published a book in Portugal, and is pretty happy about the fact that he is spared the trauma of having to read his own work in Portuguese, a language he does not understand himself!

Food for the soul

For a music-appreciating person like me, a flute recital by Hari Prasad Chaurasia, or a santoor recital by Shiv Kumar Sharma, is as



uplifting and purifying as a vocal concert by Kalapini Komalini.

Even though national celebrities happen to be in Pondicherry only once in a blue moon, the soft glow of inner happiness lingers on for many more years to come.

For an art lover

Art galleries like Aurodhan and Tasmai keep the place alive and happening. Dance performances of all genres keep me hooked to the place. When it comes to theatre, institutions like Aadishakti add their own charm to the place. Auroville has eclectic performances scheduled almost every week. Screening of offbeat movies is a routine affair. Alliance Francaise also keeps organizing some exciting events. IMG_0446

Workshops on masks, outfits teaching Salsa and Zumba, Baul performances, folk dances – you name it and Pondicherry has it!

For the intellectual pigmy

Talks of subject experts organized by the local chapter of Madras Management Association do stir up the manager within me, reigniting my entrepreneurial passion. Held once or twice a month, the talks are short, crisp and highly focused. Business strategies get discussed. Power dressing tips are offered. Management lessons from movies are put across. In short, lot of management wisdom gets shared by those who practice the art and science of management.



Improving my Spiritual Quotient

For someone who is trying to understand how businesses can be run based on sound values and ethics, listening to some charismatic speakers steeped in Sri Aurobindo's thoughts often leaves one gasping for more. The content may be incomprehensible to someone like me,

a novice in the realm of spirituality, but there is a possibility that the quest may bring about some enlightenment in due course of time.

The heartfulness program of Sri Ram Chandra Mission offers a simple way for the lay person to peep within.

Brahma Kumaris happen to be very active, as do so many other outfits of the spiritual kind.

Minimizing the Pumpkin Quotient

It is fun to work with like-minded teams and create events like workshops and seminars which allow stressed out managers to explore the spiritual dimensions of management. This way, they get an opportunity to sharpen their skills. I get rewarded in return by minimizing my own Pumpkin Quotient.

Frequent endeavours being made by such organizations as Sri Aurobindo Center for Advanced Research and Sri Aurobindo Foundation of Integral Management tend to increase the allure of Pondicherry.



Frequent guest lectures at academic institutions in the region also add to the gravitational pull of the place.

Keeping the body and soul together

For the best North Indian food in town, the place you can head to is Roma's Kitchen in Auroville.

For vegetarian seekh kababs: Hotel Anandha Inn/Annamalai

For the least greasy samosas in town: Madhu Sweets, Mission Street.

For good tea (meaning not the milky tea we get to slurp otherwise): Sekar Snacks, a tiny joint right opposite Mithai Mandir.

For greasy Punjabi dishes: Punjabi Dhaba off Mission Street.

An eatery which transports you back to the 'Life of Pi' days: Indian Coffee House, Nehru Street.

Keeping alive and kicking

Howsoever oppressive the heat, a walk along the promenade leaves one feeling invigorated.



To a young-at-heart senior citizen like me, Pondicherry offers a wide array of Yoga Dhanurasana_Yoga-Asana_Nina-Mel 'pathies' to choose from. As a follower of allopathy, one just needs to brave the crowded corridors of JIPMER, to be able to avail of world-class medical advice. For a focused attention on dental blues, Mahatma Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Dental Sciences comes to the rescue. Eye-related issues get readily addressed at either the School of Perfect Eyesight or the Aravind Eye Hospital.

For occasional forays into homeopathy, naturopathy, yoga and ayurveda, abundant choices are available. Acupuncture, acupressure and reflexology treatments are readily available. For spiritual healing, one just needs to walk in and meet a specialist.

Perhaps a day would soon come when a national level institute of Integral Medicine comes up here. My physical form will then not have to get compartmentalized into organs and 'pathies', but a holistic view will get taken of me as a whole being!

An accessible government

The upside of living in a small territory is that one could walk into any government office and meet smiling and helpful seniors. The problem gets heard. If it has merit, it also gets resolved as quickly as possible.

Experience of a unique kind

The kind of aggressive driving we get to experience in Pondicherry

makes us fitdrawing to be able to drive any kind of vehicle in any part of the world. The dexterity required on the roads would make a circus stuntman squirm with shame. The kind of democracy on display on the roads could easily be packaged and marketed to train our wannabe politicians.

It is a unique experience which makes one feel as if all those rushing about on the roads are ardent functionaries eager to play their part in the French Revolution, following the dictum of Liberty and Equality but sans Fraternity.



Satisfying the wander lust

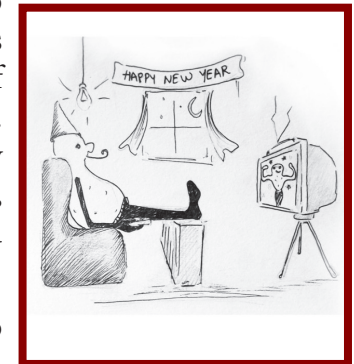
If ever boredom threatens to kick in, a short picnic at Alambara Fort (on ECR, 40 kms towards Mahabalipuram) is my recipe. It has long stretches of shallow water one can wade through and a pristine beach yet unsullied by the ravages of tourism.

A day's trip to Gingee fort (60 kms, towards Tiruvannamalai) is another attraction. Other than the steep climb, we get to meet herds of our ancestors who are more interested in the bananas and eats we carry with us.

The bliss of doing nothing!

With its scenic promenade, picturesque locations, an old world FrenchExercise 1 ambience, Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Auroville, Pondicherry offers the lay visitor a curious combination of hedonistic as well as spiritual opportunities. One could go on a spirited binge and enjoy an upliftment of a transient kind. Otherwise, one could soak in its spiritual glow and relish a bliss which lasts much longer.

Often, when relatives call up to



announce that they are planning to pounce on us, one of the most frequently asked questions is this: "What is there to do in Pondicherry?" When I say "Nothing", they get disappointed. I then proceed to cheer them up by pointing out that this, the opportunity of doing nothing, is indeed the Unique Selling Proposition of the place.

The soft power of Pondicherry is the reason I do not relish being a Non Resident Pondicherryite for an extended period of time!

(Photograph of the moon and the yoga illustration are both courtesy the world wide web)

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# Institute of Human Study

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

Sri Aurobindo

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