

13.12.66

New Race

Blessings



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

Email: ihs_hyd@yahoo.com
Phone: 040 27098414
On the web:
www.instituteofhumanstudy.org

Founder Editor
Late Prof. V. MADHUSUDAN REDDY

Managing Editor
V. ANANDA REDDY

Chief Editors
BELOO MEHRA
LARRY SEIDLITZ

Pagination
P. DIVYANATHAN @ KATHIRAVAN

Editorial Board
V.V. RAGHAVA RAO
P. NIROOP REDDY

NEW RACE

A Journal of Integral Studies

April 2012

Volume XIII

Issue II

CONTENTS

From the Editor's Desk	2
<i>Savitri</i> as the Yoga of the Earth - Ananda Reddy	4
Seven Guidelines for Spiritual Living - Larry Seidlitz	23
Spirituality, the Master-key of the Indian Mind: A Reflection - Beloo Mehra	35
Review of <i>Concept of Man in Sri Aurobindo's Poetry</i> by Dr. Jitendra Sharma - Shruti Bidwaikar	39

For questions or comments,
write to:

Managing Editor, New Race
No. 1, Papammal Koil Street, Kuruchikuppam
Puducherry - 605 012, India

sacar@auromail.net

For the web-version of New Race visit:

www.sacar.in

From the editor's desk...

Dear Readers,

Greetings from SACAR! In this issue we bring you three articles by our faculty members, and a book review by Shruti, an associate of the institute. The first article is by Ananda Reddy and is based on talk he gave at Savitri Bhavan in Auroville. It goes into the deep essence of *Savitri*, relating it to the essence of life in the world, and to the essence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in their roles as Avatars! It sounds deep, and it is, but partly because it is in the style of a talk, and partly due to Ananda's style, it is personal and engaging. He brings together many quotes from various sources in Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings to reveal and support his interesting and profound arguments.

The second article is by me, Larry Seidlitz, and is focused on seven psychological qualities or lines of development in the Integral Yoga. Unlike many other paths of yoga, Integral Yoga does not have a set method or set of practices. It is more subtle and psychological, more based on attitudes or movements of the consciousness. These attitudes also are fluid, hard to define, blend into related attitudes or states, and our experience of them is constantly changing with our psychological state. Nevertheless, we can form a conception of them and strive to foster them over time in our daily life, increasing their focus, power, frequency, and intensity.

The third article is by Beloo Mehra and is a reflection on the essence of Indian spirituality. She starts with a quote from Sri Aurobindo, "Spirituality is indeed the master-key of the Indian mind; the sense of the Infinite is native to it." And then she asks, "What does it mean to grapple with the Infinite, and how is it native to the Indian mind?" She follows with a personal reflection on these issues, drawing on Indian art, sculpture, music and poetry to help formulate her answer.

The final book review by Shruti is on Jitendra Sharma's book, *Concept of man in Sri Aurobindo's poetry*. The book indeed seems to be interesting, as it elucidates Sri Aurobindo's conception of man as expressed in a wide range of shorter and longer poems. It also conveys the philosophical sense of the topic, relating it to the evolution of consciousness and the future of humanity.

Till next time....

Larry

SAVITRI AS THE YOGA OF THE EARTH

Ananda Reddy



Photo credit: Sri Aurobindo Ashram

In my recent studies, when I was preparing for a workshop in Germany, I came across a message of the Mother. Although it seemed by chance, surely it was not just by chance. It was definitely by her Grace, for in fact in this message She has given the quintessence of *Savitri*. You may have read many comments from the Mother and many letters from Sri Aurobindo about *Savitri*, but in this small message she has given the entire theme and content of *Savitri*, and I could easily hold a whole workshop on this theme.

The Mother writes that *Savitri* is :

1. The daily record of the spiritual experiences of the individual who has written.
2. A complete system of yoga, which can serve as a guide for those who want to follow the integral yoga.
3. The yoga of the earth in its ascension towards the divine.
4. The experiences of the divine Mother in her effort to adapt herself to the body she has taken and the ignorance and the falsity of the earth upon which she has incarnated. (*Collected Works of the Mother (CWM)*, 13:24)

These are the four essential strands in *Savitri*, and each one of them can be developed in its fullness. Each of these could be given a subtitle for our convenience. For example the first one, "*The daily record of the spiritual experiences of the individual who has written*" could be called "*Savitri as the Record of Yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.*" The second one, "*A complete system of yoga ...*" could be subtitled "*Savitri as the Yoga of Self-Perfection*". For the third one the Mother herself has given the title "*Savitri as the Yoga of the Earth.*" And the last one, "*The experiences of the divine Mother ...*" could be subtitled "*The Yoga of the Avatar.*"

So essentially *Savitri* is but a Book of Yoga – yoga on different levels: for individuals who want to follow the integral yoga; the yoga of the Avatar because the Avatar too needs to do yoga in order to transform this world; the yoga of the earth; and lastly it is the book of the personal yoga of Sri Aurobindo. About this we get a lot of hints in Sri Aurobindo's *Record of Yoga* – that is, the diary notes which he kept in the early years at Pondicherry. So *Savitri* unfolds itself essentially as a Book of Yoga. That is perhaps why the Mother said that to read *Savitri* is to do yoga. Of course it all depends on the way that it is read.

Today we shall take up the third theme – *Savitri* as the Yoga of the Earth. Most of us know that the tale of Savitri is taken from the Mahabharata. But in reality it goes beyond the Mahabharata tale. It is essentially a legend of creation itself, especially the creation of the earth. It is a legend of a tradition that goes back beyond "*the two known lines of spiritual and occult tradition – that is the Vedic and Chaldean lines; a tradition which seems to have been at the origin of these two known traditions.*" (CWM, 9:332)

What is this tradition that goes back beyond the Vedas and the Chaldean civilizations? We are not sure. However, in that tradition, we are given a story, the story of the creation of this universe. Here is the passage in which the Mother narrates this story of the creation:

When the Supreme decided to exteriorise Himself in order to be able to see Himself, the first thing in Himself which he exteriorised was the Knowledge of the world and the Power to create it. This Knowledge-Consciousness and Force began its work; and in the supreme Will there was a plan, and the first principle of this plan was the expression of both the essential Joy and the essential Freedom, which seemed to be the most interesting feature of this creation. (CWM, 9:205-6)

In the Upanishads it is said that it is out of Delight that this creation was born, that it grows and exists in Delight and to Delight it returns. So Delight is the first principle, the essential principle of this creation. And the second principle, we are told, is Freedom. Freedom and Delight: these are the principles of involution itself, and therefore it is only through Freedom and Delight that

there can be a proper and true evolution. If the process of involution took place through freedom and joy, the principles of evolution also must be Delight and Freedom. However, let us return to our story:

So intermediaries were needed to express this Joy and Freedom in forms. And at first four Beings were emanated to start this universal development which was to be the progressive objectivisation of all that is potentially contained in the Supreme. These Beings were, in the principles of their existence: Consciousness and Light, Life, Bliss and Love, and Truth.

These were the four beings which came forth from the Divine Creatrix, the Mother.

You can easily imagine that they had a sense of great power, great strength, of something tremendous, for they were essentially the very principle of these things. Besides, they had full freedom of choice, for this creation was to be Freedom itself. . . . As soon as they set to work – they had their own conception of how it had to be done – being totally free, they chose to do it independently. Instead of taking the attitude of servant and instrument . . . they naturally took the attitude of the master, and this mistake – as I may call it – was the first cause, the essential cause of all the disorder in the universe. . . . As soon as there was separation between the Supreme and what had emanated, Consciousness changed into inconscience, Light into darkness, Love into hatred, Bliss into suffering, Life into death and Truth into falsehood. And they proceeded with their creations independently, in separation and disorder.

The result is the world as we see it. It was made progressively, stage by stage, and it would truly take a little too long to tell you all that, but finally, the consummation is Matter – obscure, inconscient, miserable. . . . The creative Force which had emanated these four Beings, essentially for the creation of the world, witnessed what was happening, and turning to the Supreme she prayed for the remedy and the cure of the evil that had been done. (CWM, 9:206-7)

This is the first stage of creation, what we call the First Creation – when these four Beings born from the Supreme Chit-Shakti made a world that is miserable and obscure, dark and full of falsehood. So the supreme creatrix, Aditi, appealed to the Lord, the Supreme and asked Him, “What to do?” And the Supreme answers:

Thrust yourself into a new emanation, an emanation of the essence of Love, down into the most material matter.” That meant plunging into the earth – the earth had become the symbol and representation of the whole drama. Plunge into matter. So she plunged into matter and that became the

primordial source of the Divine within material substance. And from there she begins to act as a leaven in matter, raising it up from within.

It was like a memory, an eternally present memory of that consciousness of Supreme Love, emanated by the Lord onto the earth, into earth, to draw it back again to Him, and truly it was the descent of the very essence of the divine nature into the most total undivine negation, and thus the abandonment of the divine condition to take on terrestrial darkness, so as to bring earth back to the divine state. (*Mother's Agenda (MA)* 3:55)

And unless that Supreme Love becomes all-powerfully conscious here on earth the return can never be definitive, explains the Mother. This is the second stage of creation, when the Supreme himself descends directly into Matter in order to bring Matter and Earth back to the Supreme.

Well, this may seem like an interesting story, but it is in reality the spiritual story of creation, of this creation. And what is relevant to us here is that this descent into Matter is actually, as the Mother would say, the first universal Avatar. In fact she gives a description of this universal Avatar:

It is remarkable that this wonderful Being strangely resembles the one whom I saw in vision one day, the Being who is at the other extremity, at the confines of form and the Formless. But that one was in a golden, crimson glory, whereas in his sleep the other Being was of a shining diamond whiteness emanating opalescent rays.

In fact, this is the origin of all Avatars. He is, so to say, the first universal Avatar who, gradually, has assumed more and more conscious bodies and finally manifested in a kind of recognised line of Beings who have descended directly from the Supreme, to perfect this work of preparing the universe so that, through a continuous progression, it may become ready to receive and manifest the supramental Light in its entirety. (*CWM*, 9:333)

Here, in a short passage from the Mother, we have the full explanation of the *dasavatara* we speak of in India, and how very true it is, that at every level of evolution the Supreme descends directly and each time He takes evolution to a higher rung. If you have noted the last line here, "*so that ... it may become ready to receive and manifest the supramental light in its entirety,*" you could almost say that all the Avatars seem to have had only one aim: to make earth ready so that it can receive the Supramental Light and Consciousness.

So, in a way we can say that all the previous Avatars have only been making the earth ready for the coming of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, who are the harbingers of the supramental Light and Consciousness. What happened in 1956 on the 29th of February was the event for which Earth was waiting since its creation. That is the golden date in this evolutionary Time; it is the beginning of fulfilment of the purpose of the earth's creation. The complete realisation will take time, but that was surely the beginning of the realisation of the purpose of earth's creation.

Interestingly, the Mother adds here:

The intervals separating these various incarnations seem to become shorter and shorter, as if, to the extent that Matter became more and more ready, the action could accelerate and become more and more rapid in its movement, more and more conscious too, more and more effective and decisive.

And it will go on multiplying and intensifying until the entire universe becomes the total Avatar of the Supreme. (CWM, 9:333-34)

I hope you have noted that very important phrase here: "*the entire universe becomes the total Avatar of the Supreme.*" This is very significant in the light of something that the Mother had said about Sri Aurobindo: "*...he is probably the last Avatar in a human body.*" What this signifies you can understand if you link it with the above phrase. There could be other Avatars after Sri Aurobindo, but they will not be the same kind of Avatars in the physical. They may be having non-physical bodies and be at the same time Avatars, for it is always the Supreme who shall lead whether humanity or superhumanity.

Another way of looking at it may be – if we can extend our imagination and understanding a little bit in the light of Sri Aurobindo's writing – what may happen is that henceforward there would be the descent of the supramental Light into individuals, into common people, and there wouldn't be any need and necessity of any one leader-avatar, because Supermind would start working in all those beings of the Gnostic society. In fact, that is the meaning and essence of the Gnostic society – that they would be carriers of supramental consciousness, and therefore they would be their own guides as well as guides to the human society around. So what would happen is that Avatarhood would no longer manifest in a single outstanding individual but would be embodied in a whole race of gnostic individuals.

I have recounted this entire story of creation, especially elaborating on the Avatar, because for me it is very clear that this eternal Avatar, this first manifestation of the Supreme in Matter has a name, and that name is Satyavan. In fact we have this truth revealed to us very clearly in *Savitri*, in the words of the Divine Mother, who says about Satyavan :

He is my soul that climbs from nescient Night
Through life and mind and supernature's Vast
To the supernal light of Timelessness
And my Eternity hid in moving Time
And my boundlessness cut by the curve of Space.
It climbs to the greatness it has left behind
And to the beauty and joy from which it fell,
To the closeness and sweetness of all things divine,
To light without bounds and life illimitable,

Taste of the depths of the Ineffable's bliss,
 Touch of the immortal and the infinite.
 He is my soul that gropes out of the beast
 To reach humanity's heights of lucent thought,
 And the vicinity of Truth's sublime.
 He is the godhead growing in human lives
 And in the body of earth-being's forms:
 He is the soul of man climbing to God
 In Nature's surge out of earth's ignorance. (pp. 702-3)

This brief passage gives us the essence of who Satyavan is. Indeed the Mother gives a single phrase which conveys the entire idea described in this passage from Savitri, when she tells us that Satyavan is "*the soul of the Earth, the Earth's jiva.*" If you can remember that single phrase, you will understand a great deal of the symbolism of *Savitri*. "*Satyavan is the soul of the earth, the earth's jiva.*" So the emanation of the Supreme that had descended into Matter is Satyavan. He is the soul, the Jiva of the earth.

If we analyse the meaning of the word Jiva we will see it has a great significance in the context of the yoga of the earth. We know the word Jiva refers to the Atman, or in the human context to the psychic being. Now, what is the role of the Jiva in a human being? It goes from life to life, from birth to birth, not only enriching itself with the experience on the earth but enriching earth itself. Each time it returns it brings down something of the divine Consciousness, injecting it into Matter. So there is a double role that a psychic being plays: it enriches earth's Matter, the physical Matter, as well as enriching itself. And that is what Satyavan is doing as the Jiva of the earth. There is an explanation in Sri Aurobindo's "*Author's Note*" to *Savitri*:

Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance.

Juxtapose this line with what the Mother said about Satyavan being the Jiva of the Earth and you will get the whole significance: Sat is Truth; Satyavan is one who carries this Truth, and carries this truth into the grip of death and ignorance. He has descended into ignorance and death. And what is he doing? Right from Matter, it is this Jiva, this Satyavan who with his radiation, with his tapasya, with his consciousness, has been preparing Matter's womb through billions of years. And eventually, because of this preparation, Matter was ready to give birth to Life. And at the point of giving birth to Life, there has to be a descent of the higher principle of Life into Matter, as seen in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy.

As you know, in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, evolution is not unilinear. There is always a preparation and an ascent of the lower, and there has to be a descent of the higher principle. It is only when these two movements meet,



Spiritual significance: Spontaneous aspiration of Nature towards the Divine
Photo credit: www.blossomlikeaflower.com

that there can be the birth of the next higher principle in creation. And this has been the eternal role of Satyavan. He prepared Matter and at that time Savitri descended – we know not in what form – she descended as the principle of Life, and Life itself was born upon earth and she displayed her rich green robes. It took millions of years for all the forms to manifest upon earth – in the form of the trees, animals, insects, birds. All this was not only an enrichment of the world but also a preparation – a preparation and at the same time, I would say, a celebration of this great delight of Life. So once this celebration was there, which took millions of years, it is again Satyavan who has been the essence, the quintessence, the aspiration of this Life-element upon earth; because Satyavan, you remember, is the soul climbing from the beast upwards, or he is the soul that is climbing from Matter towards Mind. So once Life was prepared, when it was ready for the descent of the Mind principle, there was then again the descent of Savitri, and when that descent met the Life principle there was the birth of Mind.

Savitri is always the descending Avatar. Savitri could come in the form of Sri Ram or Sri Krishna or Christ or any Avatar; the external human form is not of importance. What is important is that the ascending principle is always Satyavan, and the descending principle is always Savitri.

To put things together: it is again Satyavan who has prepared Life for the descent of the Mental principle; he has aspired as the representative of the mind of man and it is he who has called forth the descent of Savitri. Very interestingly, as you know, Satyavan is the son of Dyumatsena, who is blind. Sri Aurobindo tells us that he represents the Divine Mind here fallen blind because it has lost its own true vision, and through that lost its kingdom of glory. So Satyavan is born to this blind Mind, and breaking the barriers of Mind he has prepared for the advent of the New, the advent of the supramental consciousness. That is what we see in Book V Canto III – Satyavan invoking and praying to Savitri to descend upon earth and to embrace this earth.

Descend. Let thy journey cease, come down to us ...

...
Come nearer to me from thy car of light
On this green sward disdaining not our soil.

...
Wilt thou not make this mortal bliss thy sphere?
Descend, O happiness, with thy moon-gold feet
Enrich earth's floors upon whose sleep we lie.
O my bright beauty's princess Savitri.
By my delight and thy own joy compelled.
Enter my life, thy chamber and thy shrine. (pp. 402, 408)

This is the symbolic significance of the meeting of Savitri and Satyavan, that he calls down Savitri upon earth. Thus all along Satyavan has been the representative aspiration of Earth.

This much perhaps we can understand. But my interest does not stop there, because of what has been revealed to me: that there is no separation – of course there is a difference but no separation – between Satyavan and Sri Aurobindo. In fact, the Mother herself writes:

Sri Aurobindo is the Soul of Matter, the aspiration of the whole humanity. He is the Light in Matter or the Spirit incarnated in Matter. Sri Aurobindo has separated himself from the Supreme and has plunged in this Matter, in a body, with this load of inconscience and ignorance upon himself to awaken them to the divine life. (*The Supreme*, p. 68)

It is so obvious. The Mother uses almost the same words when she says that Satyavan is the Soul of the Earth, and again when she says that Sri Aurobindo is the Soul in Matter.

In fact, Sri Aurobindo writes about himself in a poem called "The Pilgrim of Night:"

I made an assignation with the Night;
In the abyss was fixed our rendezvous:
In my breast carrying God's deathless light
I came her dark and dangerous heart to woo.

I left the glory of the illumined Mind
And the calm rapture of the divinised soul
And travelled through a vastness dim and blind
To the grey shore where her ignorant waters roll.

I walk by the chill wave through the dull slime
And still that weary journeying knows no end;

Lost is the lustrous godhead beyond Time,
 There comes no voice of the celestial Friend,
 And yet I know my footprints' track shall be
 A pathway towards Immortality.

Again, here are a couple of stanzas from his famous poem, "A God's Labour:"

Coercing my godhead I have come down
 Here on the sordid earth,
 Ignorant, labouring, human grown
 Twixt the gates of death and birth.

I have been digging deep and long
 Mid a horror of filth and mire
 A bed for the golden river's song,
 A home for the deathless fire.

I have laboured and suffered in Matter's night
 To bring the fire to man;

...
 Heaven's fire is lit in the breast of the earth
 And the undying suns here burn;...

Sri Aurobindo brought down 'Heaven's fire' and 'the undying suns.' But what do we understand by this? I mean that these phrases throw a lot of light on who Sri Aurobindo is as an Avatar. In fact, I have taken a clue from the Mother's own explanation of the line from *Savitri*:

The great stars burn with my unceasing fire
 And life and death are both its fuel made. (p. 638)

Explaining this, the Mother once said,

According to what he says here, it is the principle of Love that is transformed into flame and finally into light. It isn't the principle of Light which is transformed into flame when materialized; it's the flame that is transformed into light. The great stars give light because they burn; they burn because they are under the effect of Love.

Disciple: Love would be the original Principle?

That seems to be what he is saying. I didn't remember this passage. But I told you, my experience is that the last thing as one rises – the last thing one reaches is love. . . . According to the experience, it's the last thing to manifest now in its purity, and it is the one that has the transforming power.

That's what he appears to be saying here: the victory of Love seems to be the final victory. (*MA*, 6:236)

What do we gather from this passage? There is an enormous clarity that comes through: that even the light we see, the sunlight, the light of the stars, all this exists because this light is essentially a flame, and that flame is essentially Love. So we can understand how Love has created this world or how Love is behind this entire universe – Love and Delight. And we see clearly the steps: Love, the supreme Love, transforms itself into Flame and it is this Flame that gives light to the stars or the suns. And remember that this same Flame is the psychic flame within man. What has come of the supreme Love into man is the psychic flame, and the essential feature of the psychic flame is *that* Light.

We thus can see the whole connection when we find Sri Aurobindo telling us that he has brought down '*the undying suns*' and '*Heaven's fire*'. He is the bringer, he is the harbinger of divine Love, the Flame of that divine Love.

In the last lines of the same poem, '*God's Labour*' he suggests that he has brought down the Mother so that '*The living truth of you*' may

move on the earth embodied and fair
and
Down a gold-red stair-way wend,
The radiant children of Paradise
Clarioning darkness's end.

If Ashwapati has brought down the divine Mother, if Satyavan invokes Savitri to step on earth and make it her home, that is exactly what Sri Aurobindo has done in his own life – he has brought down the Mother. The similarities are too obvious to be missed. Here is the passage in the Mother's own words as recorded by Mona Sarkar, in his book *The Supreme*:

He is the Light in Matter or the Spirit incarnated in Matter. Sri Aurobindo has separated himself from the Supreme and has plunged in this matter, in a body, with this load of inconscience and ignorance upon himself – to awaken them to the divine life. For this He has invoked the Supreme, the Grace, to descend here below on this earth to help in His work. That is why, having heard His call, I have come down here into matter in a physical body, into this world of pain, suffering and death. (*The Supreme*, p. 68)

This is so clear! Crystal clear! The Mother says about herself:

That is why, having heard His call, I have come down here into matter in a physical body, into this world of pain, suffering and death. And it is in the union of both of us that the world will witness gradually this miracle of a divine life. It is because of Him that I have descended. (*Ibid.*)



Spiritual significance: Divine grace
Photo credit: www.blossomlikeaflower.com

Extraordinarily definite – there is no room for doubt or debate:

It is because of Him that I have descended.

So the Mother is that eternal Savitri principle who descends time and again, time and again, each time a new evolutionary stage is set to ascend. As you will see – I shall take it up later after finishing this passage – it is this intense aspiration of Matter from below that Sri Aurobindo has sent up, and the Grace has responded by a descent.

What a blessed hour for the earth. It is an occasion for a tremendous progress so that the whole universe may blossom in a great élan towards the goal of its existence. With Our help which will be at its disposal and a will to pursue, what could be there that would be impossible to realise! This is the moment. (*Ibid.*)

In this passage, what we said about the Yoga of Earth becomes very clear, if we understand the essential meaning of the word *yoga*, which all of us know to be “union with the Supreme”. So in the Yoga of Earth, Earth itself is wanting to reunite with the Supreme.

And did we not read in the book *The Mother* that in this yoga on the individual level two elements are required: the call from below and the answer from above, the Grace from above. These two elements are necessary for all yoga and especially for the yoga of transformation. If we extend this to the Yoga of Earth, we see the same conditions. The call from below is represented by Sri Aurobindo, the eternal Avatar, or at every stage by the same universal Avatar, Satyavan. The descent from above, the descent of Grace, of divine Love, is none else than the Mother. It is as if the Mother from above and Sri Aurobindo from below are moulding this earth, changing this earth, transforming this earth.

Again, the uniqueness of Sri Aurobindo, as revealed by the Mother, is that he is “the Light in Matter;” and we know now that Light means Love. So it is the principle of this eternal Love which is ascending from below and it is again the principle of Love which is descending from above. And when they meet, there is the birth of the New Creation.

Is it not simply wonderful to realise that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are holding the earth in their hands and are carrying it safely towards that New Creation!

Now let us see whether what I have been saying is reflected in *Savitri*. We see that it is precisely this aspiration in Matter which gets represented in the tapasya of Aswapati, who at the end of his ascent invokes the Supreme Mother:

O Bliss who everdwellst deep-hid within
 ...
 Incarnate the white passion of thy force,
 Mission to earth some living form of thee.
 ...
 Let thy infinity in one body live,
 ...
 Let a great word be spoken from the heights
 And one great act unlock the doors of Fate. (p. 345)

In these lines we can hear a clear prophecy of the descent of the Supermind on 29th February 1956, when ‘one great act’ unlocked the doors of the fate of the earth, of the universe itself.

Aswapati knows that the descent of the Divine Mother alone can solve the suffering of humanity, so he says,

“How long shall our spirits battle with the night
 And bear defeat and the brute yoke of Death,
 We who are vessels of a deathless Force
 And builders of the godhead of the race?” (p. 341)

To this deep anguish and intense call the Divine Mother replies:

“O strong forerunner! I have heard thy cry...”

The Mother says exactly the same words, “having heard His call” in the quote:

That is why, having heard His call, I have come down here in matter in a physical body.

To resume the *Savitri* lines:

“O strong forerunner! I have heard thy cry.
 One shall descend and break the iron Law
 Change Nature’s doom by the lone spirit’s power
 ...
 Immortal Love shall beat its glorious wings
 ...
 A seed shall be sown in death’s tremendous hour,
 A branch of heaven transplant to human soil;” (p. 346)

The One who descends to break the iron law is Savitri, the principle of Love, who alone has the power to transform death. Explaining this descent the Mother clarifies:

Savitri is really a condensation, a concentration of the Universal Mother, the eternal Universal Mother, the Mother of all universes from all eternity in an earthly personality for the earth’s salvation. (*MA*, 2:37)

So you can see who Savitri is: she is ‘*an earthly personality for the earth’s salvation.*’ And it is in this context that the Mother says that Satyavan is the soul of the earth, the earth’s jiva. Explaining this further, She says:

Let’s take *Savitri*, which is very explicit on this: the universal Mother is universally present and at work in the universe. But the earth is where concrete form is given to all the work to be done to bring evolution to its perfection, its goal. At first, there is a sort of emanation representative of the universal Mother which is always on earth to help it prepare itself. Then when the preparation is complete the universal Mother herself will descend upon earth to finish her work. And this she does with Satyavan. Satyavan is the soul of the earth. She lives in close union with the soul of the earth and together they do the work She has chosen the soul of the earth for her work, saying, “Here is where I will do my work.” Elsewhere,... it is enough just to be and things simply ARE. Here on earth you have to work.

There are clearly universal repercussions and effects of course. But the thing is worked out here, the place of work is here. (*MA*, 2:282-3)

This place of work here, is this earth. So we say, that Savitri could not have chosen anyone else upon earth but Satyavan. There might have been happier princes, greater princes, richer princes, more powerful princes than Satyavan. But why did she choose Satyavan? A person who didn’t even have a kingdom! A person who lived in a hut in a forest! Because Satyavan represents the soul of the earth, and the Mother’s or Savitri’s work is upon this earth. As the Mother says, in other regions, beyond earth, it is enough just to be and work simply.

But here one has to work in unison, together. So it is only the coming together of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, that will open the doors of the New Earth, of the New Race.

It is always this togetherness of the principles of Savitri and Satyavan which is the basis of evolution. The meeting of Savitri and Satyavan, or of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, is a must. It is together that they can do the work.

But on a deeper level, we have to take into account another extremely important principle in order to understand the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother or the work of Savitri and Satyavan. In one of her conversations the Mother explains,

Every time there is, ... it is more than an aspiration, much more than a will, it's what they call in English an 'urge' – 'thirst', ... an urge to let Divine Love be expressed completely, totally, everywhere, the basis, the propitious ground (is): Truth.

An extraordinary explanation of the working.

Naturally Sri Aurobindo said it and wrote it in every letter: The pure divine Love can manifest safely only in a ground of Truth.... If you wanted to say it poetically, you could say, 'In a land of Truth'.

So before being able to proclaim, "Love, manifest, bring Victory," the ground of Truth has to be ready.

And here again lies the significance of Satyavan. Until and unless Truth is established Love cannot manifest fully. And this is exactly what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have done.

Before the Mother could be called back from Japan in 1920, there had to be first the preparation of the new Truth upon earth. So from 1914 to 1920 what Sri Aurobindo might have done was to establish in the subtle physical the truth of the supermind. In the *Arya*, there wasn't the direct reference to supermind, for he had yet to realise it in its fullness. Maybe he had by then only glimpsed the supermind, the new Truth, and by writing it down on paper and publishing it in the journal, he had given as if the signature of Truth upon the earth's bosom. The higher mind of earth had been prepared, so that the incarnation of Love, the Mother, could come back. It was not by chance she had gone away to Paris in 1915. Truth, the ground of truth, had to be prepared so that the Mother could descend.

Apply the same beautiful truth to individual life. If we want the Mother to work within us, transform us, change us, help us even, we have got to be truthful, honest, sincere and not deceive, not cheat, not be insincere. It goes so far that this great principle of creation is absolutely applicable to our day to day living. We cannot on one side call the Mother to help us and on the other side

have untruth, falsehood within us. So this is where the necessity of purification comes in. Purification of oneself is a must if the divine Grace is to act. This is the great principle that we see, the principle of the establishment of Truth as a preparation for the working of Love.

I am telling you all this directly in relation to the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, parallelly with Savitri and Satyavan, and directly applying it to Earth, because the work is happening here. So how does this incarnation of Love act upon this earth, how does Love itself transform? Here is a beautiful explanation from the Mother. She says:

If we want to know or understand the nature of the Force or Power that permits and accomplishes this transformation, we see that of all powers Love is obviously the mightiest, the most integral... (MA, 2:20)

You might have heard about this, that love is a mighty force. But how does it act? What is its strength? How does it transform?

It is even mightier than the power of purification, which dissolves bad will, and is in a way master over the adverse forces, but which doesn't have the direct transforming power; because the power of purification must first dissolve in order to form again later. It destroys one form to make a better one from it, while Love doesn't need to dissolve in order to transform; it has the direct transforming power. Love is like a flame changing the hard into the malleable, then sublimating even the malleable into a kind of purified vapour. It doesn't destroy, it transforms. (*Ibid.*)

An extraordinary explanation! Now you see the link of Love with flame and with life. If we invoke this Love, what does it do? It is like a flame changing the hard into the malleable. You might have seen at an iron-smith's place how he puts an iron rod into the flame. The dark hard iron gets melted. But it retains its form. It is not yet liquid, but it burns in that flame and then the impurities are burnt off. And then, as she says, it becomes malleable and then comes "*the sublimating even of the malleable into a kind of purified vapour.*" So if you heat it further the iron loses all its impurity. Then without destroying the form, without destroying the content of the iron, a new form is given. Whereas, she says, the power of purification and all other things destroy the form and replace it with a new one. So that is how Love brings forth the Truth from your being and gives you a new form.

It is so beautifully described in *Savitri* itself. When Savitri conquers Death, it is exactly the same process. She doesn't destroy Death, but with her immense Love she brings out the truth of Death, and then Death realises his own infinite godhead. It is as if in that Flame of Love the false appearance of Death has been burnt off and the truth of Death comes forth. For in the Upanishads we see that Death is the son of Vivaswan, son of the Sun God. So

he is not an evil, anti-divine force as is normally understood. He is himself the son of the Sun God, the supramental Sun. Originally he is that. But he has taken upon himself or he has been given this form, only to impel mankind towards its own perfection: Death is the road to Immortality, as it is said. In this manner Savitri is such an extraordinarily new approach to the vision of Death. Death is no longer that hated thing but a kind of purifying force in humanity. It obstructs all that is false. In a line in *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo says that it is the gateway to immortality. Death declares: "*I am the gateway to immortality.*" Because all that is false, all that is incomplete, cannot enter the region of immortality. This is how Death itself is a purifier. Therefore Savitri does not destroy Death, but brings forth in the flame of her Love the real aspect of Death.

Here let me add one last explanation of this transformative power. For me personally *Savitri* would have lost half its meaning had I not discovered the Mother and Sri Aurobindo in most of its lines. It is not only symbolic. It is for me a kind of a self-evident autobiography of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. If you want to know Them more, read *Savitri* more – nothing else. It is such an extraordinarily close link to Their work and Their consciousness. So how does this Love work? The Mother explains again:

It corresponds to a state where you are so perfectly identified with all that is, that you concretely become all that is anti-divine, and so you can offer it up, it can be offered up and really transformed through this offering.

That is the transformative power of Love. How does it work? It gets identified, as She says here: "*it becomes all that is anti-divine.*" So Love transforms and does not destroy because of its capacity to embrace, unify, identify itself with the other. So apply the same thing to Savitri and the power of Death: she embraces Death, identifies herself with it. You know the last transfiguration that comes upon Savitri. She brings into herself her omnipotent transcendental Power and Puissance, then she embraces Death. With that identification, she offers all that is untrue to the Supreme. That is the real transformative capacity of Love. It identifies itself with you and then offers you also to the Divine. And it is the Divine who transforms.

We can apply it to our own lives. When somebody is behaving wrongly, when there is a problem, instead of hatred, instead of a quarrel, instead of disharmony, instead of all these things, if we have the capacity to love, what happens? This love identifies, and on his or her behalf – they may know it or not know it – you offer it to the Divine's Grace and let that light flood upon the person. Perhaps we say that we pray for the other person. But that prayer isn't sufficient. We have to love the other person, loving truly, not for selfish reasons.

As we have been explaining, the Truth has to rule first before Love can manifest on a wide scale, on the whole of manifestation. In this light the relation

between Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, or Satyavan and Savitri, is more on the level of manifestation and transformation of the earth consciousness. Only when the Truth of the supramental is brought down can the power of Love manifest on a wide scale, so it seems. Sri Aurobindo – the Principle of Truth, Satya, Satyavan – brings down or pulls down first the Supramental Consciousness before the Mother – the Principle of Love – could take up the work of the transformation in Herself and for the Earth.

Very interestingly, the same lines are there in *Savitri*, when Savitri says,

Not for my happy body's bliss alone
 I have claimed from thee the living Satyavan,
 But for his work and mine, our sacred charge.
 Our lives are God's messengers beneath the stars;
 To dwell under death's shadow they have come
 Tempting God's light to earth for the ignorant race,
 His love to fill the hollow in men's hearts,
 His bliss to heal the unhappiness of the world.
 For I, the woman, am the force of God,
 He the Eternal's delegate soul in man. (p. 633)

I do not want to take a workshop now on Savitri. I am only putting forward some suggestions, some secrets that I came to understand, or rather that I was given to understand. When Savitri says, "I, the woman" why is she saying so? Is there something different between 'I, the woman' and 'I, the Mother', 'I, Savitri', 'I, the wife'? There must be something different, otherwise Sri Aurobindo would not have used these words. "*I, the woman, am the force of God.*" Does it mean that womankind is the Force? the Chit-Shakti? And what does it mean when she says "*He the Eternal's delegate soul in man*"? Does it mean that the male power, man in principle, is the Purusha aspect?

I am sure all of us are familiar with how the Mother in her own words describes the relation between Herself and Sri Aurobindo: "*Without him I exist not, without me he is unmanifest.*" But I will read out to you something that is not only new, but flabbergasting – if I can use that word – where She describes Her relation with Sri Aurobindo:

You know, it is like this: in the terrestrial evolution, man, who is emerging out of the inconscience and ignorance, is guided by the Supreme. And the Supreme, in order to manifest His reign upon earth, labours to uplift the human consciousness so as to establish the Divine Consciousness; and for this He does not delegate someone but He Himself manifests physically, even in the Ignorance, to accomplish His work. And it is I who have been appointed to raise up man and the creation out of this Inconscience. It is I who am responsible. What I wish, the Lord also wishes. I am the Supreme in the Unmanifest. But in the creation the Supreme acts only through me,

exists only by me and wills nothing but what I will. There is no distinction to be made. (*The Supreme*, p. 5)

So now we understand what She means by, “Without me He is unmanifest”! To go further into Their relation, here is another passage from the Mother:

And still deeper down in this purifying Flame resides Sri Aurobindo – Immutable Ananda, All-Powerful, the Invincible, the Supreme Lord of our existence, the manifestation of the Omnipresence in existence, the Omnipotence in His effectuations, the Omniscience of the Supreme Power manifested; one who is the Goal, the Master, the Beloved, – who is also the Supreme Lord.

When one truly calls Him, it is from there (*Mother indicates the heart*) that Sri Aurobindo answers. It vibrates by His Name, with His consciousness; there resounds the name of Sri Aurobindo because His imprint is there (gesture).

In the very depths, it is He who resides. . . . All existence lives by Him. It vibrates by Him. The whole universe vibrates by Him. He is there in everything, vibrant and animating by His Presence. The delight of His Name penetrates and purifies all, rings and resounds everywhere in the sublime Joy, eternal and true. With His Name the existence takes on a meaning.

To rediscover the Immanent Divine hidden in everything in this whole universe. . . . To find Him is the eternal game. To feel Him is to feel the Immutable Peace of perfect Purity. To realise Him is to find the eternal Joy. To call him is to unlock the doors of Infinity. This is the power behind the name of Sri Aurobindo. (*Ibid.*, pp. 79-80)

After a short trance the Mother continues,

Me, I am there as a Presence in the Eternal Flame, the Power that animates and initiates the action, the Peace that renders all sweet and peaceful, the Joy that overflows and sublimates, the Light that purifies, and the Vibration that sanctions.

Sri Aurobindo is there as a sustaining Entity, and me I am there like a Guide. In fact, it is a same identity in two. One, who observes, – the Witness, and the other that effectuates, – the Shakti. (*Ibid.*)

And one of the highest self-revelations of the Mother is:

My child, I am the Unknown that is unseizable, yet I consent to be seized; I am the Unknowable, yet men pretend to know me. I am the Infinite but I am constrained to limit myself in a physical body by time and space. I am the Eternal who has submitted itself to be bound in the evolution.

I am Immortality which awakes in its innumerable aspects that perish, in order to climb back towards the One, and which has consented to a birth, in order to suffer the terrestrial consequences. I am the Nihil where everything disappears; the Inconscience that denies my presence, yet each atom of this mass of ignorance palpitates with my consciousness. I am the Mystery – the great paradox which has begun to unveil the innate secrets of this divine manifestation in the terrestrial and cosmic evolution. By the fact of this immense descent of the Supramental upon earth, we foresee the gradual dissolution of the duality, the contradictions and many other things which trouble ordinary men.

My child, I am the Cause, the great Creatrix from whom everything emanates. All that you can conceive of is created from me, by me and for me it exists. Nothing is which is not in me. You understand, it will take you hundreds of births to understand what I am. And yet I reveal myself to my devotees who love me; and still I shall remain unseizable. (*Ibid.*, p. 93)

On listening to this supreme self-revelation, we can only join our voice of thanksgiving and gratitude with Arjuna's, who, on having the vision of the World Spirit prayed:

Thou art the ancient Soul and the first and original Godhead and the supreme resting-place of this all; Thou art the knower and that which is to be known and the highest status; O infinite in form, by Thee was extended the universe....

Salutations to thee a thousand times over and over again and yet again salutation, in front and behind and on every side, for Thou art each and all that is. Infinite in might and immeasurable in strength of action Thou pervadest all and art everywhere.

Therefore I bow down before Thee and prostrate my body and I demand grace of Thee, the adorable Lord. (*Bhagavad Gita*, Chap. XI)

And to this we have as if a reply from the Mother, in her own beautiful words. She says:

Yes, my child, he who recognises Sri Aurobindo and me – in fact, it is the same thing, the same identity – for him all obstacles, all difficulties, all traps, all the so-called interruptions on the march towards the Truth, are swept away and removed for ever – in this life, as well as after death and in the lives to come – till Eternity.

Yes, for him, the Lord is all powerful.

Only to repeat: "Ma – Sri Aurobindo, Ma – Sri Aurobindo." (*The Supreme*, pp. 80, 82)

This mantra, "Ma, Sri Aurobindo," is also the assurance of the completion of the work begun by Them; for it reverberates with the pulsations of the Supreme

Love that carries the worlds. The assurance, the promise of the fulfilment of the transformation of the earth was stamped, as it were, on the night of April 13, 1962, when the Mother had this following experience:

Suddenly in the night, I woke up with a full awareness of what we could call the Yoga of the world. The supreme Love was manifesting through big pulsations and each pulsation was bringing the world further in its manifestation. It was the formidable pulsations of the eternal, stupendous Love, only Love. Each pulsation of the love was carrying the universe further in its manifestation, and the certitude that what is to be done is done and the supramental manifestation is realised. Everything was personal, nothing was individual. This was going on and on and on. The certitude that what is to be done is done. All the results of the falsehood had disappeared. Death was an illusion, sickness was an illusion, ignorance was an illusion, something that had no reality, no existence – only Love and Love and Love and Love, immense, formidable, stupendous, carrying everything. And how, how to express that in the world. It was like an impossibility because of the contradiction. But then it came, “You have accepted that this world should know its supramental truth and it will be expressed totally, integrally. Yes! Yes! And the thing is done. (MA, 3:131-2)

So this is the definite finale of the Yoga of the Earth, because it is He and it is She – the Mother and Sri Aurobindo – who are doing the Yoga of the Earth. Since its creation, it is They who have taken care of its evolution. Through all these travails and tapasya, it is they who will take it to the finale of its supramentalrealisation, and the Mother has been given already the vision of its completion. The work will be done. That is the promise.

They have always said that Their sole work in Their past lives has always been to see the evolution of the earth. So it is They who are doing it and it is Their work that is described in *Savitri*.

Savitri is thus the legend of creation, and the central pivotal symbol of *Savitri* is Ma – Sri Aurobindo.

SEVEN GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIVING

by Larry Seidlitz



Spiritual significance: Constant remembrance of the Divine
Photo credit: www.blossomlikeaflower.com

How does one do Integral Yoga? Most other spiritual paths have a fairly clearly defined set of practices or techniques. In the Integral Yoga, there are specific techniques that may be used if one wishes, but they do not form the core of its approach. While I do not deny that various kinds of yogic techniques can be valuable aids in the Integral Yoga, I want to focus here on seven psychological methods that I believe are more essential. There are other psychological methods that also are important, but these seven seem to complement each other and together form a strong, balanced discipline. These are relatively simple and straightforward things that anyone can understand and practice, though it is not easy to develop them to a point of perfection. Indeed, each of these psychological qualities can probably be developed more and more to an always higher level until the point that they lead us into the higher spiritual consciousness and the transformation of our nature.

Aspiration

The first attitude that we must foster is aspiration to the Divine. We must ardently seek the Divine if we are to find, unite with, and manifest the Divine in our life. Indeed, this must become our overriding aim and endeavor in life, our number one priority, the focus of all our efforts. We must not only aspire in rare moments, when confronted with insurmountable obstacles or when we are peaceful and alone, but often and then constantly, and with an intensity that is always increasing.

There are various aspects of aspiration, various ways to aspire. Aspiration is essentially a call to the Divine. We must call the Divine down into ourselves. We must recognize that ultimately the Divine must make the change in us and in the world, that our human powers in themselves are insufficient. Thus, this aspect of aspiration presumes that we have a certain spiritual humility that recognizes we are powerless without the Divine. The Divine Mother is the Power of the Divine, we aspire to the Divine Mother to lead us to the divine Realization. We must ask her, pray to her, implore her to deliver us from the falsehoods and limitations in which we live and lead us to our divine fulfillment. We may put it into words as in a prayer, or it may be a silent unformulated yearning of our heart and soul, but essentially it is this, "take my life just as it is, good and bad, I offer it all to you, transform me, lead me to the Divine Life."

Whereas this side of aspiration is closely allied with surrender, another side of aspiration emphasizes personal effort. Ultimately, in the long course of the yoga, personal effort must melt away into surrender, but in the beginning and for a long time effort is very much needed. If we overemphasize surrender in the beginning there is a dangerous likelihood that it will be a passive and inert surrender, which actually is not surrender at all. If we say in the beginning, "the Divine is doing the yoga for me, I will wait patiently for the Divine to take care of it," then we are likely to delude ourselves and simply give in to and accept our lower nature just as it is, precluding any possibility of real change. We must resolutely put ourselves on the side of the Divine, we must be warriors for the Divine, we must stand and fight against the impulses and ignorance of the lower nature. Yes, we must recognize that the Divine Power is there behind our efforts supporting and leading us to victory, but we must be the willing and obedient instruments of our own transformation.

What must we fight against? We must fight against greed and selfishness, lust and seeking after vital pleasures, anger and hatred, fear and worry, laziness and unwillingness to change, doubt and narrow-mindedness, arrogance and pretension. We must fight against the enemies of our own inner progress. These things are natural accompaniments of the lower life in the ignorance, so we need not be ashamed of finding them within us. Indeed, we must learn to see them clearly for what they are, but our whole aim is to establish a Divine Life where these things are expelled from the nature and replaced. They are to be replaced with divine peace, light, harmony, love, strength, and ananda. They are not to be accepted but rather rejected from the nature. We must not be discouraged if the process of rejecting these from ourselves takes time, as it must, but at the same time we must not become complacent and allow them to remain indefinitely. We must exercise a steady and persistent will for their elimination, and maintain it against all resistance, however long it takes.

We must also use our efforts to develop the positive side of the discipline. The three main limbs of the discipline, in addition to the purification and perfection of the nature, are (1) the offering of our work and action to the

Divine, (2) concentration on the Divine, and (3) the cultivation of love and devotion for the Divine. Part of aspiration is to use our will and effort to put these three things into a living and eventually a constant practice. Service to the Divine is an essential side of the discipline that we must develop. We should aspire that each of our activities becomes an offering to the Divine. We can begin by making an offering of our food when we eat, consecrating it, seeing it as coming from the Divine and being offered to the Divine within us. Similarly, before starting our work, we can make an offering of it to the Divine, seeing that it is the Divine Force within us that enables us to do it, and asking the Divine's guidance and power to do it efficiently and in service of the Divine's will. Secondly, we should also aspire to concentrate more and more on the Divine. It is the aim of the yoga that we are always concentrated on the Divine, but in the beginning it is very useful to set aside some time to exclusively focus on this concentration. This can take different forms. One of the simplest is to read something by Sri Aurobindo or the Mother for a short time, and then either quietly contemplate on it, or allow oneself to go within towards the source of those words and thoughts. One of the most effective methods of concentration is to quietly stand back from one's thoughts and feelings, and any outward sounds or activities that may be happening around you, and simply observe them without becoming caught up in them. Yet another form of concentration is to focus in an upward aspiration to the Divine in the heart center, and if desired, this can be accompanied by repeating a mantra. Concentration on the Divine, with or without a mantra, can be gradually extended into one's normal activities as well. And third, we should aspire to develop a feeling of love and devotion to the Divine. This can be developed during periods of meditation, as well as when we make offerings of our work and other activities. This can also be fostered through prayer, whether by repeating formal prayers, or simply talking within to the Divine. Other ritualistic activities such as burning incense, offering flowers, or contemplating the photos of the Divine can also be helpful. Gratitude to the Divine for his gifts of beauty and delight, for his help and protection, and for his promise of spiritual growth and eventual realization, is also very helpful for developing a deeper devotion and closeness to the Divine.

Quietude

A second great need in this yoga is quietude of the mind and vital. If the mind and vital are always churning, creating noise and disturbance, leading us down a myriad dead-end roads, heaping obstacles on our path, we will not make effective progress. While it is desirable in this yoga that the mind should fall silent, what is important as a first step is to free the mind of restlessness and disturbance. One of the great abilities of the mind is that it can imagine situations in which things are better than they are now. Indeed it is this ability that enables us to aspire towards a divine life. If this tendency would confine itself to showing us a better way it would be alright, but unfortunately the flip

side of this is that it also can find an endless number of things to regret or be dissatisfied with and complain about. Similarly, while it can show us greater possibilities of the future to strive towards, it can also imagine an unlimited number of dangers or catastrophes that may befall us. Complaints about the past and present and worries about the future create disturbances in the mind which makes it difficult to open ourselves to the Divine or to receive anything from the Divine. It is like a swirl of disturbing energy turned in on itself which can neither give itself to the Divine nor receive from the Divine. One possible aid for this kind of problem is to focus on the present moment, on what one is actually doing in the present moment, doing it carefully and with full consciousness as an offering to the Divine.

While an unquiet mind can retard progress, an unquiet vital can be still more upsetting. The vital is the center of our passions, desires, emotions, and dynamic energies and powers. It carries in it tremendous energy for both good and evil, and while properly it should be an obedient servant of our higher reason or deeper soul, more typically it acts according to its own ignorant and erring will and desire, leading to emotional upheavals and destructive behaviors. Quarrels, interpersonal strife, anger, jealousy, despondency, desire and hankering after food, drink, money, power, sensual pleasure and sex are its common activities. It is evident that this type of continual or repeated agitation of the consciousness makes spiritual progress slow and difficult. These types of vital disturbances must be quieted down; there must be an active will to dampen them as much as possible, to refuse to give in to them when their impulses threaten to overwhelm us.

The power of the intelligent will must be exercised to bring the vital under control. At first, our will may be weak and be swept aside by the sheer power of the vital impulses and their ability to cloud the mind or subvert it to their aims, but through continual efforts that are not discouraged by failure, the intelligent will gets stronger and is able to bring the vital under greater control. In addition, it is important to keep the intelligence free or relatively free from the vital influence. It should not justify the lower vital propensities and become a servant or accomplice in their actions. It should maintain an objective perspective, see these things for what they are and not only from the viewpoint of our egoistic preferences or desires. It should look on such vital disturbances as an agitation of the outer consciousness which should be discouraged from happening again and which should be brought back into quietude and harmony as soon as possible. This is not to deny that things may happen to us or people may do things which are not right, but in place of vital agitation and conflict there are quiet, intelligent, more effective ways to deal with such wrongs.

In addition to using the intelligent will to constrain unwanted movements, it is necessary to shift our psychological center or poise deeper within, away from the surface consciousness where this agitation has greater power. In part,

this means concentrating the attention within, preferably in the heart center, and from there keeping up a closer inner connection or remembrance of the Divine. We must learn to concentrate within and feel the peace and protection of the Divine which is there within us. We should become less preoccupied with minor outward things that have little importance in a wider or deeper view of things. What *is* vitally important is our spiritual growth, the development of our aspiration to the Divine and our growing conscious inner relation with the Divine; this will have a much more profound positive influence on our life than minor outward incidents of everyday life. We must learn more and more to keep our poise deep within, and not be swept away by outside waves of emotion or sensual attractions on the surface of our consciousness.

Equality

Quietude develops hand in hand with a related psychological quality called equality. Equality means to remain unmoved within regardless of what happens or whatever conditions one may have to face. One must learn to face events, people, circumstances with a perfect calm and peace. However disagreeable people may be to you, however unpleasant the circumstances in which you must live or work, however terrible the events that may befall you, you must learn to remain quiet, calm, detached, unaffected. Similarly, you should not become elated, overjoyed by pleasant things that may happen to you. One must learn to be centered within on the Divine, quiet, peaceful, calm, taking joy only in the Divine, and not be dependent on the vagaries of outside events or people.

Naturally this is not at all easy to establish in its fullness, but it is an ideal that we can all work towards everyday in our life. Especially, our interpersonal relations with others present frequent opportunities for us to develop, work at, and deepen our equality. Sri Aurobindo has emphasized the development of equality in his yoga, devoting several chapters to it in *The Synthesis of Yoga*, as well as a number of letters. His explanation of it in one of his *Letters on Yoga* cannot be surpassed, so I would like to quote some of the relevant portions:

Equality means a quiet and unmoved mind and vital, it means not to be touched or disturbed by things that happen or things said or done to you, but to look at them with a straight look, free from the distortions created by personal feeling, and to try to understand what is behind them, why they happen, what is to be learnt from them, what is it in oneself which they are cast against and what inner profit or progress one can make out of them; it means self-mastery over the vital movements,—anger and sensitiveness and pride as well as desire and the rest,—not to let them get hold of the emotional being and disturb the inner peace, not to speak and act in the rush and impulsion of these things, always to act and speak out of a calm inner poise of the spirit...

Equality means another thing—to have an equal view of men and their nature and acts and the forces that move them; it helps one to see the truth about them by pushing away from the mind all personal feeling in one's seeing and judgment and even all the mental bias. Personal feeling always distorts and makes one see in men's actions, not only the actions themselves, but things behind them which, more often than not, are not there. Misunderstanding, misjudgment which could have been avoided are the result; things of small consequence assume larger proportions. (pp. 661-662)

And it is not only with respect to others or to outside things that we must develop an equal attitude; we must also develop it in regard to our own actions and inner movements. Sri Aurobindo continues in the same letter:

The first condition of inner progress is to recognize whatever is or has been a wrong movement in any part of the nature,—wrong idea, wrong feeling, wrong speech, wrong action,—and by wrong is meant what departs from the truth, from the higher consciousness and higher self, from the way of the Divine. Once recognized it is admitted, not glossed over or defended,—and it is offered to the Divine for the Light and Grace to descend and substitute for it the right movement of the true Consciousness. (p. 662)

We must learn not to be shocked or ashamed by the wrong movements that occur in ourselves, we must learn not to hide them from ourselves or deny them, but to look at them squarely and objectively, without distortion, without dressing them up or excusing them. Yes, it is natural that we find such things in ourselves, but if we have taken up the yoga in earnest, that means that we must use our will to reject them from our nature, and call to the Divine Light and Power to help us overcome and transform them. We should try to maintain an objective view of our difficulties, not attribute to them a greater power over us than they really have, and at the same time we can always hold them up before the Divine to eliminate or transform. In reality, the Divine Power can do everything, eliminate every obstacle, lead us to the heights of spiritual realization, but it requires our consent and our active aspiration and collaboration in its action. To the extent that we give this consent and collaboration, our progress will be more swift and smooth.

Sincerity

If we are to succeed in our aspiration to unite with the divine consciousness and to make ourselves fit instruments for a divine life on earth, then our aspiration must not only be ardent but also sincere. This means that our aspiration must be wholehearted, integral. This integrality, however, takes time to establish. To begin with, we must have a central sincerity. This means that the central part of our being, the part which we call "I," truly wants the

Divine and is willing to undertake the necessary discipline and surrender, however long it takes. We must be able to honestly say, "I want to unite with the Divine, I want to surrender all of myself to the Divine, I accept to undergo the necessary discipline to reach the Divine and transform my nature." If we wish to undertake the Yoga, we should sincerely ask ourselves whether this is what we really want and whether we are willing to undertake the necessary discipline, however difficult it may be and however long it may take to do it. It is fine and good if we recognize that presently we are unable to fulfill all the requirements, that we have weaknesses and defects in our nature, but we must be willing to commit our life to sincerely working towards the fulfillment of the requirements of the Yoga. If we are not ready to make this commitment, we can still put ourselves under the Light, Protection, and Influence of the Divine, but we are not yet on the path of Integral Yoga.

But this is only the beginning, and this is where the real work of sincerity begins. Once we have accepted the aim of the Yoga as the aim of our life, then we must get to the work of fulfilling the conditions of the Yoga. And the fundamental condition of the Integral Yoga is that we must make an integral offering and surrender of ourselves to the Divine. This work must proceed from the center of our being, that which has fundamentally surrendered and accepted to undertake the discipline and spread to all the rest of the parts of our nature. Here we will find that although a central part of us accepts the aim of the Yoga, other parts of our nature do not accept or accept only partly or sometimes. We will find that there are many different personalities in us with their own agendas that may not be in agreement with our central resolve or with themselves. This means that we have conflicts in our nature which need to be made conscious and reconciled. Each of the different personalities and tendencies within ourselves has its own will and is very reluctant to surrender it. They are part of who we are and in this yoga we don't simply want to cut them all off, but rather we must convert them to the central aim and commitment. For example, the mind may have certain interests and activities which it wants to pursue independently of the search for the Divine. Similarly, there are many tendencies in the vital nature which will seek their own fulfillment regardless of what our central aspiration is. Some other yogas proceed by silencing all these activities by becoming inactive, but this does not lead to a full divine life but to a very restricted inner existence with little power for outward expression. The great difficulty of this yoga is to align all these different parts of the nature with our central aim, and thus to transform them into effective instruments of a divine living.

One of the most formidable obstacles to this alignment of the parts of the nature around the central aim is mental dishonesty, mental self-deception. This is almost a universal failing, and it requires a preserving self-discipline to overcome. One of the chief occupations of the mind is to find justifications and excuses for the indulgence of the vital nature's desires. A part of the mind is typically a servant of the vital, rather than an objective witness or master

of it as it should be. Instead of seeing that a mistake is being committed and should be corrected, it gives a little excuse for it and thus a free pass for it to continue. It is necessary to courageously and deeply examine these excuses for our vital indulgences and expose this mental insincerity. We may justify the indulgence of our desires with such thoughts as, "it is okay, nobody will find out," "this isn't so bad, everybody does it," "I worked hard, now I'm entitled to some indulgence," "I will deal with this overcoming this desire later," "this is my weakness, everybody has some weakness; I cannot control it." But when we probe such excuses more deeply, we will find they do not stand up to scrutiny. It does not matter if we can keep our mistakes hidden from others, it is the Divine with whom we must deal. If we profess to aspire to truly lead a spiritual life, then other people's failings cannot be a justification for continuing our own. In the spiritual life, desire must be eradicated from the nature and replaced with surrender and self-offering to the Divine—indulgence of vital desires is in contradiction to our aspiration. Postponing dealing with a defect of our nature is simply a ruse to allow it to continue; at some point it must be faced and it may as well be now as later. The problem with "later" is that later never comes. Years may be wasted, even lifetimes, waiting for this "later" to come. And it is not true that our desires cannot be overcome; they can be overcome if we face them honestly and courageously, and if we ardently and persistently call on the Divine Force and Grace to help us. For the Divine Mother, nothing is impossible.

Faith

This requires another quality: faith in the Divine and its Power and in the possibility of the Divine to overcome our difficulties and lead us to spiritual realization and the transformation of our nature. Essentially faith comes from a knowledge of the soul that is at first hidden deep within us, but which comes out in the course of our spiritual progress. Deep within us, our soul or psychic being, is itself a portion of the Divine and knows the Divine as like knows like. But usually the soul is hidden at first by the activities of our mind and vital, only sending up sometimes jets of intuition or experience while also putting a general pressure on the mind and vital to seek out in life truth and goodness and beauty. Such intuitions or early soul experiences provide an initial basis for our developing faith; they suggest to us that there is something more to life than the mundane and checkered existence we see around us, that there are greater possibilities, that somewhere there is something that is perfect, whole, fulfilled which we can feel and touch and perhaps become. We also have the living examples of others who have already travelled the spiritual path before us, and the words of our Teachers and of others' Teachers who have explained the possibilities of spiritual experience and realization.

But we may say, "Oh this is alright for great Avatars and saints, but I am a simple person, I cannot realize the Divine, I cannot transform my nature." Another, apparently more reasonable form this takes is that "this yoga will

take many lifetimes, one should not expect to change right away or in the near future." But these are tricks of the mind and vital to hold onto its limitations and avoid the difficulty of change. The mind and vital nature are full of such ruses and continually try to snare and trip us in our aspiration for the divine life. We must learn to detect and avoid them. Indeed, much change can take place immediately if we set our mind and heart to it and insist upon it. We should not underestimate the power of human will, every day it achieves miracles, great achievements, by ordinary people who are not doing yoga. When we apply our will wholeheartedly to the sadhana, calling in to support it the Power of the Divine Mother, it can achieve even greater miracles; at least we should not decide beforehand that it cannot achieve much. It is better if we keep to the faith that if we have been called to this path of yoga by the Divine, then the Divine is with us and leading us on it, and if we cling to the Divine, he will surely lead us to the goal as quickly as possible. Remember, it is the Divine Power which does this yoga in us, not simply our personal will; we must have faith in that Power. We should not be impatient, but we also should not expect failure or little visible progress. Especially when we learn to keep quiet and centered within, concentrated in our aspiration to the Divine, we will find our difficulties and obstacles can quickly melt away.

We must learn to rely on this Divine Grace and Power more and more for all things in our life. Normally people rely on their own ego, their own strength and ability, as well as on other people, to achieve whatever needs to be done. People rarely rely on the Divine. It is precisely this transition that must be made in the course of the Yoga. Even when our own abilities, or those of others are instrumental, we must learn to see that it is really the divine Power behind that is responsible. All power ultimately comes from the one Divine Power, it is simply that in our egoistic ignorance we claim it as our personal property or attribute. As we turn consciously to the Divine Grace for our needs, then we will find that the Divine provides all that is truly necessary for our progress, often through intermediaries. The right person or opportunity may come along at the right moment, providing the very thing that we required. If we are in danger, in illness, or in distress, we should turn to the Divine for help, while being wise enough to be receptive to the help given, which may well come through the hands of another person. When we must make a difficult decision, we must learn to seek guidance from the Divine, and become attentive to receive the guidance which often may come in inner feeling or intuition in our heart center. When we must do a difficult task, we must turn to the Divine to support and help us through the endeavor. On the opposite side, whatever we receive in life, we should have faith, and develop the vision, that it comes from the Divine. Even our difficulties we should see as coming from the Divine in order to help us to make a needed progress. When Sri Aurobindo was in jail, he saw even the bars of his cell and prison guards as forms of Krishna. In this way, all of life, even our difficulties, will be welcomed as a gift of the Divine to help us grow and progress and will become full of delight.

Harmony and Beauty

A great help in preparing ourselves to be receptive to the Divine Grace is to create within and around us an atmosphere of harmony and beauty. We should more and more cultivate the harmony and beauty of our mind, our heart, our vital nature, our body, our actions and physical movements. We should do the same with regard to our physical environment in which we live and work. We should keep them in order, peace, harmony so that the Divine may consent to dwell in us and with us. This could be called the cultivation of refinement.

Let us keep our mind and thoughts pure and noble and beautiful. On one side this means refusing to entertain thoughts that are low, vulgar, cruel, mean-spirited, selfish, refusing to argue or forcefully impose our viewpoints on others. On the other side it means learning to communicate and express our thoughts and ideas clearly, with precision, harmoniously, and with a kind consideration of different points of view. It also means learning to see and appreciate the expression of harmony and beauty in others, in nature, in the world around us. We must make a conscious effort to open our eyes to the beauty that is there, or we can go through life oblivious of the wonders around us. We can also develop our appreciation of beauty in literature, poetry, art, music, dance, film, photography, architecture, crafts, and other creations of the human mind and soul. Cultivating such appreciation elevates the mind and helps it from falling into inertia or vulgarity.

We should strive for harmony and beauty in our interrelationships with others. This means treating others with love and respect and compassion, whatever shortcomings we might perceive in them. All human beings have limitations and defects in their nature, but all human beings also have a divine soul at their center, they also are forms of the Divine. We should be more concerned with overcoming our own limitations and defects than in pointing out the defects of others. Let us rather be patient and tolerant of other people's weaknesses, and more severe with our own. Each individual has a unique relationship with the Divine, a unique karmic history, a unique set of strengths and weaknesses, a unique role to fill in the world, a unique trajectory of personal and spiritual development. Usually we cannot know all these things about another human being—it is difficult to know this even about ourselves—so we should not be prone to judge or advise others. Rather, let us be supportive of the positive elements in other people, and in this way foster the growth and the expression of their inner psychic being as well as our own.

We must also cultivate harmony and beauty in our emotions and in the flow of our vital energies. We must learn to control our emotions and vital energies so that they do not lead us into ignorant, violent, disturbing, or unwholesome acts. Anger and lust are perhaps the two most common and difficult challenges of the lower vital that disturb the peace and harmony of the being. Pride and arrogance are also common obstacles associated with the

vital ego, and should be controlled with the idea that before the Divine we are as nothing and that it is only the Divine within us that gives our life its significance. Desires for alcoholic drinks, tobacco, or drugs may affect some people and can be dangerous, often disturbing the health of the body and tending to create or exacerbate other personal and interpersonal problems. In others, desires for food, comfort, or luxury can create disturbances in the life and become obstacles on their spiritual path. In such cases, the will may need to be strengthened through repeated efforts to stop these activities, calling in the support of the Divine Power and Grace, until we are able to reject these unhealthy habits.

We should also work to establish and maintain harmony and beauty in our physical surroundings. In part, harmony translates in this sphere to order. We must learn to keep our things in order, in places that are assigned for them, such that they can be easily found when needed and do not disturb the beauty and harmony of our living space. At the same time, we should keep our things clean and in perfect working order and condition. When things are damaged or broken they should be quickly repaired if possible or replaced and not left in an unusable or dysfunctional condition. We should treat things not merely as material possessions, but as instruments of the divine manifestation for which we are the trustees. Indeed there is even a consciousness within physical things which responds to the care or unconsciousness with which we use them, and as we develop a greater consciousness in our use of things, we begin to see more and more the Divine within things. In addition to material things, we must also strive to be in harmony with the Nature of which we are a part, being conscious and considerate of the other living plants and animals around us, the air and water and earth which sustain us.

Patience and Perseverance

Finally, this yoga requires patience and perseverance. One should not expect quick results. I think it is necessary to embark on this path with the attitude that one will proceed to the end however long it takes; it may take one's whole life and it may take more than one life. It is not that one should not expect to see any changes or growth; growth does come, but it may not be very dramatic. For example, over time, strong upheavals of the vital may become less severe and less frequent. This may not be much for one who is seeking realization of the Self, but it is an important gain from the point of the view of the transformation of the vital nature, an essential aim of the Integral Yoga. Similarly, one may find the mind and vital becoming calmer, one may see oneself growing in equality, or growing in understanding of oneself and others, one may find oneself growing in devotion, or even simply a stronger sympathy, empathy, or love for others. One may simply feel a stronger sense of purpose and direction in life, a stronger sense of the meaning of life. One may have fleeting experiences

in dream or while meditating, which although temporarily uplifting, leave one feeling pretty much the same. All these kinds of changes, while not dramatic, are yet significant and point to real and lasting progress.

Actually, I believe it is difficult to really gauge progress in this Yoga because of its character and aim of transforming the nature. It is as if the Yoga Force was working on many different parts of oneself at once, or in no apparent order, sometimes on one thing, sometimes on other things. It may also raise various difficulties in your nature, forcing you to deal with them. In such cases, during such periods, you may feel as if life is more difficult, not less. In addition, through learning more about the yoga and through growing in consciousness about your nature, you may see more clearly or experience more vividly defects which are there. As you struggle with these defects in your nature, it feels as if you not making progress, or even regressing to a lower level. But in actuality, this greater awareness, this facing more acutely the defects in your nature is a great progress. But it doesn't necessarily feel that way.

Another reason it is difficult to gauge our progress is that progress may be taking place on the inner parts of our being of which we are not aware. Sometimes, if we have some conscious access to the inner consciousness, for example, through dreams, we may see there signs of our inner progress. Such progress in the inner consciousness may not manifest immediately in the outer consciousness, or may not do so in an obvious way. When certain difficulties become less frequent or disappear, we may not notice it. But also, sometimes progress that has taken place in the inner consciousness may take some time before it begins to manifest in the outer life which is more under the influence of physical inertia.

There is something else. It may be that the Divine uses our weaknesses and defects to its own advantage. One must be a little careful not to turn this into an excuse for continuing mistakes, but often it seems that it is our difficulties and the pain they engender that keeps us motivated towards progress. They become a focal point of our efforts, almost a symbol of the ignorance, unconsciousness, or selfishness that we must overcome. They force us to persevere, to strive harder, more intelligently and skillfully. They require us to turn to the Divine more completely because sometimes it seems we cannot overcome these difficulties by ourselves.

So we must be patient and persevere. We must not give up because after much effort we still face the same difficulties. Mother said that victory goes to the most persevering. We may struggle with something for a long time, and then the thing may suddenly be swept aside and disappear. But other things may then take its place. One by one we may need to clear out many such obstacles from our nature. This yoga is a long labor; it is not easy. There are delights and surprises that come in its course, descents of ananda or peace or light that keep us afloat, encouraged, but there is also much difficult labor.

SPIRITUALITY, THE MASTER-KEY OF THE INDIAN MIND: A REFLECTION

Beloo Mehra



Spiritual significance: Contemplation of the Divine
Photo credit: www.blossomlikeaflower.com

“Spirituality is indeed the master-key of the Indian mind; the sense of the infinite is native to it.” (CWSA, Vol. 20, p. 6)

The above sentence from Sri Aurobindo’s essay *The Renaissance in India* is perhaps one of the most-quoted lines when it comes to describing the foundations of Indian culture. In this short write-up I take the opportunity to reflect a bit on this profound truth and share with the readers something of what I am beginning to grasp.

In the paragraph which opens with this quote, Sri Aurobindo further says,

“...she [India] saw that the physical does not get its full sense until it stands in right relation to the supra-physical; she saw that the complexity of the universe could not be explained in the present terms of man or seen by his superficial sight, that there were other powers behind, other powers within man himself of which he is normally unaware, that he is conscious only of a small part of himself, that the invisible always surrounds the visible, the suprasensible the sensible, even as infinity always surrounds the finite.” (pp. 6-7)

This sense of Infinite is an essential characteristic of Indian culture. In the same paragraph he also speaks of India’s great yearning to grapple with the infinite

and possess it. What does it mean to grapple with the Infinite and how is it native to Indian mind? A brief reflection follows.

This yearning has no limit, this aspiration is not for a certain limited truth, but for the Truth that is Infinite, just like the Infinite is...well, Infinite. So the yearning to possess the Infinite may be more about a conscious attempt at manifesting the Infinite in a finite form so that the intellect can grasp it, but with a deep awareness that no form can ever truly capture the Formless Infinite. The Divine is Infinite, Limitless, and hence the aspiration to identify or unite with the Divine is infinite too. Yet the aspirant continuously seeks to see or feel this Transcendent Infinite manifested in all finite forms and names. The artist-aspirant captures the Infinite in the art she creates, the sculptor-aspirant possesses It in the Durga statute he makes. And with each spiritual realization the aspirant moves from one partial truth to a higher, deeper, completer truth... that too is perhaps meant by possessing the Infinite, yet always yearning to grapple with it more.

I am reminded of the famous lines by T. S. Eliot—“We must not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we began and to know the place for the first time” (Little Gidding). So even at the end of exploration, it is as if the journey hasn’t begun yet. But still, the journey did begin, the yearning has begun, the grappling is continuous, and even after possessing the Infinite, the Infinite still remains Infinite...beyond possession.

When we reflect on “spirituality is the master-key of Indian mind”, several examples quickly come to mind—the intricate symbolism behind the forms of Nataraja, Ganesha, the splendour and magnificence of Indian temple architecture, the true meaning behind elaborate puja rituals, etc. But a part of me feels that all these examples are also a bit....well, bookish. So I am tempted to share a simpler example based on personal experience, and perhaps more from a ‘secular realm. [But then, what is really “secular” if All is Brahman in the Indian view?] Many years ago when I was living in the US, my husband and I went to a concert of ghazals (Urdu poetry set to music) and Punjabi folk music. The singer was a woman of Indian origin and settled in Canada, who was visiting different US cities for performances. The write-up about the singer was impressive, so even though we hadn’t heard any music of hers we went to the concert hoping that it might be reasonably good. Sadly, we both were quite disappointed—not just with her singing, but I specifically felt that the selection of ghazals (poetry) she used for her compositions lacked something very important. She made a point in her performance to highlight the fact that she prefers more ‘contemporary’ poetry which captures the sensibility of our times and reflects our modern experiences. Except for one selection that she sang—a nazm penned by Bahadur Shah Zafar (the last Mughal emperor of India) which he wrote in the prison after being captured by the British, all the other poems she sang were quite disappointing. At least to me, they were. On our way back as we were debriefing about the concert, I remember saying

things like—"her music wasn't doing anything for me, it is as if the singer was not "all there", or as if the 'soul' was missing." I will perhaps never be fully able to express what it was that I found missing in those poems or her singing, but I know that I wasn't experiencing what I have experienced while listening to many other ghazals sung by other singers, even when the poetry has been very contemporary and very 'secular'.

The story however doesn't end here.

A couple of days later, on a quiet evening at home I was listening to a recently purchased CD of ghazals sung by Jagjit Singh. *Kuch Baat Chale* is the title of the CD, and all the ghazals are written by the acclaimed Hindi/Urdu poet and film-maker, Gulzar. The second track opens with a very contemporary couplet recited by Gulzar himself. It goes like this—I will first write down the Hindi words of the verse—though he uses a couple of English words too in some of his contemporary writing - and then translate the verse in English:

"Yaad hai ek din mere mez pe baithe-baithe cigarette ki dibiya par tumne chhote se ek poudhe ka ek sketch banaya tha? Aa kar dekho, us poudhe par ek phool aaya hai"

"Remember one day while just sitting at my table you had made a little sketch of a little plant on a box of cigarettes? Come and see, a flower has blossomed on that plant."

And the moment I heard this verse, I knew what was missing in the poetry sung by the Indo-Canadian singer at the concert a couple of days ago. It was as if there was no attempt by the writers of those poems to take the listeners beyond their limited experience of the world. It was as if both the poet and the singer were themselves not ready to go beyond a finite world of experience and sensory-rational input, nor were they interested or able to move their listeners to that world of imagination and mystery. It was as if they were not interested in grappling with the infinite world of imagination where even the most contemporary and secular thought can become an instrument for showing us a little glimpse of the Infinite Mystery that surrounds all the finite, limited world of forms and names we see and experience around us. May I be bold enough to say that this line of Gulzar about the flower that is blooming on an old sketch of a plant is an attempt of grappling with the Infinite?

The story still doesn't end here.

I was so touched by this verse about the flower, I went online to read up a little about this album and some new poetry that Gulzar was writing at that time. And on one website I learned that Gulzar has invented a style of writing three-line verses which he calls 'Triveni' (some of these triveni verses are in this album mentioned earlier). Gulzar explains why he calls this poetry style Triveni—"The third line changes the meaning of the first two lines which seemed complete by themselves. I named it triveni. Like at the sangam in

Allahabad, Ganga and Yamuna are the two apparent colours of the water, the gupt (hidden) one is Saraswati; after the first two lines if you can show a Saraswati, it becomes a triveni." (http://www.telegraphindia.com/1070111/asp/calcutta/story_7247106.asp)

What Gulzar may be referring to as the "gupt" (the hidden) third line which when revealed changes the meaning and essence of the first two lines, is perhaps the X factor, the yearning and grappling with the Infinite to possess it, yet being aware that it is always beyond possession. If we can experience the essence of the third line, we grasp the meaning of the first two lines also, but in a new way. And this essence can only be grasped by entering into a relationship of identification, a perfect union. If we can experience that hidden Saraswati, it is a Sangam, it is a possession. To recall the beautiful words of Sri Aurobindo—"Behind everything in life there is an Absolute, which that thing is seeking after in its own way; everything finite is striving to express an infinite which it feels to be its truth" (CWSA, Vol. 25, p. 112).

When we speak about spirituality being the master-key of Indian mind, and sense of infinite being native to it, I am beginning to realize that we are not only speaking of the heights of excellence and those wonderful accomplishments achieved by certain gifted individuals who are able to rely upon this master-key of spirituality. I humbly suggest that we examine a little more deeply whether the 'wonder' that is possible by accessing this inherent master-key of spirituality happens only in these extra-ordinary achievements or accomplishments, or whether it also manifests itself in our day-to-day ordinary acts of living and working in many different fields of human activity...even including listening to music or enjoying poetry.

Perhaps it indeed is a matter of the inner attitude regardless of what activity one is engaged in!



Photo credit: www.beautifulfreepictures.com

REVIEW OF CONCEPT OF MAN IN SRI AUROBINDO'S POETRY BY DR. JITENDRA SHARMA

Shruti Bidwaikar



Photo credit: Sri Aurobindo Ashram

The poetic genius of Sri Aurobindo has attracted many a scholars and poetry lovers. Some simply admire his poetry and some choose to think and write about them. The *Concept of Man in Sri Aurobindo's Poetry* by Dr. Jitendra Sharma is an admiration of and reflection on Sri Aurobindo's poetic genius.

Separating Sri Aurobindo's poetry and philosophy has always been a difficult task for writers; for his poetry and philosophy all are the expressions of his own experiences and experiments with consciousness and different modes of writing. Dr. Sharma seems to have found a middle way by studying the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo in his poetry. He chose to focus only on one aspect, i.e. the concept of "man" and seems to have eschewed other concepts like God and Nature. With the magnanimity of Sri Aurobindo's poetry and its range perhaps it was convenient and safe to deal only with a single concept in detail.

The author begins his journey to explore the "rhythmic voyage on the ocean of life, discovering unknown truths of one's self and evolution" by introducing the life of Sri Aurobindo—"a great philosopher, yogi, and poet of the twentieth century." This introduction serves as a background to understand the evolution of Sri Aurobindo as at yogi and a poet. He then explores the growth of Sri Aurobindo as a poet. Sri Aurobindo's poetry evolved through first expressing his experiences of his growing contact with the West and then with India. His poetry grew from musings over the adolescent adventures to philosophic expressions canvassing his readings and then his ever growing inner growth and spiritual experiences. Dr. Sharma takes up all the stages in the life of Sri Aurobindo and deliberates upon them.

It is in the third chapter that we come to the theme of book, "the concept of man." The author cites from different religious scriptures and intellectuals who have deliberated upon the purpose of man's birth on earth. He then

takes up the concept of man given by Sri Aurobindo. He refers to the famous description of Sri Aurobindo, "Man is a transitional being, he is not final; for in him and high beyond him ascend the radiant degrees which climb to a divine supermanhood." It is difficult to understand this definition in isolation. Therefore, the author goes to the extent of describing the process of evolution of consciousness through different stages of the Matter, Life, Mind, Higher mind, Illumined Mind, Intuition, Overmind and Supermind. The concept of transformation is also taken up to show the result of the evolution charted out by Sri Aurobindo.

In the next three chapters, the author picks up each section of poetry as classified in "Collected Poems," published in the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library* edition, volume 5. For the first section, early poetry, the author explores the poems thematically and deliberates briefly on many poems explaining Sri Aurobindo's expressions of man in relation to matter, life and mind and nature. In the longer poems, a debate about the life, love and death is taken up at length and the author observes that "the poet has an integral, spiritual insight in Man, Nature and God." Sri Aurobindo expressed the concept of man in many of his sonnets. Therefore perhaps the author dedicated a separate chapter to analyze various sonnets of the poet. He begins by taking up the poems "Man the thinking Animal," "Man the Enigma," "Man the Mediator," and the poems which directly point out who and what man is. He slowly glides over the subtler poems which actually give a world view from which the concept of man may be easily deciphered; like the "Cosmic Dance," "Evolution," and "Nirvana." He traces the evolution of Sri Aurobindo's sonnets to the final "Transformation."

The most prominent and underscored description of man is found in Sri Aurobindo's epic *Savitri*. The canvas of this epic is the whole Universe and its creation. Sri Aurobindo charts the creation from the very beginning, "It was the hour before the Gods awake," to the final and irrevocable transformation and the "life divine." In his process, he not only describes various stages of evolution of consciousness from the Inconscient to the Mind, but also foretells the imminent evolutionary stages to be achieved by the soul on its journey on Earth. The author touches briefly upon the importance and various aspects of *Savitri*. He says, "His [Sri Aurobindo's] poetical consciousness with a glorious vision for mankind finds fullest expression in the epic form." Dr. Sharma traces the stages and the vision of man as portrayed in *Savitri* by quoting long passages from the text.

The author concludes by summing up all that he dealt with in the book. This book may be taken as an entry point into the poetry of Sri Aurobindo; as the concept of man may be taken as one of the themes amongst many. As there are abundant quotes from Sri Aurobindo's poems, the reader gets a very refreshing reading of some of the most important lines on Sri Aurobindo's concept and vision of man – a theme which is central to Sri Aurobindo's vision of the future!