

2019

August

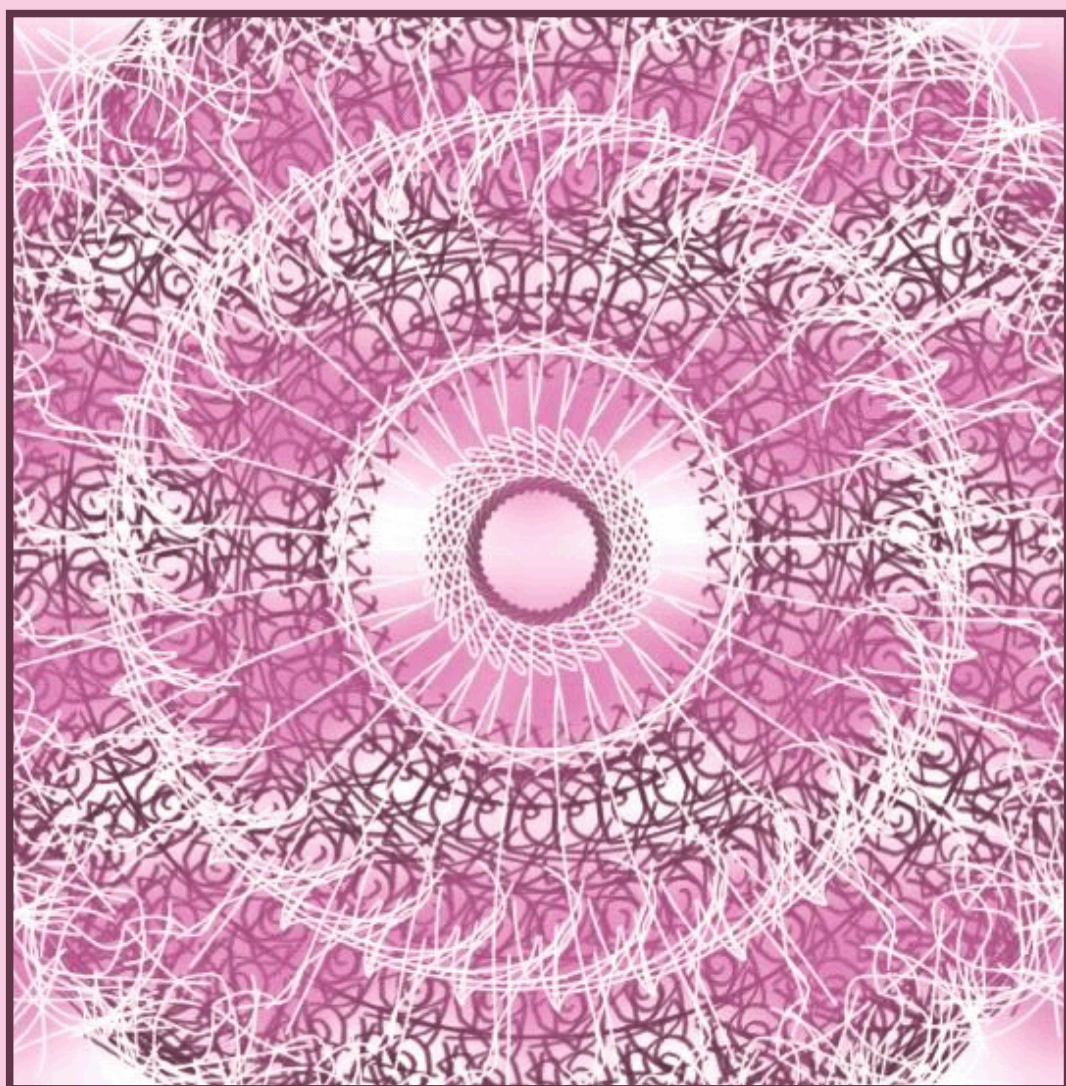
New Race

A Journal of Integral & Future Studies



Volume V

Issue 3



Institute of Human Study

ISSN 2454-1176 (Online)



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

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

Editor-in-Chief: V. ANANDA REDDY

Assistant Editor: SHRUTI BIDWAIKAR

Cover Page Image : NARENDRA JOSHI

Designing: VIPUL KISHORE

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

On the web: www.instituteofhumanstudy.org

ISSN No.: 2454-1176

NEW RACE

A Journal of Integral & Future Studies

August 2019
Volume V Issue 3

Contents

From the Editor's Desk...	
SECTION I: TRUTH	1
Evolution	
<i>Sri Aurobindo</i>	2
Surrender in Sri Aurobindo's <i>Savitri</i>	
<i>Jamshed Mavalwalla</i>	4
The Divine and the Undivine	
<i>Larry Seidlitz</i>	17
SECTION II: BEAUTY AND DELIGHT	26
Sri Aurobindo and Tamil Literature	
<i>P. Marudanayagam</i>	27
What I Learned about	
Appreciating Indian Art from Sri Aurobindo	
<i>Beloo Mehra</i>	37
Ecological Representation in "The Message of the Forest"	
<i>Oeendrilla Guha</i>	44
SECTION III: LIFE	50
The Epic Values	
<i>Deepshikha Reddy</i>	51
Vedic Education - The only means to realise:	
Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahman	
<i>Vandana Sharma</i>	54
A Light in Disguise: The Inner Presence	
<i>Monica Gulati</i>	63
About the Contributors	

From the Editor's Desk...

The auspicious month of August celebrates the birth of three spiritual giants of India - Sri Krishna, Saint Jnaneshwar and Sri Aurobindo. Incidentally, according to the Indian calendar the *tithi* of their birthdays is Sri Krishna Janamashtami. This is also the month of the birth of India's independence. It is not a mere coincidence, remarks Sri Aurobindo that India should have been free on his birthday. It is a gift and a sanction from the Lord for his efforts to liberate India. What Sri Aurobindo wrote in 1918, what he envisaged for India more than a hundred years ago is almost sweeping the country in its wave. Sri Aurobindo wrote:

...this new birth in India, if it is a fact, must become a thing of immense importance both to herself and the world, to herself because of all that is meant for her in the recovery or the change of her time-old spirit and national ideals, to the world because of the possibilities involved in the rearing of a force that is in many respects unlike any other and its genius very different from the mentality and spirit that have hitherto governed the modern idea in mankind, although not so far away perhaps from that which is preparing to govern the future. (CWSA 20: 3)

The effort to build a new India has already begun. Each sector of the society is coming forward and is trying to align itself with this idea. It is not just the political vision of a leader which could awaken this massive movement. In fact, because it was the vision of a yogi, it carried force in it and is slowly percolating into the masses. Indeed, there are forces that are fiercely resisting this change but the change will take place; India is evolving for herself and for the world.

Exploring the various manifestations of Sri Aurobindo's vision, this issue of *New Race* is dedicated to him who foresaw the human and collective evolution and worked towards it. Whether in personal life, education, art or literature, there is a reawakening to a higher ideal. Our authors have explored such a need for evolution or its trend in their articles in this issue.

We wish all our readers a happy reading...

Shruti



TRUTH



(Source: Internet)

Spiritual Significance given by the Mother: Power of Truth in the Subconscious

Botanical Name: Tecomaria capensis

For Truth is wider, greater than her forms.

A thousand icons they have made of her

And find her in the idols they adore;

But she remains herself and infinite.

Sri Aurobindo (Book II Canto 11)

Evolution

(Excerpt from Sri Aurobindo's essay on "Evolution")

Sri Aurobindo

The general idea of evolution was the filiation of each successive form or state of things to that which preceded it, its appearance by a process of outbringing or deploying of some possibility prepared and even necessitated by previous states and previous tendencies. Not only does a form contain the seed of the form that reproduces it, but also the seed of the possible new form that varies from it. By successive progression a world system evolves out of the nebula, a habitable planet appears in an uninhabitable system, protoplasmic life emerges by some yet unknown process out of Matter, the more developed grows out of the less developed organism. The fish and the creeping thing are the descendants of the plasm, the biped and quadruped trace back to the fish and reptile, man is a quadruped of the genus Ape who has learned to walk erect on two legs and has divested himself of characteristics unsuited to his new mode of life and progression. Force in Matter is the unconscious Goddess who has worked these miracles by her inherent principle of natural adaptation and in the organism by the additional machinery of heredity; by natural selection those species which reproduce new characteristics developed by adaptation to the environment and favourable to survival, tend to propagate themselves and remain; others fall back in the race of life and disappear.

Such were once the salient ideas; but some of them and not the least important are now questioned. The idea of the struggle for life tends to be modified and even denied; it is asserted that, at least as popularly understood, it formed no real part of Darwinism. This modification is a concession to reviving moralistic and idealistic tendencies which seek for a principle of love as well as a principle of egoism in the roots of life. Equally important are the conclusions arrived at by some investigators into the phenomena of heredity that acquired characteristics are not handed down to the posterity and the theory that it is chiefly predispositions that are inherited; for by these modifications the process of evolution begins to wear a less material and mechanical aspect; its source and the seat of its motive power are shifted to that which is least material, most psychical in Matter. Finally, the first idea of a slow and gradual evolution is being challenged by a new theory of evolution through sudden and rapid outbursts; and again we pass from the sense of an obvious superficial machinery and all sufficient material necessity to profundities whose mystery is yet to be fathomed....

An idea has even begun to dawn that there is not a single creation but a triple, material, vital and mental; it may be regarded as a composite of three worlds, as it were, interpenetrating each other. We are led back to the old Vedic idea of the triple world in which we live. And we may reasonably forecast that when its operations are examined from this new standpoint, the old Vedic knowledge will be justified that it is one Law and Truth acting in all, but very differently formulated according to the medium in which the work proceeds and its dominant principle.

The same gods exist on all the planes and maintain the same essential laws, but with a different aspect and mode of working and to ever wider results.

If this be the truth, then the action of evolution must be other than has been supposed. For example the evolution of Life in Matter must have been produced and governed not by a material principle, but by a Life-Principle working in and upon the conditions of Matter and applying to it its own laws, impulses, necessities. This idea of a mighty Life, other than the material Principle, working in it and upon it has begun to dominate the advanced thought of Europe. The other idea of a still mightier Mind working in Life and upon it has not yet made sufficient way because the investigation of the laws of Mind is still in its groping infancy....

Instead of slow, steady, minute gradations it is now suggested that new steps in evolution are rather effected by rapid and sudden outbursts, outbreaks, as it were, of manifestation from the unmanifest. Shall we say that Nature preparing slowly behind the veil, working a little backwards, working a little forwards, one day arrives at the combination of outward things which makes it possible for her to throw her new idea into a realised formation, suddenly, with violence, with a glorious dawning, with a grandiose stride? And that would explain the economy of her relapses and her reappearances of things long dead. She aims at a certain immediate result and to arrive at it more quickly and entirely she sacrifices many of her manifestations and throws them back into the latent, the unmanifest, the subconscious. But she has not finished with them; she will need them at another stage for a farther result. Therefore she brings them forward again and they reappear in new forms and other combinations and act towards new ends. So evolution advances. The propagation of acquired characteristics by heredity was too hastily and completely asserted; it is now perhaps in danger of being too summarily denied. Not Matter alone, but Life and Mind working upon Matter help to determine evolution. Heredity is only a material shadow of soul-reproduction, of the rebirth of Life and Mind into new forms. Ordinarily, as a constant factor or basis, there is the reproduction of that which was already evolved; for new characteristics to be propagated in the species they must have been accepted, received, sanctioned in the vital and mental worlds; then only can they be automatically self-reproduced from the material seed. Otherwise they are private and personal acquisitions and are returned into the State exchequer, the treasury of the subconscious, and do not go to the family estate. When the mind-world and life-world are ready, they are poured out freely on fit recipients. This is the reason why it is predisposition that is chiefly inherited. The psychical and vital force in the material principle is first impressed; when that has been done on a sufficient scale, it is ready for a general new departure and an altered heredity appears.

Thus the whole view of Evolution begins to change. Instead of a mechanical, gradual, rigid evolution out of indeterminate Matter by Nature-Force we move towards the perception of a conscious, supple, flexible, intensely surprising and constantly dramatic evolution by a superconscient Knowledge which reveals things in Matter, Life and Mind out of the unfathomable inconscient from which they rise.

(CWSA 13: 170-174)

Surrender in Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*

Jamshed Mavalwalla

(This article is an edited version of the 6th annual Dr. M.V. Nadkarni Memorial Lecture given at Savitri Bhavan on 19 February 2016)

Once the Mother was asked 'What is the secret of success in sadhana? She replied in just one word 'Surrender'. (CWM 14: 108) In another talk the Mother says that surrender 'is not just one of the necessary qualities: it is the first attitude indispensable for beginning the yoga. If one has not decided to make a total surrender, one cannot begin.' (CWM 8: 41) Thus if one wants to pursue Integral Yoga there is a need to know and understand what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother has said about this secret of success in sadhana.

Samarpan, that is, surrender, means complete offering. Surrender is giving oneself to the Divine, to give everything one is to the Divine Shakti, to give all your actions, work, ambitions, and feelings. So wherever the word *self-giving* comes in *Savitri*, it is referring to surrender. Surrender is the decision taken to hand over the responsibility of your life to the Divine.

Today we shall approach the subject surrender by taking up passages which talk of surrender in the mantric poem *Savitri*. We shall also correlate these passages with quotations from other works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. First we shall take up a passage which speaks about our human surrender to the Divine. Then we shall take up passages about Aswapati's surrender, then about *Savitri's* surrender, and lastly, about what the Supreme has to say to *Savitri* about one aspect of surrender.

In Book II: canto 11, there are lines that convey that we should accept the supremacy of the Divine Shakti, and dare to absolutely surrender to Her.

Her simple vast supremacy confess,
Dare to surrender to her absolute. (p. 276)

I will read the complete passage in parts and make an effort to explain it.

But thought nor word can seize eternal Truth:
The whole world lives in a lonely ray of her sun. (p. 276)

Human thought or speech can never hope to seize the eternal Truth—Truth with capital T. Now what is this Truth that Sri Aurobindo is talking about? There are quite a few quotations which tell us that the Truth with a capital T is the Divine. (CWSA 28: 5) So human thought or speech can never hope to grasp or understand the entire Divine, what the whole world receives is just one ray of that sun.

In our hypnosis by one luminous point
We see not what small figure of her we hold;
We feel not her inspiring boundlessness,
We share not her immortal liberty.
Thus is it even with the seer and sage;
For still the human limits the divine: (p. 276)

What the human understands is a small representation of the Divine, because humans can concentrate only on the limited or only on one point. So we do not feel the inspiring

infinity and miss the immortal freedom. This happens even with a man of wisdom, a seer and a sage. Human beings generally limit the Divine. So what is the solution?

Out of our thoughts we must leap up to sight,
Breathe her divine illimitable air,
Her simple vast supremacy confess,
Dare to surrender to her absolute. (p. 276)

Sri Aurobindo tells us that we must go beyond the plane of mind and thought, and open to a direct revelation of the Divine. We must breathe the natural infinite air of the Divine Shakti. It is the Divine Shakti because the phrase “Breathe her divine illimitable air” uses the word *her*. We must accept the supremacy of the Divine Shakti, and dare to absolutely surrender to the Her because we can surrender only to a force much greater than our own to help us in the Yoga. The Divine Shakti alone has the needed force which is decisive, all-wise and without limits. The other phrase used is ‘Dare to surrender’. To absolutely surrender, we need courage and completely rely on the Divine Shakti. We generally have faith in our own ability; we try to solve our own problems. It requires courage not to depend on our mind and vital strength, but to rely completely on the Divine Shakti. Then Sri Aurobindo tells us what happens when we completely depend on the Divine Shakti and completely surrender to Her.

Then the Unmanifest reflects his form
In the still mind as in a living glass;
The timeless Ray descends into our hearts
And we are rapt into eternity. (p. 276)

When man accepts the supremacy of the Divine Shakti and surrenders absolutely, then there are two things that will happen. Firstly, the unmanifest divine reveals his form in the still mind. The unmanifest divine reflects his form means one identifies with the Divine. The Mother in one of her quotations confirms this. The quotation is: “If man surrenders totally to the Divine, he identifies himself with the Divine.” (CWM 14: 108)

This identification happens in the still mind, a quiet mind. This still or quiet mind is a necessary condition for complete surrender. Sri Aurobindo in one of his letters says “there must be a complete surrender and self-giving and for that...it is necessary to have a mind that can remain...quiet and allow the Divine Force to act...” (CWSA 29: 83)

Secondly what happens when we completely surrender to the Divine is that the timeless Ray, which is the Light, descends into our hearts. One of the Mother's quotations that brings out the same idea says: “Offer sincerely to the Divine your obscurities and you will be able to receive the light.” (CWM 14: 99)

And we are rapt into eternity.

In surrender we feel rapturous with the bliss of the Divine. Here I am reminded of the following quotation from Sri Aurobindo: “...a very rapturous thing [is absolute surrender to the Divine] as anyone who has done it can tell you.” (CWSA 29: 21)

In this passage of *Savitri* we saw that to know the eternal Truth or to know the Divine, we have to accept the supremacy of the Divine Shakti and absolutely surrender to the Divine Shakti. Then we can realise the Divine in the quiet mind and the Light descends into our heart. The surrender is a very rapturous, blissful thing.

But one can ask how do we surrender? The answer is to remember every moment and offer oneself, offer all your work, offer all your thoughts and feelings, then your entire life is taken up and offered to the divine and the surrender can be complete. The best example of the process of surrender is explained by Udar in the book *Udar, one of Mother's children*. As we all know that Udar Pinto was a great instrument and has done a lot of Mother's work. Nearly all the commercial departments of the Ashram were started by Udar Pinto.

One day he asked the Mother, "I have been doing the Yoga for many years but I am not absolutely certain how to do the yoga of Sri Aurobindo. I have read all the books and try to do the yoga but I am not certain how far I have progressed." So he asks the Mother to help him out. The Mother said: "You are doing it all wrong." Then he asked "But what shall I do?" She replied, "I will do the yoga for you." Udar was thrilled! And he asked "What do I have to do?" The Mother replied "Give yourself over to me and I will do it for you." (p. 141) This is the real secret, give yourself, offer yourself, whatever you are and she can then work in you. When you offer yourself then the divine Mother can penetrate in us and work in us.

Then Udar asked "How do I surrender?" Then the Mother showed him how to do detailed offering, detailed surrender by asking another question. "When you get up in the morning, what is the first thing you do?" He said, "I brush my teeth." She asked how do you brush your teeth. He wondered and said, "How? Like everybody else does." She said, "Then you are doing it unconsciously. Instead, think of me while you are doing it. Think that I am doing it." (p. 141) When you offer the act of brushing the teeth, and the Mother accepts the offering, then she is doing the act of brushing the teeth with you.

Now we shall look at the surrender of Aswapati. The first time in the book *Savitri* that Aswapati's surrender is mentioned is in Book II, Canto 14, "The World-Soul." Here, as an answer to his yearning, Aswapati has a darshan of the Divine Mother. Here Sri Aurobindo describes the Divine Mother, as 'The sole omnipotent Goddess ever-veiled.'

He saw the mystic outline of a face.

Overwhelmed by her implacable light and bliss, (p. 296)

And in supreme answer to the yearning of Aswapati's heart, Aswapati sees the mystic outline of a face of the divine Mother and he is overwhelmed by unstoppable light and bliss.

Drunk with a deep golden spiritual wine,

He cast from the rent stillness of his soul

A cry of adoration and desire

And the surrender of his boundless mind

And the self-giving of his silent heart.

He fell down at her feet unconscious, prone. (p. 296)

Aswapati, intoxicated with the divine spirit, breaks out of the silence of his soul into a cry of adoration and seeking. Then, with the surrender of his boundless mind and the self-giving of his silent heart—and we know that self giving is nothing but surrender—he fell down at the feet of the Divine Mother. Here we have an indication that Aswapati had already surrendered himself to the Divine Mother. The surrender of his boundless mind and heart means that Aswapati had already surrendered his mind and heart to the Divine Mother.

Here Sri Aurobindo also gives a hint, an indication about the method of surrendering to the Divine.

In one quotation, the Mother says that the process of surrender, the offering of ourselves “is done either through the mind or the heart or the emotion or the life-impulse or through all of them together.” (CWM 14: 107)

How is the surrender done by the mind? The mind understands the need to surrender and makes a resolution to remember and offer. Sri Aurobindo in one quotation says “a clear and sincere mind seeing the necessity of surrender.” (CWSA 28: 385) The mind can also control all that comes in the way of surrender. Mind can enforce a clear and sincere will on the disobedient members to surrender.

And the self-giving of his silent heart. (p. 296)

The self-giving of the heart is nothing but the surrender of the heart, the emotions. The self giving of the heart is offering with adoration or devotion. In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo explains how the self-giving of the heart with adoration is done. Here Sri Aurobindo quotes the Gita:

‘He who gives to me with a heart of adoration a leaf, a flower, a fruit or a cup of water, I take and enjoy that offering of his devotion’; and it is not only any dedicated external gift that can be so offered with love and devotion, but all our thoughts, all our feelings and sensations, all our outward activities and their forms and objects can be such gifts to the Eternal. (CWSA 23: 162-163)

This idea that Aswapati had already surrendered also comes in another passage in Book III:

His living, sacrificed and offered heart
Absorbed in adoration mystical,
Turned to its far-off fount of light and love. (p. 332)

Here Sri Aurobindo speaks of Aswapati's sacrificed and offered heart. *Offered heart* as we know means surrendered heart. Even *sacrificed heart* means surrendered heart. To help us understand the word *sacrifice* I will read a quotation: “In the spiritual sense, ... sacrifice has a different meaning—it does not indicate giving up what is dear to us. [It means] offering of oneself.. It has the original sense of ‘making sacred.’” (CWSA 28: 433) Making sacred is consecration, which means when we offer and the Divine takes our offering it becomes sacred.

Here too the heart is sacrificed and offered, meaning that the process of offering has been completed. In this passage, Aswapati has offered his heart as a living sacrifice for the great work of transformation.

His living, sacrificed and offered heart
Absorbed in adoration mystical,
Turned to its far-off fount of light and love. (p. 332)

“Absorbed in adoration mystical.” *Absorbed* means absolutely concentrated. This surrendered heart was absolutely concentrated in mystical adoration of the Supreme Divine

Mother. This adoration is turned upward to its far-off distant fount, the source of light and love. This passage brings out another important aspect of surrender.

In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo says: "It is evident, to begin with, that, even if such a discipline [self-giving to the Eternal] is begun without devotion, it leads straight and inevitably towards the highest devotion possible; ... the most profound God-love." (CWSA 23: 112)

Now we will see the third and the last passage, in fact it is just one line where Sri Aurobindo points out the surrender of Aswapati. Sri Aurobindo says:

A vast surrender was his only strength." (p. 315)

What is a *vast* surrender? Vast includes the surrender of the complete being, an absolute surrender. But then Sri Aurobindo says that 'A vast surrender was his only strength'. Why is it his only strength? I am emphasising the word *only*. Human beings have the strength of their physical, vital, and mental will-power. If surrender was his only strength, that means that these strengths of the human being were not there with Aswapati.

To understand what Sri Aurobindo means by "only strength," I will bring out the gist of another quotation from Sri Aurobindo. In this quotation Sri Aurobindo compares the path of surrender with other paths of doing Yoga. He says that "even 1) the most powerful Rajayogic self-control, 2) the most developed pranayama, 3) the most strenuous meditation, 4) the most ecstatic Bhakti, 5) the most self-denying action, mighty as they are and efficacious, are comparatively weak in their results. For those are all limited to a certain extent by our capacity, but this [path of surrender] is illimitable in potency because it is God's capacity." (CWSA 13: 74)

The result of surrender is infinite in potency, because it is God's capacity. All other strengths have their limitations, their constraints, but this strength of surrender is far more than any other strength that men can possess. So the only strength that Aswapati has is God's strength which is illimitable and infinite in its potency. But the strength of surrender also has a limitation. It is only limited by the Divine will which knows what is best for the world and for each of us in the world.

And with this only strength of Aswapati, what did he achieve? He could achieve the highest personal sadhana that anyone can achieve, and could compel the Divine Mother to take birth to help humanity.

Now let us have a look at passages which talk about the surrender of Savitri. In Book I, Canto II where Sri Aurobindo describes who Savitri is, there is a line which indicates that surrender was natural to her.

A wide self-giving was her native act; (p. 15)

The self-giving is done to the Divine, and self-giving means surrender. So here we see that this surrender was her native act, her second nature. This act of self-giving happened in her spontaneously all the time.

A wide self-giving was her native act;
A magnanimity as of sea or sky

Enveloped with its greatness all that came
And gave a sense as of a greatened world: (p. 15)

When self-giving becomes a natural act, then all acts are taken up by the Divine Mother and so they are not limited but become magnanimous. As magnanimous as the sea or sky. When the Divine Mother enters or participates in all our acts, the atmosphere around becomes great and gives a sense of greatened world.

The process of remembering every second and offering every act is the process of surrender. But the question arises that in some work where our mind is concentrated in work how can we remember and offer every moment or every act to the Divine?

I am reminded of a story where this is emphasized. We know that Narad was a great devotee of Vishnu. Narad possibly wanted to hear this from the Lord so he asks Vishnu “Lord tell me who is your most beloved disciple.” Vishnu tells him that there is a farmer on the earth who is his most beloved devotee. Narad then asks him why that farmer is his most beloved devotee and not he. Vishnu then tells that he will give a task to Narad which he must fulfil. He gives him a vessel filled with oil, filled up to the brim. Then he tells Narad to go round the world with this vessel but the condition is that not a drop of oil should fall down. Narad concentrates while going round the world so that not a drop of oil falls down. He is very happy that he has completed his task successfully and now Vishnu will have to accept that he is the most beloved disciple. But Vishnu asks him, while going round the world how many times did he remember the Lord and offer the act? Narad exclaims, how can he remember the Lord for he was all the time concentrating on the vessel that not a drop should fall down. Then Vishnu tells him that the farmer is a married man, and has lot of responsibilities, he does all the work that a man is supposed to do but he remembers me all the time and offers all his works to me and so he is my most beloved disciple.

If we cannot remember the Divine during every second of our work, then in one of the letters Sri Aurobindo gives us a solution for beginners:

If you can't as yet remember the Divine all the time you are working, it does not greatly matter. To remember and dedicate at the beginning and give thanks at the end ought to be enough for the present. Or at the most to remember too when there is a pause... When people remember all the time during work (it can be done), it is usually with the back of their minds or else there is created gradually a faculty of ... double consciousness— one in front that works, and one within that witnesses and remembers. (CWSA 29: 214)

So when Savitri's self giving was her native act, her second nature, that means that she may be able to do this by a faculty of double consciousness in which her inner being offers constantly while her outer being does the acts.

The second time Sri Aurobindo mentions Savitri's surrender is in Book VII, Canto 5: “The Finding of the Soul.” In this passage, Sri Aurobindo is referring to the inward journey of Savitri to find her soul.

Onward she passed seeking the soul's mystic cave.

At first she stepped into a night of God. (p. 522)

Savitri goes ahead in her search of her soul into the secret cave. This journey is going within. At first she finds herself in the supernatural darkness that intervenes before one reaches God. Sri Aurobindo describes this darkness as a night of God.

The light was quenched that helps the labouring world,
The power that struggles and stumbles in our life;
This inefficient mind gave up its thoughts,
The striving heart its unavailing hopes. (p. 522)

The light that helps man in this world is extinguished in this night; the power that helps man in this world is not available in the night of God. When the heart strives then there is always a hope, but here in the night of God the striving heart gave up its vain hopes.

All knowledge failed and the Idea's forms
...
The unseen Light she could not claim nor own.
In a simple purity of emptiness
Her mind knelt down before the unknowable.
All was abolished save her naked self (p. 522)

Here the knowledge fails and all forms taken by the Idea fails and the unseen light she can neither claim for herself nor possess. In this pure emptiness, all strength is abolished.

All was abolished save her naked self
And the prostrate yearning of her surrendered heart: (p. 522)

When all help and strength is abolished and there is no hope, only then the phrase 'surrendered heart' comes. The reason is that it is only the surrendered heart that can help one in the inward journey to find the soul or psychic being.

To help us understand how surrender helps in the inward journey to find one's soul, we will refer to a passage of the *The Life Divine*, in the chapter "The Triple Transformation." (CWSA 22: 938-939)

Between our outer nature and our inner being there is a thick wall. This thick wall screens our inner being from our outer awareness. Even before the purification of the outer nature is effected, one can still break down this thick wall. But this is a premature movement and has serious dangers.

In entering within one may start having some supernormal chaotic experiences which one may not understand. There can be forces which may chaotically drive the being. One may keep wandering in a wilderness of glamour but this glamour is a deception.

Here in this supernatural darkness there can be voices and influences which will claim to be the Divine Being, while in truth they are of a very different character. We can be misled from the true way of the inner life and even fail to find our way out into the true realisation.

Sri Aurobindo explains that for this penetration into the luminous crypt of the soul, there are few useful aids for this difficult passage. They are the methods of: 1) detachment, 2) a concentration in the heart, 3) austerity, 4) self-purification and 5) rejection of the old mind movements and life movements, 6) rejection of the ego and desire. But the strongest, and

the most central way is a path of self-offering and surrender of ourselves and of our parts of nature to the Divine Being. (CWSA 22: 940)

Once we completely surrender to the Divine Shakti, then she carries us on the path. This is one of the main reasons why there is a need to surrender to the Divine Shakti in the Integral Yoga. The dangers of Yoga are avoided by the path of surrender. There is a quotation of the Mother which says that "The path of surrender is safe and sure. ... If you take up this path of surrender fully and sincerely, there is no more danger or serious difficulty." (CWM 3: 4-5)

When Savitri starts her journey inward to find her soul, she had already surrendered herself, and that is the reason she could overcome all obstacles and dangers of the path.

Now I wish to emphasize the phrase "the prostrate yearning of her surrendered heart." The Mother points out that one of the three ways by which total self-giving or complete surrender to the Divine can be done is to prostrate oneself at the Divine's feet. (CWM 14: 102-103)

In this passage where it is mentioned that Savitri had surrendered herself, in the continuation of the same sentence, there is a description of her egoless state.

All was abolished save her naked self
And the prostrate yearning of her surrendered heart:
There was no strength in her, no pride of force;
The lofty burning of desire had sunk
Ashamed, a vanity of separate self,
The hope of spiritual greatness fled,
Salvation she asked not nor a heavenly crown:
Humility seemed now too proud a state." (CWSA 33: 522)

There was no pride in Savitri. Her high flaming desire sinks down as if ashamed realizing it to be vanity of self that presumes to think itself as separate. There was no asking for spiritual greatness or salvation or a heavenly crown. Even humility seemed like a proud state because she had reached the egoless state.

There is a linkage between complete surrender and the egoless state. Sri Aurobindo in one of his letters says that: "a complete surrender means to cut the knot of the ego in each part of the being and offer it, free and whole, to the Divine." (CWSA 29: 72-73) Another quotation says that "Egoism goes when the individual...is entirely surrendered to the Divine." (CWSA 28: 124)

In the poem *Savitri*, the third time Savitri's surrender is shown is when she had realised her soul and the different centers of her consciousness have been transformed.

Behind all reigned her sovereign deathless soul:
Casting aside its veil of Ignorance,
...
Surrendered into the great World-Mother's hands
Only she obeyed her sole supreme behest
In the enigma of the Inconscient's world. (p. 530)

Behind all the changed movements of the different centers of consciousness, the

immortal soul of Savitri is the supreme ruler. Generally in human beings the ruler is either the vital or the mind. But now Savitri is completely ruled by her soul or psychic being. Then there come the lines that convey that Savitri had surrendered herself into the hands of the great World-Mother and follows only the great World-Mother's supreme Will in the riddle of our Inconscient world. There is a correlation between realizing one's psychic being and surrendering to the Divine Mother. There is a quotation of Sri Aurobindo that says "If the psychic manifests, it will...ask you to... surrender to the Mother." (CWSA 32: 147)

He also says, "When the psychic awakes, it can bring a sudden and true surrender of the whole being" (CWSA 29: 83-84) In fact, Sri Aurobindo goes to the extent of saying that "No complete surrender is possible without the psychic opening." (CWSA 29: 76)

So it is natural that after realizing the soul, Savitri surrendered herself into the great World-Mother's hands and only obeyed the supreme Divine Mother. When one has realized one's soul, one has already achieved the aim of realizing the Divine. Then why is there a need to surrender? Because in Integral Yoga, realizing the divinity in oneself is just a first step and not the goal. The last step of bringing the supramental force to transform the mind, vital and physical will need a far more superior Power, and the power of the Divine Mother is limitless and decisive.

In these passages we saw that Aswapati and Savitri both had already surrendered. But what about us, we humans who are making an effort to remember and offer, trying to surrender or groping to do sadhana. A question can come to our mind that when we offer, we can only offer imperfectly or partly. In that case does the divine Mother accept our offering? I will give two examples that will prove that the Mother does accept our offering.

We have known Amal Kiran as a poet, an author, and a humorist, but today I will talk about him as a flower painter. The Mother had given him drawing materials like sketching pads, paint brushes, and crayons. Every morning after the Pranam, he would paint the flower while it was fresh. There were certain times when Amal had felt that he had done them with a great deal of cleverness and was proud of it. Every week the Mother used to inspect his drawing book. When she turned the pages, she would just pass over the paintings and give no comment on the ones that he felt had been done with great deal of cleverness. But she would pause and smile and appreciate very much whatever was done with real remembrance of her and with an inner gesture of offering to her. This is an incident which shows that the Mother could recognize whatever was done with offering to her.

There is another example which shows that the Mother recognized whatever was done with offering to her. In Sri Smriti, where many things used by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are kept, there is a small and very simple ribbon with stitching kept. When the Mother saw the ribbon she could recognize that every effort in stitching was offered to her the divine Mother. The Mother must have appreciated this offered ribbon so much that Sri Smriti people have kept it among other items that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have used. The very fact that the Mother could recognize this just by seeing it shows that when we offer anything to her, the Mother receives it.

Sri Aurobindo has written sonnet 'Surrender'. A sonnet is often about the poet's personal experience. The first line of the sonnet 'Surrender' is: 'O Thou of whom I am the instrument,' (CWSA 2: 611) Sri Aurobindo says that he is the instrument of the Divine. When the surrender is complete then one becomes the true instrument of the Divine.

In Book XI, Savitri refuses all the gifts of solitary bliss and other things offered by the Supreme for herself. Then she says, "Thy sweetness give to me for earth and men." (p. 697). This line shows that Savitri wants to become an instrument of the Supreme, so that whatever the Supreme Lord wants to give to humanity, it could be given through Savitri.

In the next lines that I will read, it is the Supreme who tells Savitri that she is his instrument. These lines bring out some aspect of being an instrument or a channel of the Divine through complete surrender.

O beautiful body of the incarnate Word,
Thy thoughts are mine, I have spoken with thy voice.
My will is thine, what thou hast chosen I choose:
All thou hast asked I give to earth and men. (p. 698)

This is an example of becoming a complete instrument of the Divine. The Supreme says that Savitri's thoughts are His thoughts and whatever the Supreme wants to speak He will speak through Savitri. The Supreme's Will is Savitri's will and whatever Savitri has chosen is in fact chosen by the Supreme. Here the surrender is so complete; the instrumentation is so complete that the Supreme Divine will give to humanity through Savitri.

Then the Supreme tells her what He would do to the surrendered instrument.

I lay my hands upon thy soul of flame,
I lay my hands upon thy heart of love, (p. 698)

"I lay my hands" is a beautiful poetic imagery meaning I will capture you, I will possess you. The Supreme says that because you have surrendered, I will capture your soul and your heart of love. How does the Divine capture us in surrender? In surrender, by the act of self-giving, we allow the Divine to penetrate us and possess us. When the Divine captures us, what does the Divine do? The Divine perfects the human being so that one becomes fit for divine living. (CWSA 23: 613)

I yoke thee to my power of work in Time. (p. 698)

'I yoke thee'. Yoke is a wooden cross piece fastened over the neck of two bullocks to plough the field. So that is the kind of work the Supreme says he will take from Savitri, yoking his power in time. So when we become the true instrument, the divine can get His work done through us. Again after few lines:

I bind by thy heart's passion thy heart to mine (p. 698)

The Supreme says that he will tie or bind Savitri's heart to his by her heart's passion. The phrase "heart's passion" brings out three aspects. The first is that when your heart passionately wants to do things, it means that there is willingness on your part, you are wilfully choosing to do it. Secondly, the heart's passion can only come when there is a joy in the act of offering. And thirdly, passion implies there is an enthusiasm and ardour in the act of giving to the Divine.

On similar lines, there is a quotation of the Mother which says, "To make your surrender total, ... you must choose to make your surrender total, otherwise you will not do it, it will not get done by itself. It is you who must want to do it." (CWM 4: 342-343) Sri Aurobindo also brings out this same point when he says, "The Supreme demands your surrender to her, but does not impose it: ... Your surrender must be self-made and free; it must be the surrender of a living being, not of an inert mechanical tool." (CWSA 32: 4)

Regarding the joy and enthusiasm in one's self-giving to the Divine, the Mother says, "Well, the surrender, that is, the self-giving to the Divine, must be happy, joyful, made gladly..." (CWM 4: 357) She also says, "...you can give yourself with much enthusiasm..." (CWM 4: 134)

These three points are important to remember when one wants to surrender: 1) you must choose to make your surrender total; 2) the self-giving to the Divine must be happy and joyful, made gladly; and 3) you must offer yourself with much enthusiasm. Returning to the lines of *Savitri*,

And lay my splendid yoke upon thy soul.
Now will I do in thee my marvellous works. (p. 698)

What is this marvellous work which the Supreme wants to do? This marvellous work is the work for the next step in the evolution. In the next four lines we will see how the Supreme prepares us for the work of the next step of evolution when we become an instrument.

I will fasten thy nature with my cords of strength, (p. 698)

When we become the instrument of the Divine through surrender, then the Divine can come into us and fasten our nature with his cords of strength. How does the divine fasten our nature with his cords of strength?

The Divine Consciousness is above us. By the act of self-giving the Divine Force descends in us and increases our capacity and receptivity. This increase in receptivity brings down a yet stronger Divine Force which will further increase our capacity and strength.

But for this to continuously happen, there must be on our part a progressive surrender into the hands of the Divine that allows the Divine Power do with us whatever is needed for the work. (CWSA 12: 169-170)

Subdue to my delight thy spirit's limbs
And make thee a vivid knot of all my bliss (p. 698)

Not only strength will descend, but we will be overwhelmed by the Divine's delight. This delight will make us blissful. A quotation from Sri Aurobindo which brings this out says: "... (*atma-samarpana*) does not exclude a will for the delight of oneness..." (SABCL 21: 738) Another quotation from Sri Aurobindo says: "The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. (CWSA 29: 67)

And build in thee my proud and crystal home. (p. 698)

The phrase 'my proud and crystal home' means the Divine's superior and lucent form. So in surrender, after giving us divine strength and ananda, then the supreme will create a body

of the next step in the evolution, which is superior and lucent, transparent, sparkling home. This home is the supramental body.

Then after a few lines,

I will pursue thee across the centuries;
Thou shalt be hunted through the world by love, (p. 699)

When one becomes a true instrument then the Divine does not leave us, the Divine will pursue us, chase us for ages. What better thing can happen than the divine chasing us? This chase, this hunting will be done by love.

Nowhere shalt thou escape my living eyes. (p. 699)

Nowhere will we be able escape from the Divine's living eyes. In short, the Divine will be with us for ages in our future lives.

I will pour delight from thee as from a jar,
I will whirl thee as my chariot through the ways, (p. 701)

This pouring of delight will be on those who come into contact with Savitri. On meeting Savitri, mankind will feel the delight of the Divine. The Supreme will whirl Savitri as the Supreme's chariot through the pathways of the universe. What are these pathways of the universe? They are paths of evolution.

I will use thee as my sword and as my lyre,
I will play on thee my minstrel'sies of thought. (p. 701)

The Supreme will use thee as his sword and as his lyre. The sword, to destroy, represents the work of Mahakali. A lyre is a musical instrument, and a minstrel is a musician or singer; these represent the work of Mahalaxmi. For the activities of both Mahakali and Mahalaxmi, the Supreme will use Savitri.

Who hunts and seizes me, my captive grows:
This shalt thou henceforth learn from thy heart-beats. (p. 702)

Normally when you hunt and seize a thing, you are the master, but when you pursue the Divine, the more you pursue the more you become captive. This is the only hunt where hunter becomes the hunted. When you surrender yourself and become an instrument of the Divine, then in fact you become the captive of the Divine.

For ever love, O beautiful slave of God! (p. 702).

We must first understand what slave of God means. When one surrenders, one wants to obey only the Divine's will. This can happen by becoming an instrument of the Divine Being, a channel of the Divine Being. But an instrument or channel is usually not a living being. A servant of the Divine is a better example of the surrender of a living being. But the best example of the complete surrender of a living being is a slave of God. A slave does not have a will of his own; he obeys the will of the Master. A slave is completely dependent on the Master and is controlled by the Master.

For ever love, O beautiful slave of God! (p. 702)

“For ever love” means to be consumed by love divine. Then one willingly, lovingly wants to be a captive of the Divine, and becomes a beautiful slave of God! The highest form of surrender is to become a loving, willing slave of God, and it is divine love that makes it

beautiful. This phrase 'O beautiful slave of God!' is the highest state one can achieve by surrender.

O lasso of my rapture's widening noose,
Become my cord of universal love. (p. 702)

The Divine throws this lasso on our souls, captures our souls, and the Supreme takes care of us from birth to birth. To be caught by the divine lasso you have to be graced, otherwise we are caught by the lassos of the world. This lasso is similar to the golden chain, a cord of universal love. Once you love the Mother you are captured forever. Sri Aurobindo has put the same idea in *Savitri* that the Mother has said in prose.

Nolini Kant Gupta tells that the Mother has said: "Whoever gets my touch, whoever has a second of true aspiration, true love for me, he is finished for life, for all lives—he is bound to me. I have put a golden chain round his neck, his heart is bound eternally to me."

Now I shall narrate the Mother's experience while reading this line, "For ever love, O beautiful slave of God!" About this line the Mother says:

... the line of Savitri that gave me the most overpowering experience of the entire book And when I came to this particular line ... I was as if suddenly swept up and engulfed in ... eternal Truth. Everything was abolished except this: For ever love, O beautiful slave of God!

That alone existed. (*Invocation*, no. 6, Feb 2000, p. 35)

There is another experience of the Mother when she read this line. The Mother has recited passages from Book XI of *Savitri*. The Mother disclosed that in the line 'For ever love, O beautiful slave of God!' the word she saw in place of 'beautiful' was 'powerful'. Though she did not read 'powerful'. In the late hours of the evening, when she used to be inwardly absorbed in Sri Aurobindo's presence, she asked him why she had that variant in the line. He answered: "What you have read is a truth—but a truth of the future. At present, 'beautiful' and not 'powerful' is the true word." (*Invocation* No. 9, November 2000, p. 42)

This surrender of the slave of God which is beautiful will become a powerful slave of God, powerful to take humanity to the next step of evolution.

I end this talk with a short prayer.

"O our sweet Divine Mother,
Help us to remember all the time to offer all our activities, and offer ourselves to you.
May our self giving become a native act, our second nature.
May our surrender become absolute.
May we become a beautiful slave of the Divine Mother in this very life.
Amen!

(Courtesy: *Collaboration*)



The Divine and the Undivine

Larry Seidlitz

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have proposed a conception of the Divine that has roots in the ancient Indian tradition, but a tradition that has been seen and interpreted wisely and subtly, with an uncommon breadth and depth of vision. It is a view that can be called integral because it includes and harmonizes many different and disparate conceptions and weaves them together into a rich and beautiful tapestry. It does not proclaim one view against another, insist on one particular conception against all other conceptions. It does not demand acceptance or adherence, or say that there is no other way. It accepts within its scope many different perspectives of the Reality, the Truth, God, the Divine, however we may like to label it, but it puts them into place and shows them their utility and role in the whole and how together they can form a more complete conception. It does not divide but reconciles; does not proclaim, but lights a path; does not reject, but accepts and harmonizes. Science and religion, reason and faith, evolution and creation, matter and spirit, worldly life and spiritual life all find their place and road to fulfilment. The individual and personal are not blotted out in the impersonal transcendent, yet the impersonal transcendent is embraced. The world and society are not rejected or renounced in a solely individualistic spiritual endeavour, but are also accepted and included and uplifted in a comprehensive spiritual evolution.

In his main philosophical work, *The Life Divine*, Sri Aurobindo bases his conception of the Divine on the ancient Indian conception of the *Brahman* which is described in the Upanishads, but in describing this conception he has used the suggestive term “omnipresent reality.” He has explained that there has been a tendency in the Indian tradition to interpret the *Brahman* as a reality that is exclusively transcendent of the universe, and that the universe and existence as we know it is an illusion, an unreality. This conception of the Divine which sets in opposition a transcendent Reality against the multiplicity of the universal existence, in which the latter is experienced from the former standpoint as an illusion, is a prevalent view in the Indian spiritual tradition, and Sri Aurobindo found it necessary to reconcile this perspective with a more comprehensive spiritual experience and conception that embraces life in the world. He says, “We perceive that in the Indian ascetic ideal the great Vedantic formula, ‘One without a second,’ has not been read sufficiently in the light of that other formula equally imperative, ‘All this is the Brahman.’ The passionate aspiration of man upward to the Divine has not been sufficiently related to the descending movement of the Divine leaning downward to embrace eternally Its manifestation” (pp. 27-28). The term “manifestation” is important in Sri Aurobindo’s writings, and here it suggests that the universal existence is a real expression of the transcendent Reality and an integral part of it. As such, Sri Aurobindo conceives of the Divine not only as a Reality that is transcendent of the universe, but as a Reality that also constitutes the universe and each individual existence in the universe. He notes that the transcendent and the manifestation are two poles of a single Reality: “They are one Brahman in two aspects, positive and negative, and each is necessary to the other.” Thus he views *Brahman* as the one Reality, but a Reality which is

present everywhere at all times: in the transcendent that is beyond the manifested universe, as the universe, and in each individual being and thing in the universe.

It should also be noted that there is another spiritual tradition that is also mentioned in the Upanishads but is primarily associated with certain schools of Buddhism that perceives the ultimate as Non-Being, in distinction from the prominent Vedantic view of it as an infinite, conscious, pure existence. In this doctrine of the Non-Being, the world existence is also seen as an illusion, an unreal creation in which we are bound to suffering by the chain of karma, a perpetual cycle of actions and their consequences through many lives. Liberation from this cycle can be achieved through various methods that are said to lead to extinction into Non-Being, and this is viewed as the solution to the problem of life. Sri Aurobindo reconciles this view with his own very much like he does with the Vedantic view, seeing the Non-Being as in reality also an aspect of the Brahman, an abstraction or a state of freedom from all existence, even the most essential. He says, “We really mean by this Nothing something beyond our most abstract or subtle experience of actual being as we know or conceive it while in this universe. This Nothing then is merely a something beyond positive conception. We erect a fiction of nothingness in order to overpass, by the method of total exclusion, all that we can know and consciously are” (*The Life Divine*, p. 32). He also notes that one of the Upanishads rejects the possibility that being, including the being that we are and directly experience, can arise out of Non-Being, and seems to agree that this proposition is illogical. He adds, however, that by viewing Non-Being “as an x which exceeds our idea or experience of existence,—a sense applicable to the Absolute Brahman of the Advaita as well as the Void or Zero of the Buddhists,—the impossibility disappears, for That may very well be the source of being” (*The Life Divine*, p. 32).

Sri Aurobindo agrees with the Vedantic tradition that the transcendent can be experienced as *sachchidananda*, a Sanskrit term which he translates as infinite existence, infinite consciousness, infinite delight. He explains that in the Supreme, the transcendent Reality, the three principles are inseparable—existence is consciousness and consciousness is bliss—and are not distinct at all. He said that there are higher planes of the manifestation in which they become triune, although inseparable, one can be more prominent and a base of the others. He explains that in the lower planes of the manifestation the three principles become separable in appearance, though not in their actuality, such that we can become aware of an existence which seems inconscient or painful, and a consciousness without bliss. It is due to this separation of the three principles that the manifestation of the material world and the evolution of consciousness out of inconscient matter becomes possible.

Although they are fundamentally one, two sides of the Brahman, the transcendent and the manifestation, or spirit and nature, are fundamental to Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy. Their integration and harmonization is the key to the puzzle of our existence. The manifestation wells out of the transcendent, is a partial expression of its infinite possibilities that are held unmanifest within it. As well, the transcendent spirit is the underlying support and essence of the manifestation, it pervades it as well as surrounds and upholds it. While many spiritual paths in India lead to the inner experience and abiding realization of the transcendent, usually that realization is not fully integrated with life in the world. There remains a gap in the sense

that although the spiritual adept feels inwardly free from the limitations of the bodily life, the limitations remain. An ascetic life is generally followed, such that the outward life is reduced in scope to a minimum so that it does not interfere with the inward realization. As already noted, many traditional spiritual paths in India view the manifestation as an illusion, but Sri Aurobindo and the Mother viewed it as a reality and its integration with the transcendent as not only possible but the aim and destiny of the evolution occurring on earth.

The possibility of their integration derives from Sri Aurobindo's affirmation of a higher or divine nature, as distinct from the ignorant lower nature. The higher nature is consciously integrated with the spiritual basis and oneness of all existence, whereas the lower nature is not consciously integrated. The difference in consciousness is what makes the higher nature divine and the lower nature undivine. Whereas the lower nature also is an expression and integral part of the oneness of Brahman, it is not conscious of the transcendent and its oneness with it, and this lack of consciousness is crucial. To its own experience its existence is limited and divided, its consciousness and its force are limited and divided, its delight is limited and divided. The higher nature is something that consciously wells out of the transcendent and manifests what is to be manifested according to the truth, knowledge, and will of the supreme Being. Its knowledge, force, and delight of being are united with the Divine. Because the lower nature is not fully conscious, its force and delight are limited and subject to ignorance, error, deviation, weakness, pain, suffering, and death.

Whereas in the transcendent there is only oneness infinite conscious blissful existence, infinite potentiality, but no manifestation in a diversity of states and beings and forms the higher nature is at once oneness and multiplicity. It is as if the one Divine Being looked out through an infinite number of faces, innumerable different expressions of itself, yet each expression inwardly knew and saw itself in every other expression. At the same time, in the higher nature each particular expression of the Divine not only knows and sees its oneness with the divine Being within and with everything around, it also acts and behaves automatically in perfect accord with the particular truth it represents in the whole scheme, and thus harmoniously with all other expressions. Whereas it may express a particular and thus limited aspect of the Divine Being, it is conscious of the whole Divine Being standing behind and in it. Whereas the knowledge, or force, or delight that it expresses may be a limited expression in order to play a single, unique part in a larger whole, the infinite knowledge, force, and delight remain behind but are held back from the expression according to the will of the one Divine. This is to say that the Divine is both one and many; transcendent, universal, *and* individual. The Divine is not limited to a static oneness transcendent of the multiplicity, the Divine expresses itself infinitely in many worlds and beings.

Whereas in the higher nature these worlds and beings are conscious of their underlying unity and divinity, in the lower nature these worlds and beings are not conscious of the Divine. The lower nature makes for the possibility of a vast extension of the expression of the Divine Being in worlds and beings which are unconscious of the underlying unity, and effectively cut off from their source of knowledge, force, and delight which nevertheless sustains them, albeit in limited and even perverse forms. We here on earth live in a world of the lower nature, but a lower nature that is evolving and destined to manifest beings of the higher nature.

Sri Aurobindo indicates that the higher nature consists of the three planes of *sat*, *chit*, and *ananda*—infinite existence, infinite consciousness, and infinite bliss—and the plane of supermind which is situated between the higher nature and the lower nature but belongs to the higher (*Letters on Yoga I*, p. 38-39, 83). The lower nature consists of the planes of mind, life, and matter. In the planes of *sat*, *chit*, and *ananda*, all three principles are present in all, but one is more prominent. Sri Aurobindo has not written much about these three planes of the higher nature. Most often he writes of *sachchidananda* as a triune principle of spirit that is transcendent of the universe. Nevertheless, in a few places he indicates that *sachchidananda* has a dynamic truth of existence and is not only supracosmic (see *Letters on Yoga I*, pp. 133-137). He explains that “the full dynamic truth of Sachchidananda and the universe and its consequences cannot be grasped by any other consciousness than the Supermind” (*Letters on Yoga I*, p. 135), and that “Supermind may be described as its power of self-awareness and world-awareness, the world being known as within itself and not outside” (*Letters on Yoga I*, p. 134). He indicates that how *sachchidananda* is perceived depends on the level of consciousness from which one perceives it. He indicates that most often in Indian yogas it has been perceived by the spiritualised mind, situated between Supermind and the human intellect, and from there it is experienced as a static condition of pure existence or else pure Non-existence. From that viewpoint, whatever forms, activities or movements may be perceived on the surface of the consciousness take place against this background of vast silence and peace and appear as minor ripples, or as an unreal cinematic play of images, or even may disappear altogether in the infinite ocean of being. It is experienced as timeless and spaceless, or may be experienced as eternal and spread out infinitely throughout space. It is experienced as the underlying support of all existence and is one and the same forever. Sri Aurobindo refers to this as the experience of the Self or *Atman*.

Sri Aurobindo did write quite extensively about the Supermind and the supramental plane of existence. Here this principle can briefly be introduced. It is a plane of divine existence and consciousness that is omniscient and omnipotent, meaning that it is all-knowing and all-powerful. It has within it not only awareness of the oneness of the infinite spirit, the transcendent *sachchidananda*, but also the awareness, which is one by identity, of the multiplicity of existence. Its power and action well directly out of the Divine and are unified with its omniscient knowledge, and thus are infallible and perfect in their output, in perfect harmony with the truth of existence and the divine intention in nature. It is infinite spirit and infinite nature perfectly integrated and harmonized. It perceives all of existence within its own being, not as separate, and thus it knows perfectly and masters perfectly all that is. It knows each thing and being in its truth as a unique expression of the Divine, and thus its exact place in the whole and its relations with the Divine within it and with all around it. It perceives its own individual existence as an expression of the Divine in the cosmic play, manifested for a particular purpose and particular expression in the cosmic whole, yet perceives its unbroken oneness with the transcendent and cosmic Divine Being. As Sri Aurobindo has often stated, it is difficult to express what it is in mental terms because it surpasses mind which must divide and compare and contrast things to understand them, and it is a consciousness which is undivided and knows directly by identification with all. At the same time, as an infinite and all-powerful consciousness and force one with existence, it

is all-blissful. The greatest bliss that we humans can experience is a pale, broken reflection of its infinite bliss.

The supramental plane of existence exists in its own right eternally, and all the lower planes of existence are but broken reflections of it, limited and often distorted expressions of some of its infinite possibilities. Sri Aurobindo contends that it is possible to not only ascend in one's consciousness into the supramental plane of existence, but also to bring it down its divine consciousness, force, and bliss into the lower existence. He indicates that this is in fact the divine intention of the evolution on earth and the goal of his Integral Yoga. It must be stressed, however, that this cannot be done by the will and effort of the human being, but can only be done by a complete conscious surrender of the human being in all its parts and tendencies into the hands of the Divine for the transformation to be done by the divine consciousness and power.

Below the supramental plane are the higher spiritual mind planes which intervene between the supramental consciousness and the human level of mind which Sri Aurobindo has labelled, in descending order, Overmind, Intuition, illumined mind, and higher mind. Like Supermind, these are not simply different types of cognition, but are distinct planes of existence, consciousness, force, and delight. Overmind is described as a kind of borderline between Supermind and the lower, undivine planes of existence. It expresses the various aspects of the truth of Supermind, but as they are differentiated into aspects and are not the integral, whole Truth, they are incomplete and in relation with each other rather than indissolubly one and unified. These truths become further differentiated in the plane of Intuition, each an expression of a particular divine truth, like an individual ray of the sun. Further down, the illumined mind is characterized by a spiritual light and vision of partial aspects of the truth. The higher mind is described as a plane of spiritual thought in which the higher spiritual truths are expressed in terms of a wide and enlightened spiritual understanding. The consciousness in each of these spiritual mind planes exceeds our human means or measures of mind, and are more directly in contact with the Divine and expressive of it the outer nature. They may perhaps be described as semi-divine in their character and nature. Again, like with the Supermind, the human being may ascend into these planes of being and consciousness and also bring their light and transformative powers into our human existence here. Lower in the hierarchy of the planes of existence and consciousness come mind, life, and matter. Again, Sri Aurobindo asserts that there are planes of the mind principle and the life principle (also called the vital principle) that are independent of life on earth which is situated on the physical plane, that were created prior to earth life in the descent of consciousness from spirit to matter. He has described various levels of the mind and life planes each having worlds and beings expressive of these levels of consciousness. They are, of course, the principles of existence with which we are most familiar in our material world., Here on earth they have developed in the course of evolution from a basis of inert matter, though their emergence and evolution were made possible due to the influence and pressure from their own native planes. The mind principle is associated especially with cognition, with thought, memory, perception, conception, inference, deduction, and understanding. The life principle is associated especially with instinct, self-preservation, self-reproduction, self-assertion, expansion of being, with attendant movements of desire,

acquisition, dominance, and feelings of fear, anger, pleasure, pain, attraction, and repulsion. It should be emphasized that although mind, life and matter may be conceived as separate principles, there is a continuum of existence and consciousness running from pure spirit to dense unconscious matter, so that all the principles effectively run into each other. Thus, the life principle at its lower end is heavily weighed down with material inconscience, but at the higher end displays signs of an emerging intelligence. Similarly, the mind principle at its lower end is dull and sluggish and turned towards physicality, but at its higher end is a clear and bright intelligence opening upward to the spiritual mind planes and influences coming from Supermind and the spiritual planes of conscious existence. Or the mind may be heavily weighted with the life principle's accent of instinct, impulse, and desire, becoming in turn rash, unpredictable, and irrational, turned away from the disinterested pursuit of knowledge and truth, its native character, to the satisfaction of the vital nature's desires. This, in fact, is a strong tendency in the present status of the evolving human mind, and a source of much danger and discord in human life.

In fact, from Sri Aurobindo's perspective, the whole manifestation is a single, interwoven complex being in which each level of existence and consciousness contains the whole within it. Even inert matter holds within it Supermind, *sat*, *chit*, and *ananda*, and while these latter principles are held back in their expression so as not to be apparent, yet they do uphold, support, and manifest something of their infinite being and consciousness through matter. It is due to this immanence of the Divine that matter, while seeming inconscient, without intelligence, yet is exquisitely organized and does the work of a vast intelligence and over time is able to evolve, albeit slowly, life, mind, and the consciousness of the spirit and Supermind. It is because infinite spirit—infinite existence, consciousness, and bliss—is the foundation of all existence that partial and often distorted manifestations of these principles can be and are expressed in us and in the world around us. The higher manifestations of life, mind, and spiritual consciousness that have been evident and evolving throughout history could not emerge on their own from inert inconscient matter due to random chance, the scientific explanation. However, from Sri Aurobindo's explanation, our existence and its nature and drift become explicable and even rational.

So far, the divine and undivine have been explained in impersonal terms, as universal principles and states of being or consciousness. However, if we look around us, everywhere we see individual beings. Each being, our own, for example, is composed of impersonal elements. We are each composed of atomic particles, molecules, cells, organs, muscles, tissues, desires, feelings, emotions, thought activities, and motivations. But we are not simply these impersonal things; we are each someone. Somehow all these things come together and are organized to be expressive of a being that is who we are. Throughout nature we observe that there are innumerable such beings from the simplest living micro-organisms to the most sophisticated and spiritually evolved beings on earth. They seem to embody all the levels of consciousness from inconscient matter to the highest spiritual consciousness. Each being is unique and fits a niche in the universal web of life. It is also the case that each plant, animal, and human being appears to consist of many smaller living beings, cells for instance, which have a certain structural integrity and autonomy of their own. It is said that cells reproduce and die, after all, like other living organisms, and they each have their own role and function

in the larger whole of they are a part. It also appears to be the case that on all the planes of consciousness above the material world in which we live, in the occult worlds visible to and felt by those with developed faculties for perceiving them, but to some extent experienced by most people in their dreams, there are domains inhabited by living beings. This curious phenomenon would appear then to be a universal principle. It would seem quite logical that this principle of distinct individual being derives from and is applicable to the one supreme Being who is the original and all-constituting Being of all existence. In other words, the Divine is not merely a transcendent and universal impersonal existence, the Divine is also the Being who is the father and mother of all other manifested beings.

Throughout the ages, many of the world religions have asserted the existence of a Divine Being to whom one could turn for comfort and assistance. Many millions of people do this every day and feel that they are heard and receive a response. If the Divine Being is all-knowing and all-powerful, if the Divine Being is the source of all love and compassion that we perceive in human beings and even in animals, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the Divine would be capable of such a relation with its children, the lesser beings which are but partial, individual manifestations of itself.

This prospect, however, raises a difficult question. If the Divine is all-knowing, all-powerful, all-blissful, and all-compassionate, how is it that we live in a world of ignorance, weakness, pain, and misery? Such a Being would not create such a place as this or allow it to continue, or so it would seem. But let us consider it a little further. First, we have already suggested that there is an infinite gradation of planes of existence and worlds peopled by beings that range from the heights of divine existence and bliss down to inert, insentient matter. We have said that our earth is a world which is evolving out of insentient matter, but its evolution is incomplete and is still ongoing. So it is not that this troubled planet is the only world that exists, there are also worlds of ecstatic bliss, a whole series of worlds from the highest to the lowest. We have also suggested that the planes of existence and their worlds and beings are partial manifestations of the Divine itself, they are not other than the Divine Being, but rather are domains and unique, living, partial expressions of the one Divine Being. So it is not that the Divine Being has imposed this suffering onto someone else. The Divine has consented to forego his infinite divine status and become these undivine beings that we are, holding back its infinite knowledge, force, and delight from the surface of our consciousness, but nevertheless supporting and upholding us. We have also suggested that we have not been abandoned, that the Divine Being is there and willing and able to comfort and assist us. And finally, we have suggested that there is purpose in our predicament, and that purpose is a gradual and difficult evolution of consciousness from matter and in matter toward an embodied divine life upon this material earth. A divine embodied life in the material world would be different from a divine existence on higher planes or in the transcendent, it would have a density and a certain kind of stability that is associated with material substance. Thus, the end result may justify the hard conditions of the long, evolutionary labor.

We have said that the Divine itself has consented to manifest something of itself in this undivine world in these undivine beings, but there is an aspect to this that requires some further explanation. We earlier said that in the higher divine nature there are individual

divine beings who are conscious of their divine source but yet express a particular aspect of the Divine Being. It is some of these divine beings who choose to send an emanation of themselves into the lower nature to support and enable that lower existence. In our world, this emanation is referred to as the soul spark in Sri Aurobindo's terminology; it is the divine nucleus that supports the evolution of individual beings here on earth. As the evolution proceeds, the soul spark expresses itself in and through the evolving material, vital, and mental nature, developing, organizing and weaving around itself an expressive nature and being. Eventually in the course of its long evolution through many lives, reaching the human level, it has developed what Sri Aurobindo calls a psychic being, a conscious soul personality which is oriented toward the expression of the divine in nature. Generally, the psychic being is hidden deep within and the person is not consciously identified with it, but rather is identified with the vital or mental ego, a transitional center of being on the surface of the consciousness. Nevertheless, the deep-seated psychic being does exert its influence on the life of the person, guiding the person toward truth, goodness, beauty, and other divine qualities, but its influence is curtailed by many other countervailing influences and by the being's mental, vital, and physical nature and tendencies. However, as the human being evolves through successive earthly lives, the nature becomes more and more organized around the psychic being and expressive of it. The individual divine being from its divine level presides over the evolution of the soul spark and later of the psychic being and supports and guides them. This individual divine being presiding over the evolution of an individual soul on earth Sri Aurobindo refers to as the Jivatman, and it is a concept that is part of the ancient Indian spiritual tradition.

Finally, there is the Divine Being, the Supreme, called in the ancient tradition the Ishwara. The Divine is not merely an impersonal infinite existence, consciousness, and bliss; He is also the one all-conscious, all-blissful Existent. He is the Supreme Person who is the lord and master of all existence. He is the creator of the universe and one with it, he is the Divine Transcendence and he manifests his self-existence as the universe and in the universe through his Shakti, his Divine Consciousness-Force, also called the Mother. The following description by Sri Aurobindo in *The Life Divine* illustrates it best:

Here the supreme Person, the Being in its transcendental and cosmic consciousness and force, comes to the front, omnipotent, omniscient, the controller of all energies, the Conscious in all that is conscient or inconscient, the Inhabitant of all souls and minds and hearts and bodies, the Ruler or Overruler of all works, the Enjoyer of all delight, the Creator who has built all things in his own being, the All-Person of whom all beings are personalities, the Power from whom are all powers, the Self, the Spirit in all, by his being the Father of all that is, in his Consciousness-Force the Divine Mother, the Friend of all creatures, the All-blissful and All-beautiful of whom beauty and joy are the revelation, the All-Beloved and All-Lover (p. 366).

The Ishwara is the Being, the creator and lord of his creation, but he creates, manifests through his Shakti, his Consciousness-Force, the Divine Mother and Creatrix of the universe. The Ishwara and Shakti are two who are one, because they contain each other and are one by identity, and yet they manifest as two in the creation and as the creation. At all the levels of the manifestation, there is a nature, a form and dynamic expressive force, and within,

superior to the form, a spirit, an essential being of which the form is an outer expression. Regarding the Divine Mother, the Shakti, Sri Aurobindo explains that there are three ways of her being of which we can become aware:

Transcendent, the original supreme Shakti, she stands above the worlds and links the creation to the ever unmanifest mystery of the Supreme. Universal, the cosmic Mahashakti, she creates all these beings and contains and enters, supports and conducts all these million processes and forces. Individual, she embodies the power of these two vaster ways of her existence, makes them living and near to us and mediates between the human personality and the divine Nature. (*The Mother*, p. 14-15)

As an individual, the Divine Mother manifests herself in a form that is seizable to the human being, a form with which we can enter into relationship, as a child to its mother. We can call to her for her protection, guidance, aid, for her divine Light, Peace, Love, Delight, and Power to descend into us and enlighten and transform our limited existence. She even takes birth, incarnates in a human body in our world in order to become living and near to us. Just as the Divine Mother manifests herself in individual form, so also she manifests the Ishwara, the Supreme Being in individual form. We can similarly be in relation with him, and he can take whatever form is best suited to our nature or mental formulation of him, and he too takes birth in the physical world from time to time as the Avatar, the incarnate Divine Being, in order to lead it in its evolutionary journey.

We see then that in Sri Aurobindo's conception the Divine is the Absolute, he is all that is and yet he is beyond all that is. He is illimitable and indefinable and yet is the creator of all limits and definitions. He is the impersonal, infinite existence, and he is the sole Existent, the sole Person or Being who is the source of all persons and personalities. Through his consciousness-force, his Shakti, the Divine Mother, he manifests the universe as a partial expression of his Being. The Mother's Force is the origin of all the forces and beings in the universe. She manifests a hierarchy of planes of existence ranging from pure conscious spirit to pure inconscient force or matter, each plane representing a particular level of existence, consciousness, and delight. Each plane consists of many worlds expressive of particular aspects of being; each world consists of many individual beings embodying those varied aspects of being. The higher planes of existence live in the consciousness of the Divine, are conscious of their unity with the Divine. The lower planes of existence have lost the consciousness of their oneness with the Divine, their beings live in Ignorance and are thus undivine. In the lowest worlds they are subject to pain, suffering, perversion, evil, and death. Our world, earth, is based in inconscient matter, but it is an evolutionary world in which the immanent Divine is gradually emerging in higher and higher forms, over time, in a succession of earthly individual lives. This evolution of consciousness in matter is supported, guided, and assisted by the Divine, both from above and from within the evolution. This evolution is still proceeding and is destined to reveal physical embodied beings conscious of their oneness with the Divine Being, and expressive of various divine qualities and personalities of its Being.

BEAUTY AND DELIGHT



(Source: Internet)

The greatness of a literature lies first in the greatness and worth of its substance, the value of its thought and the beauty of its forms, but also in the degree to which, satisfying the highest conditions of the art of speech, it avails to bring out and raise the soul and life or the living and the ideal mind of a people, an age, a culture, through the genius of some of its greatest or most sensitive representative spirits.

Sri Aurobindo

Sri Aurobindo and Tamil Literature

P. Marudanayagam

Sri Aurobindo is a great connecting link between all the past of India and the future of the world. Where Indian culture is concerned, he is fond of emphasizing the fact that its unique character consists in the rich and luxuriant variety of its forms and rhythms. His knowledge of it being comprehensive and his nature generous, he never ignores the contribution of any region, religion, sect or race to it. In his literary, religious and cultural writings, for example, there are numerous references to the Tamil saints and poets. He took the trouble of learning the Tamil language, studying its literature and mastering what the Tamil mystics and intellectuals have to say on the mystery of life.

The line of spiritual luminaries who were his immediate predecessors includes not only Dayananda Saraswati, Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda but Ramalinganar of Vadalur also. One of the greatest of our spiritual explorers this mystic-poet lived during the closing decades of the nineteenth century and authored a mighty collection of poems and songs, a treasure house of esoteric and spiritual wisdom. There is evidence to indicate that he conducted some experiments in creative evolution resembling the Supramental Yoga, a subject dear to Sri Aurobindo's heart. According to Sri Aurobindo,

There are different statuses (*avastha*) of the Divine consciousness. There are also different statuses of transformation. First is the Psychic transformation, in which all is in contact with the divine through the individual psychic consciousness. Next is the Spiritual transformation in which all is merged in the Divine in the cosmic consciousness. Third is the Supramental transformation in which all becomes supramentalised in the divine gnostic consciousness. It is only with the last that there can begin the complete transformation of mind, life and body in my sense of completeness.¹

He conceded that the endeavour towards this achievement was not new and that some yogis had already achieved it. But two important differences were to be noted. The Yogis achieved it only as a personal siddhi maintained by yoga-siddhi not a dharma of the nature. And the supramental transformation is not the same as the spiritual-mental. To Sri Aurobindo, there is nothing supramental in the transformations contemplated by Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Chaitanya or even the Buddha. As to Ramalinganar, the temple he built was symbolic of his path and the aim in his sadhana. Revealing its significance, Sri Aurobindo writes:

The temple had no image in it cut seven screens of seven colours: black, blue, green, red, gold, white and mixed (Maya— shakti, Kriyashakti, Parashakti, Icchashakti, Janashakti, Adhishakti and Chitstshakti) indicating the seven planes of consciousness. On a fixed day in the year a crows of pilgrims assembled there to see the temple opened screen by screen ultimately revealing an effulgent sun. The meaning is that when the Sadhaka passed through the seven planes the last one perfected in him the golden body by changing the physical body into light.²

Sri Aurobindo made it clear that though the intuition about bringing down the

Supramental into the physical body is a very ancient one, the ancients do not seem to have had the knowledge of the necessary conditions for its coming down. They developed the vital being for its own sake and did not prepare it as a passive channel for the Supramental to come down and manifest itself. Here what is of importance to us is that Sri Aurobindo was willing to accept that Ramalinganar belonged to the great tradition of Indian Rishis, Siddhas and Yogins. The interest in the supramental transformation is not the only common point between the two modern saints. Ramalinganar was also totally opposed to all kinds of distinctions like creeds and dogmas, sects and clans, castes and classes and spoke of *sanmarga*, the path of truth conscious life stressing the common basis of all religions and laying special emphasis on universal love and compassion. It may not be a simple case of strange coincidence that Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo's 'cave of tapasya' is very near Vadalur, the other saint's place of fulfilment. Also the story goes that Ramalinganar predicted during the last phase of his life that the divine mission would be continued by a great one to be born not long after his death.

The greatest contribution of Sri Aurobindo to Tamil literature is what he did to Subramaniya Bharati, the inaugurator of modern poetry in Tamil. It was during his stay in Pondicherry as a political exile from 1908 to 1918 that Bharati's creative vigour reached its peak yielding the best of his writings in verse and prose. If Bharati entered Pondicherry as a political revolutionary he left it as a Gnani. And Sri Aurobindo played an extraordinary role in this profound transformation; their frequent meetings brought about this alchemy.

They began their life in Pondicherry as fellow sufferers. In an interesting letter written by Sri Aurobindo in 1912, there is a reference to the grinding poverty he had to face:

The situation just now is that we have Rs.11/2 or so in hand. Srinivasa is also without money. As to Bharati living on nothing means an uncertain quantity. The only other man in Pondicherry whom I could at present ask for help is absent sine die and my messenger to the south not returned... No doubt, God will provide but He has contracted a bad habit of waiting till the last moment. I only hope He does not wish us to learn how to live on a minus quantity like Bharati. ³

It is a saint's tribute to Bharati's power of endurance. As later events proved, Bharati did not sink under the heavy load of the miseries of life including starvation. His poetic career was not allowed to suffer and the poet in Bharati became aware of the boon that had been conferred on him in the form of Sri Aurobindo's friendship. The Tamil poet must have been terribly impressed with the Bengali's astonishing erudition, his infectious interest in the rich Indian heritage, his firm grasp of the Vedas and the Upanishads, his unerring understanding of all complex philosophical systems and his mastery of many languages. Bharati had a subtle intellect and a capacious mind. Now that the right direction was shown by one of the greatest intellectuals of the twentieth century, it could be fully equipped in an incredibly short time preparing him for the glorious poetic task ahead. He was transformed into a literary cormorant and started devouring all great writings introduced to him. There is evidence of his immense learning in the prose essays that he wrote during this period, in which he quotes Emerson, Thoreau, Carlyle, Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, Swinburne and

Macaulay. He himself states that he has read Shelley in English, Victor Hugo in French and Goethe in English translation. His essays are replete with ideas and quotations from Greek, Japanese, Chinese and Russian writers. The impact of Whitman, Shelley, Wordsworth, Byron and Keats on his poetry was considerable while that of the Victorian poets like Browning and Arnold was little.

Sri Aurobindo's *The Future Poetry* was first published serially in the monthly review 'Arya' from December 1917 to July 1920. In thirty-two consecutive instalments. He had some strikingly original and illuminating observations on the Romantics and the Victorians. He felt that "Shelley was a greater poet by nature" than any of the Romantics.⁴ Byron "has the elemental force of his personality, has even one foot across the borders to the spiritual, but never quite enters into that kingdom."⁵ Wordsworth "states too much, sings too little ... drowns his genius in, a desolate sea of platitude."⁶ Keats is "the first entire artist in word and rhythm in English poetry - not grandiose, classical and derived like Milton, but direct and original in his artistry, he begins a new era."⁷ On the other hand,

Victorian blank verse at its best is not strong or great and at a more common level it is languid or crude or characterless."⁸

Interestingly, Bharati had more or less the same preferences. He called himself Shelleydasan and admired his revolutionary idealism and love for freedom and democracy. The Augustans and the Victorians do not seem to have created any lasting impression on him.

Sri Aurobindo reserves the best praise for Whitman:

Whitman's aim is, consciently, clearly, professedly to make a great revolution in the whole method of poetry, and if anybody could have succeeded, it ought to have been this giant of poetic thought with his energy of diction, this spiritual crowned athlete and vital prophet of democracy, liberty and the soul of man and nature and all humanity. He is a great poet, one of the greatest in the power of his substance, the energy of his vision, the force of his style, the largeness at once of his personality and his universality.⁹

The influence of Whitman on Bharati is profound and there are striking similarities between the two. Whitman's cosmic vision, nationalism, sympathetic attitude to women and conception of free verse are seen to have left a deep impress on the mind and poetry of Bharati. His "prose-poetry (*Vachana Kavitaigal*) is a mixture of the Vedas and Whitman."¹⁰

It is not suggested here that Bharati's reading list was prepared by Sri Aurobindo. Bharati did possess a keen critical sensibility which would have enabled him to arrive at his own estimates of the Western poets. But it may not be wrong to believe that his contact with the Bengali scholar would have certainly put him on the right path if we remember that the Tamil poet did not have much of formal education that would have exposed him to the great English classics. He was not swept off his feet by the flood of English writers with whom he got acquainted.

Sri Aurobindo's warning was there:

To be fed on the verse of Spenser, Shelley, Keats, Byron and Tennyson is no good preparation for the severe classics.¹¹

Bharati's genius enabled him to assimilate the great Tamil tradition available to him so that what he got from the West might be adapted to the requirements of modern Tamil poetry which took shape in his hands.

Bharati could benefit by Sri Aurobindo's ideas on the Vedas and the Upanishads. "The new interpretation of the Vedas in terms of mystic symbols came to Bharati directly from Sri Aurobindo with all its grandeur of the Vision and depth of spiritual significance as experienced by [Sri] Aurobindo himself."¹² Bharati's preface to the Bhagavad Gita was clearly inspired by Sri Aurobindo's writings. Some parts of "Vedarishikalin Kavitai" might have been direct translations of what the saint wrote in 'Arya'. A few passages in Putia Atticudi and Vuyir Tamilar Pattu bear the unmistakable Sri Aurobindo stamp:¹³

"To serve the country is Yoga;
To suffer- for the good of others is sacrifice;
Even while on the battlefield
To be serene is true gnana."

"The entire mankind is one;
Those who realise the truth attain bliss;
The one that falls today may rise tomorrow;
Praise may yield to blame."

"To tame the senses, to train the mind,
To direct the grumbling self in the intellect's
path is the way to be happy"

(Vuyir Petra Tamilar Pattu)

Realise that you are divine;
Do penance to acquire strength

Practise silence;
This world is a lila.
Renew the Vedas.

(Atticudi)

The subdued revolutionary is seen here advocating Aurobindonian maxims of mental balance, tolerance and contemplation.

For Bharati's adoration of "Shakti, there may be more than one source. But the role of Bengal and Sri Aurobindo cannot be easily brushed aside. "The poem on the dance of the Pralaya or Ulikkuttu reminds one of the Kali of Bengal or Saktism rather than the Kali of the Tamil land."¹⁴ It is one of the best poems by Bharati picturing Kali's divine dance of destruction:

Oh Mother ! Mother dear!
I desire to see you dance the dance of joy

Tearing the cosmos with drums of thunder and songs of blood-drunk ghosts the human intelligence to profound large and powerful truths of the spirit, or, as in certain French Writers, to mould into accurate rhythm the very substance and soul and characteristic movement of soul- states, ideas or objects described and seen.¹⁵

He conceded that there is something large and constantly mutable in the life, thought and spirit of today which cannot be adequately expressed by the restricted range of subtleties, variations and fullness of any given poetic measure. But at the same time, he warned against the liberal use of poetic prose because he felt that it has not been fully justified even in the hands of its greatest or most skillful exponents. It is to be noted that Bharati uses a kind of prose-verse only in a few Vedic hymns which he offered as *Vacana Kavitai*. Even though he had great regard for Whitman and Tagore who used it in his English rendering of *Gitanjali*. Sri Aurobindo's warning must have prevented Bharati from carrying the experiment too far.

The great poet-critic advised the Hindu poets to take with a reverent hand the old myths and cleanse them of soiling accretions till they shine with some of the antique strength, simplicity and depth of meaning. He himself used Greek and Indian myths to interpret life for us. Bharati did it with remarkable success in his *Panchali Sabadam* in which Panchali, like Sri Aurobindo's Savitri becomes a complex symbol. Contracting the Western and Eastern attitudes to matters spiritual, the seer in *The Foundations of Indian Culture* says,

“The spiritual, the infinite is near and real and the gods are real and the worlds beyond not so much beyond as immanent in our own existence. That which to the Western mind is myth and imagination is here an actuality and a strand of the life of our inner being. What is there beautiful poetic idea and philosophic speculation is here a thing constantly realised and present to the experience.”¹⁶

Bharati's *Kannan Pattu* is a clear vindication of this stand. In this unique series of exquisite poems, Bharati boldly presents Kannan as his friend, mother, father, servant, master, king, disciple, guru, child, playmate, lover, lady-love, and household deity. There cannot be a greater celebration of the intimacy between God and man.

Though Bharati translated many of Sri Aurobindo's essays and speeches into Tamil and published them in his journal *Karmayogi*, Bharati's rendering of the latter's poem “To the Sea” deserves special mention. Done as early as 1909, the translated version has a brief preface in Tamil which is a moving tribute to Sri Aurobindo:

Just as a child imitating its mother, cooks sand-food, I have translated the great Yogi's poem out of love for him... What does Sri Aurobindo call the sea in this story? It is nothing but man's life full of miseries and conflicts. The soul, struggling against these, has to conquer them in order to attain fulfilment and gnana. The one that keeps oneself away from dangers is a fool. Oh man! Face all the problems boldly and master them. God has sent you here only to do this... I have tried hard to express the ideas in a simple language so that everyone may understand them.¹⁷

Not only does Bharati use simple words but he takes care to interpret the poem providing sub-headings and explanations that are not found in the original. It is a typical Sri Aurobindo poem bearing a characteristic message. Its appeal to Bharati is understandable. The wholesome message that it contains would have been needed to see him through the life of political persecution and penury that he lived till his death.

Another Tamil poet who came under the influence of Sri Aurobindo is Suddhananda

Bharati who lived in the ashram for a long time. His magnum opus, *Bharata Shakti*, is allegorical epic, which is at once his autobiography, India's political-spiritual history, an account of the East-West confrontation, and a poetic record of man's spiritual journey.

It is evident that the hero of *Bharata Shakti*, Suttan, is none but Sri Aurobindo himself. In one of his letters, the author of the Tamil epic states that in the whole work he sees only the great saint and the Mother and that the influence of Sri Aurobindo on him was profound.¹⁸ The last chapter of the long poem also mentions that it is his spiritual guru who has been the source of inspiration. There is a liberal use of ideas from *Savitri*, *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga*. Suttan, like King Aswapathy in *Savitri*, is a traveller and climber who presses towards his high goal step by step. The ascent of his consciousness may be described as a series of sublimations through Higher Mind, Illumined Mind and Intuition into Overmind and beyond it. Finally it reaches the summit of the Supermind. Just as it is shown in *Savitri* that asuric power can be mastered and transformed by spiritual power, even so Suttan and *SHakti* are able to counter beastly forces with the power of love. Suddhananda Bharati's portrayal of Tanavous under the leadership of Mavali reminds us of Sri Aurobindo's picture of "The Children of Wotan":

'We mock at God, we have silenced the mutter of Priests at his altar,
Our leader is master of Fate, medium of her mysteries.
We have made the mind a cypher, we have strangled Thought with a core...
A cross of beast and demoniac with the godhead of power and will.
We are born in humanity's sunset, to the Night is our pilgrimage...'¹⁹

It is a pity that Suddhananda Bharati blessed with such a background and a long writing career could not reach great heights and write the future poetry as conceived by his great guru.

Another great service that Sri Aurobindo did was to introduce some of the best Tamil classics to the West through his sample English translations. Both by precept and practice, he showed the way to the future translators of Indian classics into English.

He pleaded for a lot of freedom in translation:

A translator is not necessarily bound to the exact word and letter of the original he chooses; he can make his own poem of it if he likes, and that is what is very often done. This is all the more legitimate since we find that literal translations more completely betray than those that are reasonably free—turning life into death and poetic power into poverty and flatness.²⁰

Regarding his own practice as a translator, he once observed perhaps half in jest and half in earnest:

Whenever I translated I was careless of the hurt feelings of the original text and transmogrified it without mercy into whatever my fancy chose.²¹

But where the Tamil texts are concerned—the first chapter of *Kural*, a few stanzas each by Nammalwar, Kulasekhara Alwar and Andal—he does not take too much of liberty with the original but tries to keep as close as possible to it, at the same time seeing to it that the result

does not read like a translation but like an original poem in English. For instance the first couplet of *Tirukkural* says,

Just as “A” is the first of alphabets, the original Bhagavan is the first in the world.”

V.V.S. Iyer’s prose translation reads as follows:

“A is the starting point of the world of sound; even so is the great original the starting point of all that exists.”²²

Sri Aurobindo translates it as:

Alpha of all letters the first, of the worlds the original Godhead the beginnings. ²³

Another Kural in the same chapter contends that only those who take refuge in the feet of God will be able to cross the ocean of birth. V.V.S.Iyer renders it as

“They alone cross the ocean of births and deaths who take refuge in the feet of the Lord; the others traverse it not.”

Sri Aurobindo clothes it in a poetic garb:

“Some are who cross the giant ocean of birth; but he shall not cross it
Who has touched not the feet of the Godhead.”²⁵

V.V.S.Iyer, believing that the authorised version of the Bible is the proper model to be followed by the translator of the Kural, used a kind of poetic prose and aimed at rendering all the vigour and force of the original in an interpretive translation making the meaning clear at the risk of using a larger number of words and lines than found in the original. While rendering a poem from one language into another, Sri Aurobindo seeks to take its spirit, sense and imagery and reproduce them freely so as to suit the new language. In his translation of Kurals, he retains the poetic form and sticks to the length of the couplet.

Sri Aurobindo’s choice of the poems of three Alwars from the vast body of Bhakti poetry in Tamil indicates that he found kindred souls in them. In his writings there are many reference to their role in the moulding of the soul of India. It is justly claimed that the *adhara shruti* of his writings is the vision of a great future for mankind.²⁶ From the large collection of Nammalwar’s poems, his first choice falls on the ten stanzas dealing with the golden age. It may be noted that Bharati to whom the Alwars were a great source of inspiration never got tired of painting a glorious picture of the future when Kali yuga will have to yield place to Krita yuga. Nammalwar’s fare-well to the iron age had captured the heart of Sri Aurobindo:

The Iron Age shall change. It shall fade, it shall pass away. The gods shall be in our midst. The mighty Golden Age shall hold the earth and the flood of the highest Bliss shall swell. For-the hosts of your dark-hued Lord, dark-hued like the cloud, dark-hued like the sea, widely they enter in, singing songs, and everywhere they have seized on their stations.²⁷

Estimating Nammalwar’s achievement as a poet, Aurobindo states that while some songs touch the level of the loftiest world-poets others, even though rich in rhythm and expression

fall much below the poet's capacity. The Alwar receives high praise for having touched all the phases of the life divine and given expression to all forms of spiritual experience.

Sri Aurobindo's rendering of some of the exquisite pieces of Andal are easily the best in as much as they recapture the spirit of the original in simple and flowing lines:

I dreamed a dream, O friend.

There were beatings of the drum and blowings of the conch; and under the canopy hung heavily with strings of pearls He came, my lover and my lord, the vanquisher of the demon Madhu and grasped me by the hand.

I dreamed a dream, O friend.

Those whose voices are blest, they sang the Vedic songs. The holy grass was laid. The sun was established. And He who was puissant like a war-elephant in its rage, He seized my hand and we paced round the Flame. ²⁸

In a short note on Andal, the translator points out with great respect and admiration that her poetry is entirely occupied with her passion for the divine being. Though he has done a marvelous job, he apologetically submits that the great Alwar's poetry has suffered considerably in translation and adds that the genius of the Tamil tongue hardly permits of an effective rendering as it is utterly divergent from that of the English language.²⁹ While going through the few English renderings of Sri Aurobindo one wishes that he had translated many more of these sacred songs. Also one wishes that the later translators of the Tamil classics had the same humility and the same reverential attitude to the Bhakti literature.

Unfortunately, Sri Aurobindo as a literary Critic has not said much on the great Tamil writers, though there are a few scattered observations especially in *The Foundations of Indian Culture*. With regard to the gnomic poetry, he categorically states that Tiruvalluvar's Kural is the greatest in plan, conception and force of execution ever-written in this kind.³⁰ Kamban and the southern Shaiva saints and Alwars are mentioned along with the greatest in Indian literature and the Mahayogi contends that the people and the civilisation that have produced such writers must surely be counted among the greatest civilisations and the world's most developed and creative peoples.

Now it is very difficult to estimate the nature and the extent of impact that Sri Aurobindo had on V.V.S.Iyer, who may be considered the inaugurator of modern literary criticism in Tamil. This great revolutionary during his stay in Pondicherry from 1910 to 1920 was naturally drawn into the saint's charmed circle. Though for his conversion from a fiery militant to a non-violent satyagrah, his contact with Mahatma Gandhi was largely responsible, in matters literary and aesthetic, he must have gained a lot from his friendship with Sri Aurobindo. But one should not underestimate Iyer's knowledge of English, Tamil and Sanskrit, his passionate love for classics in these languages and his remarkable critical sensibility. All the same, it is reasonable; to conclude that the impetus to his work as a critic came from Sri Aurobindo. His *Kambaramayanam* a study comparing the Tamil writer with other great epic writers in the world including Valmiki is an acknowledged masterpiece and

a monumental achievement inspiring similar comparative studies involving Tamil writers in Tamil and English.

One great but little known critical work by another leading Tamil critic, T.P. Meenakshisundaram deserves special mention because it applies [Sri] Aurobindo theory of poetry to a close study of the major creative writings in Tamil.³¹

The different types of poetry Sri Aurobindo identifies are explained and suitable illustrative examples from Tamil literature are given. For the poetry of pure intuition the *Sangam akam* poem is an ideal example as it reveals a particular moment in the drama of human love with all its depth and by a lightning flash displays a simple scene with an entire and miraculous completeness of vision and its rhythm has a decisive inevitable sound which leaves nothing essential. For the poetry of the higher thought, there are numerous examples in Valluvar's *Tirukkural*. Each of the great couplets is a well-chiselled diamond of multifaceted brilliance revealing a mystic vision and it is characterized by austerity and "miserliness of words."

Kambaramayana offers a supreme example of the poetry of the illumined mind since in that great work the outflow of illumined mind comes in a flood of revealing words or a light of crowding images. From the Nayanars and Alvars we get the poetry of the Overmind, using a language which carries in it a great depth of spiritual vision and experience.

In the second part of the learned essay, T.P. Meenakshisundaram gives a historical-critical survey of Tamil literature in the light of Sri Aurobindo's ideas on the evolution of a national literature.

Last but not the least, Sri Aurobindo's concept of poetry as mantra has thrown a flood of light on a much neglected passage on mantra in the great Tamil grammatical treatise *Tolkappiyam*. *Tolkappiyar* describes it as the secret word of those who have perfect seeing words at their beck and call.³² *Tirumular* calls each one of his verses in *Tirumantiram* a mantra and according to a legend, each, an incarnation of an aspect of truth is the produce of a year's meditation. Interestingly, Sri Aurobindo describes the mantra in poetry as that rhythmic speech which, as the Veda puts it, rises at once from the heart of the seer and from the distant home of the truth. He feels that it is not sufficient for poetry to attain high intensities of word and rhythm; it must have, to fill them, an answering intensity of vision and always new and more and more uplifted or inward ranges of experience. It is no exaggeration to say that the experience of the reader of *Tirumular's* mantras is similar to the experience described by Sri Aurobindo. When the mantra gets into the ear,

Its message enters stirring the blind brain
And keeps in the dim ignorant cells its sound;
The hearer understands a form of words
And, musing on the index thought holds,
He strives to read it with the labouring mind,
But finds bright hints, not the embodied truth:
Then falling silent in himself to know
He meets the deeper listening of his soul:

The word repeated itself in rhythmic strains;
Thought, vision, feeling, sense, the body's self
Are seized unalterably and he endures
An ecstasy and an immortal change.³⁴

Even though some of the Tamil writers have cashed in on their contact with Sri Aurobindo and his writings, one cannot help feeling that contemporary Tamil literature would have gained immensely if only a large number of our poets and critics had allowed themselves to be influenced by one of the greatest minds of the twentieth century especially when he chose to live, lecture and write in the Tamil land and showed so much of interest in the Tamil literary tradition.

Notes and References.

1. Quoted in T.R.Thulasiram, *Arut Perum Jothi and Deathless Body*, Vol., 1 (Madras: University of Madras, 1980), p.905.
2. Ibid., p.910.
3. Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary, Vol.27 (Pondicherry:Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1912), pp.426-27
4. Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1985), p. 122.
5. Ibid.,p.92
6. Ibid.,p.118
7. Ibid.,p.126
8. Ibid.,p.130
9. Ibid.,pp.144-5.
10. Dr. V. Sachithanandan, *The Impact of Western Thought on Bharati* (Annamalainaigar: Annamalai University, 1970), p.83.
11. Quoted in C.D. Narasimhaiah "Sri Aurobindo:Inaugurator of Modern Indian Criticism," *Journal of South Asian Literature*, Winter Spring 1989, p.97.
12. T.P.Meenakshisundaran, "Sri Aurobindo's Theory of Poetry"(unpublished paper presented at a seminar on Sri Aurobindo & Indian Literature on 8-9 April 1972), p.1.
13. The translation of the four extracts cited from Bharati's poems is mine.
14. T.P.Meenakshisundaran, "Sri Aurobindo's Theory of Poetry," p. 2. The English rendering of "Ulikkuttu" is mine.
15. Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry*, p.143.
16. Sri Aurobindo, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, p.303.
17. The translation of the extract from Bharati's preface is mine.
18. Cited in Prema NandaKumar, "A Treasure Trove for Spiritual Experience," *The Hindu* dated April 22, 1984.
18. Sri Aurobindo, "The Children of Wotan," *Collected Poems* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), p. 112.
19. Sri Aurobindo, "Freedom in Translation," *Letters on Poetry, Literature and Art* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), p.431.
20. Ibid., p.432
21. V.V.S.Iyer, *The Kural* (Madras: Shiva, 1916). p.3.
22. Sri Aurobindo, *Translations*, p.397.
23. V.V.S.Iyer, *The Kural*, p.4.
24. Sri Aurobindo, *Translations*, p.397,
25. Prema Nandakumar, "Sri Aurobindo: Tile Bridge Between the Past and the Future," p. 7.
27. Sri Aurobindo, *Translations*, p. 398,
28. Ibid., p.405.
29. Quoted in T.R.Thulasiram, *Arut Perum Jothi and Deathless Body*, p.916.
30. Sri Aurobindo, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, p. 317.
31. T. P. Meenakshisundaram, "Sri Aurobindo's theory of Poetry,"
32. Tolkappiyar, *Tolkappiyam*, "Ceyyuliyal," Sutra 171.
33. Sri Aurobindo. *The Future Poetry*, p.9.

What I Learned about Appreciating Indian Art from Sri Aurobindo

Beloo Mehra

All great artistic work proceeds from an act of intuition, not really an intellectual idea or a splendid imagination, — these are only mental translations, — but a direct intuition of some truth of life or being, some significant form of that truth, some development of it in the mind of man. (Sri Aurobindo, CWSA 20: 266).

This is one thing that strikes anyone almost immediately when reading Sri Aurobindo's essays on Indian art. It is important to note first of all that Sri Aurobindo here speaks of "all great artistic work," not only great Indian artistic works. Thus, the first thing the Master helps us learn is that in order to truly 'see' any great work of art we must be able to somehow tap into the "direct intuition of truth of life or being" which the artist is expressing through his or her creation. This naturally implies that development of intuitive capabilities is essential for the one appreciating the art. Because great art is not merely an intellectual idea, any 'critique' of art from an intellectual standpoint will never really capture the essence of what the artist is trying to express.

Sri Aurobindo then proceeds to deeply examine this. He reminds the reader that while the above is true there still remains immense divergence between different cultural forms of art. This happens because of various significant differences:

- in the object and field of the intuitive vision,
- in the method of working out the sight or suggestion,
- in the rendering by the external form and technique,
- in the whole way of the rendering to the human mind, and
- in the center of our being to which the work appeals.

This is how we begin to learn the fundamental differences between the greatest of Indian art and the greatest of Western art. As will be clear by the examples I share in this essay, the words 'Indian' and 'Western' here are not really used in the sense of a geographical marker but rather as a representative of a particular outlook on life, existence, reality, knowledge, truth, and of course, Art. It is these 'cultural' differences or characteristics which carry themselves into the representative art of the culture as well as its predominant artistic process itself.

'Indian' refers to a more integral approach where Spirit is not removed from Life and Matter, just hidden, and hence all Life and Art become a means to express and unveil that hidden spirit. 'Western' is used more in the sense of a rational-materialistic approach to Life and Art, which views Spirit as something outside, something separate from Life and Nature.

Coming to the role of the differences in cultural outlook on life, nature, and spirit, Sri Aurobindo explains that when the object and field of creative intuition of the artist is limited to life, action, passion, emotion, idea or nature, or when all these are seen for their own sake and for an aesthetic delight in them, such art appeals more directly to the outward soul by a strong awakening of the sensuous, the vital, the emotional, the intellectual and imaginative being. It is not directed to the eye of the deepest self and spirit within.

He adds that the spiritual component in such artistic work is limited to as much or as little that is suitable to, and that expresses itself through the outward form. This is because the modern, rational, westernized mind, for the most part, is attracted and captured by the outer form. It lingers on it and cannot get away from its charm. Such a mind loves the form for its own beauty.

Even in the realms beyond the physical beauty of the form, such a mind relies on the emotional, intellectual, and aesthetic suggestions that arise directly from the most visible language of the form. Because for a rational mind if there is something akin to soul, that too is confined in the limits of the body. For such a mind, form creates the spirit, the spirit depends for its existence and for everything it has to say on the form.

This is true both for the artist and the one appreciating the art.

Let us take a look at some examples as we proceed further. I may add that the examples I have chosen to illustrate the different points that we come across in this analysis are mostly of works by contemporary artists. This is done to highlight the point that some differences between different cultural forms of art remain regardless of the truth that art transcends boundaries.

The first two examples, 1 and 2, below while being beautiful works of art in themselves, seem to me as representative of such art which is limited to expressing the sentiment – emotional, intellectual or aesthetic – primarily through the visible form. And also, the intent is to appeal to the outer eye of the viewer. Indeed, this could simply be my personal view on these specific works of art, but that's the nature of art appreciation. It is deeply subjective. These particular works of art fail to evoke in me something beyond an appreciation of the beauty of their form, beauty of the sentiments that are expressed through the form. They just seem to lack something for me, something intangible, something that can only be felt not described.

Example 1: Gustav Klimt, Mother and child



Example 2: Frida Kahlo, Roots



Uniqueness of Indian Art or Art for the Spirit

Sri Aurobindo helps us learn that Indian art – or rather, the greatest of Indian art – aims at something more than this appreciation of outer form.

The theory of ancient Indian art at its greatest is of another kind, reminds Sri Aurobindo. And lest we forget, he adds that it is the greatest art which gives its character to the rest and throws on it something of its stamp and influence.

Indian art is identical in its spiritual aim and principle with the rest of the Indian culture. This is one thing we must remember if we are to truly appreciate Indian art. It naturally implies that we first open ourselves to the true truth or the deepest spirit of Indian culture, which has been expressed through all its outer forms and rhythms including Indian art. The integrality of the culture as a whole is also highlighted through this idea.

“Indian Art demands of the artist the power of communion with the soul of things, the sense of spiritual taking precedence of the sense of material beauty, and fidelity to the deeper vision within; of the lover of art it demands the power to see the spirit in things, the openness of mind to follow a developing tradition, and the sattwic passivity, discharged of prejudgments, which opens luminously to the secret intention of the picture and is patient to wait until it attains a perfect and profound divination.”
(Sri Aurobindo, CWSA 1: 467).

Example 3: Priti Ghosh, Descent of Bliss



Reality for its own sake is not the ideal of Indian art. As per the Indian view, the highest ideal of an artist is one who sees with an inner vision the true reality which is hidden. The above example 3 seems like a good representative of this truth behind some of the greatest Indian artistic works.

Beauty for beauty's sake can also never be the spirit of art in India. As Sri Aurobindo puts it so beautifully, beauty we must seek and always beauty, but never lose sight of the end which India holds more important, the realisation of the Self in things.

He cautions us that it is not that all Indian work realises this ideal. We will come across – both in the classical or medieval periods as well as in the modern, contemporary times – plenty of art in India which falls short of this ideal, where the ideal is lowered, has been rendered ineffective or even debased. But it is important to remember that in order to judge and appreciate a cultural form of art we must look at the best and the most characteristic influence and execution, because it is that which gives a special and unique tone to a culture's artistic heritage.

The following two examples, 4 and 5, express the same theme of Krishna *Lila*, particularly Krishna's play (*lila*) with gopis, a highly popular theme in Indian cultural, religious, literary

and artistic traditions. But it is remarkable to see the difference in each artist's intuitive vision of this theme, as well as their unique working out of the theme through mind's suggestion and finally expressing it through distinct and specific form and techniques.

Both these examples are contemporary works – one being the work of a famous modern Indian artist who combined several Indian genres of folk, tribal artistic traditions with his more modern and urban artistic sensibilities, while the other a contemporary work done in a unique folk art form by an unknown artist who was in most likelihood trained in the traditional system of learning through apprenticeship.

Both, in my view, highlight the ideal that beauty for beauty's sake is not the aim of the best of the Indian art. What is being expressed here is an eternal truth of the call of Krishna's flute whose charm the *gopis* of Brindavan were unable to resist.

Example 4: M.F. Hussain, Krishna Leela



Example 5: Artist unknown, Nari-ashva



Nari-ashva is a popular motif in Krishna inspired Patachitra, depicting the ultimate surrender of gopis for Krishna, the Divine flute-player.

“The Gopis are not ordinary people in the proper sense of the word—they are extraordinary by their extremeness of love, passionate devotion, unreserved self-giving. Whoever has that, however humble his position in other respects, learning, external sanctity etc. etc., can easily follow after Krishna and reach him; that seems to me the sense of the symbol of the Gopis. There are many other significances, of course—that is only one among the many.” (Sri Aurobindo, CWSA 29: 493)

Form as a Creation of the Spirit

“For the Indian mind form does not exist except as a creation of the spirit and draws all its meaning and value from the spirit. Every line, arrangement of mass, colour, shape, posture, every physical suggestion, however many, crowded, opulent they may be, is first and last a suggestion, a hint, very often a symbol which is in its main function a support for a spiritual emotion, idea, image that again goes beyond itself to the less definable, but more powerfully sensible reality of the spirit which has excited these movements in the aesthetic mind and passed through them into significant shapes.” (Sri Aurobindo, CWSA 20: 270)

This is best illustrated through the following two examples, 6 and 7. Both of these abstract works rely on line, shape, colour, and symbolism to express an inner truth, a spiritual truth. The more a viewer is inwardly open to the intuitive truths behind these outer symbols, colours and shapes, the more he or she will be able to see and identify with the artist's inner vision behind these outer forms.

Example 6: S.H. Raza, Antar Jyoti (Inner Light) Example 7: Bindu Popli, Antaryatra (Inner Journey)



According to Sri Aurobindo, when we see a great work of Indian art – be it a painting or a sculpture – the truth, the exact likeness or resemblance is there, known as *sādṛśya*, the correspondence to the form. But it is the correspondence to the truth of the essence of the form, not necessarily the outer details, “...it is the likeness of the soul to itself, the reproduction of the subtle embodiment which is the basis of the physical embodiment, the purer and finer subtle body of an object which is the very expression of its own essential nature, *svabhāva*.” (CWSA 20: 308).

The means by which this effect is produced is characteristic of the inward vision of the Indian mind. The next two examples illustrate this rather well. In example 8 we see the inner equanimity and calm of Sri Rama, his deep inner beauty which charms all who enter into the depth of his story, the Ramayana. All this and more are captured in the simple sketch, and particularly expressed through that extremely loving gaze of Rama into the Infinite, making him one with Infinite that He is.

Example 8: Ritam Upadhyay, Ram

In example 9, we find another kind of gaze of the Infinite, the One. Here we meet Sri Krishna embracing his friend and student, Arjuna in the most loving and protecting way. It is an embrace which soothes and calms, which tells Arjuna (and us) that all is well, all will be well. It is the deep Love of Krishna, the Divine Teacher, for Arjuna, His human disciple and friend, which, if we are open to it, we can receive as we meditate on the verses of the Bhagavad



Gita the dialogue of the Divine with the Human, the human captured so beautifully in the expression on Arjuna's face. This is *sādrśya*, I suppose.

Example 9: Keshav Venkataraghavan, Dialogue with Arjuna



This *sādrśya* is facilitated by the Indian artist – again he or she is an artist who is in touch with the essence of Indian culture, the Indian way of being, the inner way of being – by a bold and firm insistence on the pure and strong outline and a total suppression of everything that would interfere with its boldness, strength and purity or would blur over and dilute the intense significance of the line.

For example, as Sri Aurobindo explains, in the treatment of the human figure, an Indian artist pays attention to the following:

- all corporeal filling in of the outline by insistence on the flesh, the muscle, the anatomical detail is minimised or disregarded;
- the strong subtle lines and pure shapes which make the humanity of the human form are alone brought into relief;
- the whole essential human being is there, the divinity that has taken this garb of the spirit to the eye, but not the superfluous physicality which he carries with him as his burden.
- It is the ideal psychical figure and body of man and woman that is before us in its charm and beauty. (CWSA 20: 308)

We see this illustrated rather nicely in the next few examples.

Example 10: Amrita Sher-Gil, Bride's Toilet

Example 11: Freydoon Rassouli, Monarch of Love



An inner aim and vision govern the work of the Indian artist even when he or she is creating the figures of ordinary human beings. As Sri Aurobindo explains, the focus is not to portray some dramatic action or a character portrait, but to embody rather a soul state or experience or deeper soul quality.

For example, in the figure of a saint or a devotee it is not the outward emotion, but the inner soul-side of rapt ecstasy of adoration and God-vision which the artist is trying to express through the creation. This emphasis on expression of an inner soul quality or experience is what makes all Indian art unique.

The next two examples give us a sense of what this expression of inner soul experience might look like.

Example 12: Keshav Venkataraghavan, Krishna Premi



Example 13: Asit Kumar Haldar, Maiden in Love



In example 12 we meet the Lord with his true bhaktas, his lovers, his premi-s – Andal, Shri (Tulsi) and the ever-loyal Hanuman. And in example 13, we see another expression of love, the very human love, the pining and longing of a maiden in love. While these two works have a long difference of several decades between them, both capture the essential seeking of Love – the seeking for eternity and for intensity, which as Sri Aurobindo notes, “is instinctive and self-born in the relation of the Lover and Beloved.” (CWSA 23: 569)

This is how I am learning art appreciation with Sri Aurobindo.

(A previous version of this article was first published on the author’s blog.)

Ecological Representation in “The Message of the Forest”

Oeendrilla Guha

Ruskin Bond contends that to take delight “like a pagan in all that is physical” (1994: 428) can satisfy the human heart. One of the earliest instances of Tagore reveling “like a pagan in all that is physical” is his visit to Bakrota:

These lordly forest trees, with their huge shadows, towering there like so many giants-what immense lives had they live through the centuries!... I seemed to feel a presence, the moment I stepped into their shade, as of the solid coolness of some old-world saurian, and the checkered light and shade on the leafy mould seemed like its scales. (2001: 103)

The “presence” can be interpreted as the presence of the infinite Being: the “universal soul” (Tagore 2001: 25). It is this “presence” that he later spelled out in *The Message of the Forest* (1919). In this essay, he revives the long-lost rhetoric of ecological consciousness in the minds of the Indian indigenes, who took pleasure in the “universal soul” since they saw in it “the hem of His mantle and hear his footsteps” (Tagore 2001: 29). Kripalani writes, “The best teacher, according to Tagore, is nature.” (107). The love that Tagore speaks of and the delight in the “physical” which Bond mentions are one and the same: childlike and free from utilitarian motives. The child’s love and delight are born of pure and guileless enjoyment of knowledge, which does not force upon Nature the human value system of profit and loss. The ability to love and take delight in the world of appearance is the Tagorean “surplus”.

Orientalism, a term coined by Edward Said, is “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (3). In the name of “inherently’ inferior” the West restructures the past and the present and formulate the future of the natives; one such “restructuring” of Indian rhetoric, according to Tagore, is the distortion in Indian rhetoric by the West by disregarding its prevailing ways of life. Through *The Message of the Forest* Tagore iterates that any race or people must proudly recognize its history in order to head towards a brighter future:

Every great people holds its history so valuable because of this, because, it contains not mere memories, but hope, and therefore the image of the future. Man has his instinctive faith in heredity. He feels, that, in heredity, that which is to come has been proved in that which has been,-in great heredity, the great conclusion is perpetually present in the process. And all history is man’s credential of his future, signed and sealed by his past. (385)

Tagore recognizes the cultural contributions of the past of a race into influencing its future. In the past lies the dormant potential of the future. The British settlers in India who observed it as the land of wilderness attempted to achieve “moral perfection” in the indigenes by enforcing their way of life: Kipling’s “the White man’s burden”. This burden is interpreted as the generous issue of the settler’s high-minded moral obligation to civilise the indigene, thereby converting the pagan worshipper of land, river, forest, and mountain into a fervent votary of a non-animist God and consequently morphing these ecologically-friendly

continents into topographies of materialism and ecological exploitation. Edward Said asserts that the settlers force upon the natives their social, cultural and political "attitudes". Michel Foucault claims that the powerful maintain "a system of statements" in and through which he propagates repression of the powerless. The settler undermines the knowledge of the indigene through a systemized set of rhetoric which in the long run appears as rational in the mind of the native who then distances himself from his culture. Hence knowledge is a weapon of power, which works invisibly through subtle systems and policies until it makes itself acceptable as the norm rather than the exception: the settler creates a whole new identity of the native which then moulds his mutated future. Ian Anderson reiterates, "...colonial ways of knowing are not historical artifacts that simply linger in contemporary discourse. They are actively reproduced within contemporary dynamics of colonial power..." (24) Ergo Bond acknowledges history as the most important factor in shaping one's identity: "Race did not make me an Indian. Religion did not make an Indian. But history did. And in the long run, it's history that counts" (1994: 173).

The West wiped out Indian history by exploiting unreservedly India's natural resources with the help of its Science. In the essay, entitled *The Supreme Message of Humanity United in India* (1940) Tagore reveals:

European countries, from the outset, have sought fulfillment outside, and with greed at the helm, set forth to amass wealth by plundering other peoples, especially in Asia and Africa, science, the helpmate of true self-realisation, has been dragged from pure pursuit of knowledge and turned into an instrument for spreading worldwide disaster. (609)

The settler places himself in the authoritative position or the central 'presence' as opposed to the native's peripheral 'absence'. Indian ecologists point out that Nature as a concept was forwarded by "Eurocentric arrogance" to destroy a "real-world" of wilderness, thereby promoting an anthropocentric discourse. Concepts of a 'first' Nature and a 'second' Nature evolved: 'first' nature is associated with wilderness and it exists no more since being defiled by "Eurocentric arrogance". 'Second' nature exists as a "social construct", born of the capitalistic agenda. *The Message of the Forest* revisits the 'first' Nature in India. The text is written in "the memory of these sacred forests" since Tagore was well-aware of the destruction of India's 'first' Nature in the hands of the settlers. The essay is moulded "within an ecological vision" (Nayar 253) since it impresses on the reader that "these forests were not merely topographical in their significance" (Tagore 386) but elemental in shaping culture and a people who are ecologically-conscious and cognizant of the universal spirit pervading the non-human environment. It highlights the ecological consciousness of the Indians, who revered forests as a representation of the creative Energy. Tagore notes:

I have said elsewhere, that the environment, in which we see the past of India, is the forest, the memory of which permeates our classical literature and still haunts our minds...The memory of these sacred forests is the one great inheritance which India ever cherishes through all her political vicissitudes and economic disturbance. (385-86)

The text subtly illustrates the forceful implementation of the Western "politics of development" on the Indian people, thus altering the Indian topography or 'first' Nature.

An eco-text worth its salt is ecologically-conscious of the non-human environment as a community which has to be cared for. *The Message of the Forest* is an eco-text because it elaborates on the ecological approaches of the Indians which were founded on the "ethic of care" of the supreme mantra of "Shantam, Shivam, Advaitam" (Tagore 609). The aspect of "shantam" or peace can be elucidated by the Tagorean motif of the forest: "...the peace which pervaded India's forest retreats, where humanity was not separate from, and had no quarrel with, the rest of his surroundings" (394). The tree harmonises the world of the sun and with soil and water and if this interrelation is checked it loses its individuality and dies. In the process, the cycle of life is disturbed for a tree plays a selfless role in controlling erosion and climate changes. It removes carbon dioxide and releases large quantities of oxygen in the atmosphere. Tree and forest preserve biodiversity in the world: both practice "an ethic of care", which vindicates every culture looking upon them as a symbol of symbiosis, bounty, and immortality. Tagore states:

The forest gave them shelter and shade, fruit and flower, fodder and fuel; it entered into a close living relation with their work and leisure and necessity, and in this way made it easy for them to know their own lives as associated with the larger life. They could not think of their surroundings as lifeless, separate, or inimical...and their relationship with this world also took a different turn, as they came to realize that the gifts of light and air, of food and drink, did not come from either sky or tree or soil, but had their front in the all-pervading consciousness and joy of universal life. (385)

For instance, Rig Veda teaches about the healing properties of plants. Manu observes that trees should not be cut as they provide shelter to insects, birds, and animals. Small wonder Tagore calls trees "hoary sages" and alike a tree every individual must nurture a harmonious relation of unity with the universe. Through the traditional motif of tree, Tagore unwittingly initiates a new paradigm of "discourse" and "praxis" to restore the Indian "ecological vision" and ecological consciousness. According to Pramod K. Nayar, "discourse" includes "drawing together a culture's ecological approaches/problems" (243) that are addressed in its cultural texts. In *The Message of the Forest* Tagore draws together Indian "culture's ecological approaches" from Kalidasa's literary endeavours: *Shakuntala* and *Raghuvamsha*, which are set in the bosom of the forest. *Shakuntala* marries Dushyanta and leaves her verdurous home for Hastinapur, where rebuffed, comes back to the forest. In due course, Dushyanta unites with *Shakuntala* in the forest. *Shakuntala*, as the spirit of the forest, forgives her husband whose pleasure in hunting makes him the spirit of enjoyment through greed since he forgets her after acquiring her. Similarly, Tagore sings in high praise of *Raghuvamsha*, which portrays King Dilip and Queen Sudakshina as preferring life in a forest to a city. Kalidasa depicts the forest as the scene of reconciliation between the spirit and the flesh or as Ruskin Bond calls it "generosity, not greed; sugar, not spite" (2015: 380). Thoreau's *Walden* delivers a similar message to the Americans: "The very simplicity and nakedness of man's life in the primitive ages imply this advantage, that they left him still but a sojourner in nature" (36). *The Message*

of the Forest is a "discourse" of Kalidasa's the ideal representation of the forest in his seminal works, which Tagore considers as a reservoir and representation of the past, which contains "the unrealised future" (385).

The Message of the Forest carries forward the spiritual lineage of *Shakuntala* and *Raghuvamsha* by spearheading the Indians towards "a new direction", that of passing on India's supreme message of the universe having a consciousness: "praxis". Nayar defines "praxis" as comprising "contributing to ecological awareness by re-reading canonical cultural texts" (243). As "praxis" the essay fulfils its social role by adhering to the four principles of eco-vision, as suggested by Lawrence Buell: the non-human must be an actual presence in the text and not a figure of speech, the human interest cannot be privileged over the non-human interest, the text holds human beings responsible for their actions in the environment and Nature is viewed as a process rather than a constant in the text.

Tagore includes the non-human as an actual presence in the text and not a figure of speech since the text is eponymous: the essayist weaves the text around the material and spiritual bounty of the Indian forest. He presents the forest as a source of enlightenment, which is imparted to the seeker who resides in its heart without any boisterous utilitarian purpose. A forest personifies a congenial union with the elements in Nature because a tree symbolises the cycle of a balanced life. Besides, a tree has a very long life; records prove that a Banyan or a Peepal tree survives for five hundred years and more. It is their physical endurance and eternity that Tagore appreciates during his sojourn at Bakrota. In the presence of a comprehensive life-source, Tagore is able to fight the illusion of separation and unite with the consciousness of the universal. It is this oneness with the forest that frames his "ethic of care"; that of renouncing power and success, which refuse "all claims of justice and self-control" (Tagore 392).

Tagore does not privilege the human interest over the non-human interest and holds human beings responsible for their actions in Nature. He opines that human nature which is in constant conflict between "what *is* desired and what *should be* desired" is unable to establish a moral relation with the non-human environment (Tagore 2002: 86). Therefore Nature offers her fullness to humanity which it exploits her unaccountably, contributing "very little towards the payment of Nature's ill" (183). Tagore bases his philosophy on the Vedanta philosophy of ecological codes of conduct being implicitly followed. In this context, Sri Aurobindo explains, "...conduct also is a part of the cultured life and the ethical ideality one of the master impulses of the cultured being" (CWSA 25: 94). The unethical conduct of the human race to exploit Nature is furthered by European Science, which with ruthless skillfulness encourages "a niggardly spirit of utilitarianism" in humanity (Tagore 480).

In *The Message of the Forest* Tagore remarks that Milton's *Paradise Lost* portrays humanity as "lord and master" of the non-human world since the former possesses "the privileged discourse of reason" (Manes 24). Tagore agrees to India acceding to "the superiority of man" as well but "the test of that superiority lies, according to her, in the comprehensiveness of sympathy,-not in the aloofness of absolute distinction" (398). According to him, an Indian is aware that the mind presents a relative truth and can adjust its attitude in any given

situations. Exploiting Nature to suit humanity's ego is a Western practice, not an Indian one. One of Tagore's conclusive messages in *The Message of the Forest* is:

It is the warning of India's past, and that warning still continues against the reckless carnival of the present, celebrated by the lords of Earth, whose pleasure is in hunting to death with their ruthless machines all that is beautiful with the delicacy of life. (393)

Tagore admits the non-human environment as a process rather than a constant in the text: "Our *tapovana* was just such a vital centre of our social body. In it throbbed the rhythm of our life's ebb and flow: it gave truth to our thoughts, right impulse to our feelings, and guiding force to our work" (Tagore 393). The forest is a metaphor for "vital centre of our social body". Forest is the microcosmic embodiment of the macrocosmic entity, the Universal Personality. In turn, the tree is the microcosmic representation of the macrocosmic forest.

The tree as a "vital centre" can be further explained by Sri Aurobindo's "A Tree", where the poet describes the roots and branches respectively as "earth-bound" and "heaven-amorous". Roots keep a tree connected to the material earth and branches reach out to heaven. The poet uses the tree as a metaphor of the human soul, which is simultaneously rooted to the finite world and aspirant of the infinite Being: Tagore calls this two-fold relationship as "an inner inter-relationship" (2001: 3), which is not obvious to the senses. He notes "the quiet of the forest shade" communicating wisdom, which is "irreplaceable since it conveys to humanity the message of "Greater-than-all in the heart of the all" (Tagore 399).

The unorthodox upbringing and initiation into ecological rubrics during Tagore's early childhood can be regarded as one of the fundamental reasons, which might have prompted Tagore to re-introduce the Indian concept of bio-centric education at Shantiniketan in 1901; Shantiniketan is a "...imagination...caught by idealized pictures of *tapovana* or forest hermitages in ancient India where learned sages lived with their disciples and taught them the practice of simple living and high thinking" (Kripalani 105). These sages guided pupils towards self-discovery by themselves being examples of esoteric knowledge and practitioners of simplistic living: "The ancient philosophers, Chinese, Hindoo, Persian, and Greek, were a class than which none has been poorer in outward riches, none so rich in inward" (Thoreau 17). The Indian ascetic is the embodiment of "the spirit of the forest ideal", who establishes harmony between the human and non-human reality. The essayist's ability to identify the "universal soul" in the non-human makes him an ascetic or "the spirit of the forest ideal".

Tagore does not pretend to restore India's utopic past in the dystopic present in *The Message of the Forest*: he writes the essay as an act of fulfilling his social role by presenting the Indian "ecological vision" to the world at large. He begins with the Upanishadic treatise of the infinite Being pervading "all that is physical". Tagore's representation of the tree and the forest is traditional and his importance lies in raising ecological awareness in the Indian mind at a time when its spiritual attitude towards ecology eroded due to the "Western contagion", which was swiftly "defeating our spiritual heroism" (Tagore 609). He offers generously an Indian idyllic "construction of 'Nature'" before the arrival of British imperialism in the Indian sub-continent like the Romantics, who wrote idylls to escape the bleak aftermath of

the European industrial war and retribution. Tagore says that even the scantiest stretch of forest that is remaining despite the colossal deforestation can help the human race to survive extinction. He is surely one of the earliest modern writers with an ecologically-conscious sensibility of the Indian past and accordingly framed the rhetoric of Nature, which did not view humanity as the highest in the chain of command. In *The Message of the Forest*, the essayist implies, "Ecological wisdom is as old as the oldest religious traditions in the world" (S. Murali 171) and illustrates the comprehensive "discourse" and "praxis" of an "earth-centered" Indian tradition and its necessity to remain so for he believes that it is India who alone can impart to the world the true religion of humanity.

Works Cited:

- Anderson, Ian. "Introduction to Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing of Indigenous"
- Australians." Edited by Michele Grossman. Melbourne University Press, 2004. Pp: 17-24.
- Bond, Ruskin. Delhi Is Not Far: The Best of Ruskin Bond. Penguin Books, 1994.
- Bond, Ruskin. The Writer on the Hill: Selected Fiction and Non-Fiction. Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd, 2015.
- Manes, Christopher. "Nature and Silence", The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology. Edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. The University of Georgia Press, 1996. Pp-15-29.
- S. Murali and Usha V. T. Tradition and Terrain: Aesthetic Continuities. Delhi: B. R. Publishing Corporation, 2006. Print.
- Nayar, Pramod K. Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory: From Structuralism to Ecocriticism. Dorling Kindersley (India) Pvt. Ltd., 2013.
- Said, Edward. Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient. Penguin, 1991.
- Sri Aurobindo. "Collected Poems", Collected Works of Sri Aurobindo, vol. 2. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1997. Pp-207.
- Sri Aurobindo. "The Human Cycle", Collected Works of Sri Aurobindo, vol. 25. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1997.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. Personality. Rupa & Co., 2002.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. Religion of Man. Niyogi Books, 2012.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. Reminiscences. Macmillan India Limited, 2001.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. "My Conception of God", The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, vol. 3. Edited by Sisir Kumar Das. Sahitya Akademi, 2006. Pp: 635-38.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. "The Message of the Forest", The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, vol. 3. Edited by Sisir Kumar Das. Sahitya Akademi, 2006. Pp: 385-400.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. "The Supreme Message of Humanity United in India", The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore, vol. 3. Edited by Sisir Kumar Das. Sahitya Akademi, 2006. Pp: 609-10.
- Thoreau, Henry David. Walden. Maple Press, 2014.

LIFE



The Mother taking Class

(Source: Internet)

Indian education of women as well as of men was more rich and comprehensive and many-sided than any system of education before modern times.

Sri Aurobindo

The Epic Values

Deepshikha Reddy

The more we see the world of today, the more we get disappointed about its present and its future. We do exist but with so many compromises with vital values and principles in life, central to the fundamental traditions and doctrines of *samsara* on this earth that we have lost the basic integrity in our living.

Do we like to acquire and practice values in life at all? Do we teach our children, whether at home or in the schools, through our own epics, the famous Mahabharata or Ramayana or even the Gita the true core values of life? The best way we can teach is through stories and we must impress upon them that these epics are not mere stories but real happenings of our past, the magnificent truth of our culture and religion and dharma and give them the analysis of characters like Duryodhana, Shakuni along with Yudhishthira and Bheeshma on a psychological basis. How many schools ever discuss in detail about the character of Kaikeyi on whose action the larger part of Ramayana was dependent upon. However justified she might have been in asking for the boon bestowed by her husband Dasharatha, was it right in the eyes of Dharma? Should any action generating from the lowest impulses in one human being be given consent to affect many human beings in an absolute negative manner! It is no less than a whole Kingdom that had to suffer for that. Where is the justice in this?

Today's children, with a very strong capacity of reasoning and critical appreciation would appreciate analysing so many such characters in our epics. Why did Bheeshma, the wisest guru choose to be on the side of the Kauravas? Why did Karna have to deal with a fate that seemed so unjust? Why did Arjuna have to kill his own kith and Kin? Why did Rama mete out a so-called unjust treatment to Sita? A thorough critical analysis of these situations through debates and discussions could sow in the minds of young kids a balanced sense of social justice or social dharma. Instead we repeat over and over discussions with the tragic and comic characters of Shakespeare and others as if they are the only creators of emotional and psychological characters.

We are fast in the process of forgetting our own treasures lying in the chest. We have lost the key to the chest. A growing child's mind, when he sees the results of the terrible adharma, that Duryodhana could not desist from, would naturally get deeply impressed by Sri Krishna's numerous efforts towards peaceful solutions as the only righteous means to life's problems.

Thousands of years have passed but each of our problems, be it individual, collective, social or moral or even political reverberate the same breath of those numerous events in our epics. We have not taken our lessons nor let our children benefit from them. All true values are embedded in them as they were primarily governed by the Avatars, the supreme spiritual head of the times.

In today's life we don't seem to be driven by any innate value – we have lost that inner drive that determined strong motivation to live by certain inner and deeper values. At one time this used to be a great valuable asset imparted through our education so that all their

actions in life are guided by them. Such an education, in ancient times related to the spiritual process of becoming a part of one's inspired living through strict practices of introspection, meditation, contemplation, honesty, empathy, uprightness, incorruptibility and generosity.

In present times we have travelled far and instead of remembering to embrace those universal values, we have entered the zone of a limited individuality which is so very narrow and suffocating! The vastness of consciousness has been, as though, bottled up in a jar and we breathe in through its little hole.

We must relate to the values that are universal in nature or we perish. We must rise beyond this world of individual desire and possessions, we must experience the joy of being alone with the creator or this vast dynamic nature or the incredible beauty of the galaxies or the joy of watching a flower unfold its petals – whatever it is, it is assured that one goes beyond the finite limitations of time and space and comes face to face with a reality absolutely immutable and the ultimate level of self within us, the only true Reality in this existence.

Unless we teach our children how to connect themselves with this innate experience of the joy of being alone and meeting the self whether through an integrally oriented education or through the touch of the earth or through various other holistic approaches with great inner possibilities, our society will not change. Our children are lost today. They need an alternative and a real one. They can no more be misled by a smoke that can transform them into a temporary, illusory delight as smoky as vapour. They have to learn about the truth of existence the hard way—by practising the values in life that can transform today's misery into delight.

This change has to come from within through our education. We need to give a small push towards the learning of this truth. We must drill in their developing minds that the wholeness on this earth can be manifested only when we can unite with all and with the indivisible Cosmic self. We have to give them a larger experience of our universe, this whole creation as an undivided truth of existence where we are dependent on each other or we lose our balance. If the elders and educators are a little more conscious and motivated this can be done as a delightful project through various methods at our disposal – the best being the incredible enthusiasm and urge for the unknown in the children themselves. The push has to be provided by us, that is all.

Unless we are grounded firmly on this fundamental principle of inner harmony and good will for the whole creation, we cannot go beyond this merry-go-round of pleasure and pain of the earthly life, the intense suffering therein and meet the higher universal or the cosmic self.

It is very important to see that the children are never given a myopic vision of life right from their childhood days. They have the highest potential to meet and interact with the Vast if we just push them towards that vision of Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram through various means and methods, stories, epics, legends, experiences with nature, and environment. Through the right approaches in education, an integral mode of education, inclusive of the whole being, an immense benefit could be attained by

adherence to our ancient core-values that alone can ensure peace, well-being, a stress free life with enlightened attitudes.

They must be helped to develop an awareness, rather beware of an undue ego-bound attachment towards this materialistic world and relations so that they experience in themselves the taste of a sustainable true joy of less possessions and richer inner experiences, a higher experience of an universal sharing the joy of all, pain of all, a transcendent joy.

It is certainly not easy to rise beyond the gravitational pull of temptations and the lower satisfactions, but if we can give them the ancient value of self-realisation, a total dependence on the innermost truth within us, being the highest aim of life through all the modern prevailing systems of upbringing, with a small yet a significant twist of looking and dealing with life and its circumstances through the inner prism of a reliance on the self or God, or your inner truth, we can hope for a better future, a safer future. No amount of looking outside can get us rid of our present miseries of immense violence, destruction and depravity in the world. We have to spread the light of the immortal within us who alone can guide and sustain this creation. In this our children are our only hope to keep this planet alive. They must be handed over the right key to this treasure-trove of eternal wisdom and knowledge.

The universal embracing dharma in the Indian idea is a law of ideal perfection for the developing mind and soul of man; it compels him to grow in the power and force of certain high or large universal qualities which in their harmony build a highest type of manhood. In Indian thought and life this was the ideal of the best, the law of the good or noble man, the discipline laid down for the self-perfecting individual, *arya*, *srestha*, *sajjana*, *sadhu*. This ideal was not a purely moral or ethical conception, although that element might predominate; it was also intellectual, religious, social, aesthetic, the flowering of the whole ideal man, the perfection of the total human nature. The most varied qualities met in the Indian conception of the best, *srestha*, the good and noble man, *arya*. In the heart benevolence, beneficence, love, compassion, altruism, long-suffering, liberality, kindness, patience; in the character courage, heroism, energy, loyalty, continence, truth, honour, justice, faith, obedience and reverence where these were due, but power too to govern and direct, a fine modesty and yet a strong independence and noble pride; in the mind wisdom and intelligence and love of learning, knowledge of all the best thought, an openness to poetry, art and beauty, an educated capacity and skill in works; in the inner being a strong religious sense, piety, love of God, seeking after the Highest, the spiritual turn; in social relations and conduct a strict observance of all the social dharmas, as father, son, husband, brother, kinsman, friend, ruler or subject, master or servant, priest or warrior or worker, king or sage, member of clan or caste: this was the total ideal of the Arya, the man of high upbringing and noble nature. The ideal is clearly portrayed in the written records of ancient India during two millenniums and it is the very life-breath of Hindu ethics. It was the creation of an at once ideal and rational mind, spirit-wise and worldly-wise, deeply religious, nobly ethical, firmly yet flexibly intellectual, scientific and aesthetic, patient and tolerant of life's difficulties and human weakness, but arduous in self-discipline. This was the mind that was at the base of the Indian civilisation and gave its characteristic stamp to all the culture. (Sri Aurobindo, CWSA 20: 163-164)

Vedic Education - The only means to realise: Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahman

Vandana Sharma

Abstract:

Today we live in constant fear of being victims or witnessing someone being a victim. Such is the condition of our society. Constant inhumanity, insensitivity and crimes against animals, fellow beings and nature leave us in a lull with a haunting question 'Where are we heading? As we progress in the scientific arena of astonishing and remarkable discoveries, we also confront the devil of inhumanity, diminished ethics and dipping morals before us. With a wide range of social evils from crime against women, animals and children to dowry deaths, terrorism and environmental haphazard mushrooming before us, it's the need of the hour that we stop and seek guidance from our great texts and Rishis. The ideas and thoughts of the great Vedas and *Upanishad* are bound to be beneficial for one and all because one indeed is all and all indeed is one- Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahm!! Thus, across races, nationalities and religions this knowledge will only act as a unifying force. It will bring about mutual respect and elevate us mentally, emotionally, spiritually and ethically. Without biases of religion, nationality and race it's time to revamp our education system and imbibe the Vedic knowledge which alone has the acumen to fight against the horrors of the society and once again put India on the pedestal of being the Universal Teacher -Vishwaguru!

Today we live in constant fear of being victims or witnessing someone else being a victim. Such is the condition of our society. Leave alone the world and let's merely concentrate upon what India is facing in today's time. On November 13, 2018, a 3-year-old girl was raped in *Gurugram* and was later put to death after the rapist broke her leg for sexual arousal.ⁱ On November 3, 2018, Tigress Avni became a victim of manipulated political and corporate ambitions. She was shot dead in the wee hours breaking all constitutional laws of wildlife and left behind two cubs to survive by themselves.ⁱⁱ After Avni, 13 more tigers were killed by a mindless mob and a bear was burnt alive. Such is the condition of our national animal and wildlife. The horror of dipping ethics became evident when a dog was mercilessly raped to death by 4 men and his genital was mutilated in Mumbai on the unfaithful night of November 20th, 2018.ⁱⁱⁱ This was not the first time when an innocent animal was raped mercilessly. On October 21st, 2018, four men raped a four-day-old calf in the dark streets of UP and there are more ghastly incidents where animals and young children become the object of one's sexual frustrations.^{iv} One is left speechless when saffron clad *Yog Guru Baba Ramdev* decides to cut down over 6000 trees in *Noida* to construct a fancy food park.^v After

i Hindustan Times, By Leena Dhankhar, 13th November 2018

ii Hindustan Times, 3rd November 2018

iii The Deccan Chronicles, by Sonali Telang, 20th November 2018

iv Times of India, 21st October 2018

v Hindustan Times, 30th August 2017

being witness to such hideous incidents of crime, we are left in a lull with a question 'Where are we heading?'

As we progress in the scientific arena of astonishing and remarkable discoveries, we also confront the devil of inhumanity, diminished ethics and dipping morals before us. With a wide range of social evils from crime against women, animals and children to dowry deaths, terrorism and environmental haphazard mushrooming before us, it's the need of the hour that we stop and seek guidance from our great texts and Rishis. The ideas and thoughts of the great *Vedas* and *Upanishads* are bound to be beneficial for one and all because one indeed is all and all indeed is one- *Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahman!!* Thus, across races, nationalities and religions this knowledge will only act as a unifying force. It will bring about mutual respect and elevate us mentally, emotionally, spiritually and ethically. Without biases of religion, nationality and race it's time to revamp our education system and imbibe the Vedic knowledge which alone has the acumen to fight against the horrors of the society and once again put India on the pedestal of being the *Universal Teacher-Vishwaguru!*

India has been fortunate in being bestowed by the eternal and precious gift of knowledge of the great seers, the infallible *Vedas* and the philosophical *Upanishads*. This land has been cultivated with timeless thoughts, teachings and philosophies left behind by divine beings like *Buddha*, *Śaṅkarācārya*, *Mahavira*, *Guru Nanak Dev*, *Maharishi Patanjali* and many more. India's *Darshana* is firmly rooted in its holistic view of reality which is not merely a philosophy that one follows but is a way of life. This unifying philosophy that advocates oneness of all till date remains the heart and soul of India's identity.

From a snail that crawls to the saint that preaches are indeed united in their very essence and hence, all that exists, all that ever existed, all that will one day cease to exist and all that will never exist in the womb of time is nothing but the non-dual *Brahman* from which everything originates, within which everything breathes and into which everything merges. From a child that plays with joy to the dog that howls in the street and the scholars that write the most impeccable articles are all fruits of the same source- *Tajjalān*^{vi} announce the *Purusa Sukta of the Rigveda*. The *Nasadiya Sukta of the Rigveda* declares this principle as *Tad Ekam*^{vii} which manifests itself variedly and the *Taittiriya Upanishad* maintains- *Ekoham Bahusyam (I am one and I shall become many)*^{viii}.

vi *Tajjalān* is beyond the realms of descriptions and yet is described positively with the help of three fundamental attributes: Sat-cit-ānanda. Sat-cit-ānanda are attributes of the non-dual, ultimate reality known as Brahman. It is from the Brahman that all things that are living and non-living, visible and invisible, thinkable and unthinkable, knowable and unknowable, humans, animals, trees, insects, rivers, mountains and every spec of the universe are born, into which they all breathe and into which the merge back for all these names and forms are nothing but the Brahman itself. *Tajjalān* is the secret name of that ultimate Brahman by which it should be worshiped. In the *Brahmasutra* (1.1.2), Badrayana defines Brahman as *Janamādi asaya yatah* (From which all is Born).

vii *Tad Ekam: tad ekam* (That One)" which is, "Spaceless, timeless, yet in its own way dynamic and the Sole Force, this Absolute.

viii Lokeshwarananda Swami, pp57 (6.2.3) *Taittiriya Upanishad*, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 2014.

According to the Vedas, the entire cosmos operates as per the cosmic law of 'Rta' and we all are bound in a well-linked chain. Humans-animals-mountains-tree- insects, we all are a part of the same cosmos. None exists independent from the other. Our survival is in our unity and our interdependence. This is what *Lord Buddha* expounded in *Pratītyasamutpāda*, The Theory of Dependent origination. This is also what *Adi-Shankaracharya* said time and again in his texts and *Bhashyas* that were impregnated with the idea of *Advaitvād* or Non-dualism, which professes that behind varied names and forms exists one non-dual principle- 'The Brahman'. Smearred in dark colours of *Avidyā*, we consider the numerousness and multiplicity of this universe as the only reality. In our deepest contemplations and meditative modes, we ought to realize that all of that which appears to be distinct is, in fact, non-dual at its root. The discrepancy of varied names and forms arises due to the veils of *Mayā*, *Avidyā* or the cosmic illusion. It is due to the clutches of *Mayā* that we see distinction. It thus becomes imperative to respect the variedness of names and forms realizing that the essence of all is non-dual and that we are the truth that we seek for all is divine, all is the *Brahman* says the *Chandogya Upanishad* '*Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahman*'^{ix}.

It is of paramount importance to understand that multiplicity has its locus in unity and unity remains the base of diversity. Since the entire cosmos is a whole of wholesome parts, bothering even an iota of existence will bring about a huge variation in the entire cosmos. Indian Philosophy in general and *Advaita-Vedanta*, in particular, refuses to see any distinction at the core of all and hence women, animals, children and nature have never been seen as objects that are meant to be dominated or exploited in any way. *Brahman* the supreme reality is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient; it logically cannot be exclusive to humans alone. The omnipotent and omnipresent *Brahman* thus can never have its exclusivity to humans alone and this outrightly discards the concept of human supremacy and refutes the theory of domination. This may explain why in India rivers, mountains, animals, human and even that what science calls as non-living are worshiped for they are seen as the manifestations of the non-dual *Brahman*.

Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahman also professes that everything that exists in this scheme of cosmos with varying names and forms underlined by non-duality is certainly supposed to work in accordance to *Dharma* which involves an urgent sense of duty, right, responsibility, virtues, ethics, conduct and a general norm of discipline which is needed to exist harmoniously and harmlessly.

Before it is too late and before we lose out on the glories of mother earth, it is the need of the hour to realize that everything from the rivers that have been reduced to dirt washing arenas and filth dumping bodies, the woman that has been reduced to a mere sexual object, the tiger which has become an object of hunting addiction and political conspiracy and the environment in general which has become an object of undying greed have their own individuality, their own right and their own duty in this cosmos for they are non- different from us and must be approached with gratitude, sense of oneness and respect. When you

ix Johi.K.L, Bimali.O.N, Trivedi Bindiya, pp-143 (3.14.1), Chandogya Upanishad, Parimal Publications, 2013.

consider each life as non-different from you, you never will try to extract joy, pleasure and gains out of it for you will always be more concerned about the joys, pleasures and needs of it. Thus, *Vedic* and *Upaniṣadic* prayers have never been of specific nature instead they have always been general, holistic and all-embracing; an example of one such prayer is quoted from the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*:

om sarve bhavantu sukhinah
sarve santu nirāmayā
sarve bhadrāni paśyantū mā kaścidduh khabhāgbhavetaḥ
om śāntih śāntih śāntih

Today we exist in a very sad state of affairs where inhumanity, infidelity, hate, insensitivity, intolerance, cruelty and irresponsible acts of all kinds are on the rise. Somewhere down the line we have lost touch with ourselves and have become self-obsessed, self-centered and self-contained. Gone are the days when we were offered practical lessons of unity and kindness at *Gurukulas* and were supposed to offer food to the mother cow before we ate ourselves. It's a matter of yesteryears when one prayed to plants and trees and drew permission to pluck even a single tiny leaf that was used for medicinal purpose. No more we teach our children the values of *Maitrī* and *Karunā*, instead, we inculcate within them a spirit of competition and rivalry. Schools and colleges are engrossed in producing management gurus, technically sound engineers, doctors and professionals but have failed to develop morally and ethically sound human beings. If we want to put an end to the current chaos that is sweeping the globe, it is advisable that one should go back to the *Upaniṣads* in order to understand them in the right light and focus on holistic development. It's important to inculcate the teachings of our Great Beings, *Rishis* and *Śāstras* at an early age for a 360-degree development of a child. It's important to not only encourage a kid physically, intellectually and emotionally but it is also important to encourage the child spiritually. It is time that the entire education system is revamped and is free from the shackles of western influences. Indian Philosophy should become a compulsory subject in schools and colleges. Only when a child from his tender years will go through the process of *Shravana-Manana-Nididhyāsana* will he realize the essence of the *Mahāvākyas*:

- Prajñānam Brahma – Consciousness is Brahman^x
- Ayam Ātmā Brahma - Self (Atman) is Brahman^{xi}
- Tat Tvam Asi - You are That^{xii}
- Aham Brahmāsmi - I am the Brahman^{xiii}
- Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma - All of this is Brahman^{xiv}

Let our society be a society where we develop seekers of knowledge instead of aspirants

- x Setumadhavan T.N. pp19, 3.3, Aitareya Upanishad of the Rig Veda, Esmskriti.com, 2011
xi Sarvananda Swami, pp5,1.2 Mandukya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, Shri Ramkrishna Matha, 1920
xii Lokeshwarananda Swamipp131, 6.8.7 Chandogya Upanishad of the Sama Veda ,Ramakrishna Institute of Culture, 2014
xiii Setumadhavan T.N. pp27, 1.4.10, Brihdarnayaka Upanishad of the Rig Veda, Esmskriti.com, 2012
xiv Hume E Robert , pp209, 3.14.1, Chāndogya Upaniṣad, Thirteen Principal Unpaniṣads, Oxford University Press,1995

of educational degrees, let us free ourselves from the clutches of rote learning in order to imbibe techniques that lead to realization of self, let our society be one where concentration should be on developing great beings and not just great doctors, engineers and management wonders because being a good human is the base of being a good professional. It is important for parents to go back to the *Vedas* and *Upaniṣad* to give their children the lessons of *Advaita*, *Maitrī*, *Karunā*, *Ahiṃsā*, *Sam Dr̥ṣṭi* And *Sarvabhutahit* instead of teaching them to be competitive with their friends and kick a street animal or pampering them to the limits. Thus, all microcosmic existence should exist in harmony so that harmony pervades all. The only way harmony will pervade the entire world is when the world is free from the evils of discrimination, distinction, dominations, inequality and sense of supremacy. It is time that we see the self in all and all in the self to co-exist in harmony, respect and peace. All of this will not be possible with mere talks and discussions but will be feasible only with the practical application of *Vedic* system of education that practically teaches us the concept and essence of 'Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahm' and further allows us to see the entire world as one family 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbkam'^{xv}. Education must not merely prepare us to be a professional of great value but should lead us to be a human of great value. It should guide us to liberating wisdom and allow us to lead a life smeared in wisdom. The important question is that how fulfilling and complete is the system of education that we have today? Is this system of education leading us to wisdom? Is it inculcating in us a sense of seeing the entire universe as one family? Or is this system promoting within us a sense of rivalry, a sense of supremacy and merely reducing success to grades and numbers? In no way is this education system touching the core of who we are and allowing an individual to understand that at the core all are but the same non-dual Brahman. If we look deep, we will come to the conclusion that education system to a great extent is responsible for all the havoc of the society and it alone can be the liberating factor from all the chaos.

Brahman is all-enveloping, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent. This reality is the base of the entire universe and all beings that exist. The current situation of our internal and external environment is disheartening. Internally we remain affected by violence, jealousy, possessiveness, desire to dominate and thus, the same becomes our expression externally. It is due to this that our times our witnessing the horrors of deforestation, deterioration of wildlife, the mindless killing of innocent animals, hideous crimes like animal rapes and murders, using sentient beings as objects for lab testing, entertainment and momentary pleasures. *Advaita-Vedanta* sees knowledge as the only means to break free from the clutches of *Avidya*. Just as darkness can be dispelled by light similarly the darkness of *Avidya* can be dispelled by *Vidya*. Cruelty, disharmony, infliction of pain have their roots in *Avidya* and certainly do not fall under the realms of *Dharma* (the natural cosmic order). We all are aware of the dipping oxygen levels, tigers near extinction, melting of glaciers, deforestation, the disappearance of species, earthquakes, floods, droughts and ailments like asthma, cancer, lung diseases and more. These issues do not have different roots instead all these issues are the branches of the same tree having its root in our current education system. Over the years we have stopped producing seekers of knowledge and are merely producing aspirants of
xv Warriar Krishna A.G, pp71-72, V-4, Maha Upanisad, The Theosophical Society, 1953

educational degrees who have only one aim-livelihood! Education that fails to aid a being in developing to his fullest on a physical, emotional, mental, intellectual, spiritual, ethical and moral level is futile. Today, our educational institutions are applying high-end commerce and marketing strategies, they are working well in calculating profit margins and have become commercial manufacturing units where every year thousands of doctors, teachers, engineers and management professionals are produced. These produced professionals have only one aim to get a comfortable job and earn in order to buy the most expensive fur coat, the most glamorous leather boots and the most beautiful house even if that means that all of this comes at the cost of killing innocent lives and deforestation. Educational institutions are no more temples of knowledge nor are the teachers and authorities beaming with the light of *Jñāna*. These teachers and authorities themselves lack conviction, ethics and morals and are anything but self-conscious. Thus, it is natural that the products that come out of these schools and colleges have no understanding of ethics, morals, kindness and are highly self-centered and material driven. An education system that fails to aid us in dealing with stressful situations makes us competitive, selfish, takes away our innocence, teaches us to use any life as an object to be dissected for the benefit of oneself is indeed a very low form of education. The increase in the number of students committing suicide today, the increase in the number of cases that speak of violence against children, animals and women throws light on the fact that our education system has broken down in teaching the young generation the most important lesson of dealing with failures as mere experiences in the journey of life. Back in the olden day's education was holistic and not in compartments. Today science, social studies, economics, mathematics exist as different subjects that have no common grounds. However, the Indian system saw these subjects as a part of one single body-*Darśana*. Everything from the ultimate reality, sex, education, environment, humans, life, animals and the whole cosmos fell under *Darśana*. The olden education system focused on making and developing seeker of knowledge. It is time to revamp our education system and introduce *Advaita-Vedanta* as a compulsory subject in primary, middle, high school and in colleges. Only when the coming generation is introduced to the concepts of *Advaita*, *Sam*, *Dam* and *Ahinsā* will they understand deeper concepts of *Brahman*, *Jeeva*, and *Maya*. Only when the make *Sravana*, *Manana*, *Nididhyasana* as a part of their very lives will they understand the significance of the *Mahāvākya*s. Only when the realise that all the names and forms that exist are non-dual from their very self will arise a situation where all beings will live in harmony, where education will not merely be a means to earn bread and butter but will be a means to realise divinity in all. It is only education through which one can undo the the damage made to this earth. It is education alone through which all crimes can be reduced and it is education alone that can reform the society. No doubt education is not same as wisdom but education is the first stepping stone to on the path of wisdom. No matter how many books one reads, one can not attain *Brahmajñāna*. However, education aids one in leading to the state of *Brahmajñāna*. Thus, are education must be such that is smeared in love, kindness and non-duality. *Sant Kabir* rightly says:

*Pothi padh-padh jag mua, pandit bhaya na koy
Dhai aakhar prem ka, padhe so pandit hoy*

In order to put an end to the current chaos of environmental disharmony and animal cruelty which has basic seeds of magnified crime, this paper suggests that *Advaita-Vedanta* must be introduced to students in their formative years. It is also suggested that *Advaita-Vedanta* should become a compulsory subject at school and college level. The current lot of teachers also must go through an introduction to *Advaita-Vedanta* on a compulsory basis. This will not only help them become more peaceful and calm but will also uplift their level of performance and their loyalty to their work. At this stage, we cannot sit and merely talk of Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahman as a concept. A philosophy that cannot be practically applied to bring about a change and uplift living beings from pain and misery is a futile philosophy. The only way the coming generation will understand the concept of Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahman is by being introduced to it in the foundation years of their lives.

No doubt on immediate basis seminars, conferences, protests, silent marches and voicing opinions on social media can be of great help in dealing with environmental disharmony and animal cruelty but in the long run, a revamp in the education system is the only means to tackle the issues of the same.

Conclusion:

The rise in violence against humans, animals and nature in general, the dipping values, morals and ethics on a social, political and individual level and the greed for scientific development and technology are indeed ruining the peace and balance of this world. It is important to understand that individual peace is not separate from world peace, it is essential to know that when each human, animal, tree or the smallest spec in the universe operates as per cosmic law and is in harmony only then will there be universal harmony. Education indeed plays an important role in the holistic development of an individual, society and the world. In order to understand and apply the essence of '*Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahman*', it is imperative to revamp, redesign and revise our entire education system. It is important to introduce young children to Yoga, Vegetarianism and add to their syllabus the life and philosophies of *Adi Śankarācārya*, *Buddha*, *Mahavira*, *Swami Vivekananda* and more. The *Vedic* system of education which concentrates upon the overall development of an individual focuses on understanding the self and 'he who knows the self, knows the *Brahman*'. An introduction to *Advaita-Vedanta* at an early stage will not only bring about interest and curiosity but will act as a building base for children to learn and understand other deeper concepts. It is also advised that teachers must also go through the basics of *Advaita-Vedanta* for emerging as better educators. Only a change in the education system will ensure our safety as an individual, family, society, nation and universe that stands on the edge of destruction due to environmental disharmony triggered by the ignorance of human race.

Without further ado, it's time to go back to the *Vedas* and realize that disparity has its locus in unity and unity remains the base of diversity. It is time to not merely preach the unifying philosophy of *Sarvam Khalu Idam Brahman* but also realize it within ourselves and within all that exists by going back to the age-old *Vedas* and *Upaniṣads* and exploring their

knowledge in the right light and applying their essence to have a world that exists in unity, love and peace!

Om Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!

References:

- Lokeshwarananda Swami, pp57, 6.2.3, Taittiriya Upanishad, ISBN- [9788185843759](#) Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 2014.
- Johi.K.L, Bimali.O.N, Trivedi Bindiya, pp-143, 3.14.1, Chandogya Upanishad, ISBN 10: 8171102433 ISBN 13: 9788171102433, Parimal Publications, 2013.
- Setumadhavan T.N. pp19, 3.3, Aitareya Upanishad of the Rig Veda, Esmskriti.com, 2011, <https://www.esamskriti.com>.
- Sarvananda Swami, pp5,1.2 Mandukya Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, ISBN- 8171205038, Shri Ramkrishna Matha, 1920
- Lokeshwarananda Swami, pp131, 6.8.7 Chandogya Upanishad of the Sama Veda ,ISBN- 9788185843919, Ramakrishna Institute of Culture, 2014
- Setumadhavan T.N. pp27, 1.4.10, Brihdarnayaka Upanishad of the Rig Veda, Esmskriti.com, 2012, <https://www.esamskriti.com>.
- Hume E Robert , pp209, 3.14, Thirteen Principal Unpanisads, 0195637437, 9780195637434, Oxford University Press, 1995
- Warriar Krishna A.G, pp71-72, V-4, Maha Upanisad, The Theosophical Society, 1953, <http://www.advaita.it/library/mahaupanishad.htm>
- Schomerus.W.H, pp-44, Saiva Siddhanta: An Indian School of Mystical Thought, 2000, MLBD.
- Lokeshwarananda Swami, 6.2.1, Chandogya Upanisad, Rama Krishna Institute of Culture, 2014.
- Johi.K.L, Bimali.O.N, Trivedi Bindiya, pp-143 (3.14.1), Chandogya Upanishad, Parimal Publications, 2013
- Lokeshwarananda Swami, pp57 (6.2.3) Taittiriya Upanishad, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 2014
- Devanand Vishnu, pp-119, Meditation and Mantras: An Authoritative Text, MLBD, 2003.
- Shankaracharya, Ch-29 (Nature of Bondage), Ram Krishna Math, 1991
- Tejomayananda Swami, pp-35, Chimaya Mission Trust, 2012
- Shankaracharya, Edited by Shastri. S.N, V-3, Vedant-Shastra, 2002
- Aiyer Narayanaswami. K, pp:140-147, Thirty Minor Upanishads, Kessinger Publishing, 2010
- Veezhinathan.N, The Voice of Shankara, Vol.41, No 1.2, Adi Shankara Advaita Research Centre, 2016
- Arya Sharda, Santity of Environment in Hindu Scripture, Parimal Publications, 2018
- Sharma.I.C, Ethical Philosophies of India, Johnsen Publishing and Co. 1991

- Singh.T.D Science and Spirituality, Bhaktivedant Institute, 2004
- Skolimowski Henryk, Dancing Shiva in Ecological Age, Dr.Henryk Skolimowski International Institute of Eco-Philosophy, 1999
- Singh Balbir, Hindu Ethics, Arnold Heinemann Publishers India Pvt.Ltd, 1984
- Ravi Illai, Foundations of Indian Ethics, Kaveri Books, 2004
- Bhatt.S.R, Reality,Knowledge and Value, Bhartiya Vidya Prakashan, 1985
- Nandakumar Prema, Adi Shankara: Finite to the Infinite, Chinmaya International Foundation, 2013
- Devsenapati V.A, Kamakottam Nayanmars and Adi Shankara, Madras University, 1993
- Kumari Ashok, Issues In Applied Ethics, Satyam Publishing House, 2009

Life

Mystic daughter of Delight,
Life, thou ecstasy,
Let the radius of thy flight
Be eternity.

On thy wings thou bearest high
Glory and disdain,
Godhead and mortality,
Ecstasy and pain.

Take me in thy bold embrace
Without weak reserve,
Body dire and unveiled face;
Faint not, Life, nor swerve.

All thy bliss I would explore,
All thy tyranny.
Cruel like the lion's roar,
Sweet like springtide be.

Like a Titan I would take,
Like a God enjoy,
Like a man contend and make,
Revel like a boy.

More I will not ask of thee,
Nor my fate would choose;
King or conquered let me be,
Vanquish, Life, or lose.

Even in rags I am a god;
Fallen, I am divine;
High I triumph when down-trod,
Long I live when slain.

Sri Aurobindo

A Light in Disguise: The Inner Presence

Monica Gulati

After the birth of my second child, Anand, in 2014 I was diagnosed with Bladder cancer. I was only 32 then. As grace would have it, somehow there was a great surety inside me that I have created the recipe for cancer and it is possible to look into it, understand it and heal it. I began some dedicated inner work. I mean what else I could do? I had no other option left! I had to now be honest to myself. If not now, then when?

You take up the spiritual path only when you feel you cannot do otherwise.

The Mother (CWM 14:29)

I slowly realised that all knowledge before that phase of my life was bookish knowledge, there was just a feeling or rather a burden of knowing however there was no real knowing in it. As I began some guided meditations with the help of my mentor/therapist, I realised there was so much inside me, jealousy, hatred, resentment, anger, limited beliefs and all the negativity that I can think of.

As Kabir says,

*Buraa jo dekhana main chala, Buraa naa milya koy
Jo man khoja aapna, mujhse buraa naa koy.*

(I searched here and there to find the bad in everything, I did not find anything bad anywhere, I looked inside my own self, and there, I could not find anyone worse than me)

Only now, it slowly dawned upon, why is it said that the other is a mirror? I have all that I see outside and blame or criticize. Indeed all the resolutions that needed to be done, all the unwinding of the knots, was inside me, and not outside. Inside was a chaos, entangled parts of being not distinguishable from each other!

At first it scared me. But slowly I let them be. There was now beginning to form a demarcation that I could let them be, and still be at peace. I could detach them from me, as 'not me' and therefore with this discernment, move on.

The interesting thing was, that I was wholly unaware of these contents within me before being struck with this huge giant in form of Cancer. It was as if my home had become a garbage bin which had allowed all unwanted guests who had started residing permanently in me, my being and I had no idea what ruckus they threw all around. All this garbage and a lot of chaos in my being was there due to lack of discernment.

Gradually through the inner work, going deeper into looking at my contents, I got the feel of a presence within me. I still cannot express it in words well, but after an intense surety of the presence being there, I somehow knew that this was the way. Who told me? No one! Yet this surety was too innate to be ignored. I could not imagine a life now without being aware of this presence within; it was as if the 'I' had found an anchor, a home and need not indulge in unnecessary struggles.

Imagine, having spent close to 30 years without that presence, I now just could not imagine life without the presence! I felt the presence very intensely at the heart level. There was a knowing that I should now take a back seat and let the presence take decisions to move on. And I did, or so I believe.

*Ek saadhe sab sadhe, Sab saadhe sab jaaye,
Rahiman moolhin seenchibo, phoolye phale aghaay.*

(Master the One, rest all with organise itself. If you try to master everything, you will be left with nothing. Says Rahim, only nurture the roots of a plant, it will give you fruits and leaves and flowers to your contentment.)

The One anchor, the strong solidity that was found as a by product of the illness, was that centre around which everything could now start to organise itself and integrate. The mind started to obey, the emotions started to obey and the physical at least begin to move forward in the direction of the driver. It appears almost effortless, just due to the presence of discernment. Discernment being there, no matter whether it is a bit difficult to implement, one moves ahead in a direction best suited for evolution and for progress.

Leap of faith:

I underwent two back to back surgeries in 2015 and a bit of treatment in 2016. This presence made possible for me a leap of faith, which otherwise I could have never imagined going through the surgeries cheerfully with a flame lit in my heart that every external happening is nothing more than a learning. The inner presence broke my thresholds, my limiting beliefs about hospitals and other things, and my previously held images about myself; it pushed me into a zone of living without definitions and labels on myself and others.

There was a clarity and discernment of not to think the thoughts that roam around floating here and there, everywhere. And now, Thoughts do arise about this and that, but now there is a surety that the thought flow is something separate from me. There is a strong knowing that I have the full right to choose, with my so called free will, to allow that thought flow inside my being or reject it. It was not before I found that inner anchor that I was able to keep the thought flow separate from me. As the inner presence made it self present, discernment was a by product of it. At the moment, garbage is felt floating outside, sometimes it may even visit for a moment, but it is not able to make my being its home. I have stopped entertaining them and making stories in my head, thereby polluting the mental environment. What I feel grateful about is that if not for this push, I would have never gotten a feel of this inner anchor, my true home.

The road is long and miles and miles to cover, but at least the journey has begun.

In the words of Kabir,

*Dheere Dheere Re Mana, Dheere Sab Kucch Hoye
Mali Seenche So Ghara, Ritu Aaye Phal Hoye*

(Gradually O Mind, things happen in their time. No matter gardener may pour hundreds of pots full of water on a plant, when the right weather is there, the fruit appears.)

It appeared to me as if I was thrust into Integral Yoga, without me even knowing it. It

became possible only due to cancer. Mother has warned us, not to take the things on their face value. In her own words:

Never take physical happenings at their face value. They are always a clumsy attempt to express something else, the true thing which escapes our superficial understanding. (CWM 9:34)

If cancer was taken on its face value, it had all the power to threaten me and instill fear in me. But behind the disguise of Cancer stood my life, waiting to be lived. From the beginning itself it was shown to me that cancer was nothing but a signal from the deepest being, a signal from the Universe to pay heed to something. One is born in this material existence and then very quickly one forgets the purpose of being born. Nature/Universe then gives us several reminders to get back to doing what we were supposed to be doing in this birth, Only if we pay attention to these signals in disguise.

Aspiration, Rejection and Surrender:

The Mother has also talked about Aspiration, Rejection and Surrender as important and indispensable steps of Integral Yoga. It was not before Cancer that I could even in the tiniest of bits understand what is meant by Rejection and Aspiration and I could not even fathom what Surrender is and surrender to whom? Slowly as I got in touch with that inner presence, Rejection and discernment were organic by products of an Aspiration that started mounting. I can say that there was no True Aspiration in me before the intense feeling of the presence within. It was only due to the inner presence that the Aspiration was aflame.

The Mother has clarified on what is Aspiration-

For the moment let us briefly state that a veritable aspiration represents the pure and sacred flame of the psychic fire rising from the depths of consciousness. But this fire envelopes our heart and mind and body too and then mounts upward with an unwavering orientation. Under its vivifying influence all the different parts of our being start aspiring in their characteristic fashions. (J.K. Mukherjee, *The Practice of Integral Yoga*: 37)

(I was introduced to Dynamic meditation by the Mother when I did the online course - New Creation of the Self, facilitated by Ameeta Didi, Gnostic Centre, Palam Vihar, Delhi. When I made Dynamic meditation a daily practice, I started feeling a lightness in my being, a certain Joy to progress. I sit daily, and scan inwardly the status of my being, the mental and the vital and the physical. Whatever comes up from either of these or all of these is offered in that sacred flame rising from the heart and going upwards as an Aahuti. All the praises, concerns, plans, ideas, obstacles, thoughts, issues, are put in the sacred fire as soon as they are noticed. The process has kept something alive within along with a certain lightness of being.)

Also, without cancer, there was no aspiration, there was no idea of what is this thing called the Divine? And appropriately enough, it has organically occurred to me that cancer

is the biggest gift I have got, which helped me to at least realise the importance of human life, before it was too late.

Maanush janam amol re, (human birth is precious)

Tu maati mein naa ghol re (do not waste it by scattering it around in mud)

But this urge to surrender, to consecrate, to bow down was not there before I was brought down on my knees. In the words of Mother herself: “Why should the sadhaka feel at all any urge to surrender himself to the Divine unless the fire of aspiration burns out the resistance and recalcitrance of his lower human nature?” (J.K. Mukherjee, *The Practice of Integral Yoga*: 38)

So, in me as well, there was no urge to surrender, and no idea of Divine or of Aspiration. In one of my meditations I was shown that lower nature in the form of ego is like a hard shell one has covered herself with. Because of the hard shell that we enclose ourselves in, there is no penetration possible of the Divine Grace present omnipotently; there is no seepage of the Divine grace into the being.

Kabir says,

aisa aisa kivad hivade par jadiya

Guru bina tala kaun khole?

Tharo raag hriday me bahar kyon atake?

(You have locked your heart inside so many doors, without a true guru who would open the doors of the locked heart? Your Ram is in your heart, why do you wander outside?)

Speaking on the essentiality of Aspiration, Sri Aurobindo says-

We can, simply by a sincere aspiration, open a sealed door in us and find... that Something which will change the whole significance of life, reply to all our questions, solve all our problems and lead us to the perfection we aspire for without knowing it, to that Reality which alone can satisfy us and give us lasting joy, equilibrium, strength, life. (CWM 9:374)

In our usual lives we are anchored outside, on our spouses, on our jobs, on money, on kids, on parents, on property etc. The inner anchor has the power to lead one to that Reality which alone is full of contentment, joy and poise and solidity.

Mother at another occasion says-

An aspiration is “an inner enthusiasm towards the New, the Unknown, the Perfection.” It is “a yearning, a longing for the contact with the Divine Force, divine Harmony, divine Love.” An aspiration is “an inner flame, a need for the light... A luminous enthusiasm that seizes the whole being... An unquenchable thirst, an elan, a luminous drive towards all that is high, all that is noble, all that is divine.” It is “a courage with a taste for the supreme adventure, the adventure of consciousness.” Aspiration is a “silently mounting column of fire that carries in its tip what one wants to be, one wants to have, one wants to do.” Finally, an aspiration is “a purifying Will, an evermounting drive.” (J.K. Mukherjee, *The Practice of Integral Yoga*: 43)

There is this strong solidity which arose naturally - about staying on this path, surrendering

more and more and intense knowing that this is the right path. With this, new paths open up, new people connect and new possibilities arise in concurrence with the Swadharma.

You no longer live like a little machine, hardly half-conscious. You want to feel truly, to act truly, to know truly... (CWM 9: 374)

The starting-point: to want it, truly want it, to need it. (CWM 9: 375)

My wanting/yearning could not initiated, if not for the heavy meteor thrown at my face, before which I was totally unaware of the fire within, a want to evolve within.

So, along with the initiation of an aspirational fire, discernment (rejection) came into light and surrender got connected along with these two. A strong sense of a presence of something all knowing, all pervasive, to whom to surrender each atom of this being. It is a tumultuous and long road, but there is a certain innate Ananda on this way. Ananda that was missing from my life before cancer, a joy which is independent of the external happenings. With this feeling of a joy and a continuously deepening process of surrender, life can be lived, life has a meaning, an aim. The Mother has very clearly said- “An aimless life is a miserable life” (CWM 12:3). So was my life, full of misery in oblivion, until I found myself being blessed with a purpose.

Connecting the Dots:

Now, It was only when I was opened to the vastness of the philosophy of Mother and Sri Aurobindo did I realise that this inner presence is none other than the Psychic. Somehow dots connected. Something told me that the inner presence I have been jolted awake to, is the Psychic only, else how could this fire arise? How could this tail of a dog try now to straighten up? How is this magic possible? It must be something powerful and wise that has done this impossible thing!

In the words of Sri Aurobindo-

It is the Psychic that gives the true aspiration—if the vital is purified and subjected to the psychic, then the vital gives intensity—but if it is unpurified it brings in a rajasic intensity with impatience and reactions of depression and disappointment. As for the calm and equality needed, it must come down from above through the mind. (CWSA 29:60)

I see a lot of stuff to be transformed in my being. Vital, Physical, Mental; yet there is also a strong hope, the hope is linked tightly with the presence of the Psychic- which is the source of True Aspiration. Vital does try and make a show whenever it can, but then thanks to the noose of Cancer hanging over my head, vital gets subjected to the Psychic force only. I feel that in my thirties now life has just begun.



About the Contributors

Mr. Jamshed Mawalwala

A former student of SACAR, he is a member of Sri Aurobindo Ashram and has been engaged in comprehensive compilation on the themes selected from Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's works.

Dr. Larry Seidlitz

Dr. Larry specializes in the Integral Yoga Psychology as envisaged by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. He has authored several articles in this field and written two books. He is also the editor of the journal "Collaboration".

Dr P. Marudanayagam

Former Professor of English, Pondicherry University

Dr. Beloo Mehra

Dr. Beloo Mehra is a Senior Associate at Sri Aurobindo Foundation for Indian Culture (SAFIC), Pondicherry, where she works in the areas of curriculum development, research, writing, editing, teaching, content creation, organizing, etc. for various projects. She is a student of the educational, social and cultural thought of Sri Aurobindo, and writes on related topics.

Ms. Oeendril Guha

Senior Content Developer, SPI, Pondicherry

Ms. Deepshikha Reddy

Ms. Deepshikha Reddy is the General Secretary of SACAR Trust. She has contributed in the field of education by conducting value education for the children for several years. Along with being a painter and musician she is deeply involved in the academic activities of SACAR by means of editing books, writing articles and giving talks.

Ms. Vandana Sharma

PhD research Scholar - Advaita Vedanta, (B.Sc. M.A. Shaivism, Diploma - Yoga, Advanced Diploma - Advaita Vedanta) Annamalai University

Ms. Monica Gulati

Monica Gulati, a learner and a seeker, is an immunologist by education, is based in Gurgaon, India. She shares her experiences on going through cancer with faith at <https://thegiftofcancer.wordpress.com>



JOIN US

Study Camp on the
Auspicious Occasion of
Sri Aurobindo's Birthday

DATE

16th – 18th August
2019

WEBSITE

www.sacar.in

CONTACT

7639920796

9994190403

0413 2348067

deepshikha1946@gmail.com

sacarstudycamps@gmail.com

VENUE:

SACAR, 39 Vanniar
Street Vaithikuppam,
Puducherry – 605 012

SPIRITUAL APPROACH TO LIFE-PROBLEMS

TIME-TABLE

16th August (Friday)

8:45 - 9:45 *The Problem of Good and Evil*

Alok Pandey

10:00 - 10:45 *Karma & Rebirth*

Larry Seidlitz

10:45 - 11:30 *Role of Hostile Forces in our Life*

Deepshikha Reddy

17th August (Saturday)

8:45 - 9:45 *Materialism Boon or Bane*

Ananda Reddy

10:00 - 10:45 *Pain and Suffering: Cause and Solution*

Falguni Jani

10:45 - 11:30

Question and Answers

18th August (Sunday)

8:45 - 9:45 *Human Relations*

Ashesh Joshi

10:00-11:30 *Diving into Interpersonal Conflict*

Manoj Pavitran

Landmarks to reach SACAR

Near Mother's House (Guest House), Masimagham
Road

Institute of Human Study

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

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

Donations to SACAR are tax exempt under 80G



Each race has a part to play; each race has one side of human nature to develop. And we have to take all these together; and, possibly in the distant future, some race will arise in which all these marvellous individual race perfections, attained by the different races, will come together and form a new race, the like of which the world has not yet dreamed.

Swami Vivekananda