

New Race

*A Journal of
Integral and Future Studies*

Homage to

Auroville
The city the earth needs



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The Matrimandir wants to be the symbol of the Universal Mother according to Sri Aurobindo's teaching.

The Mother

EDITORIAL

"The purpose of Auroville is to realise Human unity" said the Mother. Auroville is a wonderful experiment, a laboratory where world cultures meet and exchange goodwill and love. Unlike the clash of civilizations in the outside world, it is a place where all collaborate. As is the case with all human societies it too has its share of problems but that makes it even more relevant for the world. A problem sorted out and solved at one level in Auroville may become a solution to many world problems.

A simple example of it is the non-use of cash money in Auroville. Decades ago the Mother had envisioned a cash-less economy for Auroville. Accordingly no cash transaction takes place between the members of Auroville community. Today, after demonitization in India, experts opine that a cashless economy is the only way to arrest and check corruption. Auroville did it long many years ago. This is what the Mother had envisioned, that a solution found in Auroville can be applied to the world. Many such examples of aforestation, sustainable energy, green belt, water conservation and innovations can be cited here.

Auroville, a Divine dream is not a utopia. It is a dream that the Divine has willed and is constantly striving to manifest. Human Unity is being attempted here on different planes keeping perfection and harmony as its guiding principles.

This issue of New Race is dedicated to the Mother's Birthday and Auroville's Golden Jubilee. It is a humble homage from the Institute of Human Study to "the city that earth needs".

Shruti

TRUTH



O Savitri, thou art my spirit's Power,
The revealing voice of my immortal Word,
The face of Truth upon the roads of Time
Pointing to the souls of men the routes to God.

Sri Aurobindo

THE ADVENT AND PROGRESS OF THE SPIRITUAL AGE

Sri Aurobindo

If a subjective age, the last sector of a social cycle, is to find its outlet and fruition in a spiritualised society and the emergence of mankind on a higher evolutionary level, it is not enough that certain ideas favourable to that turn of human life should take hold of the general mind of the race, permeate the ordinary motives of its thought, art, ethics, political ideals, social effort, or even get well into its inner way of thinking and feeling. It is not enough even that the idea of the kingdom of God on earth, a reign of spirituality, freedom and unity, a real and inner equality and harmony—and not merely an outward and mechanical equalisation and association—should become definitely an ideal of life; it is not enough that this ideal should be actively held as possible, desirable, to be sought and striven after, it is not enough even that it should come forward as a governing preoccupation of the human mind. That would evidently be a very great step forward,—considering what the ideals of mankind now are, an enormous step. It would be the necessary beginning, the indispensable mental environment for a living renovation of human society in a higher type. But by itself it might only bring about a half-hearted or else a strong but only partially and temporarily successful attempt to bring something of the manifest spirit into human life and its institutions. That is all that mankind has ever attempted on this line in the past. It has never attempted to work out thoroughly even that little, except in the limits of a religious order or a peculiar community, and even there with such serious defects and under such drastic limitations as to make the experiment nugatory and without any bearing on human life. If we do not get beyond the mere holding of the ideal and its general influence in human life, this little is all that mankind will attempt in the future. More is needed; a general spiritual awakening and aspiration in mankind is indeed the large necessary

motive-power, but the effective power must be something greater. There must be a dynamic re-creating of individual manhood in the spiritual type....

The thing to be done is as large as human life, and therefore the individuals who lead the way will take all human life for their province. These pioneers will consider nothing as alien to them, nothing as outside their scope. For every part of human life has to be taken up by the spiritual,—not only the intellectual, the aesthetic, the ethical, but the dynamic, the vital, the physical; therefore for none of these things or the activities that spring from them will they have contempt or aversion, however they may insist on a change of the spirit and a transmutation of the form. In each power of our nature they will seek for its own proper means of conversion; knowing that the Divine is concealed in all, they will hold that all can be made the spirit's means of self-finding and all can be converted into its instruments of divine living. And they will see that the great necessity is the conversion of the normal into the spiritual mind and the opening of that mind again into its own higher reaches and more and more integral movement. For before the decisive change can be made, the stumbling intellectual reason has to be converted into the precise and luminous intuitive, until that again can rise into higher ranges to overmind and supermind or gnosis. The uncertain and stumbling mental will has to rise towards the sure intuitive and into a higher divine and gnostic will, the psychic sweetness, fire and light of the soul behind the heart, *hrdaye guhayam*, has to alchemise our crude emotions and the hard egoisms and clamant desires of our vital nature. All our othermembers have to pass through a similar conversion under the compelling force and light from above. The leaders of the spiritual march will start from and use the knowledge and the means that past effort has developed in this direction, but they will not take them as they are without any deep necessary change or limit themselves by what is now known or cleave only to fixed and stereotyped systems or given groupings of results, but will follow the method of the Spirit in Nature. A constant rediscovery

and new formulation and larger synthesis in the mind, a mighty remoulding in its deeper parts because of a greater enlarging Truth not discovered or not well fixed before, is that Spirit's way with our past achievement when he moves to the greatneses of the future.

This endeavour will be a supreme and difficult labour even for the individual, but much more for the race. It may well be that, once started, it may not advance rapidly even to its first decisive stage; it may be that it will take long centuries of effort to come into some kind of permanent birth. But that is not altogether inevitable, for the principle of such changes in Nature seems to be a long obscure preparation followed by a swift gathering up and precipitation of the elements into the new birth, a rapid conversion, a transformation that in its luminous moment figures like a miracle. Even when the first decisive change is reached, it is certain that all humanity will not be able to rise to that level. There cannot fail to be a division into those who are able to live on the spiritual level and those who are only able to live in the light that descends from it into the mental level. And below these too there might still be a great mass influenced from above but not yet ready for the light. But even that would be a transformation and a beginning far beyond anything yet attained. This hierarchy would not mean as in our present vital living an egoistic domination of the undeveloped by the more developed, but a guidance of the younger by the elder brothers of the race and a constant working to lift them up to a greater spiritual level and wider horizons. And for the leaders too this ascent to the first spiritual levels would not be the end of the divine march, a culmination that left nothing more to be achieved on earth. For there would be still yet higher levels within the supramental realm, as the old Vedic poets knew when they spoke of the spiritual life as a constant ascent,—

*brahmāṇas tvā śatakrato
ud vamsam iva yemire;
yat sānoḥ sānum āruhat,
bhūri aspaṣṭa kartvam,—*

The priests of the word climb thee like a ladder, O hundred-powered. As one ascends from peak to peak, there is made clear the much that has still to be done. But once the foundation has been secured, the rest develops by a progressive self-unfolding and the soul is sure of its way. As again it is phrased by the ancient Vedic singers,—

*abhyavasthāh pra jāyante,
pra vavrer vavriś ciketa;
upasthe mātur vi caṣṭe,—*

State is born upon state; covering after covering becomes conscious of knowledge; in the lap of the Mother the soul sees.

This at least is the highest hope, the possible destiny that opens out before the human view, and it is a possibility which the progress of the human mind seems on the way to redevelop. If the light that is being born increases, if the number of individuals who seek to realise the possibility in themselves and in the world grows large and they get nearer the right way, then the Spirit who is here in man, now a concealed divinity, a developing light and power, will descend more fully as the Avatar of a yet unseen and unguessed Godhead from above into the soul of mankind and into the great individualities in whom the light and power are the strongest. There will then be fulfilled the change that will prepare the transition of human life from its present limits into those larger and purer horizons; the earthly evolution will have taken its grand impetus upward and accomplished the revealing step in a divine progression of which the birth of thinking and aspiring man from the animal nature was only an obscure preparation and a far-off promise.

(An excerpt from CWSA 25, *The Human Cycle*: 261-269)

"A MIGHTIER RACE SHALL INHABIT THE MORTAL'S WORLD"

Sri Aurobindo

The Immanent shall be the witness God
Watching on his many-petalled lotus-throne
His actionless being and his silent might
Ruling earth-nature by eternity's law,
A thinker waking the Inconscient's world,
An immobile centre of many infinitudes
In his thousand-pillared temple by Time's sea.
Then shall the embodied being live as one
Who is a thought, a will of the Divine,
A mask or robe of his divinity,
An instrument and partner of his Force,
A point or line drawn in the infinite,
A manifest of the Imperishable.
The supermind shall be his nature's fount,
The Eternal's truth shall mould his thoughts and acts,
The Eternal's truth shall be his light and guide.
All then shall change, a magic order come
Overtopping this mechanical universe.
A mightier race shall inhabit the mortal's world.
On Nature's luminous tops, on the Spirit's ground,
The superman shall reign as king of life,
Make earth almost the mate and peer of heaven,
And lead towards God and truth man's ignorant heart
And lift towards godhead his mortality.
A power released from circumscribing bounds,
Its height pushed up beyond death's hungry reach,
Life's tops shall flame with the Immortal's thoughts,
Light shall invade the darkness of its base.

(Savitri: B XI:C I)

EVOLUTION NEXT

Alok Pandey

It is now a common ground for both Science and Spirituality that evolution has not stopped with man. While the theories and causes and the possibilities envisaged may differ, the essential truth remains. At a smaller scale it is easy enough to understand. Our mind, for instance has an enormous capacity to develop and evolve. It has also been amply demonstrated that the mind can, in certain exceptional states, exhibit capacities that border on the miraculous. In fact the entire science of Rajayoga is based upon this possibility to undoing and redoing the mind and its possibilities. Our limitations are really the limitations of the mind that have been inbuilt and programmed through centuries and millenniums for Nature's limited purposes. But always there are persons who have displayed that these first limits set by Nature and the bondages imposed by habit and conditioning are not something permanent. They can be undone and redone. Even ordinarily, though at a lesser pitch, all education is basically about a reorganisation of our being which includes, an emergence of possibilities that would otherwise remain latent, undeveloped and unused. The Genius and the Yogi are simply Nature's attempts to exceed herself, though at two different levels, one unconscious and without active collaboration of the individual, the other with the conscious collaboration of the person.

If this be so, then it is only logical to assume that with passage of Time, especially with increasing challenges emerging from all around us, we as a race are moving ahead towards a new becoming, a new species so to say. The various pressures that we see and experience in today's life are not so much physical but psychological. We have found ways and means to provide enough physical ease and comfort for ourselves but our minds are being increasingly put to test by pushing the limits of our psychological comfort zones. While on the one side it is increasing the risk of breakdowns under the mounting stress, on the other side it is leading to new ways of adaptation to

the novel challenges. It is only a question of time that a whole new generation would be so distinctly different in its ways of thinking, feeling, reaction, understanding, even in its capacities of thought and action that we will begin to experience a clear evolutionary divide between a humanity of the past and the humanity of the future. The present of course is a mixed bag and will be so until the transition is complete. But the trends are obvious enough if we care to see. Of course the physical body may remain the same for a long time since it is much more difficult to undo the physical grooves of Nature than the mental ones. But here too the first indications are that there is a change underway, a change in terms of an increase in height, a blurring of gender identities, a change in the brain, a change even in the eating, sleep and mating patterns including a general decline in the fertility rates. We may debate whether the change is for good or for worse as always but the fact of change cannot be denied anymore unless we choose to remain wilfully blind. Perhaps only when the transition is complete and Nature has achieved her purpose hidden to common sight that we shall see and know how she worked and laboured with an intuitive intelligence at every step including even those that appeared as fumbles and errors. Late shall we learn how even randomness is a path and 'chance' and 'accidents' are simply steps of a conscious Power that far exceeds our limited Intelligence and which therefore completely eludes our understanding. We call it Chance since we have no clue about the many wonderous forces at work within the heart of the spheres. The ancients simply worshipped these powers and approached them with awe and respect and fear. The moderns have discarded them in thought and belief having renamed them as 'Chance' and 'Accidents'!

Be it as it may it would be interesting and important to see how this change is taking place and what are its implications upon our individual and collective lives; what are the seeming by lanes, possible bypasses, unexpected departures, unseen abysses and hurdles that await this journey. This is all the more important since unlike the previous evolutionary leaps, Nature intends to use conscious

means and processes this time, at least partially. She expects man to collaborate and that is why she has given us the sense of a 'free will'. It means that we have a role to play this time and therefore it is helpful if we can somewhat at least understand the process and know what lies ahead in terms of possibilities and difficulties, the delight of a leap as well as the danger of a precipitous fall. This is not to say that the whole path towards the future can be seen. Least of all can it be predicted by any logical analysis or an extension of logic from the present chaos where the future and the past are locked in a mix of wrestle and embrace. We have to guided here by an intuition and experience, even perhaps a luminous faith that becomes the spearhead of the shaft of knowledge lying in the waiting. It is only few steps that can be thus revealed. The rest must necessarily wait for its disclosure in its own time. In this sense it is a real adventure into the unforeseeable, an adventure of colonising a New Space and mastering a New mode of Time.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are among the foremost who have not only foreseen this Evolution Next but also worked actively upon it, day and night pouring Their combined Energy towards this work which they saw as the one most important task before Nature and man arranged for us by the All-Knowing Guide who works behind the scenes of earthly life to turn everything, each event and circumstance, into a means towards the great evolutionary leap. Call Him or Her or It by whatever Name, for scientific purposes we can call Him as the Evolutionary Energy and Power or the Conscious Wisdom and Force that works in Nature to push things towards their far off destined goal. A recognition of this Wisdom and Power is perhaps the very first steps towards a conscious collaboration. For then our task becomes easy. All that we need to do is to align ourselves in thought and feelings, in will and impulses to this inner Push from within, obey Its tremendous impulses, follow Its subtle intimations that whisper to our souls in some silent ground of our being. But we may also play at cross purposes to this 'Power'; disobey the demand of the Time-Spirit, refuse to hear the word of the Zeitgeist and as a result

end up awash or a castaway on the shores of a bygone world, left behind to battle in the simian world while humanity emerges slowly from the ape and steps into the wild and looks anew and faces the danger and delight of the Unknown with new eyes and a new mind. So too we have the 'choice' to either belong to a past humanity that is soon losing its context or to belong to a fast emerging future that is evolving out of the human carapace. It needs a leap of faith, a leap of courage, a leap of love for all that we wish to be and to leave behind all that we do not want to remain.

Evolution is a complex process. It is not about turning human beings into little saints or endowing them with ethical and moral qualities. It is not about a genius with exceptional capacities. These are no doubt beautiful and admirable things but they are human. They indicate a higher kind of humanity that has been able to break through the morass of earthly nature and its hundred bonds that keeps us tied to ignorance, error, suffering and pain. But this something is a small little window glimpse of what yet may come. The rest of our being remains submerged in darkness even as our sight looks out of the little niche into the vast expanse outside. No doubt this little glimpse brings us new perspectives, even new powers of which we were unaware in our closed door life. It inspires and entices us to greater things. And yet we have not yet definitively stepped out of the room of Ignorance and learned to walk freely into the vast expanse or soak our very bodies in the luminous gold of the sun whose gentle rays we have witnessed. We have seen the strip of sky above and our sight has scanned a bit of it but our wings have not yet grown wide and spanned the distant horizons. We have also looked at the mud and the forest that lie outside our neat and clean rooms but have not yet felt the true touch of Earth that invigorates and strengthens even as it draws us sometimes close enough to perilous domains. Even when we do open a door and not just the window and step out a little, we return back to the safe house, our accustomed place of shelter that guards us against the dangers of the Night as well as an excess of the Light both of which may blind and threaten us. In short

we still remain a prisoner with only a limited and partial freedom, a conditional freedom so to say. A yet greater possibility, a yet higher soar, a yet wider sweep of flight awaits us with our spiritual evolution or to put it more broadly and in general terms with our 'Evolution Next'.

It is unfortunate that the term spiritual has been defined in a certain limited way creating an inability in looking at it in a large and catholic way. Many still confuse it with certain religious bent of mind or an ability to juggle with metaphysical ideas and abstract philosophical conceptions. Still others take it for some techniques and processes that allow us to open the window out of the mud house of our body and then enthralled with the grand vision that greets us, discard the rest of the house as a needless encumbrance whose function and purpose is over with the opening of the doors and the windows. Such glimpses and early short miraculous escapes are only preparatory steps; they are neither the main body nor the essence of evolution. These strolls into the Unknown enrich us, giving their distinctive stamp upon our nature but they do not transform our earthly life; it may set free the soul of a few but our nature and mind and body and life remain, largely out of habit and sense of comfort, a slave and prisoner of the old and accustomed air. Evolution will take up these human possibilities and give them an ampler scope and a greater fulfilment. But more importantly it would mean not only a radical change in the way we see things (a new conception of life) but a new way of doing and being. It is a total change right down to the very cells of our body, a new species emerging out of the old, a breaking away from our human-animal past and its habits and laws and way of life.

* * *

Thus far the urge for a conscious growth and betterment of our human lot has been both a boon and a bane for humanity. It is a boon since unlike the animal we are given conscious means and processes to explore and improve ourselves and the world around us. It is a bane since we often mistake this evolutionary angst as an expansion of the

scale and pitch of our present existence and not a radical change in who we are. It is a change in quantity that we seek and not a change in quality. Or perhaps we mistake the former for the latter. We believe in our ignorance that more money, more comfort, more information, more degrees, more outer influence means automatically a better quality of life. However humanity is beginning to realise that this may not be so. Often such an increase of outer means at our disposal is at the expense of our natural inner capacities. Technological advantage is often at the cost of a biological amputation of some function. Therefore we end up with more diseases, more restrictions of living, more dependence on outer means for our happiness. That which is our natural state as a child is lost somewhere down the lane of schools and jobs, career and ambition, entangled and enmeshed in gadgets that surround our life. Our very freedom becomes a slavery to the means we have used; our advantage turns to disadvantage, our independence a crippling manoeuvre; our mastery an even worse slavery!

It is important therefore that before we embark on the great voyage of a conscious evolution, we first make it clear to ourselves as to which way we must proceed. We have both experiences before us, - the journey of Alexander to conquer the world with the sword, wielding outer authority and external power, or the journey of Buddha who actually conquers the world with the power of the Word and the inner Poise of self-mastery. This is not to say that technology is bad and one must shun science in order to tread the evolutionary path. In fact it is best to have a balance between the inner and the outer, between scientific knowledge and spiritual wisdom, between external control and inner power. What we have to avoid is extremes, an extreme focus on the outer leads to an impoverishment of inner life and that is disastrous to our human existence itself. Equally an excess in inner pursuit leads to an exclusivity that impoverishes the race since such a person is more often than not lost to the general collective effort of humanity to evolve.

Secondly, and that is an important thing to note, the two approaches, - scientific and spiritual meet at some point. However if we, in our haste, believe that we can arrive at the highest truths of existence from this end, pursuing the methods of science then it will inevitably lead us to a fatal cul de sac of our own making. This is so because science in its present conception of life, assumes everything, from dust to man as the product of an unconscious, mechanical energy which it can somehow understand and manipulate to its advantage by knowing the laws and processes. It leads us to a point where not only the Divine existence but many beautiful things that belong to a whole subjective side of our experience such as Beauty, Love, Peace, Bliss etc are reduced to quantum packets that one day we can learn to manipulate until we are capable of even capturing and placing the very highest Divine Consciousness and Power, Shakti, at the disposal of our mechanical science, making it available for a price to all who can afford. This is carrying the mechanistic view to its extreme whose dangerous results have been repeatedly revealed in various Indian Myths wherein the Asura does tapasya to get the Divine Powers and turn it to ignorant and egoistic purposes. His tapasya does bring fruits and he does acquire lot of powers. However his achievements and acquisitions become the very cause of his downfall since the One Conscious Power and all that lies beyond in the realm of the Undivided Consciousness always eludes him. The magic of the Infinite keeps defying the logic of the finite, even though the finite be an aggradised asura, a finite raised to an nth degree.

On the other hand, there is the way of the gods, the way that starts from the other end, first discovering the essential oneness, the Consciousness or rather the Conscious Force that stands unveiled at the apex of creation. Then it extends this vision onto different aspects of existence. Behind unconscious matter and blind mechanical forces of Nature, behind the river and the sea, the mountain and the tree, behind the tempest and the storm one sees the workings of a Conscious Force or half-conscious forces.

Instead of seeing the highest as simply an extension of the lowest, only differing in quantity, one sees the lowest as a shadow of the highest, changing in quality as it comes down from level to level and grade to grade. This too is science but another kind of science. This too works if we discover ways and means to enter into contact and communication with these forces or the One Force that works behind creation.

While the former approach to conscious evolution takes us beyond the human scale quantitatively, aggrandising the present animal humanity, the latter brings down a higher quality of forces and consciousness into our present living, changing it thereby into a greater and higher, a more conscious life. These are the two lines of human evolution always open before us but mankind seems to have generally preferred the former Asuric type except for some isolated individuals or scattered groups who withdrew into the solitude of a forest life untouched by the diluting and corrupting influences that the life of mega-cities driven by the strong gusts of desire and centred around the satisfactions of the human ego breathes. Perhaps we have now reached that crucial point wherein the two must meet and mingle and mankind must chose in a definitive way one or the other course of its evolution. The results of an asuric evolution have been for all to see. Indian myths have preserved the memory of these past attempts vividly wherein civilisations after civilisation, even strong and mighty ones as revealed in the times of Ramayana and the Mahabharata have vanished without a trace collapsing under its own weight or through the recoil of almighty Nature which does not allow any partisan development of a group at the gross expense of others. The myths of Atlantis and Troy sinking into the sea or burnt to ashes are similar indications that come from the other side of the globe as historical legends. On the other hand the daivic efforts, the godlike way to evolve, have always survived and even continued through all the destruction almost as a lineage or an imprint in the racial memory inspiring similar efforts later on. The Gita and its truths survive an entire gory war that destroys

a whole breed of mighty warriors. The legend and myth of Rama continues to touch the human heart while men doubt the story itself and the existence of a golden city called Lanka and its legendary king. The Vedas and the Upanishads survive along with the names of the Rishis whereas the kings and monarchs, the kingdoms and their edicts and the currencies of gold and silver are hard to find. The Bible and Christ survives the crucifixion. The Roman empire collapses while Christ and his gospel lives on baptising millions of humanity across the globe and creating an empire far greater than the kings and the priests who ordered his execution. The dharma of Buddha survives and spreads defying its crushing by military rule and political force.

Yet mankind has to once again chose to see if it has learned its lessons or not. Depending upon the choice we make, the path of our next evolutionary curve will open, - a tremendous scientific and technological development along with an impoverished heart and a cunning animal mind made worse by its brilliance, or else, a tremendous inner development extending itself naturally into scientific and other fields for the betterment of mankind and earth, an enrichment of the race by spirituality and science working hand in hand, technology coming to assist the evolutionary impulse and not becoming a bane in unchaste minds and crude hearts. On the one hand is a large scale destruction, our one-sided growth becoming a block to our total progress. On the other hand is a leap into the future wherein all the elements necessary for our total development evolve together and take us to the promised land through the present narrow gorge.

The moment is near and we have to chose, individually and collectively.

* * *

(To be continued...)

SAVITRI AND SATYAVAN

Rod Hemsell

1. The Goddess Savitri

There is a central section of Sri Aurobindo's mantric teaching, titled *Savitri – A Legend and a Symbol*, which is often mistakenly interpreted as primarily a mythological legend rather than a symbol. However, through a series of workshops presented this year at centers in Europe as well as at our center here in Crestone, Colorado, we have tried to demonstrate the truer esoteric nature of the teaching that is revealed in this important part of the book. It is the section of about 60 pages in the very middle of the 700 page tome that ostensibly deals with the meeting of Savitri and Satyavan in the forest, but which is actually an initiatory transmission of the qualities embodied by the symbolic goddess of the “New Consciousness” descending on earth, and of the truly ready human soul that is elected as a vessel of that descent.

In the cantos of Books 4 and 5, therefore, we find a description, canto by canto, of the gradual emergence of that new consciousness on earth, first in the form of an invisible universal power working through nature and art and science; then as a subtle mystical intuition experienced by many who aspire for the emergence of a more spiritual reality beyond the practical and rational mind to which we seem bound; and finally as the original Vedic luminosity and joy of revelatory inspiration named Savitri that descends into the life and mind of the ready human being, with an elaborate description of what such readiness means and requires. And it is here that we are made to hear and see the qualities of a spiritual presence that can be experienced through Yoga. For example, She is described as:

A silence in the noise of earthly things...
The very room and smile of musing space...
A godhead sculptured on a wall of thought...
This intimation of the world's delight...
A Mind of light, a life of rhythmic force...

And in these pages we also find several examples of a pattern and technique whereby Sri Aurobindo makes the poem reflect on itself in a way that expresses its deeper meaning and purpose. He writes of it:

This word was seed of all the thing to be...
 There came the gift of a revealing hour...
 The word was used as a hieratic means
 For the release of the imprisoned spirit...

When read in the normal way, by the eyes and the brain, one can easily miss the meaning and power of lines and phrases like these. But in a dynamic mantric reading and hearing the direct revelatory effect is of a presence and quality of experience that is exactly what is being described and transmitted by the poetry. This is the mantric quality of *Savitri*, which is the essence of Vedic speech known as mantra. One of the primary aims of our workshops and the activities of the center is to make such experience a familiar occurrence on the path of Integral Yoga.

2. The Ready Human Being

In spiritual philosophy the Ideal is not some far off possibility, or impossibility, to be achieved but rather it is the inner reality of the world that we experience now, in its fragmented or partial expression. It is the absolute of all these relatives, the bliss and emptiness of the Buddha nature or the omnipresent stillness of the Brahman; the Good, the Beautiful, and the True that empower things to become what they are and empower the mind to know things as such, as Plato saw it.

In the central part of *Savitri – a Legend and a Symbol*, the mantric poem of Sri Aurobindo that we have been considering in these articles, there is a prophecy of a New Consciousness that is manifesting in humanity which enables us to know more immediately and directly the ideal reality of things, of which philosophy speaks. An image is created by Sri Aurobindo of the ready human being who has been prepared by life to be selected by that divine being named Savitri,

who reveals herself to him in the forest – in a way that may become quite common. The literary technique that is used is first person dramatic narrative. On beholding the presence of something divine, the protagonist says:

I look back on the meaning of myself,
 A soul made ready on earth's soil for thee.
 Once were my days like days of other men:
 To think and act was all, to enjoy and breathe;
 This was the width and height of mortal hope:
 Yet there came glimpses of a deeper self
 That lives behind Life and makes her act its scene.
 A truth was felt that screens its shape from mind...
 I lived in the ray but faced not to the sun.
 I looked upon the world and missed the Self,
 And when I found the Self, I lost the world,
 My other selves I lost and the body of God,
 The link of the finite with the Infinite,
 The bridge between the appearance and the Truth,
 The mystic aim for which the world was made...

In these few lines of *Savitri* Sri Aurobindo sums up the central issue of life expressed in some way by every spiritual philosophy and discipline, and the person who grapples with it consciously is precisely the one who is ready to receive the solution. In this case, there have also been a series of positive and negative events that intensify the search: Satyavan was driven into the forest by an adverse fate that left his father, the King, blind and powerless (do we see the symbolism here?), and then he attuned himself to life in nature:

“Nursed by the vastness, pupil of solitude/ Great Nature came to her recovered child/Through an inner seeing and sense a wakening came.” If we really hear these words and identify with their promise and their call, ideally placed as we are in this mountain solitude, then perhaps, like Satyavan, we might respond with a welcome, as he does when the goddess appears, and not let her slip away: “But now the gold link comes to me with thy feet/Come nearer to me from thy car of light/

Descend, O happiness, with thy moon-gold feet/Enrich earth's floors upon whose sleep we lie/Enter my life, thy chamber and thy shrine.”

3. Sruti and Mantra

“The Formless and the Formed were joined in Her.”

This line from *Savitri* seems to me to express the essence of the goal of Buddhist and Hindu Tantra, and it is not an idea or a concept; it is a spiritual experience. It is the special character and importance of Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, that it can transmit this experience: that is the Guru's gift of Mantra.

“The silent Soul of all the world was there:
It bore within itself a seed, a flame,
A seed from which the Eternal is new-born,
A flame that cancels death in mortal things.
All grew to all kindred and self and near;
The intimacy of God was everywhere...”

The goal of the "*Savitri* Immersion Workshop" is to hear and see this *sruti* of Sri Aurobindo, this intuitive revelation of the spiritual Self in us - fully, directly, experientially, and then to know that “This Word was seed of all the thing to be.” As we have said in previous articles on *Savitri*, this goddess of Vedic origin has been adopted by Sri Aurobindo as the symbol of a “new consciousness” opening in humanity, whose future possibilities, as seen in his prophetic vision, have radical implications for our species and its life experience:

“And when that greater Self comes sea-like down/ To fill this image of our transience,/ All shall be captured by delight, transformed:/ In waves of undreamed ecstasy shall roll/ Our mind and life and sense and laugh in a light/ Other than this hard limited human day,/ The body's tissues thrill apotheosised,/ Its cells sustain bright metamorphosis.” But in the same breath he specifies the process of Yoga that is required in order for this to be possible:

“But first the spirit's ascent we must achieve/ Out of the chasm from which our nature rose./ The soul must soar sovereign above the form/

And climb to summits beyond mind's half-sleep;/ Our hearts we must inform with heavenly strength,/ Surprise the animal with the occult god./ Then kindling the gold tongue of sacrifice,/ Calling the powers of a bright hemisphere, .../ Acquaint our depths with the supernal Ray/ And cleave the darkness with the mystic Fire.”

The process by which this is done has three stages typical of many yoga systems: sutra, mantra, tantra or, in other words, 1) the teaching and practice, 2) the Guru's transmission and inner hearing; 3) the reception of the Divine Shakti to transform our nature. Instead of treating each separately, as distinct stages in the practice of Yoga, the three movements in combination can intensify and illumine such practices in a particularly powerful way.

4. The Yoga of Transformation

In a series of teachings at our annual *Savitri* Immersion Workshop in August this year (2016), we were able to observe closely, over six days of readings and meditations, the important connections between yogasutra, yogamantra and yogashakti. Instead of treating each separately, as distinct stages in the practice of Yoga, we could see how the three movements in combination can intensify and illumine such practices in a particularly powerful way. For example, in a sutra teaching such as Sri Aurobindo's "Sapta Chatusthaya", combined with the Savitri mantra, the presence of the Divine Shakti is invoked, and received directly, by a clarified mind and opened heart, which is truly transforming.

In the "Sapta Chatusthaya" (seven sets of four yoga siddhis or perfections) Sri Aurobindo explains what it means to be a yogin. “The basis of internal peace is samata, the capacity of receiving with a calm and equal mind all the attacks and appearances of outward things, whether pleasant or unpleasant, ill-fortune and good fortune, pleasure and pain, honor and ill-repute, praise and blame, friendship and enmity, sinner and saint, or physically, heat and cold, etc. The complete Yogin receives all of this with with an equal, a sama

ananda (delight in all). He comes to change all the ordinary values of experience ...” (CWSA 10: 3)

This sutra teaching, followed by an invocation of the mantric transmission, is then seen and felt as a vivid, tangible possibility, above the mind's natural doubts or attempts to understand how such a thing could be. For example, reciting the Canto titled "In the Self of Mind", we see and hear: “He stood on a wide arc of summit Space/ Alone with an enormous Self of Mind/ Which held all life in a corner of its vast./ Omnipotent, immobile and aloof,/ In the world which sprang from it, it took no part:/ It gave no heed to the paeans of victory,/ It was indifferent to its own defeats,/ It heard the cry of grief and made no sign;/ Impartial fell its gaze on evil and good,/ It saw destruction come and did not move./ An equal Cause of things, a lonely Seer/ And Master of its multitude of forms,/ It acted not but bore all thoughts and deeds,/ The witness Lord of Nature's myriad acts/ Consenting to the movements of her Force.”

Such descriptions of the yogic state of *udasina*, being seated above the ordinary reactions to things, are repeated frequently, and typically followed by an inflow of blissful force: “It led things evil towards their secret good,/ It turned racked falsehood into happy truth;/ Its power was to reveal divinity./ ..All grew to all kindred and self and near;/ The intimacy of God was everywhere,/ ...A constant touch of sweetness linked all hearts.” Into the silence that follows such an invocation there actually flows a luminosity and peace that shifts one's consciousness into a sphere of possibilities that is perhaps always there, within and above – the tantric force.

5. The liberation of the Self

There is a line in *Savitri* that says, 'Nature does the most in us, and God the high rest.' We know that nature is Prakriti, in the Sanskrit vocabulary of Yoga, and Purusa is the Supreme Self, unmanifest but working through the divine universal forces and principles of Nature. But where is this Purusa, Self, or Soul that we are supposed to also be?

It is a third thing. If our mental, vital and physical energies, systems and behaviours are all Nature, which does the most in us, and God is beyond all manifestation, what is this Purusa that Yoga Philosophy tells us we should liberate from the former and unify with the latter? Where is That, which some call Thatness, the timeless being, or the Oneness?

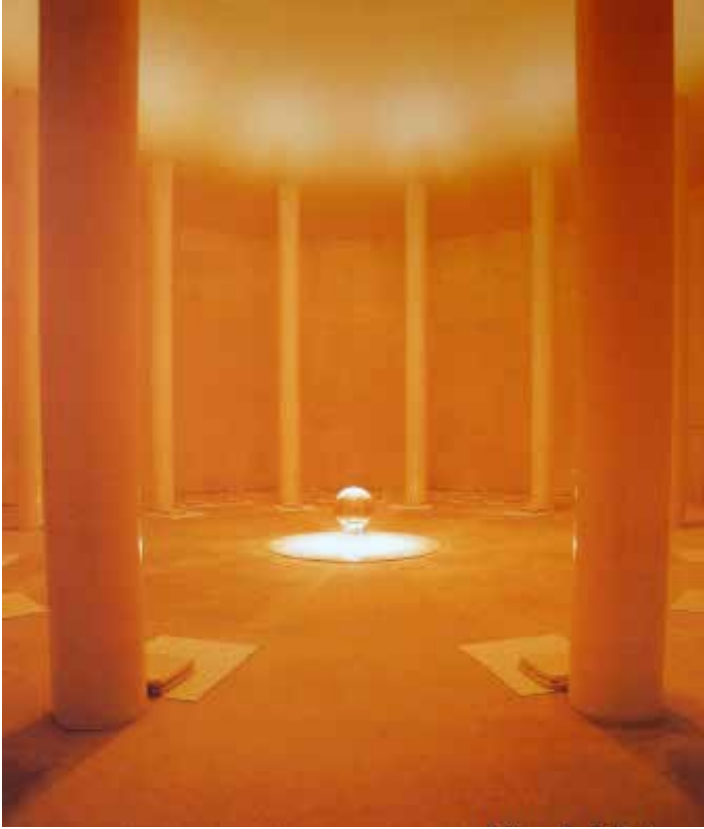
In a chapter of *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo says, 'We shall know That, as that silence and peace.' And in *Savitri* we hear, "A stillness absolute, incommunicable, meets the sheer self-discovery of the soul." We need to keep these indications in mind, because that awareness is fundamental, according to this teaching. We are not likely to experience this silence and peace in the normal activities of life, until we establish it as a fundamental awareness in our own selves. We have to separate that part of ourselves, which is capable of absolute stillness and peace, from all the other parts, until we can dwell in it, in life and in the presence of other activities.

That other part of ourselves grows in its largeness until it embraces the other things. This is the teaching of Sri Aurobindo, as he narrates in *Savitri*, as an awareness that spreads from within outward like a sea until it includes the whole world. 'But first the soul must rise above the form' and in that free space, allow the stillness of being above to come down into the emptiness that is created by the practice of detachment. If that stillness is then really tangibly felt as a substance in and around us which is large and vast, it's possible to then experience all the flow of the activities of life in the embrace of the stillness of the Self.

When one experiences the business of life in that way one isn't drawn so easily into the ordinary impressions and reactions to things that cause us difficulties. If we can allow that Presence to permeate and build up its stillness in our subtle self, it also saves us a lot of the traditional effort of Yoga. It is experienced as a grace, but it also has a specific purpose. It is not there just to give us a moment of peace, but it is meant to be cultivated as a constant awareness and presence in oneself. This is the initial aim and process of an Integral Yoga.

(To be continued...)

AUROVILLE



A house was there all made of flame and light
And crossing a wall of doorless living fire
There suddenly she met her secret soul.

Sri Aurobindo

AUROVILLE... "IN THE OLD FORMATION"

The Mother

In short, Auroville is more for outside?

Oh yes! It is a town! Consequently, it is the whole contact with outside. An attempt to realise on earth a more ideal life.

In the old formation which I had made, there had to be a hill and a river. There had to be a hill, because Sri Aurobindo's house was on top of the hill. But Sri Aurobindo was there at the centre. It was arranged according to the plan of my symbol, that is to say, a point in the middle, with Sri Aurobindo and all that concerned Sri Aurobindo's life, and four big petals— which were not the same as on this drawing, it was something else—and twelve all around, the town itself; and around that, there were the residences of the disciples; you know my symbol: instead of lines, there are bands; well, the last circular band formed the area for the disciples' residences, and each one had his own house and garden—a small house and a garden for each one. There was some means of transport, I wasn't sure if it was individual transport or collective transport—like those small open tramcars in the mountains, you know—going in all directions to take the disciples back towards the centre of the town. And around all that, there was a wall, with a gateway and guardians at the gate, and one could not enter without authorisation. There was no money—within the walls, no money; at the various entrances, there were banks or counters of some sort, where people could deposit their money and receive tickets in exchange, with which they could obtain lodging, food, this, that. But no money—the tickets were only for visitors, who could not enter without a permit. It was a tremendous organisation.... No money, I did not want any money.

Look! In my plan I forgot one thing. I wanted to build a housing estate for workers, but the housing estate was to be part of the industrial section, perhaps an extension along the edge of the industrial section.

Outside the walls, in my first formation, on one side there was an industrial town, and on the other, fields, farms, etc., to supply the town.

But that represented a real country—not a big country, but a country. Now it is much reduced. It is no longer my symbol; there are only four zones and there are no walls. And there will be money. You see, the other formation was truly an ideal endeavour.... But I counted on many years before trying to start. At that time I thought twenty-four years. But now it is much more modest, it is a transitional attempt, and it is much more realisable. The other plan was... I almost had the land; it was in the time of Sir Akbar, you remember, from Hyderabad. They sent me some photographs of the State of Hyderabad and there, in those photographs, I found my ideal spot: an isolated hill, quite a big hill, and below it, a large, flowing river. I told him, “I want this place”, and he arranged the matter. Everything was arranged. They sent me the plans, the papers and everything, saying that they were giving it to the Ashram. But they laid down one condition—it was virgin forest, uncultivated land—the place was given on condition, naturally, that we would cultivate it—but the products must be utilised on the spot; for example, the crops, the wood, must be utilised on the spot, not transported; nothing could leave the State of Hyderabad. There was even C, who was a navigator, who said that he would obtain a sailing boat from England to go up the river to fetch the products and bring them to us here. Everything was very well planned! Then they set this condition. I asked if it was not possible to have it removed; then Sir Akbar died and that was the end of it, the matter was dropped. Afterwards, I was glad that it was not done because, now that Sri Aurobindo has departed, I cannot leave Pondicherry. I could only leave Pondicherry with him provided that he accepted to live in his ideal town. At that time, I had spoken of this project to D, the person who built Golconde; and he was enthusiastic, he told me, “As soon as you start to build, call me, I shall come.” I had shown him my plan; it was based on an enlargement of my symbol; he was most enthusiastic, he thought it was magnificent.

It was dropped. But the other one, which is just a small intermediate attempt, we can try.

I have no illusions that it will keep its original purity, but we shall try something.

(Collected Works of the Mother 13: 262-264)

ON HUMAN UNITY: A SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

Ananda Reddy

Having lived in Auroville in the early days, from 1970-71, I feel I can speak on this subject as I have lived this spirit and philosophy myself. I can speak about the philosophy of human unity, as given by Sri Aurobindo, by combining it with the experience that I had in Auroville. Recently one of the professors from the Ashram school gave a talk on The Ideal of Human Unity in a university. At the end of the talk, a student who was a lecturer in the department asked why people needed to talk so much about human unity since he felt that it already existed. Wasn't it? The question seemed apparently silly at that time but on having given it a thought, you would see that it has a deeper meaning. Human Unity is, in fact, a truth of our existence. The only issue is that we have yet to realise it consciously; otherwise, it preexists. If it wasn't there, we couldn't have dreamt or talked of it or attempted it. So in a way, human unity is a fact of this terrestrial manifestation, as we understand from our ancient Indian philosophy and Sri Aurobindo. It says that there is only one single consciousness of the Supreme. What we see as this multiplicity – call it by any name, individuals, nations, countries, creed, groups and nationalities, are different expressions of that supreme Consciousness or the Divine or Sachchidananda, as we call it in India. This Truth was realised by the Vedic rishis who identified oneness of the Spirit behind this multiplicity of forms. Because of this Truth, people in the ancient times spoke of the Satyayuga, the Golden Age. The western philosophy also talked of the Saturnian age, the Golden Age of the Greeks and the Romans. This dream of a golden age is common to all the cultures on earth, be it China, Japan, East or West. It is the psychic being in a human being which has been given a name and a shape by each culture. Sri Aurobindo writes: it was

...an age of sincere being and free unity when the sons of heaven were leaders of human life and mind and the law of god was written not in ineffective books but the tablets of man's heart.
(CWSA 25: 634)

This explanation more or less captures the spirit of the Golden Age which was sincere and human unity was arrived at with no external pressure but with the inner law which guided each individual.

We do not know if such an age existed at all but Sri Aurobindo is not really interested in historicity of such an age. Many have written about the wonderful qualities of that age. But was it all that good, uniformly good or with certain defects? What is important is that this past dream was based upon some deep subconscious wish that once upon a time man was in heaven. In the Bible also Adam Eve were driven out from the Garden of Eden to earth. It was a fall from grace. This fall from eternity to time, from heaven to earth, is pretty much in the subconscious of human nature and Sri Aurobindo says that it is this subconscious memory or experience that is aspiring to take shape towards the second coming. He speaks of this subconscious psychology by stating that man wants to get back to the spirit of that age because of his subconscious memory. Getting back to that old radiance is his dream of a great Satyayuga.

The West has talked of the second coming and the city of God. In India, we talk about the Dashavatara, of whom the tenth avatar is yet to come. Now all this is not just dreams and fancies. They have a basis in the subconscious memory of humanity. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo says that it is important for man to look forward and realise the spirit of that great ancient period, the sum and substance of which, on the social level, is a perfected human society. This is where Sri Aurobindo gives us the genesis of the thought of human unity.

Now looking at it from the point of Yoga, let us consider if we have ever wondered as to why we call it human unity. We take it for granted that we must have unity but unity with what? You may think of unity amongst human beings but exclusive unity among human beings is not possible. There is a great depth in this phrase called “human unity”. Why do we not talk about animal or plant unity? It is because human unity has a unique possibility of writing the entire creation with the Supreme. The sole prerogative given to human beings is to unite not

only among themselves but to unite this whole earth and establish consciousness with the Supreme. This is man's mission. It is not for the animal or the plant world to do this work. If you understand this possibility in man, then you will see the secret of human unity in him. It is such that it is only in writing with the Supreme that humanity can unite within itself. Again, it cannot be exclusive to the humankind as we have to take into consideration the whole of the earth-consciousness. Therefore, it is a vast subject to study and however much one may come together as groups of nations or civilizations, true unity can be realized only after writing with the supreme Divine. This is the inner secret.

First, I will deal with the outer form regarding what humanity has already achieved while pursuing this goal in part. I'll briefly point out a few turning points in human attempts as analysed by Sri Aurobindo in *The Human Cycle* and *The Ideal of Human Unity*; that this innate dream of man to unite had several expressions. Centuries back, at first there was an expression, attempted through political empires; for example as experimented by emperors and empresses. The experiment of the Roman Empire failed not only because of external pressures but because of the same reason that it had only the body or the external form, missing out on the inner psychological unity. Then, came the British Empire with its conquest of nations. It is not that these empires were failures but through the then nature achieved one very important mission, that of spreading each other's culture, connecting one with the other. These empires fulfilled their roles but still the experiment was withdrawn after a period of time, once their role was over. We know this part of history.

Again there was an attempt of racial unification through the movement of Pan-Slavism, panarabianism. That did not last long too. Then we had experiments on the basis of religions like pan-Islamism and before pan-Christendom? So, Sri Aurobindo analyses all these as experiments by nature – political, racial, religious and social, recently of the proletariat. Each of these attempts succeeded in spreading culture and values quite extensively. But the resentment-experiment by nature

was that of a federal grouping where the first attempt was with the Commonwealth of Nations when the British Empire crumbled. It was a good experiment that lasted quite long.

This is only to make you aware that nature is always trying to play with different kinds of unification but as something has been missing in all these, she had to dismantle all in a row. The brightest thing that happened recently was in the beginning of the eighteenth-century which Sri Aurobindo calls as “the intellectual religion of humanity”. That was a positive step, as regarded by Sri Aurobindo, apart from the rest of the empires in any name or form. “The intellectual religion of humanity” was based on the principle that man must be sacred to man regardless of distinctions of race, creed, colour, nationality and status: political or social advancement. This was the fundamental basis of society. He became the most important aspect in every field and the centre of attention, more than the Gods. Out of this, we developed great philosophies of humanitarism with the support of religions. This philosophy, as Sri Aurobindo says, culminated in the great mantra of the French Revolution of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. This, he says, is in fact, the flowering of the consciousness of intellectual religion of man.

Many nations took up one quality, that of liberty. Some nations look up equality. Till now there have been many experiments in these two qualities; we know these political ideals in the name of democracy and socialist communism: the two political dogmas. Nations took up these two philosophies to experiment. We have seen that apart from certain benefits that reached mankind, the philosophy of communism failed. Sri Aurobindo, in his analysis, sees a logical end to it even though he predicted it seventy years or so earlier. He saw its end naturally. His logical analysis on the different levels: social and individual, psychological and political is so fascinating to understand as if we can see the future. He thinks that communism had to end because the kind of equality communists believed in was an unreal equality. This external form of equality, as we have seen in the communist countries,

is a misrepresentation of true equality. Opportunity should be given to all on an equal basis but the main power lay with the centre. So, it took away the most important factor of equality. As equality was emphasized at the cost of liberty, it could not sustain for long. Equality has to be well balanced with freedom because freedom is man's birth right. This of course has a deep philosophy. Sri Aurobindo says in *The Life Divine* that man is a limited God. God has delimited and self-limited himself in man. Man is aware of this and therefore, all the time psychologically and subconsciously he is trying to break his limitation and reach a greater freedom. So, by freedom cannot be meant a political freedom or wishing to do what he/she wants to do. It is a deep spiritual necessity in man to have freedom to which we have given different names in religions, politics, ethics and morality. If we suppress it, society will not succeed.

Now let us take up those countries which took up liberty as their philosophy and called themselves as democratic. Were they successful? They do emphasise on the freedom of the individual but without the principle of equality. There is an absolute hierarchy of the rich and the richer, of the poor and the poorer which is a serious imbalance again. Sri Aurobindo criticises democracy because basically politicians of the day do not represent the hopes and aspirations of the people. They represent invariably the worst in man, his pettiness, selfishness, egoism, self-deception and corruption and pretense. Governments are run by clashes of selfish-interest, based on money and business. They have no sympathy with the masses. So, you can now judge the pathetic condition of democracy. If such people represent us, then do we want to be governed by the worst in men? This is exactly the condition of Indian leaders at present, almost without any exception. This is reason of the collapse of democracy; especially Sri Aurobindo says that democracy is most unsuitable for India. To form a government what should be the new pattern of government? We must read the two books on social philosophy by Sri Aurobindo that I mentioned earlier.

Moving further, Sri Aurobindo notes that countries practicing

democracy or socialism or communism evolved into great nations in the beginning but at a point became self-centered. They left no room to grow. It was then that nature brought forth the World Wars. In nature, there is always a movement toward the higher and the greater. A unit which starts as a family grows into a clan and then into a village, a city, a state and a nation. Likewise, nature always wants to move on to a vaster unity. So when there was a constriction of nationhood, nature wanted to move on to a vaster unity, resulting in the World Wars, says Sri Aurobindo. The World Wars broke up the constriction of this solid nation-ego. Before it became solid, nature loosened up the national boundaries and national consciousness. It was as if she wanted to tell mankind that it was high time to unite and looked forward to the next step in evolution.

There also it experimented with the League of Nations after World War I. After World War II, we had a better sense of unity in the United Nations. It is not important to see how far these bodies are successful but the very fact that the League of Nations was the outcome of World War I is important. It is because nature wanted us to come together, think together, work together instead of getting shelled up in nationhood. Unfortunately, the United Nations is not truly serving the purpose it was created for; it has become a political body. Sri Aurobindo has even shown the ways to correct its ways. But till now, it has not mended its ways.

Sri Aurobindo further says that beyond this UNO, there are several possibilities. I find Him marvellous in these analyses. He never gives us one single angle of thought which is a commendable effort. Out of the many possibilities, he thinks that something will emerge which can perhaps be called a "world state". Here is a short paragraph describing what a world state would be.

The ultimate result must be the formation of a World- State and the most desirable form of it would be a federation of free nationalities in which all subjection or forced inequality and

subordination of one to another would have disappeared and, though some might preserve a greater natural influence, all would have an equal status. A confederacy would give the greatest freedom to the nations constituting the World-State, but this might give too much room for fissiparous or centrifugal tendencies to operate; a federal order would then be the most desirable. All else would be determined by the course of events and by general agreement or the shape given by the ideas and necessities that may grow up in the future. A world-union of this kind would have the greatest chances of long survival or permanent existence. (CWSA 25: 594-95)

You can see here that on the political frame of world unity, He envisages a “world state” that will have a federation of nations. He has told us the defects of a confederacy and then He goes into great details of what this world state should be like: its judiciary and executive, army, police, including education. He has given us a full framework of this state. But then as we started in the beginning, we should remember that no external form can last without the indispensable inner factor of a psychological unity. It is not possible for the simple reason that all that the “world state” hopes to bring about, peace, economic well-being, general security, is not sufficient in themselves to create a human unity. So, He says:

Peace and security we desire at present because we do not have them in sufficiency but we must remember that man has also within him a need for combat adventure, struggle, almost require these for his growth and healthy living. That instinct would be largely suppressed by a universal peace and a flat security and it might rise up successfully against suppression. Economic well-being by itself cannot permanently satisfy and the price paid for it might be so heavy as to diminish its appeal and value. (CWSA 25:562)

This is a stunning statement because neither peace and security nor an economic well-being can satisfy man. Of course when we read this, we remember the recent incidents in the West and the price to

pay to keep ourselves going. We understand now that economic well-being will not necessarily bring inner joy and peace because the sense of adventure and combat or struggle has not yet been transformed. These impulses came up in the form of Taliban or any other terrorist organisations. Unless the inner being of man takes over, all efforts remain insufficient. To move inwards is the spiritual aim of humanity. The intellectual humanity brought forth a lot of values and yet it failed to change man. The only factor that can sustain all these unifying efforts is a spiritual religion of mankind.

Meanwhile let us not forget the great emphasis on matter, one major development that has brought mankind together. This is materialism. It has brought us close to each other and the world has become a global village. This sense of unification on the material level has been the contribution of materialism. We already feel close to the people of USA and Europe while sending and receiving messages in seconds and conversing with them on phones and over emails and chats. In the light of Sri Aurobindo, we already get a taste of what human unity can be like when matter becomes one. I remember a story from Bhrihadaranyaka Upanishad. A student asks his spiritual master the definition of the supreme Brahman. The master tells him to go and meditate to find out for himself what the Supreme is like. The disciple meditates for twelve years and returns to say that Matter is the supreme Brahman. The master agrees with him but tells him to go back and meditate upon Brahman once more. Again after twelve years, the disciple returns to say to the master that the supreme is the prana, the Life energy in all. The master again agrees, saying that he found out a greater secret but yet again sends him back to discover that the Mind was the supreme which was indeed the third reality. Yet that was not complete. The fourth time when the disciple returned, he told the master that he discovered silence to be the supreme Brahman. The master was happy to see that his disciple had reached the highest status of Brahman.

This tells us that each of these levels belongs to the Supreme. Matter is one such level and so what science has done today for mankind is

that it has revealed Brahman in Matter; that Matter united is divine Unity. But Sri Aurobindo tells us not to get stuck on this reality. It is one aspect of the Truth but there are higher levels of the Truth, beyond the Mind which is the brainchild of all philosophers.

But beyond the Mind there is a higher spiritual level and this religion of man is on that spiritual level and that is the only measure that can sustain true human unity. I'll read out a definition, brief and condensed, of a religion of humanity:

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

This is the essence of a spiritual religion. First and foremost we realise, as the Upanishadic master told us that beyond the reality of Matter, Life and Mind, there is a higher being. We may not have realised it yet but as the disciple was asked to meditate for forty-eight years which has symbolic importance rather than numerical, we too have to meditate or make an attempt to discover this higher truth that exists beyond all our present experience. We cannot reject it only because we haven't as yet experienced it. To most of all of us, all that our senses can register is the only reality. Whatever is beyond this ken of experience is dubious and doubtful. This is where the mind proves its limitation. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo says that so far humanity is the Divine's highest vehicle on earth but the Divine will not stop with mankind. He will reveal greater truths of existence. At that higher level of consciousness, mankind will see a greater common human unity. This will be the realisation of the third principle of the mantra of liberty, equality and fraternity.

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

It is a long way ahead. It may take decades to arrive at such a conscious formation of spiritual reality. Sri Aurobindo gives us the essential characteristics of this spiritualized society about which I'd like to draw your attention to Auroville as it dreams to become a spiritual society. It is a city that earth needs and a city of human unity which is nothing short of spirituality. The three creeds of spirituality as mentioned by Sri Aurobindo are god, freedom and unity. This is a special message for all of us who want to dedicate their lives to Auroville. The mantra on the intellectual level was liberty, equality and fraternity. But our future mantra will be god, freedom and unity. God is the first necessity.

It is only in the God-consciousness that we can get real freedom and in uniting with Him that we can get the human unity. So long as we do not make the Godward-consciousness the pivot of our life, all experiments will not succeed. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo says that a spiritualized society will have god as its pivot instead of ego which has ruled us from ages immemorial. The axis must turn from ego to God. To the extent we reach this godward consciousness, we'll experience the true freedom that we seek for. God is at the head of the triangle with liberty and unity being the base. Unless we achieve God-consciousness, we cannot achieve the other two in their true form.

It is interesting to see through history that all the prior attempts were

made toward this unity in one way or another. This is because it is embedded in the very subconscious of the human race. Sri Aurobindo takes us now to a stage that was prior to that of our creation. He says that the central truth of evolution is a drive towards unity. He speaks of involution and evolution. Involution is the process of this creation. If we do not understand this process, then events become miracles for us, which is like opium used by religion. To erase this attitude, Sri Aurobindo takes support of absolute rationalism. He doesn't believe in conditioning human faith and belief. Like a scientist in the laboratory, he puts before us the entire process; it is up to us to take it or leave it. Essence of this process of involution is multiplicity in oneness.

One supreme Divine becomes multiplies into the universe. This is the central argument of Sri Aurobindo. Other details are metaphysical and not necessary to know at this point. And the crux of evolution is unity in diversity or multiplicity. This diversity of human creation is moving towards that unity; that is the process of evolution. So, involution is oneness to multiplicity and evolution in multiplicity to oneness. Now we know that nature has been attempting this unification since ages. It is toward this oneness that Auroville is heading. We must recognise the importance of why the Mother has given to Auroville the role of writing the immortal human aspiration. Certainly, there can be such centres anywhere in the world. In fact, Auroville is just a beginning of such focussed aspiration towards a large unity. The Mother envisages many such centres in future even though Auroville is the first. It is as though She has gathered those several countries who were looking forward to such an attempt.

In this futuristic spiritualist society, there are two conditions that have to be followed to hasten a desired outcome. One is the individuals who are able to recreate themselves in the image of their spirit and the group or the group body. It is not easy for the individuals to recreate themselves in the image of their spirit. It is then that the group-body receives what the individuals have discovered and created.

The issue that is notable here is that these two movements have to be simultaneous. Until now we've had individuals or individual countries aspiring for liberty, freedom, equality and salvation and immortal spirit in pockets like monasteries, ashramas, and cloisters of retreat. These were small centres of light. But now Sri Aurobindo sees that they have to unite to fulfil the function of Auroville, that of the spiritual centre or the group-body. But simultaneously, there has to be the contribution made by individuals too. It cannot be just the body without the soul. Individuals are the souls and the group-body is the physical: they must exist together. In the Ashram too, we had great individuals who reached the supramental consciousness, did *tapsaya* and recreated themselves in the image of their Spirit. But the Mother needed perhaps the group-body for which She created this last international body of Auroville. This new supramental consciousness is not happy with just a few realized beings here and there, in different parts of the world. The very essence of the supramental consciousness is humanity itself.

The Supermind requires the entire humanity as its footstool. Religions have been satisfied with nations or creeds as their footstools but not the Supermind. It needs a body like Auroville, representing humanity as a vast international platform or a world-body. There is no compromise on this. We may not be able to do much at this point of time but the Mother and Sri Aurobindo do envisage several layers of evolution in times to come for this to take place. Let us look forward to this lofty ideal even though it may take us years to reach there.

If we don't start the foundation of Auroville today, we cannot reach the wonderful supramental dawn of tomorrow. Our contribution is here and now. All the problems and struggles in Auroville should not deter anyone if one keeps in view the promised future. Auroville is the foundation of the supramental city, the very foundation of supramental consciousness upon earth. It is not a retreat that one should hope for after coming away from the polluted bustle of cities

like New York or Tokyo. One has to be prepared for a greater challenge here, a more intense inner battle. I am an idealist and following an ideal in its true image is a battle for me. This great ideal that was created with the very creation of man's consciousness itself is linked up with you and me. This is the same thing special that each one of us has to do.

Sri Aurobindo says that the most fundamental attempt of each one of us here is to rise beyond our ego. Ego was the helper till the level of evolution of the Mind as man. When man has to travel beyond the Mind, ego proves to be the bar. Here in Auroville, this has to be our very first attempt as it is unavoidable and uncompromising. It is not impossible to achieve it. Sri Aurobindo has given a full-scale method in integral Yoga. But then there is a short cut to it too. Truth cannot be avoided. This short cut is to surrender to the Divine. It may be difficult but there is no other way. Surrender is the essence of this Yoga. I'll read out a beautiful line from Sri Aurobindo, "All must be done for the Divine; all must be directed towards the Divine." (CWSA 23:113) That's the meaning of surrender. The Western mind becomes reactionary when we talk about surrender. To surrender does not mean to give up or to sacrifice. It is just that we have to live, remembering and looking towards the Divine. Sri Aurobindo clarifies:

Nothing must be attempted for ourselves as a separate existence, nothing done for others, whether neighbors, friends, family, country or mankind or other creatures merely because they are connected with our personal life and thought and sentiment or because the ego takes the preferential interest in their welfare. In this way of doing and seeing, all life and all work become only a daily dynamic worship and service of the Divine in this unbounded temple of his own vast cosmic existence. (Ibid p.113)

So, we are not asked to reject anything. All we have to do is to direct every thought, feeling and action towards Him. Each of our acts and thoughts and feelings when directed to the Divine paves

the shortest way to realise one's deeper psychic being or the soul. In another place, Sri Aurobindo says that the essential character of this psychic consciousness is love and unity. To connect to human beings and establish unity, we must move towards our psychic being:

It is the divine love which so emerges that, extended in inward feeling to the Divine in man and all creatures in an active universal equality, will be more potent for the perfectibility of life and a more real instrument than the ineffective mental ideal of brotherhood can ever be. It is this poured out into acts that could alone create a harmony in the world and a true unity between all its creatures. (CWSA 23:166)

So, you see that this entire ideal of the evolutionary consciousness is focused in our own being. It is like if we contact our psychic being, we are in touch with the whole universe. This is what the Mother means when She says that by touching a certain point in our body, we can touch certain points on the earth-surface.

On the level of the spiritual consciousness, our body can become a focused unity of all Matter. By realising the psychic, one can manifest the unity of entire humanity. I may not know you or someone by name or nationality but I shall be one with you in Spirit when I know my own truth of being: my soul. It is interesting to read this question posed to the Mother and Her answer:

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

To realise the consciousness of the one. (CWM 15:67)

In another place, she said:

If you want peace upon earth, first establish peace in your heart.
If you want union in the world, first unify the different parts of your own being. (CWM 15:71)

Therefore, Sri Aurobindo's ideal is not something that belongs to a far off future or something that we cannot achieve. This moment

which he termed as “the hour of God” is the most appropriate time, says the Mother, for us to connect ourselves with our psychic being because both the Mother and Sri Aurobindo have brought down to earth that supramental power which can rapidly lead us to our goal, if only we ask for it. Until now it was hard, like swimming against the current. But now the whole supramental force is with us, helping us. They have made our Yoga easier. And it is because of this force that the world unity will soon become a reality. Soon doesn’t necessarily denote time, but it is a reality decreed. The Mother says that because of Sri Aurobindo’s work in the subtle physical since the year of 1950 that the very concept of “the ideal of human unity” has become more acceptable to the world. Today all of us here, coming from so many directions, because we have been consciously or unconsciously touched by Sri Aurobindo’s dream of world unity which in his message of 15th August 1947 is implicitly articulated. He said that He was working for that.

Friends, this aspiration for human unity represented by Auroville is first to be realised in all of us individually. This entire cosmic aspiration of evolution is squeezed into my single psychic being as it is relentlessly working towards this goal. The path is open to each one of us. Therefore, Auroville is a city that future needs. Without this city, the future of humanity will remain doubtful. Coming to Auroville means one’s seeking toward a self-transformation. Unless and until we are ready for this self-transformation, we should not take up this experiment. We can be where we are and contribute our little self to the Divine’s work. But coming to Auroville means that we have decided to work for human unity and earth-transformation: it is a cauldron of forces. Here, if we are not firmly stuck to this one single-minded goal, we may be pulverised. I am only talking about the inner battle. General difficulties and problems are part of day to day life. But what do we need to fear when the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are the leaders of this venture themselves!

CONCENTRATION'S MARBLE SEAT...



In its deep lotus home her being sat
As if on concentration's marble seat,
Calling the mighty Mother of the worlds
To make this earthly tenement her house.

Sri Aurobindo

STRIKE AT THE MATRIMANDIR

Loretta

At the feet of Beauty's home, and Love's abode,
The fury of the Mother in her Kali aspect rode.
Released to purify, to roam through raging airs,
Her terrifying form she showed.

Long held her frightening force within, by Falsehood's reign,
She rises to resume her work again;
To reconstruct a world that might have been
Deformed to prove that Truth had lived in vain.

The raging goddess knows no coward's chance
Remains to flee her fury's wild dance.
Attempts to hide collide with Kali's blows.
Escape is not her hour's circumstance.

No face, no place is sure, she moves in all.
Those who falsely rose climb to their fall.
Who seeks for shelter answers to her lure.
Who runs away is racing towards her call.

Destruction's whirl will cease when all is done;
The ashes cool when victory is won.
The Mother will begin the dance of Peace
To show the new creation has begun.

(1973)

AN ENTANGLEMENT OF CHAOTIC UNITY

The Global Age and the Auroville Experiment

Richard Hartz

We have stumbled into the global age, but have yet to develop a global consciousness. Outer change has raced ahead of inner change. As the expansion of modernity collides with the finiteness of the earth, we struggle to reconcile progress with sustainability. Meanwhile the Westernization that went with modernization confronts the resurgence of civilizations that insist on preserving their own distinctive spirit. Though this complicates the problem, the dialogue of cultures could also help us to solve it by pooling our diverse resources in a coordinated effort.

Despite the differences between East and West, leading thinkers in both parts of the world arrived early in the twentieth century at similar diagnoses of the human condition. In Europe, for example, Henri Bergson noted that in humanity's "excessively enlarged body, the spirit remains what it was, too small now to fill it, too feeble to direct it." Reflecting on the machinery under whose weight modern life "groans half-crushed", he concluded that "the mechanism demands a mysticism."¹ In India, Sri Aurobindo saw that man "has created a system of civilisation which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilise and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites." Yet he was cautiously optimistic in his view that "the feeling that there is no other solution than the spiritual cannot but grow and become more imperative under the urgency of critical circumstance."²

We live in a time when, as Sri Aurobindo observed almost a hundred years ago, "men and nations are drawn close together and partially united though in an inextricable, confused entanglement of chaotic unity."³ The process creating this entanglement is now called globalization. The word dates from the 1960s, but the drawing together

of the human race has been going on for millennia. For better or worse, it began to accelerate with the joining of the hemispheres at the time of Columbus. By the late nineteenth century this process had entered the phase commonly recognized as globalization, implying a heightened interconnectedness and mutual impact on a worldwide scale, not only economic, but political, social and cultural.

Globalization in this sense has been a manifestation of the expansive dynamics of the modern age. Since the late twentieth century, the dynamics of modernity have shown signs of breaking down. But the consequences of globalization remain and are intensified, justifying the description of our times as the global age.⁴ On the most material level, as we become aware of the limited resources of the earth and the vulnerability of the Gaia system, the core value of expansion is replaced by that of sustainability. Progress itself, so central to modernity, is called into question. But perhaps what is needed is a more integral concept of progress.

This is the potential contribution of Auroville, which was initiated by the Mother as “a collective experiment for the progress of humanity”⁵ A unique long-term field experiment with participants from all over the world, Auroville was set up to explore the possibility of unity in diversity under the conditions of the global age. Its design takes into account all the elements of the complex problem we face today: ecological, economic, political, social, cultural and spiritual. Situated on wasteland reclaimed through extensive afforestation, the experiment’s ecological component is most conspicuous in the Green Belt. The industrial, international, residential and cultural zones of the proposed town, first indicated in a sketch made by the Mother as early as 1965 and still gradually taking shape, show a conscious recognition of the economic, political, social and cultural aspects of the world problem. And since the hypothesis being tested in Auroville is that a viable human unity requires a spiritual foundation, this dimension is visibly symbolized by the Matrimandir with the silence of its luminous meditation chamber at the heart of it all.

The Mother insisted “on the fact that it will be an experiment, it is for making experiments – experiments, research, study.”⁶ The experimental nature of Auroville has to be kept in mind if the vicissitudes the project has passed through are to be seen in the right perspective. Experimental science proceeds through a combination of “successful” and “unsuccessful” experiments. Both are considered to be of equal value for the discovery of truth. An experiment is a failure only if nothing useful is learned from it, whether because of poor design, careless execution or shoddy documentation. From this point of view, whatever the apparent successes or failures of the Auroville experiment so far, its inspired conception and the undiminished commitment, passion and integrity of the participants more than forty years after its inauguration ensure that it will continue to be worth observing.

It was to be expected that such an attempt at a dynamic spirituality grappling collectively with the complexities of contemporary life would confront inner and outer difficulties commensurate with the scope of its objective. Sri Aurobindo, at least, would not have been surprised. Anticipating the evolutionary need for such communities, he also foresaw the kinds of problems they were likely to face. “It might be,” he wrote, “that, in such a concentration of effort, all the difficulties of the change would present themselves with a concentrated force; for each seeker, carrying in himself the possibilities but also the imperfections of a world that has to be transformed, would bring in not only his capacities but his difficulties and the oppositions of the old nature and, mixed together in the restricted circle of a small and close common life, these might assume a considerably enhanced force of obstruction which would tend to counterbalance the enhanced power and concentration of the forces making for the evolution.”⁷

Sri Aurobindo was speaking from experience. He had encountered this disconcerting phenomenon even before an Ashram grew up around him. In a diary entry in 1913, when as yet only a few young men were staying with him, he observed: “The atmosphere of the house is full of the struggle and the opposition to the dharma of the satyayuga

of which the assistants of the satyayuga are the chief instruments owing to their clinging to their egoism and small selfishnesses.”⁸ Later, when the Ashram had been established as a “laboratory” for his Yoga, Sri Aurobindo described it as “an epitome of the human nature that has to be changed” and commented: “Wherever humans are obliged to associate closely, what I saw described the other day as ‘the astonishing meannesses and caddishnesses inherent in human nature’ come quickly out.... But when one tries to do Yoga, one cannot fail to see that in oneself and not only, as most people do, see it in others, and once seen, then? Is it to be got rid of or to be kept? Most people here seem to want to keep it. Or they say it is too strong for them, they can’t help it!”⁹

Auroville’s aspiration for human unity was not likely to exempt it from similar contradictions. From the beginning, even with the best will, the members of the community struggled to live up to its ideals. One of them asked the Mother: “It seems very difficult to be able to want to achieve any specific aim and at the same time to love everyone. When we begin to want something and try to act with a particular result in mind, immediately we cut ourselves off from everyone who does not agree with that. In practice, how can we do both at the same time?” The Mother seemed momentarily puzzled: “You cut yourself off from people who do not think as you do?... But not a single person thinks as you do!... So how can you love anyone?” The young Aurovilian explained: “As long as I don’t want anything, it is all right.”

A time-honored solution to this dilemma would have been to give up the will to act. But the quietistic method was ruled out by the very nature of Auroville. After concentrating for a few minutes, the Mother said: “It is because when you want something, it is the ego that wants. So, the ego... must be ignored. The first thing to do is not to act for yourself but to act in obedience to the Divine, to express the divine Will.... When we say, ‘We are at the service of the Divine’, it is not just words. It is He who should act through us, not we ourselves. The greatest objection is: How can we know the divine Will? But as a matter of fact, I tell you: if you sincerely renounce your personal will, you will know.”¹⁰

Perhaps the thing we most need to do today, on the threshold of a global age, is to widen our too narrow, egocentric consciousness. The Mother suggested a number of simple exercises for making a beginning in this direction. These range from mind-expanding visualization to methods of enlarging one's outlook by seeing things from other points of view.¹¹ At a more advanced level, we have the account of her experience of global consciousness in the truest sense, recorded on November 26, 1915. She described her physical body as "seized, first in its lower members and next the whole of it, by a sacred trembling which made all personal limits fall away little by little even in the most material sensation." The experience continued:

It was as a progressive dilatation of the cells until there was a complete identification with the earth: the body of the awakened consciousness was the terrestrial globe moving harmoniously in ethereal space. And the consciousness knew that its global body was thus moving in the arms of the universal Being, and it gave itself, it abandoned itself to It in an ecstasy of peaceful bliss.¹²

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WORKING ON THE MATRIMANDIR

Loretta

Growing souls' deepening eyes
 Speak ever more truth
 Into soul-open eyes
 All bathed in the brilliant sun.
 Beautiful face smiling at beautiful face.
 Arms, legs, backs, more supple, more strong,
 Forming the body of a beautiful dream.
 Inner ignorance menting away,
 We are forged in the body of the one heart's love.



SHE WAS WITH US: WE FELT HEAVEN WAS WITH US

Deepshikha Reddy

I saw the Mother for the first time when I was 13 years old, in 1959. I came from the Delhi branch of the Ashram. The day was the 1st of December and the Mother was distributing Prosperity to all the Ashramites in the room above the Reception hall, which is the one we see just as we enter the Ashram. When I went to her, she smiled and gave me a small soap cake as *prasad*. To the rest of the students she gave a delicate pink rose flower to each.

The first memory and impression that I have of the Mother is something very ethereal because she was fully clad in a spotless white sari. Light in various hues through the tinted glass panes of the upper part of the large middle door—especially violet— were reflecting on her white sari and somehow it seemed like a dream to me. It did not feel as though I really met and saw the Mother whom we had been worshipping at home for so long!

We all came out and down to the courtyard, did *pranam* to the Samadhi and started walking towards the playground. Those days our radius was between the new Delhi House, Samadhi, Playground, Dining hall, Flower Room, library and the tennis ground. We all circled within this area year after year almost. As we came out, my friends were curious to know what the Mother had given me. When I said that it was soap, first they got quite upset as they all got a rose each. As one can expect, kids did not have much value for the rose initially. After a while one of them said, “You know the Mother is God, is it not? She knows very well that you do not bathe properly daily. So she gave you a piece of soap. We do not need it.”

We were in the Ashram for a month. That time in the Delhi school, Dr. Chamanlal Gupta was our teacher, philosopher and

guide. He brought us all by the train to Pondicherry. We used to live in the Delhi House, which is now turned into a beautiful guesthouse. It was quite close by; from the next day onwards we were coming for the balcony darshan in the morning by 6 a.m. That is how it started. In a way I was especially lucky as my birthday is on Christmas I could go to her on Christmas day and, as I was young then, I used to get lots of cakes. We kept coming a few times and thus a deep bond was struck with her. I did not understand anything about the yoga or philosophy. We just loved to come to Pondicherry. After we returned, we kept contact with her through letters whenever needed. During that time, in one of her letters, she mentioned that I would become a teacher. Fortunately, I did not have to think too much about my future. I knew what I had to do and I was equipping myself towards that. To teach in the outside world for the school levels, one needs qualifications like Bachelor or and Master of Education, etc.

Ten years passed by, and I was completing my studies. By then I had written to her twice asking whether I could come and settle in the Ashram. Both the times she refused me. Kireet bhai told me later what she had exactly said, “The time has not yet come for her.” I was the eldest at home, and in Indian houses girls in early twenties are given in marriage. One did not wait too long to get married those days. I wanted to join the Ashram, and I thought I loved her so much but she did not even reply to my letter!

Then in 1969, in summer, on 11th May, I went for her darshan and gave her a small slip, in which I wrote that she had not yet permitted me to stay there and in the meanwhile I might, miserably, get married and go away; was it not sad! The slip was a small laundry chit on which before going up to her I scribbled these thoughts. Now, when I see Ananda’s (my husband’s) letters, so many in number, in his measured handwriting, to the Mother as they carried so much respect and reverence to her,—I realize my shabbiness, casual attitude and carelessness. I

almost pushed that slip into her delicate palm and came down.

It was, that day, the birthday of the Corner House. It was quite a celebration. In the afternoon at around 3.00 or 3.30 p.m. Nolini-da came and said, "You have become an Ashramite from today. Mother said this." I was overwhelmed and cried for a long time; O, I could not believe my ears at all! Finally, a small circle seemed complete.

Then I happily joined the Ashram and became an Ashramite in May 1969. As the Mother had mentioned in her letter earlier, I expected quite naturally to work as a teacher, that too in the Ashram school, which was my dream. But, meanwhile, I developed a bad throat. I was worried that I could not sing properly. She said that it was not the singing I should worry about but that I should not talk for one full month. I was absolutely shocked! Then I wrote to her asking whether it would be possible for anyone to stop talking for a month! Then she wrote back sternly saying that I had not to talk for one full year! She was very serious. I could not be a teacher without talking! I had to join the Corner House. I was quite disappointed. I did not know any cooking. I had to learn everything from zero. I got so disheartened that it took me two and a half months to finally decide whether to accept the long-cherished Ashramiteship at all!

At that time it was very difficult for me because I was not at all surrendered in my attitude. It appeared to me as though teaching was the respectable work and cooking had no value. As I did not even know how to peel a potato properly or kneed the dough, my co-workers used to laugh at me and I used to feel hurt. But I was able to learn everything in a short time, and I enjoyed great friendship with all of them. I became one of the head cooks cooking nine times a week for 350 children or more each time. In fact, I started loving cooking and enjoyed it. Our greatest attraction was to cook on Thursdays because on that day food

would be sent to the Mother. On Thursdays I always cooked non-vegetarian, either chicken or fish, also lamb at times. Someone else was cooking the vegetarian items. When the food was taken to her, she would not eat the food; she would look at it, bless it, and occasionally take a spoon of it close to her, I was told. Later the food would be returned to the Corner House for all of us to partake as *prasad* by 1.15 p.m. We used to run for it.

A year and more passed by and I felt as if I was born to be a cook only. I got so much involved in it. I realised it later that this work was the most needed for me. It was not so easy. It was her grace that prepared me for life. After this experience of the Corner House, I became a changed person who could sweep the road, clean the gutter with a smile—no problem whatsoever. My life was made and I truly feel so grateful for that.

However, one day I wrote to her asking about my teaching work. She replied that I should go to Auroville school, which had just started. I was once again shocked because I thought all along that the Ashram school would be my teaching place. I could not believe that always such contrary things had to happen with me alone! Of course, I loved Auroville; I had come all the way from Delhi to participate in the inauguration of Auroville in 1968, February just before my M.A. final. 'The Charter of Auroville' fascinated me as something most unique on this earth. But still I was shocked. I needed to be much more humble and devoted; hence the battering perhaps continued.

I came to Auroville to see the school and have the first experience of the school; till then I had not replied to the Mother. Slowly, perhaps I was learning to become a little humble. The sharp edges were slowly getting smoothed. I went to the "Last School" and what did I see? Rod was sitting in the middle of seven or eight children and a dog. Two of them were playing, one was playing the flute, one was sleeping.... the dog too was sleeping. Rod himself

was gazing upwards towards the sky... I fell from the treetop! Is this the classroom and Mr. Rod the teacher? Oh Maa!! I was used to formal education and whatever kind of a free-progress system I knew about contained a lot of order and classroom discipline. I was so shocked with all of those together that I approached Rod and asked him, "What are you teaching, Sir?" He replied in a blissful manner, "...experiencing joy..."

Next day I wrote to the Mother that I was ready to join the Aspiration School on the August 15, 1971. Finally, I decided to join and partake of the joy that Rod was experiencing. We were—to name a few among the first teachers selected by the Mother - Ananda, Shradhdhavan, Shantiben and myself. We had a lot of 'growing' together. There was no syllabus, no proper library, classrooms were being shared and a few were also being built. We were teaching in "Sanskrit School" and the "Last School". A creche was started simultaneously. I was teaching history, Sanskrit and Hindi at that time. I always wanted to become a good history teacher, as I had a very boring teacher teaching history to us. I had written to the Mother about it once and she told me that I would be a good teacher. I also taught Indian music. Rose, Martha and Miriam were my very good music students.

Mitch, an American, used to be a very good music teacher teaching wonderful folk and English songs to us. We used to sing loudly during nights. Those were the early days in Aspiration School. There were not too many communities like today. A few people stayed in the Matrimandir camp; a few at the Forecomers, Utility and Fredrick's place and here and there. Aspiration was the largest community. Not too many people. Auroville was very young. Nowadays we see visitors and people coming to stay temporarily. At that time we burned all our bridges and came here for life only to serve this beautiful ideal of living together. We used to teach what we felt was the best for that kind of a mixed group of children from France, Germany, America along with

the children from Kuilapalayam. I remember that I taught from some books of the Ashram school. Ashram had always been very co-operative and generous. I used to bring packets of medicine from Nripen-da, the Ashram doctor for our Auroville children. Slowly the Health Centre came up quite efficiently. We made small groups of children on a certain capability basis and taught them the languages, mathematics, history, geography, painting, music, dancing, etc. For dancing Anuben used to come from the Ashram periodically.

I also started a cooking class with children after Pour Tous started to function and it was quite a hit. We allowed our students, at times, to choose their teachers and gave quite a lot of liberty in terms of learning. Learning and teaching was nothing but joy. What Rod said regarding “experiencing joy” was wholly true. On rainy days, we would stop our classes and go for long walks on the ravines or even to the seaside. We had very flexible timetable and the groups were named, and I still have a big timetable written in detail, signed by the Mother as approved by her. All sports activities are also written in the timetable. If on certain days children wanted to play cricket for the whole morning, we allowed them, provided they made up their study at another time. Regular classes, of course, were held in general. But sports were more organized and the whole physical education was more orderly. Ananda organized the sports on the Ashram lines. He used to take ‘marching’, Frederick took basketball, etc. We had a lovely time. Sometimes on Sunday mornings, Ashram groups used to come and we used to have competitive games with them. For studies, we had no tension. There was no homework system at that time.

In the beginning, there was no kitchen in Aspiration; I mean a proper big one. Food used to come to us by bullock-cart; also vegetables and fruits. There was also a van. Sometimes the van would arrive late. Students would feel very hungry after their

games in the evening. It is to meet the need of these children that I bought a heater to boil some 'chana' (chic peas) or some vegetables to give them. Slowly, the main kitchen (near the tamarind grove) was started. We used to go to the mango grove and play or even take classes with small groups of children. Sometimes in those beginning days, there often used to be no water in Aspiration. Then I used to take the children to the single tap available near the kitchen, give everyone a bath, wash clothes and return by walking back to Aspiration. We used to carry our buckets, mugs, etc., for bathing.

Then it was informed to the Mother that some parents wanted to keep their children in a hostel in Aspiration school. I was the first guardian with four students for me to look after in a three-room capsule in Aspiration. Mother told me to teach and live in Aspiration but remain an Ashramite.

Those were the days when the Matrimandir was being built. We would go early mornings and evenings for working on the four pillars. Buses used to come from Ashram also. We did not involve the small children in this work. We elders used to go early in the morning after taking black tea—around 4.30 or 5.00 a.m.—mostly do digging, etc., and return by 7.00 a.m. to go to school, full of red dust. We had no servants or laundry. We had to wash all our clothes ourselves that turned red. We had such wonderful time those days—the sunrises and sunsets, so many different kinds of birds chirping at specific hours of the day, long walks on moonlit night to Utility, bonfire at the daybreak—we never wanted to go back to Pondicherry at all. During the harvesting season, we would take our kids to the Green Belt, where Joss was, and engage them in practical work while the lesson was in progress. They learnt about polination and so many other things there. Many of the trees you see on that road were planted by our children then.

I was not only a guardian and teacher, I used to eat with the

kids, play, teach them history through dramatics, music through chanting, cooking jam with the mangoes plucked from the trees by the children themselves. It was a living together that taught us many more things beyond just the lessons. Sometimes we used to call Richard, the renowned botany teacher of the Ashram school, and he would walk endlessly with the kids, picking up twigs, flowers, seeds, leaves, etc., teaching us their significance, importance, usage, etc.

Those days, I used to write letters to the Mother whenever I had any difficulty or a problem. I was not like Shantiben and Ananda who had regular correspondence with her. We came to know so many things through their letters. Whenever we wanted to take the children for a picnic outside or stay out for a night or two, we always wrote to her and only with her permission we could go. Without her approval and blessings we never ventured anywhere. Once, I remember she refused our proposal for a night out somewhere nearby. Very often she used to send some reply or messages that used to be put up on the notice board in the Aspiration kitchen, meant for all people in general. We used to very enthusiastically go to read those in the mornings.

Through the dramas of the ancient Babylonian or Egyptian culture that I used to get enacted by the kids in my history class, I think we used to feel that Auroville ever existed on this earth from ancient times and we were experiencing the joy of that honey in this life.

She was with us; we felt the heaven was with us. We used to think that one would not be able to breathe outside Auroville, perhaps—so deeply were we identified with Auroville then!

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF AUROVILLE

An Introspection

Joseba

With the occasion of this golden jubilee we can say that an enormous dynamism is increasingly taking shape in the entire structure of Auroville and creating a number of initiatives at all levels. Artistic and cultural events, exhibitions, celebrations, inner reflections etc. The guest -houses are full from long time ago with friends, long time collaborators, visitors, different authorities, official representations, even the Prime Minister has announced his presence here. All these demonstrate that Auroville against all the odds is alive, growing and becoming more and more self-confident of itself and its luminous future.

We can say also that between all these initiatives, one extremely important, has been that the Aurovilians have dedicated some space and time to do different exercises of self-reflection about where are we as a collective project, where are we going and what should be the next steps that we should take keeping in mind the original ideals that originated the adventure of creating the new city of Auroville.

Personally, I am involved in one of them that I consider essential for the future of this experiment, it is called "Exploring Prosperity". I consider that the best way of explaining this initiative is presenting to all of you the letter below that was published internally for all the community.

"Open Letter to the Community of Auroville Concerning Prosperity System"

Dear Aurovilians,

The 50th Anniversary of our dear Auroville is approaching, and for this occasion a group of Aurovilians, long and short

term, gathered to reflect about our present situation and our future as the society envisaged by the Mother; what are our achievements and shortcomings. We have tried to analyse where we are as a community and what direction we should take, what are the most urgent decisions and actions that need to be taken to accelerate the manifestation of the city the earth needs.

As you can imagine we discussed plenty of ideas, and soon one emerged with the capacity to reunite many of the topics we consider essential for the future of Auroville, and this was the Prosperity System guidelines given by the Mother.

Based on the system existing in the Ashram, the Mother took the initiative to establish something similar in Auroville. These guidelines should inspire and guide our present and future activities concerning crucial aspects of our economy, services, work, contributions, “lifestyles ” and others. When we did the exercise of re-reading these guidelines and comparing them with our present realities we had the overwhelming and painful impression of the enormous gap that exists between these ideals/guidelines and many of our present policies, practices, and daily life. We felt also a kind of embarrassment for having permitted this enormous drift to happen when these guidelines have been in existence from the beginning.

As we have had in the past many long and tedious discussions that rarely concluded in any practical action and have left us with a feeling of frustration, we would like to avoid these kinds of meetings and mixed up discussions.

That is why we propose to create as soon as possible a Focus Group, i.e action oriented with enough experience and capacities to analyse, study and organize the presentation of

a number of practical proposals to be discussed at a collective level for their ratification and implementation. All those who share this aspiration can come forward with practical suggestions based on experience to work towards this mission on a short, medium and/or long term basis as labour of love.

This anniversary brings to us a very precious moment, a rare opportunity full of significance that we should not lose/squander. It is with this intention that we invite all those who feel the urgent need of the change, to join us in this exercise.

Please read the documents attached, taking the time to reflect and judge for yourself.

Exploring Prosperity Team

Auroville August 2017”

This letter was followed by a well attended public presentation, and I have to say that again the reception was quite encouraging. A big number of aurovilians supported this initiative and give their support. From that first meeting we have been able to create an innovative organizational structure that is formulating short, medium and long targets oriented to give a new impulse to all the organizational changes needed to bring closer and closer our present realities to the Mother’s vision of Prosperity. The work is going on and personally I believe that this initiative it is an excellent way of contributing to the celebration of this anniversary.

Auroville

February 2018

SRI AUROBINDO – A BRIDGE BUILDER

Lopa Mukherjee

Sri Aurobindo's father sent him to England to get a classical Western education and become a faithful servant of the British Raj. Half way through the process he had a change of heart. He looked at the way his own people were treated by these so-called educated rulers. For himself, he was always the common man's friend. As a doctor he treated them for free, ended up in debts unable to support his sons in England. The young Aurobindo was following his own heart independently. He returned to India, a faithful servitor of his Motherland. Quickly he learnt the language of the Vedas. His grounding in Greek and Latin wisdom literatures and his mastery of English allowed him to write Eastern thought in lucid English. Only a genius of both Eastern and Western thought could build such a bridge connecting the East to the West. In his writings he followed a rational method that the man of Enlightenment period would appreciate and at the same time, he planted forces that the intuitive man would grasp. His words "are a force in action", said the Mother.

Following the breadcrumbs of philology, he found the key to understanding the Vedas. These mystic texts had remained secret at best, misinterpreted at worst, until he explained the symbolism hidden in its language. The Upanishads had already made a profound impact on the Western philosophical mind, but had not reached the common reader. Sri Aurobindo explained these recondite Eastern texts in the "Arya" journal, published during the First World War, in a language accessible to all. To translate all the Vedas and Upanishads would require several lifetimes. But with the key, many scholars can unlock these treasures simultaneously. And this key is the technique of word formation in old Sanskrit, the language of the symbolic age in India. Sri Aurobindo then picked up another gem of Eastern philosophy - the Bhagavad Gita which he expounded in detail, translating most of the slokas. Now his serialized "Arya" writings are published under separate titles: *The Secret of the Vedas, The Upanishads, Essays on the Gita*. His

original spiritual works are in English too, in a language that appeals to the reason. But he uses reason only as a springing board.

This is where we find Sri Aurobindo as a builder of bridges between different planes of consciousness. He has commented extensively about his method of writing. His words poured in from planes above the Mind - the Higher Mind, the Illumined Mind, the Intuitive Mind, the Overmind and the Supermind. In his book, *The Future Poetry*, he discusses how poetry can be sourced. His many drafts of *Savitri* were experiments in this line. Every time he had an inspiration from a higher plane, he re-wrote the lines. Many other poems he wrote as an experiment in channelling. He guided his disciples in performing these super-human feats, so much so that some of them were breaking forth into Overmental verses. It is one thing to tap into higher planes oneself, but quite another to guide someone else. And this he did, partly with instructions, partly with his power as a Guru.

It is a well-known fact that a Guru has power to direct his disciple's experiences, grant it as a gift, stop it when it becomes dangerous. These are siddhis or super-powers called *prakamyā* and *vyapti*; in simplified terms, the ability to read others' minds and plant thoughts in them. In mystic traditions world over there are certain individuals who have these powers. They are called occultists, shamans, oracles, clairvoyants. They can commune with invisible beings and transmit something of the other worlds to the material world. The Mother spent a year studying occultism in a retreat in Algeria, although she was a natural at it. These teachings are kept secret because they are powers that can be misused. Thus we hear of miracles performed by occultists, but find no instruction manual. In Sri Aurobindo's case we have a rare document related to his yogic training – his diary, now published under the title of *Record of Yoga*. In it we find the experiments he conducted in reading and transmitting thoughts and sensations. His target subjects change as he progresses – ant, crow, dog, man. The amount of information he can apprehend and transmit changes, the precision of thought and the efficiency of execution

improve. Of course he did not develop just the two faculties of the mind, but worked on other siddhis, including those of the physical and vital sheaths. He was like an arch-mason constructing a bridge between nature and super-nature, one brick at a time.

When it comes to Sri Aurobindo's contribution to society, he not only bridged the East with the West, he had to also bridge the Indian of the past to the present. The Indian of his age, subject to a condescending foreign power, had lost faith in his own heritage. Sri Aurobindo commented extensively on Indian culture, and wrote revolutionary poetry to inspire his countrymen. Today, the Vedas are revered as much as the Upanishads in India, because of Sri Aurobindo and the scholarship he inspired. As a member of the Bengal Renaissance, he minced no words when it came to criticize the tamasic Indian people of his days. His column was boldly named - *New Lamps For Old*. Soon he was in the black list of the colonial ruler. Eventually, he was charged for writing seditious articles and imprisoned for a whole year. A most capable lawyer, Chittaranjan Das, represented him. As he concluded his defence, he uttered these prophetic words,

...long after this controversy is hushed in silence, long after this turmoil, this agitation ceases, long after he is dead and gone, he will be looked upon as the poet of patriotism, as the prophet of nationalism and the lover of humanity. Long after he is dead and gone his words will be echoed and re-echoed not only in India, but across distant seas and lands. Therefore I say that the man in his position is not only standing before the bar of this Court but before the bar of the High Court of History. (KRS.Iyengar: 313)

Indeed the prison, even the solitary confinement, became the mountaintop of a hermit. Here Sri Aurobindo bridged the gap between the Revolutionary and the Spiritual man. He emerged a yogi, constantly in meditation, even when immersed in work – the lotus leaf of the Bhagavad Gita. He dropped politics like a worn-out attire, started an ashram in Pondicherry and later applied his Force on world politics.

This comprised just the first half of Sri Aurobindo's life. In Pondicherry he dedicated the rest of his time to bridge the gap between the human and the next rung in evolution. From the mental plane he built a bridge to the Overmental, which culminated on November 24, 1926. How do we understand these milestones in a yogi's life? All we can do is repeat what our Masters explained to us. "The descent of Krishna would mean the descent of the Overmind Godhead preparing, though not itself actually bringing, the descent of Supermind and Ananda." (CWSA 35: 272) Outwardly, this marked a big change in the ashram life. Sri Aurobindo would henceforth remain in his room, and hardly see anyone. The Mother became the sole executrix of the ashram. Of course people were curious to know what he did in solitude. What was apparent was his copious writing. He expounded his Arya essays into full-length books; and answered his disciples' letters, which form the many *Letters on Yoga* volumes - essential companions for the yoga. Those who saw him knew he was living a life within he did not talk about. When he was leaving his body they asked him why he was not curing himself. He answered, "You will not understand". Indeed, all we know is but too little.

Five years after he left his body, on February 29, 1956 the Mother told her disciples that a momentous milestone had been reached. Sri Aurobindo had been working on bridging the gap between the earth consciousness and the Supermind. And so on that day the Supramental consciousness descended upon the earth. The new world that was promised is born, the Mother told us. So this is what Sri Aurobindo was working on during his solitary days! He had written it down in poems, as hints and predicted the Supramental Manifestation. One of them, so aptly named, is "A God's Labour". Here are some stanzas from it:

I had hoped to build a rainbow bridge
 Marrying the soil to the sky
 And sow in this dancing planet midge
 The moods of infinity.

...

I have delved through the dumb Earth's dreadful heart
 And heard her black mass' bell.
 I have seen the source whence her agonies part
 And the inner reason of hell.

...

The gulf twixt the depths and the heights is bridged
 And the golden waters pour
 Down the sapphire mountain rainbow-ridged
 And glimmer from shore to shore. (CWSA 2: 534)

At the age of ninety, in 1968, the Mother started an experiment in collective living. This was to give a concrete form to Sri Aurobindo's vision on human unity. He had written in *The Human Cycle* about the past ages of man and had planted seeds for a future humanity in *The Ideal of Human Unity*. A new bridge had to be built, a new society created based on Unity. The Mother acquired a large piece of land near Pondicherry upon which was launched Auroville, the city of dawn. She wrote a four-point charter, which says that Auroville will be open to all peoples of the world; people who aspire to be the willing servitors of the Divine; it will be an education and research centre for human unity and that "Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future". Idealists and explorers responded eagerly. Soon they found they needed something else too - physical and psychological tenacity. Auroville was arid, with hardly any sources of water. To make things more complicated, it was surrounded by villagers, who were poor, uneducated and had little opportunity for upward mobility. When the "foreigners" came, the economic disparities jarred the villagers. The early Aurovillians had to build their own huts, collect water, live without electricity. There were mosquitoes, heat and tropical diseases. The Aurovillians reached out to the villagers. They started Village Action. They created jobs for villagers, gave them professional training, allowed their children to join Auroville schools. They also organized women's groups and taught them banking. To heal the earth, they created a green belt, erected solar panels and windmills. Bridges were extended further.

Experts of various professions settled in Auroville. Their research into sustainable housing, eco-friendly agriculture, renewable energy are now being adapted around India, and in several other countries.

As we consider Sri Aurobindo's life, and read his inspiring works, we are invited to try out our own bridge building. We are reminded of the Upanishad's *asato ma sad gamaya, tamaso ma jyotir gamaya* – from falsehood lead me to Truth, from darkness lead me to Light. As we learn, we can also teach. As we grow, we can take our community along. We can heal or help others who are healing. We can speak up against injustice, or join other activists. We can embrace unity in diversity. We can broaden our mind, widen our heart, and heighten our life. In our own way, in our own circle, we can prepare for the Advent of Truth.



LIFE



Earth's wordless hymn to the Ineffable
Arose from the silent heart of the cosmic Void;
He heard the voice repressed of unborn Powers
Murmuring behind the luminous bars of Time.
Again the mighty yearning raised its flame
That asks a perfect life on earth for men
And prays for certainty in the uncertain mind
And shadowless bliss for suffering human hearts
And Truth embodied in an ignorant world
And godhead divinising mortal forms.

(Savitri: BIV, C3)

LIFE : A MYSTERY AND A MIRACLE

Falguni Jani

Mystic Miracle, daughter of Delight,
Life, thou ecstasy,
Let the radius of thy flight
Be eternity. (CWSA2: 541)

The question of Life has always been intriguing for philosophers, scientists, artists as well as common people. They all ponder on the issues whether human life is entirely programmed or to be designed by ourselves? To put it differently, how much is pre-determined and how much freedom do we have to remake it? The Philosophers contemplate the scientists experiment; the artist draws design and fills it with colors each according to their vision. The majority live, grow and die almost in a mechanical manner, without pondering on the question of destiny and free will. They are like those dreamers who continue with the images and scenes in the dream without pause or query. The question of life bothers only those who are awake and find a contradiction between the two states of consciousness. In fact, a little introspection reveals more than one level of consciousness at different times, emergence of different personalities in different circumstances. Life presents various colors, forms and dimensions just as the sky reveals different shades during the day and the earth reveals its splendours with the change in seasons. We see that each word described in this poem by Sri Aurobindo about life opens a new window in our consciousness. Let us take the word, mystic, which means, occult, unknown, transcendental, not understood easily by the mind. To understand life and the secrets it contains, one has to have the mind of an inquirer. Through the centuries, the human species have travelled far and wide, attempted to climb the mountains, cross the oceans and cleared forests to know and understand the world in which they live. We are endowed with the quality of curiosity which constantly seeks to know, understand and master the secrets of Nature. Beginning with the outer Nature, human beings have come a long way towards the understanding of

their inner nature as well. The knowledge gathered from these pursuits has enriched the life of the collective and the individual in all the aspects material, psychological and spiritual. The dance of the stars, the rhythm of the planets, the force of the wind, the treasures in the depth of the oceans, the infinite varieties and use of the plant kingdom has been deciphered by science to quite an extent, yet the mystery behind the universe still remains unexplained, unexplored.

Regarding the inner nature, we are just infants who are still learning to crawl. As one goes deeper into the levels of mind, one discovers still greater depths and heights of consciousness, yet unknown, unplumbed. Layers and layers of ignorance cover the secret splendour within whose light and delight await our discovery. Therefore we agree with the poet that life is not only mystic but miraculous, since at each step there is something unknown, unexpected lighting our onward journey. We move from wonder to wonder, from joy to greater joy, beauty to greater beauty similar to our discovery of the physical Nature where we discover the gifts of the jungle and mountains. In our adventure sometimes we meet unexpectedly a gushing waterfall from the mountain on the way or a beautiful flower tucked between two rocks or see a rare bird with colorful plumage.

The poet wants us to be like a traveller, an explorer, a seeker for the yet unknown hidden wealth, a life that is a daughter of Delight. How can our lives experience the Delight that is infinite? What is the source of a constant happiness? Where is the fountain of joy? Perhaps not in the way we understand life, its scope and its purpose! It seems our vessel of life loves to ply between safe, known and finite shores, too afraid to venture in the far off oceans. Our minds love to move in the tried and tested field, not willing to take risks. Our hearts cling to the well known comfort zones of familial and social bonds, always binding the free spirit in its flight to the sky. Only the mountaineer knows the thrill of being on the top of the summit; the deep sea diver, the wonders beneath the ocean and the explorer find rare flowers and birds in the jungle. A little curiosity, a small effort, and a will to break

the monotony of life can take us towards the change we constantly seek and never find. Most of us run away to a resort or a famous tourist place for holidays to break the routine life, but how many of us are able at the same time to break off from the same circle of thoughts, attitudes and activities? One almost comes back tired from these excursions and often without feeling fresh or energetic within. Life opens up its heights and depths when we do not seek to externalize ourselves. A beautiful sea side or a lovely valley in the mountains can provide an ideal atmosphere to go within if we spend time in solitude. The delight is always within and the outer conditions act only as a catalyst to bring it out. It is interesting to discover where we are free and what binds us. There are windows opening in the direction of infinity, wings waiting to fly into eternity.

Our Present Condition

Usually we see our life in fragments, divided by Time. Our myopic vision hides the complete picture as we experience opposites, dualities and dilemmas in life that make our choice difficult and challenging. If we can change the way we understand life, then perhaps a new window opens to give us a fresh perspective. We would always like to see a clear road ahead to walk without fear, doubt and insecurity, make the right / correct/ best/ decisions, but things are not written in black and white, to make our task easy. We are conditioned to see everything in binary terms. Our mind labels events in terms of good-bad, right-wrong, perfect-imperfect, success-failure. This happens because,

Our eyes are fixed on an external scene:
We hear the crash of the wheel of Circumstances
And wonder at the hidden cause of things.

We cannot understand the entire context, and the significance from a deeper standpoint. As if we are watching the shore and not the entire sea, a ray and not the Sun, from a small fraction of the mind.

... Few can look beyond the present state
Or overleap the matted hedge of sense.(*Savitri*: 52)

Isn't this the purpose of life? To go on expanding and enriching its scope, to move from our petty preoccupations to the contemplation of the larger motives of the universe? Since we are a part of this vast universe, there are surely windows in our consciousness that open towards it. Humanity is at the cusp of a greater age wherein the powers of the higher are waiting to manifest. The limitations are due to the heavy influence of our sense organs whose data constantly guide our thoughts, feelings and action. Our consciousness resides mostly in the physical-vital, emotional-vital or in the mind which is preoccupied with material well being. The tasks in the world are endless, and numberless are our wishes. The poet aptly says that few can make a leap beyond the sensorial mind and see the whole wherein lies the secrets of the world. The solution lies in crossing the border of the finite, a visit to the infinity. Perhaps a new dimension of having a holiday in a higher realm, get away into Timelessness, rejuvenate from a drink of the fountains of eternity? Is this not the message of the Master of Integral Yoga? To bring the treasures of Peace, Silence, Joy and Power of the higher hemisphere to enrich our earth, to make life, "Life Divine"!

Adventure of Consciousness

Without courage we cannot attempt to cross the limits set by our past. An insatiable thirst for knowledge and experience can take us from the known to the unknown. Whoever breaks the limits or attempts the impossible comes back with renewed energy and strength. Human beings have tried a lot and are still trying to conquer unknown terrains and mountain tops, but the real challenge lies in discovering the other dimension of life that takes us towards eternity. The poem is like a prayer or an invocation to life itself to go beyond its present limits.

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.

From Mortality To Immortality ("Life", CWSA 2: 541)

Who lives when slain? Life ends with death or begins anew? How can we make the leap from the finite to infinity without relinquishing mortality? Is it possible to go beyond our human limits to the kingdom of the Virat? Can we experience Satyam, Ritam and Brihat? The Mother, once said that we are so much afflicted by the 'hurry up' syndrome that we forget to lose ourselves in Eternity. Perhaps, in deep sleep we move into that refreshing fount of consciousness which restores our fatigue. This plane of consciousness can be reached in the waking state by ceasing from the preoccupation with our senses, simply by BEING. We must spare some time for doing NOTHING. Perhaps not even thinking, just letting ourselves fly away into timelessness. Inactive

outwardly but conscious and vigilant inwardly, to let something happen rather than DO IT.

See with the large eye of infinity,
Unweave the stars and into silence pass.(*Savitri*: 696)

Mark the word, "Unweave". What happens when we unweave or unroll something? We see the empty space between, the object moves away to reveal the vacuum, or *shunya*. One can find this space between two spoken words or in the Mind when it is empty of thoughts or in the heart when emotions do not occupy it. That is why the Seer poet says,

Communing with a boundlessness voiceless and intimate
Make thy knowledge too high for thought,
thy joy too deep for emotion,... (CWSA 2:582)

That is the space for deep contemplation as the apparent emptiness is the gateway towards infinity. If one dwells there, the secrets of eternity will slowly emerge. Life will reveal its deeper dimension and take us beyond to the very founts of its origin. All we need is to make an attempt to move from here to eternity.

References:

1. *Collected poems*, CWSA 2, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1972
2. *Savitri- A legend and a Symbol*, CWSA; 33-34, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1972

A TREE

Sri Aurobindo

A tree beside the sandy river-beach
Holds up its topmost boughs
Like fingers towards the skies they cannot reach,
Earth-bound, heaven-amorous.
This is the soul of man. Body and brain
Hungry for earth our heavenly flight detain.

NEW LIGHTS FOR NEW INDIA

(Sri Aurobindo's Farewell Speech at Bengal National College)

Charan Singh

Sri Aurobindo was, to borrow the words of C. R. Das, "a poet of patriotism, a prophet of nationalism and a lover of humanity" (*Sri Aurobindo: a biography and a history*: 313) to an extent unsurpassable in contemporary India. In his observation Das, the great poet of *Sagar Sangeet*, sounded prophetic when he described the personality of Sri Aurobindo in the aforesaid three sublime epithets. One of the things that we come to know after delving deeper in the pages of Sri Aurobindo's works like *Bhawani Bharati*, *Bande Mataram*, *Karmayogin* and *Speeches Renaissance in India* is his immense and intense love for India. Bharat, the land of perpetual light and perennial love, of indomitable spirit and endless efflorescence of inner awakening, was very near to Sri Aurobindo's heart. Sri Aurobindo's stay in Baroda paved the way for him to know the role and relevance of India in the making of her own and world's destiny. And it is this knowledge, realization and responsibility of our Motherland which he shared in his highly illuminating speeches and writings. One such speech which has great lights for today's new India is his farewell address before his students of Bengal National College on August 23, 1907. Pithy, patriotic and highly pertinent in contemporary India, this speech or 'advice' reveals his ability to speak most preformed things in the simplest possible words.

Thanking the sympathetic students for their warm affection and love for him, Sri Aurobindo connected, beautifully, their feelings with the 'cause' he stood for and was involved in as a "mission" since childhood-

What I want to be assured of is not so much that you feel sympathy for me in my troubles, but that you have sympathy for the cause in serving which I have to undergo what you call my

troubles. If I know that the rising generation have taken up this cause, that wherever I go, I go leaving behind others to carry on my work, I shall go without the least regret... (CWSA 7: 655)

Sri Aurobindo went on inspiring the young minds for the greatness of the cause and its seriousness. He felt highly indebted to the countrymen for the love, support and help extended by them to him during his trials. Putting his countrymen on high pedestal, he felt humble before them and admitted in utter sincerity- "I am nothing, what I have done is nothing". (ibid)

The real sublimity and beauty of his address begins after that. Advising and appealing the youngsters to keep alive and devote their lives for the ideals and mission of the college, Sri Aurobindo said-

I have no doubt that all of you have realized by this time what this mission means. When we established this college, and left other occupations, we did so because we hoped to see in it the foundation, the nucleus, of a nation, of the new India which is to begin its career after this night of sorrow and trouble, on that day of glory and greatness when India will work for the world. (ibid)

It is noticeable that Sri Aurobindo was sure about India's emancipation from the yoke of subjection, humiliation and dependence at the hands of the British crown. Terming the period of dependence as "*night of sorrow and trouble*" he reminded his students, impliedly that the eventual destiny of a night, however dark and dolorous, is to open and end before the dawn of Light and Hope.

In today's India the main focus of education and upbringing is, unfortunately, on enabling the students to earn livelihood and secure a comfortable life. But earning the livelihood is not the sufficient end of education. Education must be for LIFE and not just for a living. The real glory lies in working and suffering for the country, *Bhawani Bharati*. Sri Aurobindo didn't mince words and

categorically reminds the youths that lofty ideal of the institute–

What we want here is not merely to give you careers for earning a livelihood, but to build up sons for the motherland to work and suffer for her. (ibid)

Nation or motherland is the pivot around which we, the children of the mother, revolve. Our training and traits, our character and calibers, our labour and success must be offered at the holy altar of her service. Fear, selfishness, narrowness of vision and hearts are India's enemies today. Gone are the days when one used to harbour the belief and cherish the ideal that in the good and prosperity of motherland depends their good and opulence. What we see today is a grim and pessimistic picture, with colours of anger, rancor, rage, ruse and deep distrust among the countrymen. In today's India of liberalized economy, citizens are growing rich eminent and great whereas Motherland is increasingly whining in deep pain. We are failing and wounding India through our small squabbles and brawling. Ego and apathy have become veritable rulers of the country. In this ambience of gloom and rampant despondency it will be highly meaningful and heartening to remember the words of Sri Aurobindo so that we may again turn our sight towards the height of Light-

I wish to see some of you becoming great, great not for your own sakes, not that you may satisfy your own vanity, but great for her, to make India great, to enable her to stand up with head erect among the nations of the earth, as she did in the days of gone when the world looked up to her for light. (ibid)

In contemporary India, the very ideal of *sewa* or service is under threat. When every activity of life is being governed, regulated and dominated by materialistic pursuits, it is hard to cherish the selfless idea of service to the country. A fast growing '*pizza generation*' is growing in our cities and rural heartlands with great apathy and ignorance regarding the glories of our eventful past and a sense of negligence towards current challenges before the motherland: communal

CONCEPT OF FREE WILL IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF IQBAL AND TAGORE: A CRITICAL STUDY

Ateequllah Dar

Tagore and Iqbal are the most celebrated thinkers of the twentieth century in Indian subcontinent. They belonged to two different religious-cultures and were deeply nourished and well versed in their respective religious classics and philosophic-o-literary tradition. Vedas, Upanishads, Gita and other important treatises are deeply imbued in Tagore's soul. And Iqbal is intoxicated with the Quran, the prophetic traditions and other religious scriptures. Besides it, the classical Arab-Iranian poetry especially Rumi is one of the sources of Iqbal. But this is a half truth. Both were well cultured and influenced by the Greek, Modern and European scientific philosophical and cultural tradition and teachings and were profoundly driven by the values of humanism, love, freedom and social justice. Both were theistic philosophers, with deep understanding of spiritual ideals and moral values. Infact both belong to all ages.

Approach of Tagore and Iqbal towards Man, and the Concept of Free will

In this work an attempt has been made to discuss both in details very critically to trace the similarities as well as differences between the two. Despite their fundamental difference of approach and understanding, because of their nourishment in two different cultures and realms of thought and spiritual ethos, they agree that man is the greatest mystery, a complex being, infinite and the ultimate cause of the world. His essence is spiritual or soul. There is nothing equal to him in the universe. He is not only crux of the universe but also the very purpose behind the whole creation. According to Tagore man is the creator with creator. As such he is the true image of God. To Iqbal, Man is the co-worker with God. He rejects the negativity and asceticism of life. Man creates

his own image, world and history. His choice and creativity coins his history and destiny. Man is self revealing being. Like existentialists, Iqbal and Tagore believe that man is incomplete however he is in the process of completeness. Until he is unconscious of his existence or the purpose of his creation he is unable to know himself.

If self is not realized life is lost and its purpose is defeated. Self purification is the hallmark of Iqbal and Tagore's philosophy. They seek man from both within and outside. Iqbal's position is unique in many facets. Till date, He is the only thinker in the history of Muslim philosophy who has given much importance to human freedom, social justice, equality and fraternity etc. Man according to him should live and act as a free being. Both Iqbal and Tagore were religious romanticists and humanists of the highest order. Tagore is an unqualified humanist but Iqbal's doctrine of humanism and cosmopolitanism can be said qualified because of his unlimited conviction in Islamic beliefs and in Islam as the way of life.

Despite their greatness and magnanimity of their contribution to the world thought, philosophy and literature, their theistic philosophical and scholastic statements are not simple and identical but complex in their nature and are open and liable to various interpretations. However it is important to mention that every great thinker or philosopher operates within his own conceptual framework and interprets the reality according to his bent of mind. Every time and every age is open for new findings, new interpretations and new paradoxes. On many bewildering questions, Tagore and Iqbal are silent but this mystical silence cannot escape from the philosophical analysis and conceptual clarifications.

Both Iqbal and Tagore's analysis of their concept of God is theistic which is sometimes shadowed by pantheism. This is because of their intense attraction towards love as the cosmic principle and spiritual foundation of man and universe. This impersonal God of pantheism can easily be treated as the spiritual energy, or the ground of all or the form of forms. The concept of God, whether personal or impersonal

involve certain difficult questions and these questions arise at certain points. In their thought scheme and interpretational format, the problem of evil is such a burning question.

The problem of evil is the most intractable question faced by the theistic thinkers. It is so intricate that there is no easy answer possible. Theistic thinkers have failed to give a satisfactory answer to it. The question arises on account of their belief that God is all Omniscient, Omnipotent, Most Merciful and most kind. He can do whatever He wants to do. As a matter of fact, philosophers and thinkers have brought out the ingenious solutions to the problem of evil. Various religious traditions have also proposed explanations of it. According to Vedanta Monism, phenomenal world with all its evil is illusion. The universe is ongoing confrontation of good and evil says Zoroastrianism. St. Augustine holds that evil is absence of good as darkness is absence of light. It has not its own existence. It is parasitical on good. The corruption has entered in the universe due to the freedom of man or his interventions. The primeval fall is the cause of the sufferings and diseases of man. St. Thomas Aquinas, Luther and Calvin essentially follow St. Augustine and hold that evil is caused by condemnable fall of man. Schopenhauer against the doctrine of goodness of the universe holds world as the worst of all possible worlds.

According to Tagore, man is imperfect; he is like animals and possesses animal traits. It is the reason that distinguishes him from animals. He holds the dual nature of life. True self according to him is not an individual self but a Universal self or Supreme self. Evil is linked with the imperfection of the world. Man is imperfect being therefore he is the victim of evil or ignorance. It is the outcome of the lack of understanding of his true nature. As a matter of fact, man needs goodness for his greater self. However, when he fails to merge the finite self into infinite self, it gives rise to miseries and sufferings. Tagore says, selfishness is the root of all evils. It makes man to think only for himself and thereby suffer from pain and trouble. In the absence of mine and yours, he realizes the true essence of his nature.

Death is nothing but an opportunity, a way to surpass the thralldom of pain and sufferings. Pain is a source of realization of the truth. God sends it out of his love to man so he understands and realizes his true self. By advocating the wisdom of God and incorrigible fallibility of man, Tagore's poor advocacy of the evil as the outcome of the human desires is not tenable. Lord Buddha held human desires as the basic cause of his ignorance. Perhaps the justification of Buddha lies in his non theistic and non pantheistic interpretation. The basic dilemma of theistic interpretation is that it does not provide any solution to the problem of evil in the presence of God most merciful and Just. God is the source of human imperfection and therefore the primary cause of evil. The answer that the realization of man as a part of Brahman and Trans/substantiate himself into divinity can eradicate the evil a felicitous escaping from the reality. The critics of the theistic philosophy precisely question why God did not create an ideal world and a man without the desires and sufferings.

Tagore is optimistic in his approach to life like Iqbal. Both believe in the ultimate goodness of the world process. However Iqbal's approach to problem of evil is more sustainable than Tagore. Iqbal's answer to the problem reveals his acceptance of the fact that there is no justification of evil possible. He tries to explain the existence of evil in the wisdom of God. This too perhaps is not valid justification. Man is not in a position to justify or understand the infinite wisdom of God. Both Iqbal and Tagore have failed to answer the existence of evil. According to Iqbal, sufferings and difficulties are prerequisite for vigorous life. Evil is necessary for the realization of human personality. It is like an aid from God in order to make man see the whole of life. It gives an opportunity to strengthen our life. If earthquakes, floods and storms are the punishments of man for his misdeeds what sins the animals have committed for which they face the sufferings?

The problem of evil and determinism has been a very crucial philosophical, religious and ethical issue from times immemorial. Both believe in the omnipotence of God and yet assume the freedom of man.

The answer has no logical justification. If God is absolutely free and all powerful and the Creator of the existence, how can a man be free! If the existence of man is a product of God, then how can man be held responsible for his deeds? The entire thesis of human accountability and subsequent reward and punishment becomes a meaningless game.

The problem of evil and the human freedom have always remained bewildering and irresolvable. Both Iqbal and Tagore have not given serious thought to the question of existence of nature and God. They simply argue that His existence cannot be understood by the human intellect and there is only one way for Him to realize God through intuition or through religious or mystical experience.

The conceptual analysis of the problem by the early theistic philosophers is un-matching. Al-Ghazali, Thomas Aquinas and many others have held discussions on the issue but Iqbal and Tagore simply have made short-shift of the problem. They complicate the problem furthermore by their concept of loving God or love personified. If God is all loving how can the intolerable justice be justified? We must admit the fact that all metaphysical, cosmological and theological problems are so intricate, bewildering and baffling that there are no readymade answers to them. The history of man is witness to search for answers to these issues. There are various interpretations and justifications of these issues by the philosophers but there cannot be any final justification. It is truth that faith in God has sustained the human civilization from times immemorial and it has always helped in re-designing and transformation the structure and function of human life.

The scepticism, nihilism and cynicism have endangered the very existence of man. The only hope for man is the existence of God. If this hope is snatched from him, the existence will become meaningless. The philosophers will come and go but the questions of philosophy will remain always illuminating. Philosophy is the process of illumination. It generates hope and helps man in understanding the secrets of the realities. Both Iqbal and Tagore nourish this ray of hope in humanity.

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RESURGENCE

Oeendrila Guha

Doubts, petty and servile,
Eating into my very marrow,
Served a plebian purpose
By gutting out my faith.
But my hesitant heart,
Awaiting a golden dawn,
Quickened its pace
For the crowning victory.
As my elastic wings stretched
And grasped the warm air,
My heart called out to freedom
To join it in a quixotic adventure.
Fluttering eyelids braved a new world.
A smile curved my despondent mouth.
My senses, alert and exhilarated,
Sought initiation from the Unborn.
In the deepest recesses of my being
Is lit a piercing fire
Which calls out to the navigating ship
To the quiet safety of a port.

*Auroville wants
to be the cradle of
the Superman.*

The Mother



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