

**SRI AUROBINDO:
SOME ASPECTS OF HIS VISION**

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side.

—Rigveda, I-89-i

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

General Editors K. M. MUNSHI

R. R. DIWAKAR

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BY A. B. PURANI

GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulses of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs.2.50.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the re- integration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit.

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the framework of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are

progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

It is this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate

currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita* by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita*, which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of

scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

K. M. MUNSHI

1, QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD,
NEW DELHI,
3rd October 1951

PART I

THE LIFE DIVINE : SOME ASPECTS

" Sri Aurobindo is both a poet and speculative thinker. The same is true of Rabindranath Tagore, but the thought of Sri Aurobindo appears to me more comprehensive and systematic than that of Tagore."¹—G. H. LANGLEY (*Sri Aurobindo: Indian Poet, Philosopher, Mystic* " Royal India Pakistan Ceylon Society, David Marlowe Ltd.,)

". .I have never known a philosopher so all-embracing in his metaphysical structure as Sri Aurobindo, none before him had the same vision....

" I can foresee the day when the teachings which are already making headway of the greatest spiritual voice of India, Sri Aurobindo, will be known all over America and be a vast power of illumination..." (Prof. Fredric Spiegelberg of Stanford University, California, U. S. A.)

I' "Resurgent India has in *The Life Divine* a world-view worthy of its glories past and formative of a more glorious future " (Chandra shekharan)

DAWN OF A NEW AGE

I should like to begin by giving some historical back- ground. In the last decade of the last century there was a profound stirring of the spirit of India, Bharat Shakti.

¹ I am inclined to give these quotations because we in India have hesitation and are slow in recognising greatness in our midst. Tagore got his place in our country after he won the Nobel Prize. But greatness does not depend upon its recognition : it is those who recognise it that stand to gain.

² Doubt has been expressed in some academic quarters as to whether " The Life Divine " is a philosophy. After all what is in a name ?

It was the beginning of the movement of independence. It might be difficult for a reader of *The Life Divine*, the great philosophic work, to imagine that its author was one of the very few nationalist leaders in those stormy days of Indian politics. It was during his detention as an under-trial political revolutionary in 1908 that he got the second crucial experience of yoga that became the turning point of his life. In a certain sense, it was an epoch-making experience and he gave expression to it at a meeting in Uttarpara in 1909. This spiritual experience in jail turned his mind to a problem; of far greater magnitude than winning the freedom of the country. Subsequently invited several times to lead the political movement, he politely declined the honour because of his single-minded devotion to the pursuit of the spiritual problems of man.

I give this historical background in order to bring to your minds the fact that *The Life Divine* is not an arm-chair philosophy, not a mere academic product; it is the result of a very earnest and single-minded search extending over

It may not conform to certain fixed ideas of what is philosophy and " The Life Divine " is not an exercise in intellectual gymnastics, nor is it an attempt of mathematical logic. Dr. S. K. Mitra, I think, is right when he says : " System building is not what we value in a philosopher. It is the power to kindle thought, to give new orientation, a new outlook. " Meeting of the East and West is Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy.

Besides there are philosophers and philosophers. Some are professionals who live in the old orthodox mould and whom no philosophy touches; they remain like the lotus leaf in water. There are others who are careerists and have an eye on promotion and position. Others there are who are interested in ideas—new ideas and even those who are attracted by the style and method. Only very few are earnest seekers of the Truth prepared to tread the unknown path and risk all the dangers of an adventure. What such people write is philosophy. " The Life Divine " is

forty long years by one of the foremost intellectuals of our times. It is important to note that the author not merely thought but lived his vision of the reality, and it is the solid work done for many years that has enabled him to make a lasting contribution to thought and life. It is necessary that the younger generation should be made aware of so varied and valuable a contribution because that would enable it to solve the problems of today and of the future.

The Life Divine ushers in the dawn of a new age. We are told by many leaders of thought that today we are living in the atomic age, in the space age, the age of Cosmonauts, the age of technical advance par excellence and. it seems at first sight natural that our age should be so named because. of the vast economic changes science has brought about and is even now bringing about in the individual and collective life of man.

It has given a new concept of collective life by showing the possibility of ameliorating the material condition of the masses all over the world. Man has established himself as the undisputed king among creatures of the earth and he is expanding his physical consciousness to outer space claiming it as his domain. Mind has succeeded in mastering material energy by the knowledge of its processes.

Even with regard to mind's control over material energy, long ago Sri Aurobindo laid down a fundamental principle indicating the nature of the new age of conquest even of Matter —conquest not dependent always on gross physical means and processes but the conquest of Matter by the Spirit.

The control now attained by man is that of Mind and of the Life-Force which are themselves not final realities but instruments of the Spirit. He writes in *The Life Divine* : " But there is always a limit and an encumbrance, the limit of the material field in the knowledge, the encumbrance of the material machinery in the power. But here also the latest trend is highly significant of a freer future. As the outposts

of scientific knowledge come more and more to be set on the borders that divide the material from the immaterial, so also the highest achievements of practical science are those which tend to simplify and reduce to the vanishing point the machinery by which the greatest effects are produced. Wire- less telegraphy is Nature's exterior sign and pretext for a new orientation. The sensible physical means for the intermediate transmission of the physical force is removed; it is only preserved at the points of impulsion and reception. Eventually even these must disappear; for when the laws and forces of the supraphysical are studied with the right starting point, the means will infallibly be found for mind directly to seize on the physical energy and speed it accurately upon its errand. There, once we bring ourselves to recognise it, lie the gates that open upon the enormous vistas of the future."

But Man, the mental being, in spite of his scientific advance, is still a slave of his own nature, his blind desires, impulses, passions, ambitions, greed, ego - in short, the slave of ignorance. The advance in techniques has given rise to a tendency to increase his needs, " to raise the standard of living, " as it is called, to multiply gadgets for his comfort; it is slowly changing the values of life by promoting the false notion that the physical is the only reality. The exclusive concentration on mere material advance, it is clear, is not enough to create perfect men or a perfect society. Even in societies that have achieved a very high degree of material advance there are signs of satiety, psychological malaise which manifest themselves in increasing nervous disorders. We may ask ourselves whether this scientific advance with its utility to life and its mastery of science-data is leading man towards the Truth. It is true , science gives efficiency which is very essential but efficiency alone is not, or cannot be, the goal of life. To a strictly rationalistic, that is, scientific, outlook Truth is unknowable.

What is urgently needed is not only mastery of material Nature but also self-mastery. The application of scientific advance to collective life has put into man's hand such a tremendous reservoir of material power that without a corresponding inner transformation of his nature man would not be able to make a real advance in his culture. It means the material advance by itself would not solve man's problems though the possibility of its misuse has instilled fear in his mind and the fear makes him halt and think; but that fear would only deter him but not bring about the necessary inner change. That is what Billy Graham writes in *Life*³ "

American genius has enabled us to change virtually everything but ourselves. It is absolutely impossible to change Society and reverse the moral trend unless we ourselves are changed from inside out."

This feeling, this perception is fairly widespread among the intelligentsia everywhere and I believe that it is symptomatic of the new psychological change that is trying to establish itself. The material advance itself, man's mastery over unlimited material energy, and simultaneously man's inner feeling of the need for changing his own nature are signs of the descent of a Power beyond the Mind into earth evolution. Sri Aurobindo advocates the control of Matter—that is, material energy by the Spirit; but, in order to be able to do that, man must rise above his present state of Consciousness; he must rise to the Supermind.

In one of my lectures at the Friend's Hall at Cambridge,⁴ I said: " Yours is an old seat of learning. It has the distinction of giving to the world great discoverers like Newton and Faraday. I have come to tell you that here in King's College there was another distinguished discoverer, Sri Aurobindo, from India, who laid bare the Supramental level of Conscious-

3. August 15, 1960.

4 November, 1955.

ness opening thereby an immense realm of spiritual experience to man. In the words of Dr. Gokak his work " opens up new horizons that spell new cultures upon earth. "

The Life Divine meets the challenge of the agnostic and materialistic outlook now trying to dominate the world, but, in a profounder view, it satisfies the deepest need of man — his aspiration for integral perfection. While it thus satisfies the spiritual need of mankind it is equally a characteristic contribution of India to the human culture of the future; for without those fundamental spiritual elements no human culture could be perfect. Sri Aurobindo's Works may be said to be the international form of Indian culture. My friend Sri Chandrashekharan, the Andhra poet, says : " No other philosophy or religion gives to life on earth such high significance."

Apart from the material advance there are purely psychological factors also that have emerged: (1) Internationalism; (2) A universal demand for a kind of Socialism; (3) The increasing prominence given to ethical values in international politics. The question is whether these new Values with the help of the scientific advance would enable man to solve his problems. In fact, there is a great confusion with regard to the nature of the problem before man. It is supposed by some that a certain plan or programme, carried out by social, political and other outer means, would solve the problem.

About that Sri Aurobindo says : " The advocates of action think that by human intellect and energy making an always new rush, everything can be put right; the present state of the world after a development of the intellect and a stupendous output of energy for which there is no historical parallel is a signal proof of the emptiness of the illusion under which they labour. Yoga takes the stand that it is only by a change of consciousness that the true basis of life can be

discovered; from within outward is indeed the rule. "⁵

Others think that a certain " thought " or " ism" propagated by sincere persons, through the agency of speech, travel, radio, press, books even padayatras - would bring about the necessary inner and outer change. It is true, a system of thought, the ideal of service, some programme of social or economic change etc. are great powers for effecting a change in life. But the most important thing, very often forgotten, is that there is no mere outer problem. The problem is inner, the problem is man and his ignorance.

The next question is : is it possible to attain perfection with the faculties which man possesses at present? Sri Aurobindo shows that man must ascend to the Supermind, -the Truth-Consciousness (above the Mind), if he is to attain perfection.

The general tendency is to regard such questions relating to the fundamentals as insoluble and if solutions are offered they are dubbed Utopian. This wrong attitude prevents a proper approach and retards the solutions of important problems. An illustration might make the point clear.

If Mahatma Gandhi had consulted the statesmen and political leaders of his time to advise him about his contemplated resort to Satyagraha to secure independence for India, what do you think would have been their reaction ? With one voice they would have declared him crazy and advised him against any such Utopian method that would surely invite failure, if not political disaster. Granting that India does not owe its freedom entirely to Satyagraha, still it is clear that the Mahatma did right in trying his novel experiment for which he consulted only his own conscience: the world has a new weapon for setting right some of its political wrongs. What is or seems impossible at one time becomes possible after sometime. The sciences of medicine,

⁵ On Yoga ' Tome I, P. 162.

physics, etc., have achieved many things that were once considered impossible. Sri Aurobindo writes in his epic *Savitri*

The high Gods look on man and watch and choose

To-day's impossibles for the future's base.⁶

In considering the solution offered by a great work like *The Life Divine* one has to keep the mind open, admit untried possibilities and undertake even the risk of experimenting in new directions. In this regard I am glad to find that Vinoba Bhave, though following a particular line of thought and action, has kept his mind open to other quite disparate kinds of possibilities. He is trying to live up to the ideal of " the world as one family", *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* , and he has been preaching the same in his "Padayatra", "pilgrimage on foot". After years of experience of Padayatra he accepts the possibility of spreading the idea without resorting to any outer means. By attaining to a certain spiritual poise it is possible, he believes, to spread the ideas and work out its results in life sitting at one place. It would be like the launching of a ballistic missile from a previously prepared base directing it to the target.

The Life Divine propounds the possibility—indeed, the inevitability of evolution of man from Mind to Supermind. Omnipresent Reality is the basis of the universe—its fundamental substance. This Omnipresent Reality is active :". the universe in three positions or, say, it is triple in its moments: the Individual, the Universe- and the Transcendent i In all the three it is identical. The universe is the movement of evolution from an apparent Inconscience to a greater and greater degree of consciousness: this is a process in the opposite direction to

involution in which there was the gradual descent covering the original Reality, creating a world at every downward step. The process of evolution

6 (Savitri : Book III Canto 4, P. 308.

has proceeded from Matter to Life, from Life to Mind. Man, the mental being, is transitional because he has yet to ascend to higher Consciousness beyond Mind. This is the great spiritual Odssey that man has now to undertake consciously. If material science lays open before man a wide—practically unlimited- field of adventure, research and experience in the outer interstellar space, the supramental, is not without its own attractive elements. *The Life Divine* is a call " to spiritual adventure, to a spiritual exploration; it initiates a vision of heights of consciousness which have indeed been glimpsed and visited but have yet to be discovered and mapped in their completeness. The highest of these peaks or elevated plateaus of Consciousness, the supramental, lies far beyond the possibility of any satisfying mental scheme or map of it or any grasp of mental seeing and description."⁷ On those unexplored heights there lie inexhaustible treasures of Light and Power which can effectively help mankind to solve its problems. A call is upon young India to answer. *The Life Divine* is not a poetical dream, an abstract weaving of mere intellect; it is a discovery that makes available a new source of knowledge and Power to man.

That this assertion is not a speculation unrelated to the so-called ' hard realities ' of life may be seen from a statement of Sri Aurobindo himself:

" This (his retirement from outer activity) did not mean as most, people supposed, that he had retired into some height of spiritual experience devoid of any further interests in the world or in life. It could not mean that, for the very principle of his yoga is not only to realise the Divine and attain to a complete spiritual consciousness, but also to take all life and all world activity into the scope of this spiritual consciousness and action and to base life on the spirit and

⁷ The Life Divine, P. 817

give it a spiritual meaning. In his retirement Sri Aurobindo kept a close watch on all that was happening in the world and in India and actively intervened whenever necessary but solely with a spiritual force and silent spiritual action for it is a part of the experience of those who have advanced in yoga that besides the ordinary forces and activities of the Mind and Life and body in Matter, there are other forces and powers that can and do act from behind and from above; there is also a spiritual dynamic Power which can be possessed by those who are advanced in the spiritual consciousness, though all do not care to possess or, possessing, to use it, and this Power is greater than any other and more effective. It was this force which Sri Aurobindo used at first only in a limited field of personal work, but afterwards in a constant action upon the world forces. "

In his *Savitri* he wrote :

This world is a beginning and a base

Where Life and Mind erect their structured dreams:

An unborn Power must build reality.⁸

Supermind brings to birth that unborn Power. Is it only Power ? It is much more; listen to the voice of the maternal Divine Love.

"O beloved children, sorrowful and ignorant and thou,

0 rebellious and violent Nature, open your hearts, tranquillise your force, it is the omnipotence of Love that is coming to you."⁹

In spite of the glib talk of there being no difference between the cultures of the East and the West it cannot be denied that the values dominating Western culture have created problems for new India. Old values are already broken up and one need not regret it if they had no contribution to make to human progress. But young men uprooted,

⁸ Book I, Canto 4.

⁹ Prayers and Meditations of the Mother : P. 131. June 9, 1914.

psychologically, from their own culture are taking to the glamorous outer values of the powerful Western culture in their bewilderment. The civilisation of gadgets, with its aimless speed, senseless competition, fragmented living, "commercialisation of culture, rising standard of living with no prospect of where it will stop, undermining of moral and spiritual values—all that poses a problem. There is a crisis in the cultural life of free India. It is for young India to decide. In a wider sense the choice is for humanity today.

As for India, return to the past is not only undesirable but impossible. Sterile repetition is not life; nor is slavish imitation of the West the solution. Does free India want to tread the same path of industrialisation in the same way ? Our need today is growth—growth within. The problem is how to assimilate the dynamic values of life—social, economic and political—prominently imposing themselves upon humanity, and yet to preserve the spiritual forces created by our culture; or, in other words: Is Indian spirituality capable of assimilating the elements of western culture and giving humanity a new synthesis that might point the way out of the present crisis ?

It is spirituality that can give us guidance in the present crisis but there are some leaders who regard this as not possible; though they have no knowledge of what spirituality is and they dub it 'escapism.'

This word 'escapism' is sometimes used to question and run down the value of spiritual life. Escape from what ? life presents so many problems and there is no one method of solving them. If, for instance, J. C. Bose retires into his laboratory to solve scientific problems and does not participate in a political demonstration or in a jail-going programme, is he an escapist ? If Tagore continues his literary activities and does not ply the charkha or go to prison, can he be called an escapist ?

Ramdas, the great saint of Maharashtra, was a great

patriot and wanted to remove the Mughal yoke. But he did not take to political organisation as his own work—he only prepared the ground and Shivaji organised the political activity. Was Ramdas an escapist ?

Ramakrishna after a long and arduous life of Tapasya. gives out to the world that the sincere practice of every religion leads to the same experience—can he be called a escapist ? Does he not serve the highest need of mankind by giving to it a great truth ? If a culture worth the name of " Human Culture " is to arise some day in future it can only be on the basis of the truth announced by Ramakrishna.

And what about his being a living example of the attainment of profound knowledge by other more direct methods of inner culture than those that are in vogue? Sometimes, it is forgotten that rushing into action itself may be attempt at escape.

I believe no one can escape—even if one wants to—because Nature will be always with oneself. What is called "escapism" may be the shifting of the point of interest of the individual It may be also exclusive concentration of a particular subject of interest. Some of our leaders seem to think that there is only one method by which problems

can be faced or solved. But that would be arbitrary limitation—for there can be many methods. One may have to wait for conditions to be fulfilled to try his method. In fact, no true progress or gain by the individual in any field can remain personal, it is always for all. As to methods, those who are one-tracked in their minds may be reminded of the line of the poet: " More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." Even prayer can be a method.

Some quotations from Sri Aurobindo's letters and other writings would be helpful in dispelling the notion that the attainment of the higher consciousness is something abstract and without any dynamic consequence.

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(1)

" I must remind you that I have been an intellectual myself and no stranger to doubts - both the Mother and myself have had one side of the mind as positive and as insistent on practical results and more so than any Russell can be. We could never have been contented with the shining ideas and phrases which Rolland or another takes for gold coin of Truth.., I think I can say that I have been testing day and night for years upon years more scrupulously than any scientist his theory or his method on the physical plane." (18-8-1932)¹⁰

(2)

" When I concentrate, I work upon others, upon the world, upon the play of forces." (19-12-1934).¹¹

(3)

" The invisible Force producing tangible results both inward and outward is the whole meaning of the yogic consciousness. Who would be satisfied with such meaningless hallucination and call it power ? If we had not had thousands of experiences showing that the power within could alter the mind, develop its powers, add new ones, bringing in new ranges of knowledge, master the vital movements, control the conditions and functionings of the body, work as a concrete dynamic force on other forces, modify events, etc. etc. we would not speak of it as we do.

" ¹²

(4)

" Concrete ? What do you mean by concrete ? Spiritual force has its own concreteness; it can take a form (like a,

¹⁰ Life of Sri Aurobindo, P. 281.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² On Yoga, Tome I, P. 237

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stream, for instance) of which one is aware and can send it quite concretely on whatever object one chooses." ¹³

(5)

" I have always said that the spiritual force I have been putting on human affairs, such as the War, is not the supramental but the overmind force, and that when it acts on the material world it is so inextricably mixed up in the

tangle of lower world forces that its results, however adequate to the immediate object, must necessarily be partial.
"14

(6)

" I have often used the Force alone without any human instrument or outer means..... " (24-1-1936.)15

(7)

" Certainly my force is not confined to the Ashram and its conditions. As you know it is being largely used for helping the right development of the World and of change in the human world. It is also used for individual purposes outside the scope of the Ashram and the practice of yoga; but that, of course, is silently done and mainly by a spiritual. action." (13-3-1944)16

Ramakrishna gave birth to the neo-spirituality in India by freeing it from all external forms and stressing "experience" as the acid test. On the basis of his experience—call it realisation—he declared the unity of all religions. Sri Aurobindo gives the link between the past and the future and asks humanity to build its life on the basis of the Omni- present Reality ;to him Life and God are absolutely compatible; earth is worthy of the divine manifestation. Separation of

12 Ibid, Tome I, P. 233

13 Life of Sri Aurobindo, P. 296

14 Ibid, P. 297 "

15 I bid, P. 297

the human spirit from the Divine is the cause of the prevailing human ignorance which is a transitory or passing phase in cosmic unfoldment - the growth of the human soul towards the Truth. He assures us that the Universe and the Reality are not static, but dynamic and that evolution is the process of unfoldment of the Divine that is involved in the Inconscient. " The animal is the living laboratory in which Nature has, it is said, worked out man. Man himself may well be a thinking and living laboratory in whom and with whose conscious co-operation she wills to work out the super- man, the God. Or shall we not say, rather, to manifest God?"17

THE PHYSICAL BODY IN THE SCHEME OF SUPRAMENTAL PERFECTION

The Life Divine presents so many avenues of new approaches to problems of man's individual and collective life that it is not possible to deal with all of them in a single exposition. I choose three such: (1) the physical body in the scheme of supramental perfection; (2) the place of material, economic organisation and ethics in the collective life of man from the point of view of *The Life Divine*; (3) the origin of Ignorance.

One question which might be considered here is the place of the physical body in the scheme of Supramental transformation. The movement of ascent from Mind to Supermind and the descent from Supermind to the mental, vital and physical consciousness brings about the transformation of nature. For example. Mind would function as

and half-darkness. The question is how would it affect the laws of the body ? Is it possible to transform the gross and seemingly undivine body into a divine body ? Or is there a divine use of the body as there is of mind and life ? Or metaphysically, if the Spirit has assumed form, a material form, what is the place of Form in the ultimate fulfilment ? Though the Upanishad has not hesitated to state that "Matter is Brahman", the seeker of spiritual life, even the religious man finds the body a great obstacle and a bondage from which he seeks escape through ascetic rejection and even mortification. Man finds that life manifesting in Matter is compelled to accept grossness and subjection to pain and death, and that Mind in Matter becomes limited, dull and;

blind. In fact, one finds that Matter, Life and Mind, each one of them, is trying to overpower the other two in life.

Matter may be said to be the fundamental element of our earth, it is ignorance incarnate on whose dark background Mind and Life seem to arise. Matter seems only form— without consciousness, a work of brute inconscient energy. The second thing about the working of Matter is its subjection to mechanical laws. It opposes Life and Mind by its sheer inertia and thus renders the conquest of ignorance by them difficult, if not impossible. The third characteristic is that the process of division reaches its culmination in Matter which imposes the law of struggle, dissatisfaction, pain and death on the being.

According to Sri Aurobindo, the Omnipresent Reality¹ is the basic truth of the cosmos. The question then comes up: how does matter arise in the one Omnipresent Reality? Now, what we call Matter is really Energy and the question would be : why does Energy take the form of Matter ? Is it the sense-organism of the individual mind that gives the impression of Matter ? No. It is the Universal Mind that is the creator of Matter. " Matter is substance of one conscious-being phenomenally divided within itself by the

action of a universal Mind. "¹

" Material substance is the form in which Mind acting through sense contacts the conscious Being of which it is itself a movement of knowledge."² Are not, then, inconscience, inertia, division and death the original and eternal laws of Matter ? Sri Aurobindo says : no, Matter is the creation of Cosmic Mind and for that an extreme fragmentation of the Infinite was needed as the starting point of substance. Hence, howsoever, one may go on dividing the atom there will always be an infinitesimal particle left, one would never arrive at a void. Subtler and subtler states of Matter exist. Ether as an intangible, " almost spiritual support of Matter exists " but its presence is not detectable. " Matter is Sachchidananda represented to his own mental experience as a formal basis of objective knowledge, action and delight of existence. "³

But to our normal experience substance is real in proportion to its solid resistance, to the durability of form. The more subtle the substance the less material the form. If we look at the process of evolution from Matter to Spirit we find " an ascending series of substance"; when the substance is less bound to the form it is more subtle and flexible. " Drawing away from durability of form we draw towards eternity of essence." ⁴

So when the consciousness rises from Mind to Supermind the series of substance from gross material to the subtle spiritual would also undergo a corresponding transformation. If the Mind and Life underwent a change there is no reason to suppose that the body which is seemingly undivine and

¹ The Life Divine, P. 217

² Ibid, P. 219

³ Ibid, P. 220

⁴ Ibid, P. 233.

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gross would remain unchanged. In fact, the present limits of the body are not permanent. They are not " the sole possible rhythm of cosmic Nature". Body can be transfigured In the words of Sri Aurobindo, " Earth-mother too may reveal to us her godhead."⁵

Even without any radical spiritual change we find athletes and physical culturists achieving remarkable results 1 sheer training-feats of endurance and strength that verge c the miraculous. Moreover, under various kinds of psychological strains the human body shows ranges of extraordinary capacities.

Science has sounded some potentialities of Matter and it is a truism to say that man's body is living Matter. T powers of man's physical body and senses, in their gross functioning, are very limited; the sense of sight and hearing has very poor range. But these very senses are capable c far greater ranges of action because they have their subtle forms and powers. Still more remarkable are the hard! tapped powers of Mind. When some of the powers i the Spirit are awakened in man or when man's nature undergoes a transformation by the descent of the Supramental Consciousness, then not only would unknown spiritual powers become active but the very physical consciousness o man would undergo such a change that a far greater degree of immunity from diseases would be attained leading to the conquest of death.

The schools of Yoga in India mention five states of substance, each corresponding to a degree of our being: (1) the material, ' Annamaya'; (2) the vital, ' Pranamaya '; (3) the mental, ' Manomaya '; (4) the ideal, ' Vijnanamaya ' (5) the spiritual or beatific, ' Anandamaya '. To each of the grades of the Soul there corresponds a grade of substance; the soul dwells in each simultaneously, there is no isolation. They

⁵ The Life Divine, P. 234.

are called Koshas or sheaths. Though we are normally co, nscious of only physical body, it is possible to open oneself to other bodies; the psychic and occult phenomena we come across in life are due to them. Six nervous centres of life in the physical body, corresponding to six centres of vital and mental faculties in the subtle, have been discovered by the yogis and they have found out physical exercises by which these, now closed, centres could be opened up, and man can enter into the higher spiritual life. " Our substance does not end with the physical body."⁶

" The conquest of physical limitations by the power of supramental substance is possible. "

The verse of Svetashwatara Upanishad shows that the idea of a divine body was familiar to the seers in the past.

1. " When the five-fold quality of yoga has been produced; 2, Arising from earth, water, fire, air and space; 3. No sickness, no old age, no death has he; 4. Who has obtained a body made out of the fire of yoga." ⁷

6.The Life Divine, Ch. 26P. 239

⁷ पविष्यत्य तेजो निश्चिन्ते नमस्त्विते पञ्चात्मके योगगुणे प्रवृत्तं ।
न तस्य रोगो न जरा न मृत्युः प्राप्स्यत्य योगाग्निमयं शरीरम् ॥ २-१२

A few quotations from Sri Aurobindo's letters shed light on the question of physical transformation :

(1) " There can be no immortality of the body without supramentalisation; the potentiality is there in the yogic force and yogis can live for 200 or 300 years or more, but there can be no real principle of it without the supramental.

Even Science believes that one day death may be conquered by physical means and its reasonings are perfectly sound.

There is no reason why the supramental Force should not do it. Forms on earth do not last (they do in other planes) because these forms are too rigid to grow expressing the progress of the spirit. If they become plastic enough to do that there is no reason why they should not last. " . (*On Yoga II, Tome 2, P. 333*)

(2) " DEATH is there because the being in the body is not yet developed enough to go on growing in the same body without the need of change and the body itself is not sufficiently conscious. If the mind and the body itself were more conscious and plastic, death would not be necessary. " (*On Yoga II, Tome 2, P. 333*)

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MATERIAL, ECONOMIC ORGANISATION AND ETHICS IN THE COLLECTIVE LIFE

" What the modern spirit has sought for is the economy social ultimate, an ideal material organisation of civilisation and comfort, the use of reason and science and education for the generalisation of a utilitarian rationality which will give

(3) " Immunity from death by anything but one's own will to leave the body, immunity from illness, are things that can be achieved only by a complete change of consciousness which each man has to develop in himself,—there can be no automatic immunity without that achievement. "

(*On Yoga II, Tome 2, P. 334*)

(4) " It (death) has no separate existence by itself, it is only a result of the principle of decay in the body and that principle is then already—it is part of the physical nature. At the same time it is not inevitable; if one could have the necessary consciousness and force, decay and death is not inevitable. But to bring that consciousness and force into whole of the material nature is the most difficult thing of all—at any rate, in such a way as to annul the decay principle. "

(*On Yoga II, Tome 2, P. 334*)

(5,) " Immortality is one of the possible results of supramentalisation, but it is not an obligatory result and it does not mean that then will be an eternal or indefinite prolongation of life as it is. That is what many think it will be, that they will remain what they are with all their human desires and the only difference will be that they will satisfy them endlessly; but such an immortality would not be worth having and it would not be long before people are tired of it. To live in the Divine and have the divine Consciousness is itself immortality and to be able to divinise the body also and make it a fit instrument for divine works and divine life would be its material expression only. "

(*On Yoga II, Tome 2, P. 337*)

(6) " The scientists now hold that it is (theoretically at least; 'possible to discover physical means by which death can be overcome but that would mean only a prolongation of the present consciousness in the present body. Unless there is a change of consciousness an change of functionings it would be a very small gain. "

(*On Yoga II, Tome 2, P. 338*)

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the individual a perfected social being in a perfected economic society."¹

" At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny, "²

"Reason, science and education" are the means by which the modern spirit wants to create individual and collective perfection. What remains of the old spiritual values is " moralised humanitarianism " and " Social ethicism "; these are to replace the old religious spirit and spiritual idealism.

Granting that the economic stress has a legitimate place in any scheme of reconstruction of collective life, the need to consider the adequacy of the psychological means, which modern man proposes to employ, remains.

" Reason and Science " as psychological means can only help but are not sufficient to solve the problems now facing humanity. This is, perhaps, being granted even by votaries of reason and science now after the experience the world has had during the last forty years.

I want to deal particularly with the item, " Social ethicism " - in fact, with ethics as an effective means to solve human problems.

It is very likely that the beginning of ethics was the sense of recoil that even the primitive man felt from painful experiences of life. Then the growth of the sense of good and evil— particularly the sense of evil—was connected with the mind of desire ; that is to say, good and evil has sensational value, what gave pleasure was good and what was painful was bad or evil.

Then the sense of good and evil advanced from the field of individual experience to society and acquired a utilitarian value ; what was considered beneficial to society was ' good ' and its opposite was 'bad '.

¹ The Life Divine, P. 932

² Ibid, P. 933

Really speaking the sensational and utilitarian views of good and evil can hardly be called ' ethical'. When reason intervenes and tries to determine some principle or law of ethics, then the idealistic value of ethics comes into being. There is even a religious basis of ethics, declaring on the authority of religion what is good and what is bad. Conceptions of Truth and righteousness are determined by religion. For those that have a spiritual bent the Upanishad draws the distinction between ' Preyas ', the pleasant, and ' Preyas ', ' what is conducive to welfare'. The rational approach gives only the relative value to ethics because mind can only be selective. What is ' good ' for one mind is ' bad ' for some other mind. Besides, the mind gives ethics a form in thought and in action of life which becomes more or less an artificial construction, not a spontaneous expression. Still, with all its limitations, ethics, the sense of moral values of good and evil, is an indispensable stage in evolution. It arises from the perception of possibility of a higher idealistic—intellectual—harmony instead of the prevalence of a lower movement in man's nature—the movement that he inherits from the animal and from the inconscience from which he has evolved. The aim of ethics is, really speaking, not to destroy the parts of nature that are wedded to the lower harmony, but to convert them— by first controlling them—" to lessen, to tame, purify and prepare to be fit instruments" for the higher harmony which the mind and heart of man perceive necessary for perfection.

There is in fact a deeper basis of ethics, apart from relative and selective basis of intellect, an inward sanction, an intuitive sense or a psychic tact which is traditionally known as ' Conscience '.

Morality has thus to do more with the will than with any other power of human psychology. But there are some thinkers who believe that morality gives knowledge. It is

true in a certain sense, within certain limits: it gives one the knowledge of the world which is inconscient, it brings one in contact with the elemental powers of the subconscious and the lower vital nature. Secondly, practice of ethics or morality tends to purify the ordinary nature and may serve as the beginning of dissolution of the ego which is a great obstacle in man's inner progress towards Truth. Ethics establishes active impersonal values in man's nature which require the subjugation of his ego. In the process of man's evolution out of Ignorance ethics is an indispensable stage.

At the basis of ethical endeavour there is "Will to attain perfection" in inner and outer life. Seeking for Truth, Good and Beauty is the sign that the will to perfection is awake. There are people who think that the duality that obtains in ethics—good and evil, truth and falsehood, etc.—is eternal, that there are two eternally conflicting forces at the root of cosmic manifestation and man's progress lies in constantly choosing one against the other. But a little thinking will show that there is no reason to grant an eternal antinomy in the working of the cosmos. Duality, in fact, is only in the mind as a necessary mode for its action. But the opposites of Truth, Good and Beauty have no eternity about them. Of course, so long as one is in the mind, Good and Truth are also relative; but there is the absolute of Truth, "the absolute of Good and of Beauty beyond Mind where there is no possibility of falsehood or evil. It is like darkness whose existence depends upon light but the contrary is not true.

Besides, though the first awakening to the sense of Truth, Good and Beauty generally comes to the mind, yet at its root it is much deeper. It is the soul of man that turns to these things because they are of its nature. In fact, awakening to ethical values—the attraction towards Truth, Good and Beauty, towards nobility, sacrifice and service, etc.—is the machinery

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provided by the Supreme Wisdom so that the all-pervading ignorance may slowly turn to the light of knowledge. Its ultimate aim is not merely to bring about a moral perfection but to lead the human being towards the Infinite. None of these great realities can be fully realised within the limits of mental consciousness. It is the curing of the split-existence that is the remedy.

Sometimes an undue stress is given to external action in the practice of ethics. As a social and conventional rule there may not be much to say against it. But from the point of view of a deeper psychology one has to accept that action is not what it appears—it is the resultant of energy of being and there are many kinds of energies at work in producing a particular action. Action is the result of a very complex play of many forces. And we see that Nature admits strength, power, efficiency as elements in bringing about results in life. The value of action depends upon its source in the being, for, externally the same action may be the result of quite contrary forces.

Ethics accepts the position that life is a becoming and that there is a Truth of becoming which man must realise. In that process of becoming through which the human soul evolves, the duality of good and evil, true and false, etc., belongs to the mind. The call on the human soul is of the infinite, the human being has to rise to the consciousness of Infinity. On that higher plane - the supermind—the soul rises above duality, because it goes beyond Mind and its ignorance. Ethics as the ultimate remedy is imperfect.

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THE ORIGIN OF IGNORANCE

It would be daring and even presumptuous to think that within a short time at our disposal the problem of the origin of Ignorance would be finally and satisfactorily solved. I do not propose to make the attempt. Certain viewpoints may be suggested to help the seeker find the solution of the problem.

It must be emphasised at the beginning that Sri Aurobindo arrives at the solution of the problem on the basis of

his spiritual experience. That is to say, it is not a metaphysical solution, though it resorts to the method of metaphysics.

Attempts have been made to explain the origin of Ignorance on the basis of religious belief; accept a Satan, an Ahriman, or a Mara, as against God, Ahurmuzd, or Buddha, and you have an explanation of the origin of Ignorance, especially if you do not inquire as to who created Satan and his Compeers. Then, there is an eternal duality at the basis of creation, a power of good beneficent, all-knowing and a power of evil, malevolent obscuring.

It is also possible to explain Ignorance on the basis of monistic philosophy. According to it an Infinite Reality is the cause of the universe. Then the question how Ignorance" could have originated from That remains to be answered. The general explanation is that Ignorance has no place in the Infinite Reality which is One. But then from where did Ignorance come ? Somehow or other, a principle opposed to the nature of the self-existent Reality, all-conscious and all- blissful, has succeeded in pervading the creation of that, Reality: it is something " Anirvachaniya "-indescribable ". But the human being is bound to feel his Ignorance— it is an inescapable experience. Another important aspect of this experience is that man does not, and cannot, feel

himself at home with Ignorance, it is not felt as native. There is constitutional revolt against it from his nature and sometimes an active effort to eliminate it.

Monism posits an Absolute and Infinite as the only reality and it says that in it, this phenomenon of Ignorance has no place. It amounts to saying that the experience of Ignorance is unreal.

But then the question remains: who experiences this Ignorance. Philosophical schools of so-called absolute monism assert that this unreal experience of Ignorance is on< due to the Mind, and Mind has no place in the Absolute, the ultimate Reality. Mind, according to them, is the creation of Maya, the power of Illusion, which imposes itself, somehow, on the Infinite. So, to get rid of Ignorance man must get rid of his mind. It is like proposing to . patient that he has to get rid of his limb by amputation in order to cure his malady. It may appear to be a short-cut but it is not easy, and its efficacy is not certain. One can always ask if that is the best method of cure.

Sri Aurobindo sees an Omnipresent Reality as the basis of this Universe. In terms of it he explains the phenomenon of Ignorance. At once the question arises: how can an all-wise merciful, omnipresent, omniscient God inflict ignorance on his creation ? But Sri Aurobindo finds that this question is wrongly put, because the Reality being omnipresent does not inflict ignorance upon anybody else. Itself it assume;. ignorance; God or the Omnipresent Reality has managed, on one status of Himself, to become ignorant. He has submitted Himself to a process which we feel as ignorance. This feeling of ignorance and of its infliction is the protest of the Divine in man.

So the question is ; how has this self-division taken place in the One : how has the Divine become ignorant, subject to sorrow, suffering and pain and evil ?

We have to note that Consciousness is the fundamental

fact of the cosmos. Consciousness is not simple it is complex it has a subconscious level which ends in the Inconscient, a waking outward-turned consciousness which is capable of partial knowledge and a superconscious level which is the attainable potentiality. The infinite Brahman holds all of these in its integral being—it holds both knowledge and Ignorance, Vidya and Avidya. At one pole of its being the Alone, the Timeless Self, the One immutable, is present with its dazzling Light. At the other pole is the broken light and mist, the mutable many, the One Self throwing itself in Mind and Life, in Time for adventure. Thus we can say in the words of Sri Aurobindo :

" Ignorance is the limited separative consciousness striving to become an integral consciousness."¹

If the Omnipresent Reality is the basis then the phenomenon of ignorance cannot be something unknowable, or something that came about by an accident, or something which is non-existent. The dynamic character of Supreme is Omniscience, Omnipotence and Omnipresent. Ignorance, therefore, must be the result of the will of the Supreme. In fact, the Upanishad speaks of the Divine will as the creator of the world—and therefore of ignorance. The character of this Ignorance in man is the separation of the knower from the object of knowledge—separation of the many from the One of whom they are only variations based on fundamental unity. This division of the subjective consciousness has no place in Sachchidananda because nothing but the One exists in it; it is also not present in the Self because the Self is always identical with the One, the Infinite- The division of consciousness which is the root of human ignorance exists in Mind, it exists in Life and of the plane of the body.

Cosmic Ignorance is created by an act of concentration of the One in Prakriti : it has an essential concentration as

¹ The Life Divine

Silence which becomes Inconscience in Nature; it has an- integral concentration as Sachchidananda which becomes the Supermind creative of the cosmos; it has a multiple concentration which becomes the one overmind which gives rise to Mental, Vital and Physical worlds; it has a separative- consciousness which becomes what we as individuals experience as Ignorance.

This Ignorance is due to exclusive concentration : that is,. concentration which puts forward a part of self and holds back the rest of the self-knowledge behind. Thus a self— imitation takes place which gives rise to Ignorance; the true Being is not clouded but kept behind by the exclusive concentration. In fact, this exclusive is purposeful and is within the exercise of freedom of the Self.

A similar phenomenon takes place—on a much smaller scale, of course, in the mental consciousness of the human being.

Generally the human being is exclusively concentrated in his outward personality and is oblivious of the Subliminal, the Subconscious and Superconscious and Psychic being. Even apart from these levels of consciousness we find a temporary self— oblivious putting forward a personality and pushing behind the rest of the being, is often necessary to secure the highest effectivity of a particular aspect. For instance, a poet, an actor, or a soldier when concentrated on the task in hand becomes totally oblivious of his other parts and personalities: it is then that he gets his highest efficiency. Such an exclusive concentration, which is ignorance of the total self, is the condition for its highest effectivity as a personality. If the exclusive concentration and the resulting self-loss became permanent, that would give us some idea of the phenomenon of Ignorance in which the human being is the result of an exclusive concentration of the Infinite. The Infinite Brahman puts forward only its power and knowledge as a blade of grass and puts behind the rest of its infinity in

order to manifest itself as a blade of grass.

Besides, the Supreme has not closed itself in the walls of Ignorance inescapably. He has kept and provided means of escape; only, the return to the divine self cannot be done without effort, without training.

Thus, Ignorance is not a blunder and a fall (as is ordinarily supposed), but a purposeful descent; "not a curse but a divine opportunity." (Ignorance pervades only Prakriti, it is not in the true self, it is not in the whole of our being, it is active only in the Mind.)

PART II

SRI AUROBINDO AND INDIAN CULTURAL RENAISSANCE

When I think of the subject my mind goes back to the nineties of the last century and the first decade of our century. The urge for political freedom was becoming irresistible. In my memory I still see my old uncle scolding my elder brother, the late Sri C. B. Purani, for holding nationalist views as against the philosophy of moderatism; his arguments were logically sound.

The incident and the subsequent trend of events that followed brings home to us a great truth that the intellect is not always able to give correct guidance, especially in moments of individual or national crisis. Something else, some other power in man alone can give the Light.

The stalwarts like Sir P. M. Mehta, the lion of Bombay, G. K. Gokhale of the Servants of India Society, the disciple of M. G. Ranade, and others, men who certainly were patriots, were moderates. Their logic was indubitable, their premises were not mistaken; only their conclusion was wrong, their method effete and foredoomed to failure. India, they argued, had never been a nation politically; it is a subcontinent of many groups, speaking two dozen languages, unorganised, enslaved, disunited, poor. A disarmed people without a living national consciousness could only slowly march to the temple of freedom, particularly, when it has to challenge an empire over which the sun never sets. So, their method was "prayer, petition and protest." As it turned out, and it always turns out in such great causes ... "not failure but low aim was crime."

It was not a time for logic; there are times in the history of nations when the logic of material facts has to be laid aside. And Sri Aurobindo in those days did concede to the

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moderate argument and wrote : "Yes, externally we are nothing"; but he argued "spiritually we are everything."

It was a time when there was a call, a call to every one in the nation; it was a time when the Mother called. And thank God, there were her children who disregarding all logic of facts responded to her call and ran to her rescue taking, as we say, their life in their hands. The feeling has been vividly preserved in the now famous letter to Mrinalini Devi by Sri Aurobindo fortunately brought to light unintentionally by the Police in the Vande Mataram trial. He wrote : "whereas others regard the country as an inert object, and know it as consisting of some plains, fields, forests, mountains and rivers I look upon my country as my Mother, I worship and adore her as mother. What would a son do when a demon is sitting on the breast of his mother and drinking her blood ? Would he sit down content to take his meals and go on enjoying himself in the company of his wife and children, or would he rather, run to the rescue of his mother ? I know I have the strength to uplift this fallen race; it is not physical strength, I am not going to fight with sword or with gun, but with the power of knowledge. The strength of the warriors is not the only kind of strength, there is also the power of the Brahman, which is founded on knowledge." This was the logic of the soul of India which the small number of the nationalists, like Sri Aurobindo, followed.

After the nine nationalist leaders were deported from East Bengal the Jhalakati Conference was held in 1909. A photo of Ashwini Kumar Dutt, the deported leader, was placed in the presidential chair and Sri Aurobindo, the only leader who happened to be out being acquitted in the Alipur bomb case, declared from the platform : "Great as he is Ashwini Kumar Dutt is not the leader of this movement Tilak is not the leader. God is the leader." He assured the audience : "God is within you..... An immortal Power is

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working in you ". This faith was common to all the nationalist leaders. They strengthened the faith in the ultimate victory, taught the nation self-reliance, self-sacrifice and organisation.

Their patriotism had the fervour of religion. The farewell message which Sri Aurobindo gave to the students of the First National College in India in 1906 remains true, even today, for the whole student world of India. He said, " Work that she (India) may prosper; suffer that she may rejoice."

But it was no narrow patriotism or collective ambition, for even in those days of political subjection he declared the aim of the political struggle.

" It was to save the light, to save the spirit of India from lasting obscurantism and debasement," Sri Aurobindo said: " God was raising the nation. Something must come from you which is to save the world. " That " something " was further made clear in the following words: " That something is what the ancient Rishis knew and revealed. " In the international field they saw " beyond the unity of the nation and envisaged the ultimate unity of mankind."¹

It was the time when the national consciousness lying dormant for centuries suddenly awoke and its dawn automatically emphasised the fundamental elements of India's culture, a spiritual attitude towards life, a dynamic faith in the guiding Divine Spirit.

Culture which is a collective creation is not like a house built of bricks; it is a mould of collective consciousness that organises life round values which it evolves during the course of its history. Culture is, more truly, a living organism that must change according to changing conditions. When a culture becomes rigid, i.e. unable to change, it becomes what Tagore calls 'Achalayatana', inert, a dead mass.

¹ Speeches

Like all organisms, a culture lives, grows, matures, decay and dies. But there is a difference which endows culture with a -power of longevity; it is the power of .revival. A culture that is vitally weak goes down and is either destroyed or changed beyond recognition by the impact of a more powerful culture. India came in contact with European culture and was dominated by it during the period of her decline. But the very impact of European ideas and literature, its political and social ideals, set into movement a powerful and many-sided revival of Indian culture.

The most important elements of the revival were: (1) the awakening of the religious spirit in new and vigorous forms; (2) the challenge to the political domination of England. Of course, there were literary and other revivals also. In those early years the only support on which the political movement could count was that of the spirit, a faith in the spirit of Indian culture, a living faith in India's destiny.

The need for political freedom is not merely for securing material well-being. The chief aim is to have freedom for the expression of the nation's Soul. Just as the individual has a soul so the collectivity or nation has a soul. Nearly thirty years after the movement Sri Aurobindo wrote : "Each nation is a Shakti, or power of the evolving spirit in humanity, and lives by the principle which it embodies. India is the Bharat Shakti, the living energy of a great spiritual conception and fidelity to it is the very principle of her existence. "²

It was the feeling and living out this great spiritual truth, the feeling of a living spirit of India, Bharat Shakti that enabled the small band of Nationalist leaden to fire the imagination of the masses, in fact, to transmit the flame from their hearts to the people and capture the political organisation from the Moderates. And later on

² The Foundations of Indian Culture, P. 5

the same movement broadened out by emphasising, through the great personality of Mahatma Gandhi, some salient ethical elements of our spiritual culture and applying them to political and social problems led India to freedom and gave a new ethical weapon to the world for the solution of international problems.

What is culture ? We have partly answered the question, but a further consideration is needed to make clear the foundations of a culture. There are two sides to a culture; one, political, social and external, including religious institutions, other institutions consisting of basic inner factors, the spiritual elements of a living culture. The external forms must go on changing and adapting themselves to changing historical conditions.

The inner elements remain the same. It is the persistence of these inner elements that gives permanency and maintains the individuality of a culture and makes it grow. An example would make the point clear. Let us consider the forms which the " will to freedom" assumed in the course of Indian History. In the 17th century, at the time of Shivaji, the movement for freedom started with the cry of " Swadharma " and " Swaraj " and the method adopted was guerilla warfare. After three centuries the same "will to freedom ' burst forth with the cry of " Vande Mataram " with a vision of free Mother India, and satyagraha was the method or the technique. The earlier movement ended in the establishment of the Maratha confederacy falling short of a united India and now the latest movement has given us a republic and a united India (though paradoxically, it has also brought the division of India along religious lines). Sri Aurobindo enumerates the essential elements of a culture : " The Culture of a people may be roughly described as the expression of a consciousness of life which formulates itself in three aspects : First, there is a side of thought, of ideal, or upward will and the soul's

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aspiration; then, there is a side of creative self-expression and appreciative aesthesis and intelligence and imagination; thirdly, there is a side of practical and outward formulation. "

The content of History may be said to be man's " search for harmony. " Culture is a " harmony of spirit, mind and body"³ Some form of harmony was attained by certain cultures in the past. We shall consider only three : (1) The Greek, (2) The Modern European, (3) The Ancient Indian. The Greek culture was the harmony of disinterested intellectual curiosity, flexible aesthetic temperament, a sense of form, a strong and beautiful body. The modern European culture is the harmony of practical reason, scientific efficiency, and economic capacity of man. It takes these powers as the whole truth of the human being. The Greek mind was " philosophical, aesthetic, political," the modern. mind is " scientific, economic, utilitarian." The ancient Indian culture arrived at the harmony of " the spiritual mind, intuitive reason informed by a religious spirit, a living. sense of the Eternal and the Infinite."⁴ During the, struggle for independence in India very few leaders saw beyond the political horizon. But there were some who saw that freedom was only a means and not an end, that ,a new India should emerge as a natural sequel. They saw that new India would have to meet the challenge of European culture with its vital drive, its scientific discoveries and economy-centric outlook. Indian culture is vast and complex : it has been constantly building new forms adopting them, adapting old forms, changing some and even destroying some. At one time it completely gave the outer forms of Buddhism which it had created.

There is an all-round meeting, mixing and clash of

² The Foundations of Indian Culture.

⁴ Ibid

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values in the world today based on difference of cultures. And if Indian culture is not merely to survive but make its

contribution to humanity today it must rebuild the life of new India on her own spiritual foundation adapted to the needs of the scientific age. This is the reason why Sri Aurobindo with his cosmic vision of human history writes at length about Indian culture which contains some values that are indispensable to the conception of a perfect human culture.

There have been various attempts to rebuild life in India on a new basis. The powers behind a few of them may be mentioned here : (1) Raja Rammohan Roy (2) Swami Dayanand Saraswati, (3) Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, (4) The Theosophical Society, (5) Rabindranath Tagore, (6) Mahatma Gandhi, (7) Jawaharlal Nehru, (8) Sri Aurobindo. These great men have tried to live, according to their faith, the aspect of Indian culture which appeared to them the most important. An outline of the approach of each and its appraisal is all that can be attempted here.

Swami Dayanand began his reformist movement, really, when at the age of 13; seeing the rats going over the image of Shiva on a Shivratri night, he ran away from his house in Saurashtra in search of the truth of Indian religion. Becoming a Sannyasi, he studied the Vedas and courageously founded the Arya Samaj on the basis of the Veda, the first book of humanity, and the fountainhead of Indian Culture. He gave a new interpretation of the Veda, discarded untouchability, encouraged widow re-marriage and tried to stop the mass conversions of the poor in India to Christianity. He wanted to revive the old Vedic Society and Culture as he understood them and though he introduced many reforms in Hindu religious practice and society, he could not, (not being fully familiar with the elements and forces of Western Culture) see the necessity and the form of the synthesis

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that was necessary. That Indian Culture was far more elastic and capable of absorbing and assimilating new elements and even forces of a true culture did not strike him. The life of this bold genius was cut short at forty-eight as he was poisoned by his enemies while serving the cause of Vedic Religion. Sri Aurobindo has paid a glowing tribute to Swami Dayanand. Arya Samaj is the reformist religious organisation spread out not only in India but in many foreign countries. The Guru-Kula system of education is an attempt to mould the future generations into Vedic Aryans. The attempt has not succeeded in overcoming the stress of modern European culture on the minds of Indians even after freedom, perhaps because of its insistence on the externals of Indian Religion.

Rammohan Roy may be called an imitative reformer, if Dayanand is a protestant reformist. He was among the first to oppose the blind orthodoxy of Hindu Religion and to found the Brahmo Samaj based on some ideas of the Unitarian Church and Upanishadic Vedanta. He worked, even at great risk, for the emancipation of Indian womanhood. one of his outstanding achievements being the abolition of the sati. " Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man " was the inspiring ideal of his life.

More than Dayananda and Rammohan Roy, Ramakrishna Paramahansa represents the neo-spirituality of modern India and marks a stage in the evolution of Indian spirituality. Sri Aurobindo paid a tribute to Sri Ramakrishna in 1908 :

" In Bengal there came a flood of religious truth. Certain men were born, men whom the educated world would not have recognised if that belief, if that God within them, had not been there to open their eyes, men whose lives were very different from what our education, our Western education, taught us to admire. One of them, the man who had the greatest influence and has done the

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most to regenerate Bengal, could not read and write a single word. He was a man who had been what they call absolutely useless to the world. But he had this one divine faculty in him, that he had more than faith and had realised God.... He was a man without intellectual training... such a man as the English- educated Indian would ordinarily talk of as one useless to society. He will say, " This man is ignorant, what does he know? What can he

teach me who have received from the West all that it can teach ? " But God knew what he was doing. He sent that man to Bengal and set him in the temple of Dakshineswar in Calcutta, and from North and South and East and West, the educated men, men who were the pride of the University, Who had studied all that Europe can teach, came to fall at the feet of this ascetic. The work of salvation, the work of raising India was begun. "

In another book on Yoga, Sri Aurobindo wrote about Ramakrishna as one " with a colossal spiritual capacity taking the kingdom of heaven by storm. "

Ramakrishna taught the modern world that religion is a matter of experience, not of professing or believing and that experience in all religions, ultimately, is the same. This is one of the fundamental truths on which any future world culture would have to be founded. A man without literary education is a standing challenge to the modern world, its scepticism, atheism and materialism. Through him the power of Indian spirituality, in its pure form, was effectively brought to the notice of the modern world. Ramakrishna and Vivekananda inspired nearly two generations of Indians when they were in bondage with self-confidence and pride in their culture. The Ramakrishna Mission; organised by Vivekananda carries out the work.

It is unfortunate that in recent years the spiritual work of Ramakrishna is put into the shade and the emphasis of

outer social work for its own sake has gained ground.

Tagore's cultural contribution consists of his unique literary output and his educational institution, the ' Shantiniketan.' He burst into world fame with the Nobel Prize for the " Gitanjali ". From the vast literature he has created, it is possible to get an idea of his philosophy and his interpretation of Indian culture. The Upanishads, the works of the saints and mystics of the Middle Ages like Kabir, and aspects of Vaishnavism have influenced his outlook. He was a firm believer in international peace and Shantiniketan was started to promote it; he pointed out the dangers of exclusive nationalism. In his Gifford lectures he has worked out the conception of Vishwamanava, the collective man, a conception of growing perfection of the human being through collective effort. His influence has largely been active in the field of creative literature and fine arts.

Mahatma Gandhi through his long and active life tried what might be called, an ethico-politico-economic integration of Indian culture. Ethics is the basis of his outlook. His book ' Hind-Swaraj' gives most of his fundamental ideas on life and philosophy. Simplicity, non-possession (of wealth), self-control and service are some of the elements on which India would rebuild her life. Among religions, Jainism, Vaishnavism and Christianity influenced him. Among leaders of thought Tolstoy inspired him. The rejuvenated India should, according to him, build her life on (1) rejection of machinery, (2) rejection of medicine, that is, of all the systems except naturopathy, (3) acceptance of absolute non-violence as the one method for the solution of all human problems. He equates non-violence with Truth. His contribution to the winning of India's freedom is very great, for, he led the Congress for thirty years in the political struggle with non-violence as the creed. His influence on Indian public life is far-reaching and his political philosophy of

non-violence has attracted the attention of the world in this atomic age.

The cultural integration attempted by the Mahatma stressed the social aspect of ethics and religion, and created a demand for purity and integrity in public life which the ruling party in the country is not able to satisfy. Fasting as a method of achieving public welfare has found its limitations. Gandhi lays stress on the observance of Yama and Niyama and wishes to activate ethical values in the collective life. One may mention one result of the Gandhian outlook which seems to overlook some fundamental values. of Indian culture. In the stress for "doing" the more

important fact of "being" is neglected. For instance, there are many today whom Ramakrishna does not strike as a "phenomenon", a characteristic product of Indian culture, one who actually demonstrated that there is a divine element in man which is superior to his intellect and all other faculties, that knowledge can be acquired by a more direct method than the indirect, unsatisfactory and imperfect method of intellectual training. In the insistence on outer action the need for rising to a higher consciousness is often totally forgotten.

Jawaharlal Nehru, our great Prime Minister, has certainly put an indelible stamp upon our country, perhaps unintentionally. I say 'perhaps' because it may be equally true that he may have arrived at not a stable integration, but a working, or a workable outlook which may be called "Secular Socialist" or "Economic Socialist" or "Economic Secularist". His "Discovery of India" and "Glimpses of World History" give his vision of India and the world in modern context. He is a peculiar amalgam of the East and the West. To those like the late Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya or even, perhaps to Rajendra Babu, it would sound strange that an Indian has to 'discover' India.

His acquaintance with and understanding of spirituality

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is limited, that is why though he is highly impressed by its popular manifestations like the Kumbha Mela at Prayag, he does not find it possible to canalise that tremendous energy for rejuvenating Indian Culture or building a New India. It may be due to the urgent need of industrialisation and his earnest desire to remove poverty from India that his mind is constantly turned to other countries whose technical and economic aid is indispensable.

India under his leadership may be said to have definitely given up the Mahatma's opposition to machinery, and embarked upon a historic programme of phenomenal proportions to rebuild Indian economy on the modern European model. His great service to the country is the promotion of scientific knowledge and research. This is a crucial step fraught with immense consequences to the culture of India and that of the world.

Of the three great men, Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru, none believed in renunciation of life. Tagore seeks aesthetic harmony and delight in life. To Gandhiji life is austerity, penance, tapasya, an adventure, a new discovery every moment. Some of these attempts at cultural rejuvenation seem to lack the very central springs of Indian culture. These may be regarded as three independent approaches to the problem of the Indian renaissance.

Sri Aurobindo's synthetic vision is cosmic and has the merits of comprehensiveness and clarity. It points the way to a new creation (may I say, a world culture ?) on sound foundations of our culture. Is he a mere revivalist, or only a proud nationalist who glories in the past ? Is he merely an enthusiastic exponent of our culture, a mere intellectual ?

He himself expresses his attitude to all human cultures: "There is here no real question between barbarism and civilisation, for all masses of men are barbarians, labouring to civilise themselves".⁵ He does not assert that Indian culture

⁵ The Foundations of Indian Culture, P. 93

is the highest and others are not needed or useful : "There is a need of divergent lines of advance until we can raise our heads into that infinity of the spirit in which there is a light broad enough to draw together and reconcile all highest ways of thinking, feeling and living".⁶ He admits the imperfections of our culture : "Certainly, it was not perfect or final or complete ; for that can be alleged, of no past or present cultural idea or system... These structures in which he (man) lives are incomplete and provisional".⁷ Still he says : "Each (culture) has achieved something of special value to humanity". Further he observes: "Mankind is no more than semi-civilised and it was never

anything else in the recorded history of its present cycle".⁸

As for reviving the past or living on its capital he says, " But to live on our capital without using it for fresh gains is to end in bankruptcy and pauperism. " Further he adds: " To shrink from enlargement and change is, too, a false confession of impotence. It is to hold that India's creative Capacity in religion and in philosophy came to an end with Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva and Chaitanya".⁹

He evaluates the two cultures and their achievements in following terms : " From the view of evolutionary future European and Indian Civilisations at their best have only been half achievements, infant dawns pointing to the mature sunlight that is to come"¹⁰. He can forecast a severe judgment of the future against the present : " The coming ages may look on Europe and Asia of today much as we look on savage tribes or primitive people".¹¹ "Not only are there every-

6 The Foundations of Indian Culture

7 Ibid P. 193

8 Ibid P. 199

9 Ibid P. 25

10.Ibid P.37

11. Ibid

where positive, ugly, even ' hideous " blots on the life of man, but much that we now accept with equanimity, much in which we take pride, may well be regarded by a future humanity as barbarism or at least as semi-barbarous and immature ".¹² He looks at the future and says: " But the real and perfect civilisation yet waits to be discovered; for the life of mankind is still nine-tenths of barbarism and one tenth of culture".¹³

In his great epic " Savitri " his vision rises to prophetic heights :
Ever the centuries and millenniums pass.

* * * *

The aeons ever repeat their changeless round,
The cycles all rebuild and ever aspire.

* * *

Huge revolutions of life's fruitless gyre,
The new-born ages perish like the old. ¹⁴

As to man :

" Nothing has he learnt from Time and its history;"¹⁵

" A growing register of calamities

Is the past's account, the future's book of Fate

The centuries pile man's follies and man's crimes

Upon the countless crowd of Nature's ills;"¹⁶

Holding that all human cultures are imperfect, why, it may be asked, does he take so much trouble to lay bare

the foundations of Indian culture ? It is because, Indian culture stands for a great truth, an indispensable truth of human life and its perfection. In spite of India having achieved freedom there is still need for the defence and preservation of its fundamental values, for there is danger of their being

12 The Foundations of Indian Culture P. 38

13. Ibid P.44

14.Savitri Book III, Canto 4

15 Ibid Book VI, Canto 2

16. Ibid Book VI, Canto 2

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neglected or destroyed. Other externally more powerful cultures have arisen and have challenged the basis of Indian culture. I believe there was a second reason also. Even great leaders are puzzled by the baffling complexity of Indian culture and are at a loss to find its true foundations. There was a need for a clear exposition of the integral foundations which would, in effect, be the international form of Indian culture. He declares : " The living aim of culture is the realisation on earth of the Kingdom of Heaven ".¹⁷

In Sri Aurobindo's vision the element of Tapas-concentrated force of consciousness, is not lacking. The programme he has put before the individual and the collective man is dynamic and its carrying out would require not only human but also divine Tapas. He advocates the pressing need of realising international unity and peace, which cannot be realised without active will. Harmony and beauty are, according to him, the highest attributes of the Divine. In addition to all these elements that are commonly stressed by the great leaders there is one element, the most fundamental, I believe, to our culture , in which Sri Aurobindo stands apart: it is in his insistence on founding life with the Divine as the centre. That is the element he has in common with Ramakrishna and I believe that it is the 'central stone in the arch of our ancient culture.

Sri Aurobindo has put the ideal before the whole of humanity because he sees it as the rational, nay inevitable culmination of the process of cosmic evolution and he points out that it is man's special privilege to be called upon to participate consciously in his own self-exceeding.

About the foundation of Indian culture Sri Aurobindo says : " Spirituality is, indeed, the master-key of Indian culture ". Nowadays the word ' Spirituality ' is being used in a vague sense and it is interpreted variously including at

17. The Foundations of Indian Culture, p.8

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times, intellectual idealism, ethical effort, even social service. It is true that all elevating activities of man do contain some element of spirituality. But with regard to Indian culture it carries a definite sense.

Sri Aurobindo gives the meaning of what is spirituality :

" Spirituality has meant hitherto a recognition of something greater than mind and life, the aspiration to a consciousness pure, great, divine beyond our normal mental and vital nature, a surge and rising of the soul in man out of the littleness and bondage of our lower parts towards a greater thing secret within him."¹⁸

" The Indian idea of the world, of Nature and of existence is not physical, but psychological and spiritual. Spirit, soul, consciousness are not only greater than inert Matter and inscient Force but they precede and originate these lesser things. All force is power, or means of a secret Spirit; the force that sustains the world is a conscious Will,

and Nature is its machinery of executive power. Matter is body or field of a consciousness hidden within it, the material universe a form and movement of the Spirit. Man himself is not a life and mind born of Matter and eternally subject to physical Nature, but a Spirit that uses life and body. It is an understanding faith in this conception of existence... and it is the aspiration to break out in the end from this mind bound to life and matter into a greater spiritual consciousness that is the innermost sense of Indian Culture. "¹⁹

"The Indian believes that the ultimate truths are truths of the Spirit and that truths of the Spirit

18 The Foundations of Indian Culture, P. 74-75.

19. Ibid P. 110-111.

are the most fundamental and most effective truths | of our existence, powerfully creative of the inner, salutorily reformatory of the outer life"²⁰

" Indian culture ... has held up the goal of a supreme and arduous self-exceeding as the summit of human endeavour."²¹

" Indian spirituality in its greatest eras and in its inmost significance has not been a tired quietism or a conventional monasticism, but a high effort of the human spirit to rise beyond the life of desire and vital satisfaction and arrive at an acme of spiritual calm, greatness, strength, illumination, divine realisation, settled peace and bliss. The question is ... whether such an endeavour is or is not essential to man's highest perfection. "²²

" It must therefore be emphasised that spirituality is not a high intellectuality, not idealism, not an ethical turn of mind or moral purity and austerity, not religiosity or an ' ardent and exalted emotional fervour, not even a compound i of all these excellent things; a mental belief, creed or faith, an emotional aspiration, a regulation of conduct according to a religious or ethical formula are not spiritual achievement and experience. These things are of considerable value to mind and life, they are of value to the spiritual evolution itself as preparatory movements disciplining, purifying or giving a suitable form to the nature; but they still belong to, the mental evolution,-the beginning of a spiritual realisation, experience, change is not yet there. Spirituality is in its essence an awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self, soul which is other than our mind, life and body. An inner aspiration to know, to feel, to be that, to enter into

20 The Foundations of Indian Culture, P. 66.

21 Ibid P. 80.

22 Ibid P. 86.

contact with the greater Reality beyond and pervading the universe which inhabits also our own being, to be in communion with It and union with It, and a turning, a conversion, a transformation of our whole being as a result of the aspiration, the contact, the union, a growth or waking into a new becoming or new being, a new self, a new nature."²³

Sri Aurobindo warns :

" The danger is that the pressure of dominant European ideas and motives, the temptations of the political needs of the hour, the velocity of rapid inevitable change will leave no time for the growth of sound thought and spiritual reflection and may strain to bursting-point the old Indian cultural and social system, and shatter this ancient civilisation. "²⁴

" There is need to emphasise this aspect of our culture, for, even though India is politically free the danger to her culture is, perhaps, greater than ever before. "

Jawaharlal after signing the third five-year plan said; " It was a challenge to India -I believe in more than one sense - it is a challenge. At this critical time of history, India stands at the crossroads. She has embarked upon a huge programme of economic reconstruction, a programme which may be said to be befitting her greatness. We all want to banish poverty from the land. Let more food, more goods of all kinds be produced. But the whole effort poses a question of supreme importance. Are we to be victims of the age, helplessly driven to be like others or have we some contribution to make to the world's culture ? Let us produce more steel because it is necessary, but in the process of producing it the higher values evolved by our culture should not suffer. Let us not produce steel at the expense of the precious golden ore of the human material."

23 The Life Divine, P. 763.

24 The Foundations of Indian Culture, P. 22

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Man, today, is trying to overcome the limits of outer i space without overcoming the limitations of his consciousness. Man seems to be on the point of being overcome by his own achievements unless he changes himself.

Forty years ago Sri Aurobindo saw that mere political, economic, social or any other external changes would not solve the problems of life though all may be attempted by man in his present state. The change required is psychological—an inner change. And he pointed out long ago that the inner change needed was far more radical than merely embodying ethical values. Living up to ethical values and ideals can be a stage, an important step, in the direction of the required change which is radical. A radical transformation of man's nature is needed. Such a radical change can come by putting spirituality in the centre of all human activities.

Sri Aurobindo sees the course of Indian history as a, gradual and chequered growth towards a complete spiritual; living. " It is her founding of life upon this exalted conception and her urge towards the spiritual and Eternal that constitute the distinct value of her civilisation. And it is her fidelity, with whatever short-comings, to this highest ideal' that has made her people a nation apart in the human world." ;

He therefore wants free India to accept boldly the challenge of the age and give the world a lead in solving problems of collective life by applying her spiritual ideals. He states: " A widest and highest spiritualising of life on earth is the last vision of all that vast and unexampled seeking and experiments in a thousand ways of the Soul's outermost and innermost experience which is the unique character of her past; this in the end is the mission for which she was born and the meaning of her existence. "

" There are deeper issues for India herself, since by following certain tempting directions she may conceivably

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become a nation like many others evolving an opulent industry and commerce, a powerful organisation of social and political life, an immense military strength, practising power-politics with a high degree of success, guarding and extending zealously her gains and her interests, dominating even a large part of the world, but in this apparently magnificent progression forfeiting its Swadharma, losing its soul. Then ancient India and her Spirit might disappear altogether and we would have only one more nation like the others and that would be real gain neither to the world nor to us." " It would be a tragic irony of fate if India were to throw away her spiritual heritage at the very moment when in the rest of the world there is more and more turning towards her for spiritual help and a saving Light."²⁵

" A new creation of the old Indian Swadharma, not a transmutation to some law of the Western nature, is our

best way to serve and increase the sum of human progress. "

" Either India will be rationalised and industrialised out of all recognition and she will be no longer India or else she will be the leader in a new world phase, aid by her example and cultural infiltration the new tendencies of the West and spiritualise the human race. That is the one radical and poignant question at issue. Will the spiritual motive which India represents prevail on Europe and create there new forms congenial to the West, or will European rationalism and commercialism put an end ever to the Indian type of culture?"²⁵ " Creative assimilation is needed, a mastering and helpful assimilation

²⁵ The Foundations of Indian Culture, P. 25

²⁶ Ibid P. 15.

of new stuff into eternal body has always been in the past a peculiar power of the genius of India."

" The renaissance of India is inevitable as the rising of tomorrow's sun, and the renaissance of a great nation of three hundred millions with so peculiar a temperament such unique traditions and ideas of life, so powerful a intelligence and so great a mass of potential energies cannot but be one of the most formidable phenomena of the modern world. "

Sri Aurobindo has lived the great spiritual Truth about which he has written; he is the embodiment of the Spiritual Reality which he affirms in his great works. He has contributed a body of vast literature embodying his vision of the Reality and man's destiny on earth. He has built up, in collaboration with the Mother, an Ashram which has grown into an international centre for the seekers of Spirituality and he has started. an International Centre of Education where the younger generation is being moulded for the future .human culture.

PART III

THE PROBLEM OF COLLECTIVE LIFE

UNITY OF MANKIND, A SPIRITUAL NECESSITY

The subject may be fittingly begun by referring to one or two facts which have hitherto escaped the public notice. The term " Co-existence " which is now extensively used in international politics was first used by Sri Aurobindo in the postscript chapter to his book " The Ideal of Human Unity. " He wrote : " If much of the unease, the sense of inevitable struggle, the difficulty of mutual toleration and economic accommodation still exists, it is rather because the idea of using the ideological struggle as a means for world domination is there and keeps the nations in a position of mutual apprehension and preparation for armed defence and of attack than because the coexistence of the two ideologies is impossible."¹

The second point to which the attention of the reader may be drawn is the possibility of Chinese aggression about which he wrote in 1949 when, probably, the visit of Chou-En- lai and the Panchashila declaration made almost everyone feel that a new era of co-operation had dawned between India and China after practical isolation of fifteen hundred years. He wrote :

" In Asia a more perilous situation has arisen, standing sharply across the way to any possibility of a continental unity of the peoples of this part of the world, in the emergence of communist China. This creates a gigantic block which could easily englobe the whole of Northern Asia in a combination between two enormous communist Powers, Russia and China, and would over-shadow with a threat of absorption

¹The ideal of Human Unity, P. 387

South-Western Asia and Tibet and might be pushed to overrun all up to the whole frontier of India, menacing her security and that of Western Asia with the possibility of an invasion and an overwhelming military force to an unwanted ideology, political and social institutions and dominance of this militant mass of communism whose push might easily prove irresistible."²

Everyone in India is able to understand and accept philosophy and Yoga as legitimate fields for Sri Aurobindo's work, though, it must be added, many people fail to understand his Yoga because it has no external renunciation like the orthodox paths. But the greatest difficulty is encountered by Indians in regard to his ideals of collective life and international unity. What has a Yogi to do with these things ? It is likely that his two books on the subjects of collective life, *The Human Cycle* and *The ideal of Human Unity* will appeal more easily to European minds.

Sri Aurobindo tackles the problem of man's destiny on earth and the nature of perfection man can attain. He finds that all the problems, difficulties, imperfections in man's life arise out of man's ignorance. The word " Ignorance " is to be understood in the sense given to it in Indian culture. Our ancient culture recognises two kinds of Knowledge: Vidya and Avidya. Vidya is the Knowledge of the Self, identity with our real Being, with One that is the World, with the Supreme. Avidya means Ignorance which includes all the branches of intellectual knowledge.

If an Omnipresent Reality, the One, is the truth of life then one would expect harmony, love and delight everywhere in life; on the contrary, division, disharmony, conflict and suffering are more in evidence. The question is : how to eliminate them from life. Also can the Omnipresent Reality, of which Sri Aurobindo speaks as the highest and dynamic

truth, help us in the solution of this problem?

In answer it may be said that the all-pervading principle of unity is all the time active whether man is conscious about it or not. Even then, the question how the division and disharmony did arise remains to be answered. It is true that in all the operations of the present mental consciousness of man the element of duality and division is present. But man is not bound to remain confined to his mental consciousness; it is possible for him to rise to a Truth-consciousness; which is now beyond - and above the Mind. It is the Rit- Chiti - Truth - Consciousness - of the Veda, to which Sri Aurobindo has given the name Supermind. In the Supermind, Unity is the law and therefore harmony is the dynamic consequence of its working. Man's destiny is to rise to that plane and bring its Light and Power into his nature which would enable him to solve all his problems.

It is necessary that the 'ego' in man should be replaced by the new Consciousness. Most of our philosophers thought ignorance to be an individual problem whereas to Sri Aurobindo, it is a collective problem; in fact, it is a cosmic problem. Very often it is seen that the ignorance of the collectivity is far more dangerous than that of the individual. The Indian Puranas speak of the Asuras and Rakshasas, the titans, who symbolise the inordinate ignorance of the collectivities. The abnormal ambition of an individual may harm himself and a few persons around him but a nation outstripping the limits of normal ambition creates world wars with all the horrible consequences.

In the old way of thinking, the problem of collective life was relegated to ethics and religion and later on to sociology. They tried to bring high idealism and religious attitude in the conduct of collective life, but there was no question of working out collective ignorance. But they did not succeed in solving the basic problems of collective life which arise out of individual and collective egoism. Unfortunately,

clear thinking about the right principles and methods of solving problems of collective life is not much in evidence even among leaders.

The problem of the collective life of man brings us to the interpretation of history. History is not the record of man's collective life under the mechanical stress of economic, environmental or political forces, though these play their part in it. History is the gradual revelation of the Soul of the collective being of man.

It is true, history was regarded at one time as the chronicle of dynasties of kings and a story of their conquests and defeats. Then it became the story of peoples, their growth and evolution. The economic interpretation of history then came and the philosophy of history began to be attempted. Spengler in his book, "Decline of the West" tried to read the working of "Destiny" in history. He takes a pluralistic view of history which makes Dr. S. K. Maitra put the question: "Is history destiny without destination?" Sri Aurobindo gives us the reorientation of the philosophy of history. Spengler equates time with destiny and sees history as a cyclic movement of about two thousand years after which the dominating culture must petrify itself into civilization, gradually decline, and die. Sri Aurobindo posits a spiritual principle, the collective soul in place of destiny and sees history moving towards the fulfilment of the collective spirit of man. Man's destiny, according to him, is to attain divine life on earth i. e. to attain and manifest the Truth-Consciousness which would take the place of his mental consciousness and recreate life, individual and collective, in the mould of that higher reality.

That brings in the question of the place of collective life in Sri Aurobindo's vision. He affirms the Omnipresent Reality as the basis of the universal manifestation. That Reality occupies three positions, or is triple in its view of man: (1) the Transcendental, (2) the Universal, (3)

the Individual. Collective life of man is the manifestation of the Universal aspect of the Reality and the perfection of man's collective life has, therefore, a place in his scheme of integral human perfection. The divinity in the individual when realised in the collectivity and made dynamic would lead it to collective perfection.

It is the universal aspect of the Omnipresent Reality which is behind the drive for collective expression in Nature. Life is the field for the working out of this impulse and it takes two lines in the human being. One is the creation of a distinct individual, say, an ego-centre, from physical, vital and mental elements and second is the creation of greater and greater, larger and larger units of collective life.

But the drive towards collective living is not confined to the human race; the animal and the insect world have the same trend : the bee-hive and the ant-hill are typical examples of perfectly organised societies. The difference is that in the lower kingdom there is no individuality except perhaps functional individualisations of the groups into workers and fighters etc. In the case of man his collective life is seen to be evolutionary, starting from small units and tending to create ever larger aggregates.

It is important to note that the first unit of collective life, the family, was not based on economic but on strong psychological elements in man's nature. It has slowly gone on evolving larger aggregates that assimilated the smaller ones destroying what could not be assimilated. Today man has attained to the nation as the largest unit of collective life.

In some of the social philosophies the opposition between the individual and the collective life is accepted as basic: Hence in all the applications of these outlooks the individual is pitted against the group. It is argued that the individual is only a temporary cell of the collective body and therefore not entitled to independent self-fulfilment. The collectivity

being eternal, it is by living and sacrificing for it that the individual has his fulfilment.

Sri Aurobindo's vision does not accept the 'isms' in which the collective life is the Ultimate Reality of existence. He affirms the fundamental Divinity of the individual and accepts it as the indispensable brick in the building up of art perfection. Collective life at present is not free from ignorance and cannot, therefore, lay claim to perfection. All the values that act in the collective life derive from the present imperfect state of man and can be, at most, transitional. No collective perfection can result by crushing the individual. On the contrary, it is the individual alone that can contribute to the advance and perfection of collective life.

THE NATURE OF THE UNITY

This Unity is called the 'Omnipresent Reality' by Sri Aurobindo in his book the *Life Divine*. "The same can be expressed in old formula of the Upanishad, 'All this, indeed, is the Brahman, the Infinite.' But our actual experience based on our sense-evidence and mind is not that of the Omnipresent Reality but of infinite multiplicity and everywhere we perceive disharmony and division and conflict. This is due to the separative action of the Mind which introduces the element of error in all human knowledge; each individual instead of functioning as one centre of the Universal Soul, acts and behaves as if it was the centre of the cosmos. Instead of experiencing itself as one centre of the Omnipresent Reality it acts as a separate individuality. "

And yet the mental knowledge acquired by the ego-consciousness is not absolutely false; it is a partial or distorted view, behind which the unity is present and active. Let us take Matter, for instance. All Matter is one in its

In the same way. Energy is one, yet there are many forms of it, like heat, light, electricity, etc. Life is one but there are so many types of it and each type further deploys itself in innumerable forms. Mind, as an instrument of knowledge is one, yet each mind is separate and has so many different states. Humanity as a race is one and is composed of so many nationalities. Seed is one yet sprouts in a thousand different ways giving rise to an infinite variety of the same kind. Unity in the midst of an infinitely varied diversity may be said to be the plan of the universe. The many that we see are the self- multiplication of the One. It is the self extension of the Omnipresent Reality.

The Omnipresent Reality is Infinite, but the infinite is not the sum or multiplication of finite things. It is that which is the All and more. The Veda expresses it by saying : *adhyatishthat dasangulam-*" It pervades the whole universe and ten fingers' measure remained over. " In spite of all apparent divisions it is the occult, Secret Identical but the " Identical is not immutable. " The Identical is not " a monotone of changeless sameness incapable of variation." The unity of the Ultimate Reality, the true, dynamic unity of Sachchidananda, is not a monotony, an incapacity to assume innumerable variations, its infinity is not incapable of assuming multiple self-formations.

Thus, existence is One but its unity is infinite, universal- transcendental. There is, in fact, " infinite multiplicity of the One and eternal unity of the many " at work. Oneness is everywhere ; differentiation is everywhere; oneness is the basic security, multiplicity is the same Oneness " finding itself infinitely." It is " reality an inexhaustible diverse display of Unity." The drive towards multiplicity which is variation ' on the basis of unity is so strong that no two leaves of the same tree are completely identical and men are identified by variations in their finger-marks. As we observed above, the unity gives to the universe the basic security: for without it, it would

be heading for disorganisation, dissolution and anarchy; and the multiplicity gives field for the eternal play of oneness which keeps the universe fresh and beautiful.

But still, mind constantly feels duality, a constant opposition between two mutually contradictory elements in life : good and evil, God and Satan, Light and Darkness, Matter and Spirit, conscient and inconscient, form and formless, infinite and finite, these appear to the mind to be fundamental and therefore eternal antinomies. But it is the nature of Mind that is responsible for setting up these trenchant divisions and oppositions; Mind divides the One, the infinite Reality for its own convenience and then, instead of seeing the divisions as complementaries, takes them for mutually exclusive realities as if they had dividing walls between them. In order to assure ourselves about the soundness of this metaphysical position let us look at the working of universal Energy. Taking the problem of dualities created by the mind, c. g. Matter and Spirit-the opposition between them tends to become less and less as we ascend in the scale of evolution, Matter giving rise to more and more conscious physical organisations; and we then discover that even the Inconscient in its machanical operations seems to behave as if it has a will of its own, an inherent knowledge in its very constitution.

At the first surface view of the plane of life we find not only division but conflict, struggle, distinction, struggle for existence, as it was once called, almost the prevailing law. But that is only one side of it; the elements of co-operation, sympathy, service and even sacrifice are not wanting. If there are in life ego-asserting and ego-expanding impulses no less are there ego-exceeding and ego-destroying impulses also at work.

At this point it is necessary to look at life and find out whether it is anti-divine in its ultimate constitution. Is it committed to remain for ever what it is at present ? In case it is anti-divine and inexorably condemned to its present state,

it is futile to apply any spiritual remedy however successful it may be in case of exceptional individuals. The question really is that of the possibility of the collective life of man.

Leaving aside the attainment of the Divine or any great spiritual Truth, the question may be asked : does Life really care even for high ideals ? Is it concerned with Truth, with God, with Beauty, with any high ideal ? If we observe the working of Life we find it is rather concerned with physical (needs, desires, vital instincts, greed, ambitions, impulses. These are real to it; the rest is shadowy. It is true that society gives these ideals a place in its life, but its heart is not there e. g. ethics has a place in collective life but no society lives for ethics. It is for the satisfaction of vital needs, utility, and desires of the body that a society lives. Society lives for desire, neither for religion nor for beauty. Only special individuals follow these high things - the saint, the ethical man, the artist, the thinker. Life seems to devote itself to efficiency in satisfying its vital desires.

Life is a power of Being and its impulse is not merely to last but to assert, increase, expand, possess, to enjoy: it seeks growth, power, pleasure. " Collective life has come into being from the dynamic character of Life."³ It has brought into play two contradictory tendencies : mutual strife and assistance, competition and co-operation. European culture has given to the world the practical, dynamic man, the vital man.

Life in a society consists of three kinds of activities:

(1) Domestic and social life, (2) Economic activity as producer and consumer, (3) Political status and action.

In Asia these were regarded as first but not the chief business of man in society.

But the main question is : What is the aim of society ? Does it exist only for satisfying the practical and vitalistic

³ Human Cycle.

impulses of man ? Is it for giving comfort and for securing economic and political efficiency of the group life ? Modern collective life organised as the nation has two gods, (1) Life and (2) Practical Reason organised under the name of Science.

But life is much more intensely individualistic, for family,. society etc. are only a means for greater satisfaction of th& individual vital being. Society, or any collective unit, however large, is only the larger ego for the individual.

The relation of the vital being of man to the higher activities of collective life is one of opposition. In fact, the individual's vital being has to be subjected to discipline in order to maintain society.

If the collective life presses too much the vital being of the individual, it may go on strike, discourage life itself as. seems to have happened in case of Buddhism in India.

Life in the collectivity is Infra-Rational in the beginning, even religion and ethics of primitive societies are infra- rational. Then a stage comes when it becomes rational i. e. Reason tries to organise and govern life.

Whenever Reason has tried to do it in the past it has not succeeded. It is because Life is not merely Mind or reason; Life is "the imprisoned supra-rational "⁴ and therefore Reason cannot succeed in governing it completely and permanently. Take Love for instance; it is not an element that can be governed by Reason; in fact, it is not rational in its origin and working. It holds infinite possibilities within itself. Not only is there love of man and woman but also there is maternal and filial love, love of comrades, of country, of humanity. Love seeks only its Absolute in life. Even economics is not merely the seeking for satisfaction of personal desires and comforts but is meant to remove poverty and squalor from mankind when it would seek its true aim. If Nature has ego-affirming

instincts so she has ego-enlarging and ego-exceeding instincts

and movements also; there are love, sympathy, self-denial, self-sacrifice.

Therefore it seems that " there is the pressure of an infinite on human life which will not allow it to remain too long in any formation." Life seeks the Absolute and not the rational. Reality is already there working in Life as Cosmic Self or Spirit and it can be discovered by the individual here. As its summit the Reality is the eternal and infinite Being.

But what we actually see here is the Inconscient Energy, a void, out of which Existence comes. This Existence does the work of supreme Intelligence in Matter and in Life. It seems, therefore, that the Inconscient is only a mask assumed by the Spirit that is involved in it and it imposes the law of difficult emergence on the process of slow unfolding of the Spirit. It begins from Matter in which the law of fragmentation in the form of atom seems to reign; it organises Life round a cell, and a Mind round an ego, and must in time pass from Mind to the Spirit.

The working of the Universal Energy shows that man is not the final product of evolution, that he is a transitional being, he is more than himself, he contains within him a higher than human-a divine-potentiality. The drive of the Universal Energy points to a level of consciousness beyond Mind, what the Vedic Seers call - Rit-chiti, Truth-Consciousness. The bringing down of this Truth-Consciousness would make individual and collective perfection possible. The indispensable item in collective perfection is the attainment of human unity. Is the time now ripe for it ?

The primary unit of collective life is the family. Then the class, the tribe, the race, the nation gradually came into being. It is evident that Nature begins with small aggregates and develops them in the process. The Nation is so far the largest attained unit of collective life. What is a nation ? Is it a mere geographical unit of land, or merely a sum of

smaller units like the family and society etc.? All these really are parts of the nation, instruments for the evolution of the- collective soul. " Each nation is a Shakti, or power of the evolving spirit of humanity and lives by the principle it embodies. " Where such national consciousness awakens,.. the nation is able to regenerate itself even from adverse,.. external conditions like foreign domination. Italy, Greece and Poland were under foreign domination but subsequently- freed themselves as the result of awakened national consciousness. When Ireland and India launched the movement for political freedom the demand was not based on economic or political rights only but on the need of freedom to express ' the national soul. ' The collective consciousness awoke under the name of ' Bharat-Shakti ' or ' Bharat-Mata 'when the national movement started in India.

The collective life of nations has been dominated by the vital-ego of the collectivity, not by its deeper soul. It is in Europe that the nation-units were first organised and all of them were dominated by economic greed and political ambition. The organisation of the nation-unit took place round the vital-ego of the collective egos culminating in two devastating World Wars. If the vital-ego leads the nation hardly any other result is to be expected.

Yet, paradoxical though it may sound, universal Nature is pressing forward to the unity of mankind not withstanding the two World-Wars. The only unit of collective life that remains to be achieved is mankind. Once the unity of mankind is attained a major step will have been taken towards human perfection. Three factors seem to be driving towards that culmination : (1) Scientific progress that has reduced time and space and helped in removing outer barriers between man and man (2) Drive towards. economic unification throughout mankind : collective life

today, all over the world, centres round economy; far greater economic interchange is taking place between nations today

than at any other time in history. It is planned economic interchange on a gigantic scale. Such economic unification needs peace and peace may bring unity nearer. (3) Increasing stress on socialism, - what is called " Socialist' Pattern " in the organisation of collective life - throughout the world. These are external means making for unity of mankind.

Bertrand Russell in his broadcasts from London-" Living in an atomic age " proposes that by a rational utilisation of the atom-energy it is possible to solve the problems of humanity. He seems to think that the problem is only external, touching only the economic life of man. I am afraid he oversimplifies the problem. Tracing man's evolution up to now he puts it in three heads: (1) Man Vs. Nature, (2) Man Vs. Man, (3) Man divided in his own self, a state of a psychological dichotomy.

The first of these, Man Vs. Nature, is only a half truth. Nature is not always antagonistic to man. Tagore is more correct when he says that the effort to divide man and Nature- is artificial like that of dividing the plant from the flower, and is therefore wrong. It is Nature that supports man giving him food, water and air, and even when she seems to oppose man it is to bring out the potential powers of man which might lead him to conquer her. There are, besides,, many problems over and above economics and politics.

Russel's third point about the self-division of man's consciousness into two parts betrays, I am afraid, very poor knowledge of human personality. It is far from true to say that man projects " Sin " from within himself on to the enemy. The enemy is not sin personified, at least no soldier ever thinks in that way.

After the two World Wars there have been efforts to , create larger than nation-units of collective life, e. g. (1) The British Commonwealth (2) The French entente (3) the vague formation of the Arab League.

But in the day-to-day flow of events one hardly sees signs

that might encourage optimism about the ideal of human unity. The difficulties seem to be Himalayan. The highest realised unit of international unity, the U. N. O., is divided into two ideological camps and cold-war is already in progress in Korea and Berlin; China is divided into two parts; Laos is the battle-ground for the two rival powers; German unification is not yet in sight - after 15 years. Tibet is swallowed by China, India's borders are threatened by China and Pakistan; Portugal and India, South Africa and the free world have very little in harmony. Last but not least, the U. N. O. 's initial policy in Congo has not born fruit.

Unity of mankind seems as far away as ever. But on the other hand signs that indicate the progress towards human unity are not altogether wanting. 1. During the second World-War Mr. Churchill actually had proposed common citizenship between France and England. It was symptomatic of the drive towards unity of mankind. The very fact that it was put with all seriousness during a great crisis in the nation's life shows the direction towards which nations must move to solve problems of collective life and if the idea could be entertained during a War far more easy it should be to make it a success duing peace. 2. The unique fact of Indian political independence ushers in some new factors in international politics and contributes to the growth of collective life towards human unity. The Indian political movement has stressed the importance of ethical ideals; economical and political factors have been subordinated to them. It has put a new non-violent instrument in the hands of unarmed nations struggling to be free.

Another fact worth noting is the influence which free India exerts in international life, quite disproportion- ate

to her economic and military strength. It seems that the age of economic and military domination is passing from international life, and slowly, ethical ideals e. g. justice, equality, freedom, self-determination etc. are taking the place.

3. Up to the end of the 17th century nations defeated in War had to face the ruin not only of their political life but had to pay the victors the penalty of the War. The economic life of the vanquished was ruined for generations. After the two World-Wars there has been a radical change in that attitude. The shattered life of the defeated nation has to be helped to stand on its own feet by economic help from the victors. And now, the idea of helping even the underdeveloped nations to make economic progress has become a dynamic factor in international life. It may be that it is due to enlightened self-interest or to the fear that the poor nations would offer easy ground for communism, but the fact is significant of the growing feeling of unity of mankind.

4. Moreover, the recent withdrawal of French and British armies from the Suez-Canal region without firing a shot indicates how powerful imponderable forces (like world opinion) have now become. It is a sign of the increasing dynamic character which the unity of mankind is gradually achieving.

The Bhoodan movement sponsored by Vinoba Bhave, is a practical effort to live the religion of humanity in actual conditions of life in India. It puts into practice the motto : "The whole humanity is one family"—in short, " One World " is its inspiring ideal. That in a conservative country like England the movement of Vinoba should have found an echo under the leadership of intellectuals like Russell shows how the level of international life is rising from military and economic factors to ethical ideals. Values in international life are being transformed. The whole trend brings human unity nearer.

THE POSSIBLE FORM OF UNITY OF MANKIND

The question of the form that the unity of mankind is likely to take has been dealt with by Sri Aurobindo. The

efforts to establish empires in the past were crude efforts at realising unity of mankind by force. As it was brute force on which they depended for their success, they were foredoomed to failure, lacking the psychological basis. Their crude attempts, the first serious and conscious attempt for establishing unity of mankind was made after the first World-War and took the form of the League of Nations. Its constitution and procedure lacked all the elements necessary to bring about real international unity. It insisted on unanimity as a rule which reduced its power of effective action and as Russia and America did not, join it, it lacked the representative character also. It was an oligarchy of four or five Big Powers that used the League to further their own policies. The principle of equality of nations was not accepted. There is no reason to be sorry for the League's failure—as it represented the ambitions of Imperial nations and not the aspirations of humanity.

THE U. N. O.

After the second World—War the need of some machinery to prevent such Wars and to solve other international problems was acutely felt and the U. N. O. was born. It is divided into two main parts : Political and Social and Cultural. The second part seems the more important of the two so far as evoking of psychological factors for promoting human unity is concerned.

The constitution of the U. N. O. is not perfect, particularly because the oligarchic element is present in the right

of the veto reserved for the five Big Powers. It had some justification at the time of the start because of the great sacrifices the five nations had made in winning the War and they might have rightly feared being outvoted in a house where all the votes were equal. But after four or five years of running the U. N. O. the voluntary surrender of the veto by one

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or more of the great powers would have gone a long way in creating the psychological atmosphere necessary for the real unity of mankind. If international unity has any meaning all the nations participating in the U. N. O. should be free and equal—irrespective of their size and power. The inherent strength of a nation would make itself felt without such artificial devices. The veto is artificial and keeps alive inequality and breeds bitterness.

Unfortunately the U. N. O. got split up into two ideological camps and each group got busy with canvassing support for its stand in the U. N. O. Unity of mankind, peace and security with justice, disarmament, promotion of one world citizenship etc. which are the real concern of the U. N. O. were left aside or given a secondary place. India has tried to create an independent block based on non-aligned attitude and as a result conditions are created in the U. N. O. where the smaller nations can express their opinion freely. A ground of fearlessness, equality and freedom is necessary to bring about the real unity of mankind.

POSSIBILITY OF A WORLD STATE

We have seen. that the nation unit, when well established, organises its life under a state. The question then arises as to the form which the unity of mankind would take. Would it be a world state ? Recently Lord Attlee has said that time is ripe for a world state. It is high time that sovereignty of nations was restricted and an international authority, effective enough to carry out the decisions of the United Nations was brought into being.

Sri Aurobindo envisaging the possibilities saw several' forms which world-union could assume. The first business of such an organisation would be to establish uniformity of control in international life—a thing very badly needed at the present time. Two principles are fundamental to any such.

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constitution; one, freedom or self-determination and second feeling of unity with mankind. Will the world state be unitary or federal ? In order that it may succeed it is best if it is a loose federation based on the ideal of unity and on the need of preserving peace and working out plans for the well-being and progress of humanity. It would be something like the British Common wealth — a federation of diverse nations with common aims and conventions but without any rigid constitution,

The drive of universal Nature is towards human unity and if man can move in harmony with the intention of Nature much waste of time, energy and material could be avoided. The first task of such an international organisation would be to make peace secure in the world. That might require control of national armaments or complete or partial disarmament. The idea of one world, one humanity, would have to be stressed frequently till it gets established and becomes a common part of the psychology of the majority of mankind. That is a very difficult task. The sovereignty of nation states might present it with a formidable resistance.

Unity of mankind and sovereignty of each nation are two things which are not compatible. Nations will have to reduce their sovereignty to a considerable extent. It might even be questioned whether the Nation Unit will remain when unity of mankind has become a dynamic. factor in international life. But it is possible that before the world-state comes into existence effectively the national egoism will try to create situations of world's strife an thus put off

the day of realisation of world unity. Patriotism in the sense of narrow national egoism can be a great obstacle in the path of the unity. It is also possible that the world unity may be attained externally, mechanically, i.e. without any life in it. Such a thing is not possible. Nation' might come together by a sort of compromise of interest

and it might lead only to the rise of a constitution for execution without an impelling sense of unity behind. Such a World-State may concentrate all powers in its hands and may dictate unity under compulsion to the nations. A World-State which is a centre of military or economic power would not only wield dictatorial powers over the nations but would hardly leave room for the freedom of mind. In fact lacking all moral and spiritual elements it would be a titanic mechanical constitution in which there will be hardly any room for the experiments of the type carried on by a Gandhi or a Vinoba.

Such a World-State would have to control the life of the whole world and in order to arrive at such a control it might be obliged to become too unwieldy, too red-tape and lack creative elements. The greater the State, the greater would be the complexity of the constitution and the need of multiple rules. An example may make this point clear. The small city-States of Greece have exhibited greater creative power than many great nations and some empires; so also the small republics of ancient India or Small States under Kings were more creative than extensive Indian Empires.

One could ask the question in face of all these difficulties : Is it that the unity of mankind is not going to be attained or even if it is attained would it only be a half success almost amounting to failure ? Perhaps the prospect is not so bleak, but it is necessary to take count of all the contingent factors and possibilities and the difficulties when we think about the problem. The crux of the difficulty is that a radical change is necessary in human nature if the unity of mankind is to be truly established. As Sri Aurobindo says, the question is of converting an animal collectivity into a divine one. Man has failed to live his religion in his life but if mankind today can make a religion of human unity and live it in its life then the unity of mankind would

be attained much sooner. The world is already one; mankind is one —unity of mankind is not to be created; it is already there; only man has to become conscious of it and make it a living reality in his thoughts and actions.

We have used the word " religion of mankind " but religion is not to be understood in the narrow sense of an external social religion. It is a kind of spiritual religion that is meant. In the last century some thinkers and poet! had accepted this spiritual religion of humanity. It was a microscopic minority at that time. It was that which inspired that poem of Leigh Hunt — " Abuben Adam may his tribe increase... .Rose one day from a deep dream of peace." The idea in the poem is that the lover of humanity is foremost amongst the lovers of God. The same idea is embodied in the verse of Yoga Vasistha :

येन केन प्रकारेण यस्य कस्यापि देहिनः ।
संतोषं जनयेद्वास तदप्यीश्वरपूजनम् ॥

"By whatever means to satisfy a human being is the highest worship of God". So long as the inner unity is the felt all efforts at political, economic, and cultural unit not mankind - all external efforts should be continued till the inner unity is attained. Sri Aurobindo in " The Ideal of Human Unity " has given the following conception of the religion of mankind.

"A religion of humanity means 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-man will

become the leading principle of all our life, not merely a principle of co-operation but a deeper brotherhood, a real and inner sense of unity

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and equality and a common life. There must be the realisation by the race that only on the free and the full life of the individual can its own perfection and permanent happiness be founded. There must be too a discipline and a way of salvation in accordance with this religion, that is to say, a means by which it can be developed by each man within himself so that it may be developed in the life of the race.

"But still in order to accomplish all its future, this idea and religion of humanity has to make, itself more explicit, insistent and categorically imperative. For otherwise it can only work with clarity in the minds of the few and with the mass it will only be a modifying influence, but will not be the rule of human life. And so long as that is so, it cannot entirely prevail over its principal enemy. That enemy, the enemy of all real religion, is human egoism, the egoism of the individual, the egoism of the class and nation. But the higher hope of humanity lies in the growing number of men who will realise this truth and seek to develop it in themselves so that when the mind of man is ready to escape from its mechanical bent,—perhaps when it finds that its mechanical solutions are all temporary and disappointing, —the truth of the Spirit may step in and land humanity to the path of its highest possible happiness and perfection."

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PART IV
ON ART AND BEAUTY :
THE LADDER OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

**" Art is discovery and revelation of beauty.
The aim of Art is to embody beauty and give delight."¹**

Sri Aurobindo, the great Yogi, besides being a great artist, is a great aesthete. He unhesitatingly gave a higher place to Beauty and Delight than even to Knowledge. He wrote : "The day when we get back to the ancient worship of Delight and Beauty will be our day of Salvation." He knew that the present age was rather far from the worship of beauty and delight. Art today is isolated from life. The modern European culture that dominates the world is "economic and utilitarian." The modern mind is complex and divided, it is governed by " practical reason. " Sir Aurobindo warns : " Without it (the worship of beauty and delight) there could be no assured nobility and sweetness in Art; no satisfied dignity and fullness of life nor harmonious perfection of the spirit." And he adds : "Beauty and Delight are also the very soul and origin of art and poetry."²

The question may arise : what has spirituality to do with Art-with beauty and delight ? From the Indian point of view, spirituality is akin to Art. In fact, in ancient times, religion, philosophy and art were collateral activities and poetry, dance and music were allied to sculpture and painting. Religion affirms a supracosmic Reality, a Creator of the universe, and lays down rules to govern man's relation with

¹ Future Poetry, Sri Aurobindo.

² Ibid.

Him and with his fellow beings. It attempts to bring a higher Truth into man's individual and collective life.

Art too tried to reach out the same Reality through aesthetic Sensibility, creative urge and a sense of beauty. It created forms which attempted to bring the invisible reality into the realm of senses. It makes the invisible visible; renders the Infinite in terms of the finite.

Art enriches human life; its alchemy converts the elements of gross matter into those of the Imponderable, turns stone or wood, metal or mere paper into something not only beautiful but Divine. Buddha's stone image embodies a state of consciousness, the ineffable peace of Nirvana.

The difference in the outlook of ancient and modern times is easily seen in the outlook towards Nature. Krishna Deva Raya ruled the country around Ellora. During his regime the construction of a temple to be carved from the rock was planned. It took 200 years to execute the plan. The Kailasa at Ellora is grand by any standard. Today the popular governments plan for industrial development. The difference between the dominating spirit of the two ages is clear. In the past, art was a part of life; today man wants to make science and industry a part of life. There is nothing wrong in it so long as it is only one part and not the all-absorb- ing and dominating part. The capacity to utilise the resources of Nature should not promote in man the merely utilitarian view of life. To see this world as Nature's inexhaustible treasure house and to feel that the highest business of man is to rob as much of it as he can during the short span of his life is a very poor view of the world and of man. A balanced view is needed.

The story of Beauty and the Beast is well-known. In- all cultures there are such symbolic stories. There is a very large element of the beast in human nature. Beauty has the power to change and elevate the beast in man. Life

irresistible movements. Man has to eat, breathe and work for his bread: life is full of compulsions. Beauty frees man from these compulsions. A need touches man where he feels a want and when the want is satisfied the object that fulfils the want becomes burdensome. But "A thing of beauty is a joy forever," it is not meant to satisfy any outer need,—it does not touch us at a particular point, it embraces the whole of our being. After that man is able to look at the world free from the pressure of necessity, free from the veil of self-regarding ego and desires. Thus art-experience liberates the consciousness and brings into view a new dimension of perception in which harmony seems the established law.

The claim of science is (or rather was) that the knowledge of the external world which it obtains by using the sense and by experiments is the only valid knowledge : it is real in opposition to the perception of the world by poetry, art etc.. which it characterised as " unreal, " "imaginative, "impractical". In fact, the knowledge of the world which science gives is only one side of Reality of which the experience of poetry and art is another, and even more important aspect. Beauty, in fact, is nearer to that ultimate suprainTELlectual Reality, for its knowledge is directly attained by an act of identity and is not indirect like that of science.

Sir Arthur Eddington in his Gifford Lectures has discussed this question of validity of knowledge. He says that the claim of physical science that the rainbow exists to give the knowledge of the difference in the wave-lengths of light to man is not valid. When the poet says, " My heart leaps up when I behold a rainbow in the sky", she expresses another aspect of the knowledge of the rainbow. The ripples in the lake do not merely indicate the force of surface-tension and the pressure of the wind, but the poet's image about them is not merely something unreal and therefore untrue.

Tagore in his book Sadhana says that a thing of beauty generally has two sides; one, outer or merely objective and

another, inner or subjective. He takes the rose for an illustration; fortunately, there is unanimity about its beauty. Objectively, the beautiful rose is a hard-working labourer in Nature's workshop, it has no time to be a dandy. In order to live, the plant must draw the necessary elements, from the soil, air and sunlight. It should absorb water in - necessary quantity at the proper time. But the same rose when it enters man's heart becomes a symbol of freedom, leisure and beauty. It seems to man a mystery of colour, form and fragrance. The soil which man looks upon as ugly and dirty hides within itself such a treasure of beauty. The very earth seems to find her joyful liberation in the form of perfume that pervades the air. But in the work of a day world, busy with humdrum life, man hardly finds time to perceive the beauty of the rose. In the homes of the well- to-do the vases are decorated with flowers, but it is a mere convention, not a communion with beauty. Such a communion is likely, perhaps in the silence of early morning while walking round the garden when one sees the miracle of the opening rose-bud. Every thing around is calm, and in that solitude the beauty of the rose reveals itself to one. One has then the overwhelming shock of delight. One sees then, what an infinite treasure of beauty is being "squandered" in the universe and how much of it runs to mere waste because of man's insensibility.

Sri Aurobindo says: "Art is discovery and revelation of beauty," and adds ; "The aim of art is to embody beauty and give delight". Explaining the nature of the ' delight', he says : "Delight or Ananda is not the pleasure of a mood or sentiment or a fine aesthetic indulgence of the sense in the attraction of form."³

Today there is an insistence on the acceptance of life and art is expected to be directed to life. In fact, all human

activities are for life. Only the question is: What is life? Art also exists for life. Sri Aurobindo says: "Art is the rhythmic voice of Life—but a voice of inner life."⁴ Life is not what it appears. In fact, the outer aspect of life is mask. To reach out to and express that which is behind the mask is the business of art.

We have to bear in mind that art is not only expression, it can be creative, also.

EXPERIENCE OF BEAUTY

In ancient times religion encouraged the experience of beauty as an aspect of the Divine. There were puritanical religions like Protestant Christianity and some philosophical schools that condemned beauty, or encouraged renunciation as indispensable to spirituality.

But in India the Upanishad speaks of the Supreme as "Raso vai Sah", "He is of the nature of the sap of Delight." Sri Aurobindo explains the word "Rasa": "Rasa is concentrated taste, a spiritual essence of emotion,' an essential aesthetic, the soul's pleasure in pure and perfect source of feeling,"⁵

Later in mediaeval times the Vaishnavite religion of the North and Shaivism of the South India have spoken of beauty not only as one but the highest aspect of the Supreme: The Divine to them is "bhuvan sundara", the All Beautiful. He is "nikhil rasamrta sindhu"—"the ocean of the entire ambrosia of delight"; He is "akhila saundarya nidhi"—"the treasure of all beauty". Tagore says: "vairagya sadhane mukti, se amar noy,"—"the liberation that is attained by renunciation is not for me"; I feel the embrace of freedom in thousandfold bonds of delight." He wants to keep the

⁴ Future Poetry.

⁵ Ibid.

doors of the senses open and feel through them the universal delight.

So did Kabir sing a few centuries ago: "santo sahaja samadhi bhali"—"O holymen! spontaneous samadhi is the best". He says further, "Since I got the vision of the Lord, my consciousness does not turn inwards. No longer do I close my eyes or ears, nor do I mortify my body. With eyes open and a smile on my lips, I behold the beautiful form of the Lord everywhere. In the centre of all forms stands the Formless, yet ineffable is the beauty of the "Form".⁶

To realise the universal beauty and also to see the Supreme as the All-Beautiful through the normal activities of the senses may be regarded as the highest experience of beauty.

One has also to bear in mind the fact that all men always keep the doors of their senses open, and yet all do not have the vision of the divine beauty. There is needed a preparation, a sadhana, to perceive it.

Leaving aside the highest aspect of the experience of beauty one or two instances may be related here to help one to understand the nature of the experience of beauty.

The first is an experience of Tagore during his childhood. A private school was run for the children of the Tagore-family. Among the subjects taught anatomy was also included. One day, the teacher of anatomy brought the bone of a human hand isolated from the human skeleton for the lesson. Tagore felt terribly shocked at the sight of the bone unrelated to a human body: He could not see it except as an organic part. Isolated from its natural place and function it appeared meaningless and was ugly.

6 *Ankha na mundu, kan na rundhu,*

Kaya kashta na dharub

Khule nayan me has has dekhun

Sundar rupa niharun

Sabahin murata bich amurata

murata ke balihari

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Another experience of Tagore may be cited in his own words: "One day I was out in a boat on the Ganges. It was a beautiful evening in autumn. The sun had just set; the silence of the sky was full to the brim with ineffable peace and beauty. The vast expanse of water was without a ripple, mirroring all the changing shades of the sunset glow. Miles and miles of a desolate sandbank lay like a huge amphibious reptile of some antediluvian age, with its scales glistening in shining colours. As our boat was silently gliding by the precipitous river-bank, riddled with the nest-holes of a colony of birds, suddenly a big fish leapt up to the surface of the water and then disappeared, displaying on its body all the colours of the vanishing sky. It drew aside for a moment the many coloured screen behind which there was a silent world full of joy of life. It came up from the depths of its mysterious dwelling with a beautiful dancing motion and added its own music to the silent symphony of the dying day. I felt as if I had a friendly greeting from an alien world in its own language, and it touched my heart with a flash of gladness. Then suddenly the man at the helm exclaimed with a distinct note of regret, 'Ah, what a big fish!' He saw the fish through the veil of his desire and so could not get the whole truth of it."⁷ A beautiful river to a painter's view is not the same as it is to a thirsty man.

But what is the meaning of the experience of beauty? What does a man mean when he says: this thing is beautiful.

Words like 'beauty', 'art', 'poetry', are very difficult to define, though one feels what they mean and experience their action in oneself. Very often definitions fail to give the true idea of the thing defined.

Beauty is recognised, rather, by an instinct, a spontaneous intuition in man,—there is an inner eye that sees beauty. But all men do not perceive beauty in the same form or object.

7. Sadhana.

If the inner eye is not open, if the instinct is not active then beauty remains unperceived. That is what makes Wordsworth complain: "The world is too much with us." We, are so engrossed in the outer and material aspect of our life, its needs, cares and preoccupations that we lose sight of the gift of beauty.

Something about beauty may be known by finding out how it acts on men. Suppose one says: "beauty captivates me",—then he is feeling the attraction and perhaps the charm of it without the perception of true beauty. Lord Vishnu is said to have assumed the form of the fatal charmer, Mohini, to deceive the titans. When one is enchanted or enthralled by a form then something like a spell is cast upon him, if almost seems as if one is caught into a net like a helpless victim.

That is not the nature of the experience of pure beauty. When one feels: "beauty liberates me, beauty raises me to the Infinite", then he has come in contact with the real thing. True beauty frees the soul from all self-regarding reactions, desires and impulses; it gives another view of the self and the world, and may reveal an aspect of the

Divine, may inspire one to unconditional self-giving, may enable one to perceive the play of infinite delight as beauty.

These various grades of the experience of beauty show that beauty is relative; it can be arranged in a hierarchy.

But what is the content of the experience of beauty? When a man says, "this thing is beautiful", he means; I feel this object rhythmic, it is well proportioned, its parts are harmoniously set, it is as it should be. Or perhaps that is not the correct way of putting it, for a machine well mad» might satisfy those conditions—and though one may find a machine beautiful, yet it seems so mechanical, too utilitarian, too dry. The experience may be put in this way: "My inner soul and my nature both are attracted by this object which has spontaneous harmony". Generally in a thing

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that is felt as beautiful one wants to say that the inner truth which is trying to manifest itself in the object or form has! succeeded in its objective; the truth in it is expressed there without distortion or diminution,—there is here a perfect accord between the inner truth or reality and the outer form. Thus beauty is the quality of an object or a form, which gives to the subjective consciousness that perceives it the sense of harmony, of perfect proportion, of appropriateness, a feeling, of attraction. It can be said that at some unforgettable moment or condition, the relation between the two, subject and object, becomes so special, so unique that it satisfies the thirst for beauty in the heart.

One may question: Is there thirst for beauty in man? The answer is: Yes; though ordinarily, such a need is not perceived yet unknown and unexpressed the need for beauty is always there in man. Man is an ignorant creature and in a world of disharmony, division and conflict, yet in his heart of hearts there is a faith that in the centre of this vast dynamic universe, self-existent harmony is at work, a harmony that so satisfies him that even a glimpse of it makes him feel as if the very purpose of creation were fulfilled, that the whole labour of the Cosmos was justified.

Beauty is the language of the all-pervading delight of existence calling man to itself. Experience of beauty may be said to be the direct proof of the unity of all being and of the presence of the all-pervading delight which spills itself constantly into two jets of beauty and delight. And this delight can manifest itself even in inscient Matter to a soul encased in senses.

One can say that beauty is Nature's effort to awaken man to the universal harmony, or that beauty is a sign that Nature is not unconscious in its depth and that she waits to carry her message to man.

Sri Aurobindo defines beauty as "the intense impression the concentrated form of delight". The all-pervading Delight

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manifests at each point something unique which endows it with a special quality of beauty. Beauty may be said to be the power of the Supreme which acts when He turns 'to create the universe. There is an infinite content of beauty in the Supreme. This infinite content of beauty can find expression in a small fraction of time, is an apparently insignificant thing. Sri Aurobindo speaks about this in his poem, "In Horis Eternum". He says that the perception of this eternal beauty can occupy "a moment mere". There can be instantaneous perception of beauty 'in a touch', 'in a smile'. Outwardly it may be something very insignificant but it is charged with burden of That which is behind all forms. The human soul through the senses catches not merely the vibration of the form but that which is behind.

The experience of beauty can be independent of any outer equipment, ornamentation, or environment; the subjective state alone of the individual can make the form beautiful.

Sri Aurobindo clarifies the nature of the experience of beauty and its highest seeking :

" When it (the soul) can get the touch of this universal absolute beauty, this soul of beauty, this sense of its

revelation in any slightest or greatest thing, the beauty of a flower, a form, the beauty and power of a character, an action, an event, a human life, an idea, a stroke of the brush or the chisel or a scintillation of the mind, the colours of a sunset or the grandeur of the tempest, it is then that the sense of beauty in us is really, powerfully, entirely satisfied. It is in truth seeking, as in religion, for the Divine, the All-Beautiful in man, in nature, in life, in thought, in art; for God is Beauty and Delight hidden in the variation of his masks and forms. When fulfilled in our growing sense and knowledge of beauty and delight in beauty and our power for beauty, we are able to identify ourselves in soul with this Absolute and Divine in all the forms and activities of the world and shape and image of our inner and our outer life in the highest image,

we can perceive and embody of the all-Beautiful, then the aesthetic being in us who was born for this end, has fulfilled himself and risen to his divine consummation. To find highest beauty is to find God; to reveal, to embody, to create as we say, highest beauty is to bring out of our souls the living image and power of God."⁸

SOME VIEWS ON BEAUTY

Even though beauty is everywhere there is room for hierarchy in it. Sri Aurobindo says : "All is from one" point of view beautiful ; but all is not reduced to a single level. All things can be seen as having divine beauty but some things have more divine beauty than others."

And this scale of beauty does not hold good only for one: who appreciates beauty but it applies to the artist as well; " In the Artist's vision too there can be gradations, a hierarchy of values. Appelle's grapes deceived the birds that came to peck at them but there was more aesthetic content in *Zens*. of Phidias, a greater content of consciousness and therefore Ananda to express and fill in the essential principle of beauty, even though the essence of beauty may be realised perhaps with equal aesthetic perfection by either artist in either theme."

The creations of art do not all proceed from one plane of consciousness; different artists create from different levels, from the physical and vital attraction, to pure devotion or aesthetic perception, reaction to shocks of life, attachment to an ideal, play of creative imagination. This ladder of creative impulse might give us different levels of the experience of beauty. We will take a few examples at random.

Byron writes : "Who can view the ripened rose nor seek to wear it? " In this line we find the irresistible attraction which beauty exerts on the human heart. But it also

⁸ Human Cycle, P. 178 ,

expresses the most common reaction of the desire-soul, -the *Kamanamaya purusha* -to the experience of beauty. Byron here represents the ardent cry of the vital being in man for the possession of beauty. Coupled with the experience of beauty is the tragic vein of disappointment and a justification of the possessive impulse.

In Shelly's experience of beauty there is an ethereal and mystic strain. Shelly and Keats are like caged birds trying to escape from the imprisonment of human limitations, beating ineffectively their wings against the bars. But their perception has great truth and power; they stress the need for reaching out to the transcendent beauty.

Shelly writes :

I can give not what men call love;
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above,

And the Heavens reject not;
The desire of the moth for the star,
 of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?

Shelly's experience differs from that of Byron; it is more subtle, more delicate, suffused with elements of psychic beauty. It moves on a different plane. The poet admits that he cannot give to his beloved "what men call love"; there is an implied fling on that love; but he offers instead a far greater thing, the worship which the human heart offers to the Divine and which the supreme does not reject. There is a thirst in the human heart for perfection unattained. Not only is it present in the human heart but even in the insignificant moth there is an attraction for the light of the stars and even the dark night holds in her heart the immortal hope for the Dawn. From the world of sorrows the man feels devotion for the Divine.

Here there is no distracted cry of the human vital being

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to possess beauty. There is instead an ardent aspiration to offer his devotion to the object of love which the poet feels. akin to the Divine.

Keats wrote those immortal lines :

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all
Ye know on earth and all ye need to know."

Beauty is one with Reality. But Keats found the world far from being beautiful. So, he burst forth into a magnificent and fiery aspirations :

" - - - But cannot I create?
Cannot I form? Cannot I fashion forth
Another world? another universe
To overhear and crumble this to naught?
Where is another chaos? Where " 9

In the white heat of his intense impulse the poet did m perhaps, realise that one chaos was quite enough; and if any scheme of perfection is to be realised it is by a transformation of this world, by man's ascent to the attainment of Beauty which is Truth and by a descent of the Truth which would. bring beauty into life.

There is here the intense expression of human need for perfection, for beauty; the creative impulse in the poet sees the possibility of perfection in life on earth.

Wordsworth perceived the presence of a spirit behind the forms of Nature; he received intimations from the world of immortality. His experience of beauty is largely in the field of Nature; to him Nature is living. Outside Nature- particularly in human life-he was very much disappointed. He did not feel beauty in life, in action or character as he felt in Nature. He wished man to identify himself with the presence that pervades Nature. He describes his experience in one poem thus:

" These beauteous forms
through a long absence, have not been to me

As is a landscape to a blind man's eye;
But oft in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet
Felt along the blood, felt along the heart"

The experience of beauty of Nature could influence not only his inner being but almost his nervous system and the body.

At the same time, it seemed to open the third eye of knowledge in his consciousness and illumine the world with its light and transform it.

He says: "while with an eye made quiet by the power of harmony and the deep power of joy we see into the life of things."¹⁰

This vision of "the life of things" endows the forms with universal beauty.

Tulsidas describes the love at first sight between Rama and Sita thus:

*"Lochan Maga Ramahi Ura Ani
Dine Palaka Kapata Sayani"*

"Bringing Rama to her heart along the path of the sight, Sita closed the doors with her winking."

The aspect of beauty expressed here differs so much from the charm of mere external form. The poet does not describe here the beauty of either Rama or Sita, or the attraction they felt. The love that Sita felt for Rama seems so spontaneous, so much like recognition of the souls for each other. It seems as if Sita took Rama to her heart through the path of her sight and then closed not merely her eyes but the doors of her heart, so that there was no chance for anyone else to enter there. And the suggestion- the Dhvani-indicates that Rama could not go out of her

¹⁰ Tintern Abbey

heart even if he wanted to. There is no question of why there was love. The experience of beauty carries everything before it; there is no logical cause, no explanation. Beauty is beyond the net of logic and explanation. Here there is no question as there is in the case of Shelly about the acceptance of the pure offering of love. Here is the self-poised serene joy of attainment, a feeling of fulfilment of the experience of beauty.

Beauty acts spontaneously and without any self-regarding motive.

Bhavabhuti describes it in one of his dramas:

"Vikasati hi patangasyodaye pundarikam"

"The Lotus blooms at sunrise" why? Because there' is between *them*-*"Antarah Kopi hetu"*—"some inner, mysterious affinity". The attraction of the bee for the flower is natural in a certain sense. But the sunlight works on the flower on almost a different plane, their relation is on a higher plane and nearer the true expression of beauty. From that absolute love for the Divine as beautiful came the attitude of unconditional self-surrender known as Madhur-Bhava.

Tagore's sense of beauty is keen, colourful, universal and mystic. Beauty to him is unseizable; though eternally alluring beauty is the messenger from the unknown, at times, from the Beloved. But beauty is unknowable and unattainable in life here. He calls her "*Bidieshini*"—"a. foreign lady" whom yet the heart knows—"ami chini"—"I know".

In his poem on 'Spring' he asks:

"By what path did you make your way to the earth, O traveller!" *"Tumi kon pathe je yele"* - "I did not see your

coming — "*ami dekhi nai tomare.*" "You came upon my vision suddenly like a dream at the edge of the forest." -
—"*Hatha swapan Samo dekha dele, Boneri Kinare.*"

His 'Urvashi', an ode to the spirit of Beauty, is one of the finest poems in literature. Says he, "you are not a

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mother, nor a daughter, nor a housewife, O Urvashi, In- habitant of heaven !" Beauty has no duty, she need not fulfil any social function, she comes into being full blown, she has eternal youth ! " *Naho mata, naho kanya, naho vadhu, he nandan vashini, Urvashi.*"

When she dances her ecstatic dance in the assembly of the Gods, the waves of the oceans keep harmony with her steps, and the green sari of the earth moves into rhythmic waves of ecstasy, the stars fallen from her necklace deviate from their orbits in the sky and suddenly the human heart beats in unison with her steps, and man forgets himself. Thus the dance of Beauty pervades every thing in the universe, heaven, ocean, earth, man, all is in rhythm with her dance.

In the last two stanzas the poet puts the question: "Will the ancient day when Urvashi walked on earth, ever return? The heart of the whole earth is pining for her, crying for her."

"No !" replies the poet, "Urvashi will never return." The poet calls her "Nishthura"-cruel-and "Badhira"-deaf — for she does not respond to the call of the earth. In the last stanza he says: "The moon of glory, Urvashi, has set and she is now a dweller on the mountains where the sun sets,—"*asta gechhe she gaurava shashi, astachalvasini, Urvashi.*"

In some of his other poems like "Balaka" while trying to visualise the goal of the journey of humanity the poet concludes with a note of agnosticism. "Whither ? is the question and the answer is "not here, not here, somewhere else, some other wherever." The beautiful vision of the poem emphasises the 'act of flight', not its destination.

The overtones of Tagore's poems are even more important than his expression. He is able to see the vision of the universal in the particular, of the subtle in the superficial, of the profound in the simple.

To Sri Aurobindo beauty is the highest aspect of the Divine, and his faith is that divine beauty not only can but

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shall walk on earth; "Beauty shall walk celestial on earth"¹¹ Three of his long poems "Love and Death", "Urvashi" and "Savitri" deal with the subject of love and therefore are concerned with beauty. The whole outlook breaches' the spirit of one who not only knows true beauty, but lives in secure intimacy with it. To him has come the vision of the universe, harmonious and beautiful. The beauty that one finds in his work is universal, its expression is impersonal and yet it is the most intense. Beauty, in his view, is not only of the intellectual plane, nor merely of the life plane, though he is familiar with the beauty of those planes - but it also belongs to the overhead. But because it is of the overhead origin it is not abstract, and airy-nothing, it is on the contrary much more concrete. This can be very easily seen in his epic 'Savitri', where on four different occasions Savitri, the princess is described; these descriptions are surcharged with overhead beauty and yet all of them are convincingly concrete and intense, full of colour of life.

Sri Aurobindo does not get, as do some other great creators of beauty, intermittent glimpses of this supreme beauty; he seems to have his permanent station on those heights. And he sees and utters from those heights, the heights of intuitive vision, of inspiration, and overmind influx. All is securely possessed, truly felt and effectively expressed-expression that is, in his own word, "inevitable."

DIFFERENT STANDARDS IN AESTHETICS

In Sanskrit literature a distinction is made between creations of the Laukika mind and those of the Seer, i.e.

Arsha. In Bhavabhuti's Uttararama Charita we find:

Laukikanam tu sadhunam artham yak anuvartate

Rishinam punaradyanam vacham arthonudhavati

11. Savitri

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"In the case of ordinary writers the speech follows the intent, the meaning, while in that of the ancient seers, the Rishis, meaning runs after their speech."

This is an admission of overhead inspiration as a superior power of creation than ordinary mental intelligence. It also means that the creator is not a mere thinker but a 'Seer' or 'hearer' of the truth.

Rules of ordinary criticism in Sanskrit do not apply to these 'Arsha'—overhead-creations. In Greek literature also a divine afflatus is held responsible for great creation. Even today, after so much work by new psychology, the critics admit that the roots of creative power of the artist are mysterious. C. Day Lewis in his book 'The Poetic Image' says:

"It is a veiled vision, a partial intuition communicated to him from the depth of human heart. If he needs mystery, the last mystery is there, and of all that proceeds from man's heart, nothing is more mysterious than virtue, the disinterested movements of moral fervour and intellectual curiosity, the spontaneous springs of Mercy, Pity, Peace and Love."

Experience of Rasa gives delight and so, very often Rasa and delight—ananda—are regarded as equivalent. But there is a subtle difference. For the experience of Rasa— aesthetic enjoyment, a subject, an "I", is necessary. In the experience of delight, the subject, the I, may be completely dissolved or disappeared. Delight can be self-existent, without any outer support. Whereas for Rasa some outer support is needed. Even in the subjective aesthetic enjoyment there is." needed a double action in consciousness, on one side a detachment from the experience and on the other an identification with it—which is the result of unity with the cosmic spirit. One identifies himself with the spirit of the poem, with a character in a drama or a story, and at the same time a detachment keeps all personal elements aside. The individual out- grows the limits of his ego, enlarges his being, and has the

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joy of the universal consciousness. That is why Vishwanath the Sanskrit critic, speaks of the delight or Rasa E "*Brahmananda sahodara*" "of the same nature as the delight of the Brahman."

The meaning of the word 'Rasa' can be easily grasped if we compare it with the liquid flow that keeps the tree alive. That sap is the 'Rasa' of the tree's life. The life of the tree depends upon it. It is the same sap that transforms itself into flower and ripens into fruit. We get the taste, the Rasa, I through the fruit. The Rasa is between them —"*Antarah Kopi hetu*"—"some inner, mysterious affinity." The attraction of the bee for the flower is natural in a certain sense. But the sunlight works on the flower on almost a different plane, their relation is on a higher plane and nearer the true expression of beauty. From that absolute love for the Divine as beautiful, came the attitude of unconditional self-surrender known as Madhur-Bhava.

OVERMIND

"At the source of this Intuition we discover a superconscious cosmic Mind in direct contact with the Supramental Truth-Consciousness, an original intensity determinant of all mental energies,—not Mind as we know it, but an

Over- mind that covers as with the wide wings of some creative Oversoul this whole lower hemisphere of knowledge-ignorance, links it with that greater Truth-Consciousness while yet at the same time with its brilliant golden lid it veils the face of the greater Truth from our sight, intervening with its flood of infinite possibilities as at once an obstacle and a passage in our seeking of the spiritual law of our existence, its highest aim, its secret Reality." It "connects and divides the supreme Knowledge and the cosmic Ignorance."

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Such an ascent of consciousness, it is often feared, would mean renunciation of, or at least indifference to, life. That such an ascent to a higher consciousness must mean a negative condition is a current but mistaken idea. On the contrary, such a rise brings out an intensification of the powers of nature. So, the power of aesthetic enjoyment also increases in intensity, extension and subtlety. A rise in consciousness brings about a state of ease and serenity-it is based on a universal calmness and ease.

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APPENDIX I

AESTHESIS- HIGHER THAN MENTAL

Aesthetic enjoyment and perception of beauty are generally limited by man's present consciousness, that is to say, by the mental, the vital and the physical fields of consciousness. Man has believed in the sovereignty of Reason, but he has found that even at best Reason is only an "enlightener and a minister", it is not the master. The societies that tried to set up Reason as the governor of life found that it could not lead man to perfection and that even the order which Reason attempted to establish in the collective life was only provisional. Many more things than Reason are needed for the integral fulfilment of man's life. For instance he needs art and beauty.

Is the seeking for beauty, the impulse to create, rational? The story of Beauty and the Beast illustrates the irrational, and yet the irresistible, attraction of beauty and its ennobling power.

The first approach of man to these things'— art and beauty - is through his crude impulse for possessions, or for the satisfaction of his animal impulses. Still the transforming power of beauty changes the beast in man into "a noble human being."

But beauty is not confined to man's present state of nature; aesthesis is not merely of the mental or emotional or vital level, it extends also to overhead levels.' In the multi-dimensionality of consciousness are included those overhead dimensions.

We saw that in the beginning the seeking for beauty

¹ For a study of this subject refer to Prof. Gokaka's series in the "Mother India", 1953. Also refer to Sri Aurobindo's Letters on Savitri.

is not rational, rather it is an impulse, an instinct which seeks satisfaction and enjoyment. It seeks the joy of creating.

This crude beginning, Sri Aurobindo calls the "infra- rational" stage of the aesthetic being. Then when reason begins to act in man it tries to regulate this crude infra- rational impulse; it organises the knowledge of the techniques of the arts, and lays down laws for the guidance of artists. This marks the Rational stage of the aesthetic development. While accepting the great contribution of Reason to the development of the arts, it was always known that the highest creations of art do not owe their origin to the intellect. Art can be intellectual but then it is not great art. During this Rational stage of development the suprarational has been sending down flashes and sparks, illuminations and intuitions.

Sri Aurobindo's great contribution to aesthetics is his plea for raising human aesthesis to a level of consciousness which he calls "overhead". He has shown that it is possible, and now necessary, to raise the centre of artistic creation to "Overhead" levels of consciousness and create from there. He also points out that these "over- head " levels have always existed and have acted intermittently. They have been not only influencing but now and then penetrating into various fields of artistic creation.

Some illustrations from poetry, which Sri Aurobindo characterised as due to the overhead influx, may be cited.

The following lines from Keats :

" Solitary thinkings such as dodge
Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
Then leave the naked brain. "

The expression is charged with a perception that indicates the overhead origin.

Or, the lines from Wordsworth :

" Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone."

The experience embodied in these lines and the expression is characteristic of overhead consciousness. The intangible fields of sleep waft to the poet tangible " winds ", this concretising of the subtle or the intangible is a power of overhead levels.

In Sanskrit literature the distinction between creations of the mind and those of overhead levels was known and recognised : the first kind of works were called " Laukika" and the second " Arsha ". This finds expression in Bhava bhuti's drama, the Uttararamacharita :

Laukikanam tu sadhunam artham vak anu vartate

Rishinam punaradyanam vacham arthonudhavati

" In the case of ordinary writers the speech-the expression-follows their intention, the meaning,-while in that of the original Rishis the meaning runs after their speech." That is to say, the expression of overhead inspiration comes spontaneously without any mental activity, and it acquires its intellectual meaning subsequently. Thus, "voyaging through seas of thought, alone" is concrete expression of a glimpse of overhead level.

"I saw Eternity the other night
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
All calm as it was bright,
And around beneath it, Time, in hours, days, years
Driven by the spheres,
Like a vast shadow moved in which the world
And all her train were hurled. "

Vaughan

Milton's ;

" These thoughts that wander through eternity."

These lines convey the overhead touch in their substance and expression.

A few lines, as samples, from Sri Aurobindo may be quoted :

" I caught for some eternal eye the sudden
Kingfisher flashing to a darkling pool."

—Savitri

Here the power of eye-sight as a universal faculty is perceived : the extraordinary keenness of the faculty of sight embodied in the kingfisher is the working of " some eternal eye."

Or

" Pranked butterflies, the conscious flowers of air."

The Poet sees the butterflies, with their wings painted in variegated colours, flying in the air as " flowers". If the butterflies were only "flowers", they would have been lowered from the consciousness of insects to that of the vegetable kingdom. But he speaks of them as "conscious flowers" that belong to the air, as ordinary flowers to the land.

" A foam-leap travelling from the waves of bliss
Has changed my heart and changed the earth around :
" And sunlight grows a shadow of thy hue

Because of change within me by thy look. "

—Savitri

The sea of bliss - of infinite Ananda, has created this world. " A foam-leap " from that ocean, in the form of Savitri, has so changed the heart of Satyavan that now the whole world appears to be a shadow of Savitri, the incarnation of supreme bliss.

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APPENDIX II

OVERHEAD AESTHESIS

Sri Aurobindo pleads that " an evolutionary ascent o all the activities of mind and life is not impossible."¹

The importance of the planes of consciousness beyond Mind for spiritual realisation is well known in India, but their dynamic nature and their importance to the life of man is not known. In the phase of evolution that is now approaching the need for clarifying the functions and powers of the Overhead consciousness is all the more urgent. Sri Aurobindo shows that all the overhead planes are not to be classed together, there are gradations of them.

"These gradations may be summarily described as a series of sublimations of the consciousness through Higher Mind, Illumined Mind and Intuition into overmind and beyond it; there is a succession of self-transmutations at the summit of which lies the Supermind or Divine Gnosis"².

It is possible to mistake these gradations for heightened operations of mental faculties. Sri Aurobindo warns against it: "They are not merely methods, way of knowing or faculty or power of cognition; they are domains of being, grades of substance and energy of the spiritual being, fields of existence which are each a level of the universal consciousness—Force constituting and organizing itself into a higher status."³

" In the descent of these higher grades upon us it is this greater light, force essence of being and consciousness, energy of delight that enters into mind, life, body, change and repair their diminished and diluted and incapable substance, convert it into its own higher and stronger dynamics of spirit and intrinsic form and force of reality."⁴

¹ Letters

² Life Divine

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

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Would these gradations automatically succeed when they descend into Mind, Life and Body ? Sri Aurobindo explains the method of their working : " These higher forces are not in their descent immediately all-powerful as they would naturally be in their own plane of action and in their own medium. In the evolution of Matter they have to enter into a foreign and inferior medium and work upon it, meet with unreceptiveness or blind refusal of the Ignorance, experience the negation and obstruction of the Inconscience."⁵

The problem is to open, if possible, consciously, to these higher planes, establish a contact, and receive without mixture of the lower nature the Overhead creation. Though it is usual to regard these planes as mystical, it is known that their powers have been acting intermittently in man through history : man has been familiar with them in his artistic creations. Almost all the ancient human cultures knew about them.

We will take up the Overhead powers and give some idea of each in Sri Aurobindo's words : The Higher Mind:

" The poetic intelligence is quite different; it is the mind and its vision moving on the wings of imagination akin to the intellect proper but lifted above it. The Higher Mind is a spiritual plane."

"In the Higher Mind we are aware of a sealike downpour of masses of a spontaneous knowledge which assumes the nature of Thought but has a different character from the process of thought to which we are accustomed."

" The Higher Mind is the first plane where one becomes aware of the Self, the One everywhere and knows and sees things through an elevated thought-power and comprehensive mental sight not illumined by any of the intense or upper lights but as in a large strong and clear day-light. "

5 Life Divine

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"If we accept the Vedic image of the Sun of Truth-an image which in this experience becomes a reality, we may compare the action of the Higher Mind to a compact and steady Sunshine."⁶

One characteristic of the Higher Mind is " totality of truth-seeing at a single view."

Illumined Mind : " Beyond this Truth-Thought (i. e. Higher Mind) we can distinguish a greater illumination instinct with an increased power and intensity and driving force, a luminosity of nature of truth-sight with thought formation as a minor and dependent activity."

" It has an intense lustre, a splendour and illumination of the spirit: a play of lightnings of spiritual truth and power breaks from above into the consciousness and adds to the calm and wide enlightenment - a fiery ardour of realisation and a rapturous ecstasy of knowledge. A downpour of inwardly visible light very usually envelops this action."

"If we accept the Vedic image of the Sun of Truth we may compare the energy of the Illumined Mind to an outpouring of massive lightnings of flaming Sun-Stuff."

" The poetry of the Illumined Mind is usually full of play of lights and colours, brilliant and striking in phrase, for illumination makes the Truth vivid, it acts usually by a luminous rush,... Illumined Mind sometimes gets rid of its trappings, but even then it always keeps a sort of lustrous- ness of robe which is its characteristic." ⁷

Example: "I saw eternity the other night

Like a great ring of pure and endless light
All calm as it was bright,
And around beneath it. Time, in hours, days,
years
Driven by the spheres,

6 Life Divine

7. Life Literature, Yoga

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Like a vast shadow moved in which the world
And all her train were hurled"

Vaughan

Intuition: "Still beyond can be met a yet greater power of the Truth-force, an intimate and exact Truth-vision, Truth-thought, Truth-Sense, Truth-feeling, Truth-action to which we can give in a special sense the name of Intuition. For though we have applied that word to a supra intellectual way of knowing yet what we actually know

as intuition is only a special movement of self-existent knowledge."

"Intuition has four-fold power. A power of revelatory Truth-seeing, a power of inspiration or Truth-hearing, a power of Truth-touch or immediate seizing of significance, a power of true and automatic discrimination of the orderly and exact relation of truth to truth."

"The intuition is usually a lightning flash showing up a single spot or plot of ground or scene with an entire and miraculous completeness of vision to the surprised ecstasy of the inner eye; its rhythm has a decisive inevitable sound which leaves nothing essential unheard, but very commonly is embodied in a single stroke." 9

8 Life Divine

9 Letters on Savitri

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APPENDIX III OVERMIND

"At the source of this Intuition we discover a super-conscious cosmic Mind in direct contact with the Supramental Truth-Consciousness, and original intensity determinant of all mental energies,—not Mind as we know but an Overmind that covers as with the wide wings of not some creative Oversoul this whole lower hemisphere of" knowledge-ignorance, links it with that greater Truth-Consciousness while yet at the same time with its brilliant golden Lid it veils the face of the greater Truth from our sight, intervening with its flood of infinite possibilities as at once an obstacle and a passage in our seeking of the spiritual law of our existence, its highest aim, its secret Reality." It "connects and divides the supreme Knowledge and the cosmic Ignorance."¹

"The Overmind is not strictly a transcendental consciousness that epithet would more accurately apply to the supramental and the Sachchidanand Consciousness though it looks up to the Transcendental and may receive something from it and though it does transcend the ordinary human mind and in its full and native self-power, when it does not lean down and become part of mind, is super-conscious to us. It is more properly a cosmic consciousness, even the very base of the cosmic as we perceive, understand and feel it. It stands behind every particular in the cosmos and is the source of all our mental, vital or physical actualities and possibilities which are diminished and degraded derivations and variations from it."²

¹ Life divine

² Letters on Savitri -

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"In its nature and law the Overmind is a delegate of the Supermind Consciousness, its delegate to the Ignorance."³

"If we regard the powers of the Reality as so many Godheads, we can say that the Overmind releases a million Godheads into action, each empowered to create its own world, each world capable of relation, communication and interplay with others."

"Overmind Consciousness is global in its cognition and can hold any number of seemingly fundamental differences together in a reconciling vision."

"Even to what is discordant it gives a place in the system of cosmic concordances—discords become a part of a vast harmony therefore of beauty. It feels Oneness, sympathy, love for all—sees the face of the Divine every-

where."

"The Overmind is a principle of cosmic Truth and a vast and endless catholicity is its very spirit."

"Overmind is a creator of truths, not of illusions or falsehoods; what is worked out in any given overmental energism or movement is the truth of the Aspect, Power, Idea, Force, Delight which is liberated into independent action, the truth of the consequences of its reality in that independence".

"Overmind is concerned predominantly not with absolutes, but with what might be called the dynamic potentials or pragmatic truths of Reality."

"In the Overmind we have the first firm foundation of the experience of universal beauty, a universal love, a universal delight."

"Overmind, has. ..greater aesthesis and when it sees objects, it sees in them what the mind cannot see."⁴

³ Life Divine

⁴ Letters Vol. III

"As yet there is no Overmind language created Overmind, used by Overmind beings."

"Overmind has to take mind, life and Matter as its medium and field, work under their dominant condition accept their fundamental law and method."

"Overmind has to use a language which has been made by mind, not by itself." " It can only strain and intensify this medium as much as possible for its own uses, but not change this fundamental - or characteristically mental law and method."⁵

"It has to observe them and do what it can to heighten, deepen and enlarge."

"It is still more difficult to say anything very tangible about Overmind aesthesis. What happens at present is that something comes down and accepts to work under the law of the mind and with a mixture of the mind and it must be judged by the laws and standards of the mind. It brings in new tone, new colours, new elements, but it does not change radically as yet the stuff of the consciousness with which we labour."⁶

"If we look carefully and subtly at things we may see that the greatest lines or passages in the world's literature have the Over-mind touch or power. They bring with them an atmosphere, a profound and extraordinary light, an amplitude of wing which, if the Overmind would not only intervene but descend, seize wholly and transform, would be the first glimpse of a poetry, higher, larger, deeper and more consistently absolute than any which the human past has been able to give us. An evolutionary ascent of all the activities of mind and life is not impossible."

Some examples of Overmind poetry,—or poetry carrying the Overmind touch :

⁵ Letters Vol. III.

⁶ Letters on Savitri

I . " The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the echoes through the mountains throng;
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep."⁷

" In the last line there is something of the Overmind

substance expressed not directly but through the
highest intuitive consciousness, and because it is
not direct the Overmind rhythm is absent."⁸

" Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone." ⁷

" Those thoughts that wander through eternity." ⁹

"We can feel perhaps the spirit of the universe
feeling and hearing, it may be said, the vast
oceanic stillness and the cry of the cuckoo"

"Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides"

Or it may enter again into Vyasa's

"A void and dreadful forest ringing with the
cricket's cry"

" *Vanam pratibhayam sunyam*
Jhillikagananinaditam "

or remember its call to the soul of man

" *Anityam asukham lokam imam*
prapya bhajaswa mam "

"Thou who hast come to this transient and unhappy
world, love and worship Me." ¹⁰

7 Wordsworth

8 Sri Aurobindo

9 Milton

10 Letters Vol. III

What is sparks and flashes in other poets
in " Savitri " becomes a blaze from end to end.
"This is a sailor on the flow of time,
This is world-Matter's slow discoverer
Who, launched in his small corporeal birth,
Has learnt his craft in tiny bays of self,
But dares at last unplumbed infitudes
A voyager upon Eternity's seas."¹¹
"The Avatars have lived and died in vain,
Vain was the sage's thought, the prophet's voice
In vain is seen the upper shining way
Earth lies unchanged beneath the circling suns

The empty roses of thy hands are filled
only with their own beauty and the thrill
of a remembered clasp, and in thee glows
A heavenly jar, thy firm, deep-honied heart
New-brimming with a sweet and nectarous wine."

"A pillard ripple of gold !" ¹⁴

"Thy grief is a cry of darkness to the Light."

"Pain is the hammer of the gods to break

A dead resistance in the mortal's heart."

"Pain is the hand of Nature sculpting men to- Greatness;"

14. Vol. II, P. 69

PART V

PSYCHOLOGY

" While Tagore awakened the latent music in me, another Indian, Sri Aurobindo, brought me to religion. He opened the way to my religious consecration. Indeed, my debt to India is very great, and is due in part to Tagore and in part to Sri Aurobindo."

Gabriel Mistral

" Psychology is necessarily a subjective science and one must proceed in it from the knowledge of oneself to the knowledge of others."²

Sri Aurobindo

MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

Plea for a new approach

Man's awakening to the need of self-knowledge must have been due to various causes external as well as internal. It is possible that the round of animal desires proved insufficient to yield any real or lasting joy to man. The feeling and realization of his own imperfection and ignorance of the outer and inner world may have made him aspire for more and more knowledge of himself and the world. The want of harmony felt within himself and an intuitive need of it may have also contributed to man's spiritual awakening. To "these negative motives must be added as an incentive to self-knowledge, the eternal and irrepressible aspiration for

¹ Aryan Path, February 1947. Mr. Gabriel Mistral

² Sri Aurobindo

a state of perfection, whatever that perfection might be, enshrined in the heart of man from the beginning of history. Even the very fact of death might have goaded man to inquire into the meaning of life and being. Perhaps, while trying to make an inquiry into the nature of the world, man might have discovered that the first problem is himself. Thus he became the problem of problems. Human inquiry becomes a subjective problem, a problem of human psychology par excellence. This seems to have taken place both in the East as well as the West. " Know thyself" was the command formulated by one of the oldest Greek philosophers. "*Tameva atmanam Janatha amritasya setum*" "know verily, that self, the bridge to immortality " was uttered by the Upanishads of hoary antiquity. The attempt to acquire knowledge of the self was found to lead to psychological experiences, processes such as introspection, self-analysis and knowledge of various states of being, and of nature. For the self of man is first revealed to him in his ordinary natural, i. e. his psychological make up. In Europe as time went on, philosophical inquiry drifted away from this practical search for the self, i. e. from the field of direct psychological experiences and inquiry. It gradually came to confine itself to mere intellectual speculation and inquiry into the nature of truth and the formulation of that truth in terms of mind. Later on, it moved on to the study of Matter and Life wherein it felt the Reality could be objectively studied. In India the tendency was to formulate a philosophical system on the basis of spiritual or psychological experience. As a result, a great mass of psychological experience was gathered and came to be formulated in the various systems of Indian yogas. Yoga, in fact, can be defined as the science of inner culture. Yoga is, of course, not an automatic process; it requires the conscious participation by the individual in the, process of his self- evolution. In other words. Yoga is nothing else but

consciously practised practical psychology. It is true that there are various systems of Yoga in India but it is quite possible to arrive at a synthesis of their aims and methods if the outward forms of practices are laid aside and their psychological implications clearly understood. Such a synthesis of the principles, practices and results of the systems of Indian Yogas is a great need of the present times and is indispensable for the understanding of the Indian psychology. Sri Aurobindo's great work "On Yoga" achieves the purpose mentioned above and is an outstanding contribution to the proper study of the subject.

But the modern mind-which means European mind-is not prepared to accept the scientific nature of Indian psychology. To it all the Indian systems are empirical at their best. Modern psychology on the contrary claims to be scientific, it is supposed to be not empirical. It has got rid of the "soul" which it characterises to be a meta-physical entity in the field of psychology introduced by the old school of unscientific psychologists. Psychology has now become, or at least is trying hard to become, a natural science like physics or chemistry. This effort at becoming an "objective" science capable of yielding experimental results, verifiable by anybody by means of outer and physical evidence, seems to inflict on modern psychology a double disadvantage. With all its efforts and in spite of the great contribution made by modern psychology to the knowledge of man we must frankly confess that it is far from the exactitude of objective sciences like physics and chemistry. So far as these sciences are concerned their basis is Matter and there is universal agreement with regard to the methods of investigation and the aim. But the same cannot be said of modern psychology. Even today, after fifty years of progress, it is divided into rival schools with diametrically opposite standpoints such as "behaviourism" and "introspection" or "gastalism" and "Horism" which

shows that modern psychology is as yet far from being a "natural science". One cannot say that these differences correspond to various 'theories' current in physics or chemistry because the differences are with regard to the very basic principles.

The question we have first to consider is whether methods of research applicable to physical sciences could be at all applied to the study of psychology. One, who accepts the strictly materialistic basis of human psychology shall have to wait, perhaps, till he is able to determine the weight of a "thought" and calculate the potential energy of an "Impulse." In fact the study of psychology can hardly be taken up seriously unless one decides the question of fundamental importance, namely: "Is matter or spirit its basis?" What is the origin of man's inner being, of his psychology? The question might be put differently: "Who is it that experiences all the multifarious phenomena in man?" Where, i. e. in what medium do these take place? Do they occur in inert Matter only-or in the spirit, in consciousness? Do they form the field of experience of a soul, a spirit?

It is true, modern psychology fought shy of and deported "the soul" out of its domain but then it is finding it hard to do without what it calls, a "subject", an individual, "a personality". Here is what a great scholar of psychology and philosophy, the late Prof. R. D. Ranade, Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy, Allahabad University, has to say on the subject: "Modern writers on psychology give no attention to Rational Psychology; they consider it either useless or metaphysical." As Prof. James Ward points out, modern psychologists vie with each other in writing a psychology "Ohne Seele". The ancient conception of 'Soul' has evaporated and in its place we find a "Self" which is-regarded as a "Centre of Interest", and which is supposed to be generated when a new interest

springs up and destroyed as soon as the interest terminates. The impasse into which such a view brings the

psychologists may be realised at a glance when we consider that some of them have been forced to recognise the continuance of such a bloodless self even after the death of the body and in place of the old world view of an immortal soul we find the idea of a " centre of interest " which survives (!) after the death of the body when the interest is not fulfilled in the person's life-time. The old-world view, as in Plato so in the Upanishads, planted itself squarely on the recognition of the *Soul as an entity* which was free to take on *£L* body as it was also free to go away and transmigrate. Whatever the limitations of such a view, it was a view which one could at least understand; but the modern conception of an anemic " centre of interest " which could continue to exist after the death of the body, passes beyond the comprehension of anybody except a metaphysician who makes such concessions to naturalism as to make an entire ferrago of his philosophical ideas."³

Thought is explained as the result of brain discharge of the nerves, but it is still a standing question in modern psychology whether thought is a finer and subtler state of Matter or of Life or of Mind. George Russel (A. E.) in his book " The Candle of Vision " reports certain dream experiences of his own and asks the question about the process of their preservation in memory. There seem to be insuperable difficulties in accepting only the materialistic basis of this faculty.

Another difficulty in adopting a strictly scientific method. in psychology is that an " impersonal " and " purely objective " observation of psychological phenomena is not possible. These phenomena occur to " some one ", they are " somebody's ". It would be too much to claim objectivity

³A constructive survey of Upanishadic philosophy, P. 129

for these experiences when even physical science is now finding that its observations are no longer strictly objective. It is argued that one can study psychological phenomena by observing the outer behaviour or by the method of personal narrative as in psycho-analysis. But these devices, even. at their best, can hardly claim certainty and finality with regard to the knowledge so acquired; for the outer behaviour hardly gives the real or the whole clue to the inner psychological states and movements; and personal narrative cannot give a complete picture of all the inner movement because men are not conscious of all their inner movements.

A formidable difficulty in applying any outer method to this field is that the whole field of investigation is complex and is constantly changing, and the instruments of investigation themselves are elastic and varying. In experiments or investigations in physical science the changes in the field are brought about by the observing subject and the physical elements change only in response to outer action and even then the changes occurring within its own structure are not conscious. But in psychology the very field of investigation can participate in the investigation and in the changes that occur in its own self. Not only the "observed " but the " observer " also is constantly changing.

The latest development in physical sciences tends to show that mind, and therefore subjectivity, cannot be altogether kept out from the field of physical sciences. In fact, after all the scientific observations have been made and the- proofs given, it is the mind that is at last called in to make the final choice of the conclusions. The same holds good for psychological research in a much more pronounced manner. One more difficulty in using methods of physical science in psychology is that the conditions for conducting the experiment are not known. It is high time that some methods were evolved in psychology that could be universally

applied. There are many who believe in the current methods and even call them " scientific " but all the knowledge that we possess is due to an act of imaginative identification or to a sort of analogy. By. a sort of consensus of

opinion we decide upon certain " conditions " which the scientists would perhaps strongly object to and dub " unscientific ".

A still more fundamental objection to the employment of scientific methods of psychology is that these methods are merely an extension of the functioning of the human senses; therefore the generalisation arrived at would also be dependent upon the same basis.

Methods pursued by physical science have not proved adequate in explaining the structure and nature of the material world, so that its application to a field of inner research becomes far more questionable. We can legitimately even ask whether there are no other methods of studying this field of knowledge.

It is claimed that though the methods pursued in psychological investigations are not strictly physical still they aimed at systematic study. If that is the case, and if testing a so-called empirical process by practical experiments and checking up the results constitutes a "systematic study", then the Indian system of Hatha Yoga, at least, can claim to be scientific. As a matter of fact, each system of Yoga, such as Gyana, Karma, Bhakti, Tantra etc. has its own "system" which prescribes practical methods, indicates the results and supplies tests to check up the achievement.

The Indian standpoint in psychology assumes the spirit as the basis of the cosmos. It admits the waking condition of consciousness and a sub-conscious state of being even as modern psychology does. But it admits in addition, what modern psychology knows nothing about, a "super-conscious ", above the mental consciousness. Modern psychology would perhaps like to relegate the super-conscious to the

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realm of the abnormal. From the super-conscious to the realm of the abnormal. From the standpoint of view what appears abnormal is only a sign of what is to, evolve in the future. A little reflection will show that this "super-conscious " is not an isolated state but is inclusive of all it exceeds. It acts in the everyday life of individuals even in and through their waking state of consciousness. Besides this "super-conscious" finds expression in various cultural activities and attainments of the human being. The attempt here is not to make a detailed classification of the states of consciousness actual and possible to man. The intention is merely to show that what is considered " abnormal " "magical" "wonderful" " super-sensual" is not something quite remote from the field of everyday experience of men. These experiences pertain to various fields. On the physical level, we see the phenomena of faith-cure, of poison-eating and fire-walking without any undesirable consequences, and we also know of several kinds of materializations. On the plane of life we find hypnotism, telepathy, clairvoyance and other similar phenomena which have been scientifically tested and proved genuine. These faculties are an indication of the presence of the supra-physical and the possibility of its attainment. There are powers and faculties in man which give him an insight into the knowledge of the future. There are visions, premonitions and prophecies.

Over and above these faculties which are relegated generally to the supra-physical there are regular branches of human culture which require the use of and depend upon the exercise of faculties that indicate the existence of the supra-rational. Religion, astrology, poetry and plastic arts very often depend upon the action of some supra-rational faculty in man for their highest creations. The undying aspiration of the whole human race for a divine Perfection or fulfilment bears witness to the pull of the super-conscious. Intuition, inspiration and revelation

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are some of the faculties connected with the super-conscious which have found expression in various fields of human activity.

Indian psychology bases its acceptances of the " super- conscient "on concrete experiences and modern

psychology would remain poorer for the rejection of a field of experience which is open to man. To limit the field of conscious. ness, that is, the field of psychological experience which has been an ever enlarging field from the inconscient to the conscient throughout the course of evolution would, in fact, be an arbitrary act. The western view of psych logy is empirical. It also suffers from an additional grave defect : all its explanations are directed to explaining consciousness, its movements and functions in the light of the past. That is to say, it tries to explain the pre consciousness of man by its past. But it holds out no I vision for the future. In the case of Indian psychology,! on the contrary, the whole vision is directed to the future, to! either a state of liberation, or perfection or to an identity with and growth into the super-conscient.

Some of the explanations of visions and dreams given by modern psychology sound quite untenable. It is more likely that visions and dreams have an independent existence of their own on subtle planes. A. E., the Irish mystic poet, after describing a vision in which he saw everything illumined says: "people pass them (visions) by too easily saying, ' it is imagination,' as if imagination were easily explained as a problem in Euclid and was not a mystery. He further says that if he was to construct the figures which he saw " it would be a work of infinite labour. " But these faces of vision are not still, they move, they have life and expression. " To say we refashion memories is to surmise in the subconscious nature a marvellous artist to whom all we have seen with the physical eye is present at once; and as clay in the hands of a divine potter, and it is such

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swift creation too that it rivals the works of the Lord. " He further adds, " The common psychological explanation is not acceptable, because we know that forms can appear in the brain which were transferred by will from one person to another."

The explanation generally given about the vision full of light is that it is due to " Light, being a vibration and vibration affecting the eye and passing along the nerves until it is stored up in the brain-cells. The vibration is-stayed or fixed there. " A. E. argues against this explanation and says, " This effect must remain unaffected in the brain because one can after years summon it again and find the image clear as at first. " Thus the explanations of memory and of imagination both break down. A. E. says perhaps it is "the perception of the images already existing". He continues, "In the architecture of dream and vision there is mystery which is not explained by speaking of suppressed desire or sex or any of those springs which modern psychologists surmise are released in dream. We must suppose that memory is as fixed in its way as a sun picture is fixed or as the attitude of a statue is fixed. If it fades it should be by loss of precision and not into another equally precise but different forms and gestures." From the quotations given it is clear that dreams, visions and figures of imagination etc. all require much closer study and consideration than has been given to them until now. It roust also be admitted that explanations given up until now have been most inadequate. It is possible that Indian Psychology and its mode of approach to these problems "light pave the way for a more correct understanding of these phenomena.

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II

THE MODERN SCHOOLS OF PSYCHOLOGY

A Brief Survey

We will take a brief survey of the present-day psychology. It must be admitted that in spite of its shortcomings modern psychology is inspired by a genuine spirit of search for the truth of human consciousness. A vast literature has been created during a relatively short period of about 50 years. Since the rise of natural sciences European mind

has been principally occupied in investigating the nature of the physical world and later on in the 18th century it took up the field of biology. In these investigations the attitude of the inquiring mind was objective. So, when man's eyes turned upon himself and wanted to study psychology involving mental processes he had perforce to adopt, in the beginning at least, a subjective attitude. This change to the subjective field of inquiry may be indicative of important cultural development of Europe.

Etymologically "psychology" means "the science of the soul." This soul was regarded as a subjective reality by the ancients and was admitted as a metaphysical reality by the pioneers of modern psychology. The various activities of consciousness in man were regarded as the manifestations of the soul. Now a natural science confined itself to the investigation of the phenomena cannot admit a soul or any other metaphysical reality. Therefore those investigators of the field of psychology who were anxious to enroll it as a natural science had to adopt its assumptions, premises and methods of inquiry. So was no longer a permissible reality in a scientific psychology. The new science of psychology began by positing a mind and its activities without considering whether an ultimate

substratum of some kind was necessary for mind or not. The answer to such a question was that it was no concern of psychology as a natural science to inquire into, or even consider the question. The methods of physical science were rigorously applied to psychology. Since then psychologists have been empirically investigating mental phenomena, collecting facts and trying to arrive at generalisations with regard to various activities of consciousness. They have been studying perception, memory, imagination, thought, reasoning, will, impulses, reflexes, complexes etc; they also tried to include the study of human personality in these fields. Though the generalisations arrived at upto now have not amounted to anything more than mere beginnings the deeper significance of the search seems to lie in the fact that the outward-turned western mind has turned its eye upon himself and is trying to know the constitution of man.

Perhaps some will dispute the statement that psychology today is nothing more than a mere beginning of a science.. But one can even go further and assert that today it is "not a single science with a definite subject matter. The standpoint of natural science adopted by chemistry, physics- and other sciences is considered inappropriate for the study of psychology by writers like Dilthey, Spranger; they are against the "natural science" ideal for psychology.

But the modernists like Tichner insist that mental phenomena should be taken as co-ordinate to the phenomena of external nature. According to Tichner the 'subject' is a group of phenomena. All values and judgments of human utility and purpose must be eschewed and all mental activity should be investigated structurally with a view to discover the qualities possessed by them and the laws regulating their functions, just as physics or chemistry or other sciences, study various kinds of material phenomena and seek to determine the laws of their behaviour, irrespective

of the practical utility. Dilthey and Spranger belonging to the Cultural Science school of psychology consider this standpoint altogether inapplicable to psychology. The psychological phenomena, they urge, is not at all co-ordinate with the material. Facts of psychological life are fundamentally of a different order from those of natural Science. A mental activity has always without exception a personal reference. It is somebody's. How can one understand a mental process divested from value? Value is created by the "subject." A physical object such as a table, a chair or a plant does not possess such a personal point of reference. Mind and mental phenomena belong to the cultural development of society to which mutual mental inter-action of human personality is essential, Psychology thus, is a

cultural or social science. Therefore, the method of investigation in psychology must be different from that of physical science. According to Dilthey, Mind is meaning-creating, meaning-experiencing principle of existence. For example, take a child at play. The natural scientist can describe the activity, observe it, but does he "understand" it? We can only understand it when we know the "meaning" of the activity.

This is not all. Even among people who agree in regarding psychology as a mental science, there are sharp differences about the nature of the subject-matter, the aim and the method. There are some who, for example, take consciousness as a subject-matter and introspection as the method of investigation. They represent what is called the Introspection-school in psychology. Directly opposed to it stands Watson, the leaders of Behaviourism, who asserts that there is no such thing as "consciousness" and that therefore introspection is futile and superfluous. According to him psychology is really concerned with the behaviour of the human individual. He regards physics as the ideal science which psychology must follow and aims

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at making psychology an experimental and objective science. Behaviour "is not merely what "is", but has in it often *or* always, the sense of "ought". Man feels the movement from the actual to the possible. It may be suggested here that though these two standpoints appear diametrically opposed to each other, they may be harmonised into a science of psychology aiming at the study of human individual in his dual aspect of activities, mental and physical. In the light of the cumulative evidence it seems reasonable to hold that contemporary, mutually exclusive schools of psychology would find their synthesis most probably by adopting a radical change both in their standpoints and in their methods.

Gestaltism is a school of psychology which has attracted a great deal of attention lately. Its basic idea is that the whole is not merely a sum of its parts and that there exists what is called the Gestalt-quality, the quality of the whole, as distinct from that of the parts. The organism as a whole is to it a concrete reality. As regards the method Gestaltism finds the much honoured empirical method of analysis utterly defective of its purpose, because it tends to make the parts substantial realities even more important than the whole. Gestaltism advocates that a mental process must be taken as a whole, though it may allow analysis to be used as a supplementary method. To this school psychology is a study of psycho-physical organism of the human individual. According to it mind and body form one whole and are not disparate entities. As an illustration of its application we find a new explanation of perception of motion. Movement, it affirms, is not constructed by putting together fixed positions in successive moments of time but that it is the result of direct perception of sense. In other words, movement is not inferred but directly perceived. Melody in music, it would say, is grasped as a whole for no component notes possess it.

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These three schools, Introspectionism, Behaviourism and Gestaltism fall within the fold of empirical science of psychology. Purposivism of McDugall making purposiveness of the mind its pivot belongs to the same class. Purposivism believes that the difference between the mechanical operations of physical nature and those of mental nature is that all mental operations work towards some purpose, conscious or unconscious. This "purposiveness" explains the manifold activities of human mind and its behaviour.

CONTRIBUTION BY FREUD

In a way, the most important school of psychology is the school of psycho-analysis founded by Freud. He was a neurologist by profession and used to treat nervous and mental disorders by hypnotism. In course of his practice he made the happy discovery that if a patient were allowed to relate his story and thus mentally relive his past

experience, he was greatly relieved of his trouble. This was formulated by him into a principle or hypothesis. He started using the talking-out method in place of hypnotism. This method revealed to him that the experiences of past conflicts and frustrations continue to persist in man. He therefore posited the sub-conscious as a fact in order to explain this persistence of past experiences. He was soon led to think that the subconscious is relatively the larger part of man's personality, in fact, as he later chose to put it, the nine-tenths of human personality. But in the employment of the talking-out method he discovered that the past experiences did not always easily come up; more often parts of the experience were held back. This observation made him formulate the theory of repression. How does repression take place and what is the mode of its operation ? The investigation of repression constitutes the main line of work of psycho-analysis. The symptoms of

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the mental disease are significant. They are willed by the- patient in the sense that they afford a partial satisfaction to- the repressed impulses. The normal behaviour is influenced by these repressions in the individual. Even small slips and errors of behaviour are subconsciously determined by the repressed impulses. These repressed impulses Freud traced to the sexual impulse. The repression here consists in the forcible suppression of the sexual impulse by the social and normal pressure upon the individual. According to Freud sex-impulse is co-extensive with the whole of pleasure-seeking propensity in man. He has shown the working of this sex-impulse in the child from birth to adolescence.

The working of sex-instinct which to Freud is the *most* fundamental is the characteristic of psycho-analysis. Every human activity, even religious, moral and artistic, is simply manifestation of the original sex-impulse.

Interpretation of dreams is another contribution made by psycho-analysis to modern psychology. Dreams according to it betray the subconscious as probably nothing?. else does. Dreams are not fantastic and meaningless. play of imagination. In his attempt at scientific formulation of explanation of dreams, Freud maintains that all dreams. are wish-fulfilment; overt or covert repression in man seeks gratification in dreams.

CONTRIBUTION BY JUNG

Jung has contributed to the study of the nature of personality and to the understanding of the action of human groups by positing the " Collective Unconscious." By an extensive study and analysis of myths, legends, customs. and early cultural history of many races he arrives the Collective Unconscious" as the psychological substratum which explains the behaviour of the individual and of the

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.groups of men. The late Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy also has made very extensive study of comparative myths.

The positing of the " Collective Unconscious " means that Jung abandons, by implication, at least, the naturalistic stand in psychology; for, one could ask, where does the " Collective Unconscious " abide ? Is it in the material or non-material medium? Is it of the vital or mental stuff ?

So far as the study of human personality is concerned Jung admits that the roots of personality are veiled in mystery.

The term "Collective Unconscious" reminds the Indian Student of the terms "Collective Consciousness", and " Cosmic Consciousness" already used in our Ancient Sacred "books. This Cosmic Consciousness and even a supra cosmic-transcendent-Consciousness mentioned in Indian books, are Superconscient to the ordinary man, but they are regarded as capable of being experienced by men if certain psychological conditions are fulfilled.¹

Dr. Harish Chowdhari finds this 'Collective Unconscious a. " blanket term " and says, "It is too inadequate to carry any exact senses." To Jung the collective unconscious is not a state of Consciousness, because, according to him " relatedness to an ego is an essential condition of consciousness. " This is a limited view of consciousness, as it takes for granted the mental as the only possible consciousness. All spiritual experience, including that of Sri Aurobindo, always speaks of the ultimate Reality not as

¹ Sri Aurobindo in his two books - *The idea! of human unity* and *Human Cycle* - points out that a slow growth of the dynamic collective consciousness is taking place in humanity. It began with the family, developed through the clan and the tribe and has now reached the nation. This impulse has its roots deep down into the insect and the animal world and even below in the Inconscient. There is, thus, a gradual unfolding of the Soul of human Collectivity of which humanity would be the highest vehicle.

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" unconscious" but as Supreme and infinite conscious- ness. It does not depend upon nor does it require an ' ego ' for its support. It is spoken of as the golden Purusha and the golden Light and the unconscious is described as the " dark". Sri Aurobindo speaks of it as " luminous uttermost super-conscience" as against the " dark inconscience. " Jung's failure to realise the distinction between the two, the Super-conscient Infinite and the Inconscient Infinite is responsible for his description of the ultimate reality as "Collective Unconscious."²

This is the brief survey of the present day schools of psychology. All of them deliberately leave out the soul. But certain psychologists while rejecting the soul seem to admit interesting substitutes. They affirm " a subject" who is the knower of all our mental activities. They say that they find such an admission essential. To say that psychology as a natural science has to reject all-meta- physical concepts and yet to maintain " a subject" as necessary is to equivocate. This entire field of differing and conflicting schools of contemporary psychology raises the fundamental question: how to arrive at a firm basis for a science of psychology.

We have already said before that modern psychology is not a science like physics or chemistry and if at all it is regarded as one, it is in its infancy, busy collecting data of facts and studying merely primary processes. All explanations, therefore, attempted by it under the present imperfect state of knowledge should be regarded as tentative. It is to be hoped that, integral and all-comprehensive psychology will emerge from this imperfect state and the different schools of today may find their reconciliation in the more comprehensive science of the future. It can be safely affirmed that a true basis of our mental life does not

² Commemorative Symposium

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seem to have been grasped by these groping contemporary schools of psychology. It reminds one of the blind men trying to describe the elephant.

Even though many years have passed since William James wrote the conclusion of his book on psychology we think that the ideas he expressed therein hold good even today for the present field of psychology.

When we talk of " psychology as natural science",. we must not assume that that means a sort of psychology that stands at least on solid ground. It means a psychology particularly fragile and into which the waters of metaphysical criticism leak at every joint, a psychology all of whose elementary assumptions and data must be reconsidered in wider connections and translated into other terms. It is, in short, a phrase of diffidence, and not of arrogance; and it is indeed strange to hear people talk triumphantly of ' the New Psychology ' when into the real elements and forces which the word covers not the first glimpse of clear insight exists. A string of raw facts; a little classification; generalisation on the mere descriptive level; a strong prejudice that we have states of mind and that

our brain conditions them; but not a single law in the sense in which physics shows us laws, not a single proposition from which any consequence can casually be deduced. We don't even know the terms between which the elementary laws would obtain if we had them.³

" This is no science, it is only the hope of a science. The matter of science is with us. Something definite happens when to a certain brain state a certain 'consciousness' corresponds. A genuine glimpse into what it is would be the scientific achievement, before which all past achievements would pale. But at present psychology is in the condition of physics before Galileo and the laws of motion,

³ Psychology, a brief course by Prof. Wm, James, P. 467

of chemistry before Lavoisier and the notion that mass is preserved in all reactions. The Galileo, the Lavoisier of psychology will be famous men indeed when they come, as come they some day surely will, for past successes are no index to the future. When they do come however, the necessities of the case will make them metaphysical. Meanwhile the best way in which we can facilitate their advent is to understand how great is the darkness in which we grope, and never to forget that natural science assumptions with which we started are provisional and revisable things."⁴

III

INDIAN BACKGROUND

(1)

VEDA

Psychology in India as elsewhere in ancient times was not a separate science; it was connected with life, and life in those days was centred round religion and philosophy and so psychology was intimately connected with them. But it did not mean that the psychology so evolved was unscientific; for, if generalisation based on practical experiments is the criterion of a science then the psychological systems current in India are scientific.

Indian psychology bases itself on consciousness as the fundamental fact of the cosmos and of life.

Rigveda, the oldest book of humanity, and the fountain-

⁴ Ibid P. 464

head of Indian culture, already contains enough psychological material to warrant a separate treatment. Only a rough outline can be attempted here. Veda speaks of "knowledge", "consciousness", "unconsciousness", "will", "thought", "understanding", "truth", "right" etc. It expresses its vision in symbolic language which is a puzzle to the modern mind. The use of terms bearing psychological significance shows that the Vedic age was far from primitive. For example, words such as Dhi, Manas, Buddha, Chetana, Ritam, Satyam, Kavi, Manishi, Medhavi, Vipra, Vipaschit, Daksha, Chitti, Mati, Achitti etc., cannot be used by people who were not advanced in culture.

Rig Veda speaks of several planes of consciousness in terms of symbols, but its language is a sealed book to the modern mind. It mentions the three steps of Vishnu, the all-pervading Divine. Each step of Vishnu creates a world and Vishnu maintains it by His dynamic presence.

Rig Veda speaks of "Dyawa Prithivi" Heaven and Earth symbolising the Mental and the Physical planes of

consciousness. It mentions ' Antariksha '—the intermediate vital plane between Earth and Heaven—the physical and. mental.

Veda mentions three shining summits of the Mind " Trini Rochana". Surya, the sun, is the symbol of the Truth-Consciousness of illumination of knowledge.

The Vedic seers speak of the ascent of the human soul from plane to plane, from Darkness to Light.⁶

In IV 2-12 the Rishi says : " The knower must distinguish between consciousness and unconsciousness"—
Chittimachittim Chinavad VI Vidwan.

5. Trini Pada Vichakrame Vishnurgopa Atabhyah"

6 I. 50. 10" Beholding on high the Light beyond the Darkness,
higher still we saw the God among the Gods, we reached the
Sun, the highest Light."

In V 19-7 the seer speaks of various states of consciousness : " State upon state is born, covering after covering opens to Consciousness, in the lap of the Mother he wholly sees."

In V 62-1 we find a passage which bears resemblance to the verse in the Ishopanishad : "a Truth is concealed by the Truth "- *Ritena ritam apihitam.*

These few quotations must suffice to indicate the rich contribution of the Rig Veda to the field of psychology. But the Veda being the creation of an age which was not intellectual, it is difficult to carry its full significance to the modern mind.

(2) THE UPANISHADS

Like the Veda, the Upanishads are a rich treasure of vast psychological knowledge; but" they too, like the Veda,. are not intellectual in their method and approach. They contain many spiritual experiences couched in intuitive, inspired and revelatory language. There is a ring of concrete experience in many of the utterances. For example, " I have known this great Purusha of the colour of the Sun, whose light shines from beyond the Darkness". Swet. Ad. 3- Verse 8 or to take another outburst of supreme delight :, " I am Matter, I am Matter, I am the enjoyer of Matter. " " I have become the golden Light, I have attained immortality. " Taitti-valli 3 Anuvashik 10.

The aspiration for Truth, for Immortality was the driving force behind all psychological strivings. Maitreyi refuses to accept her share of wealth, because she says : What shall I do with that which does not make me immortal ?" Briti Ad. 2 Br. 4.

The Upanishads speak of various states of human consciousness. 1. Jagrat—waking; 2. Swapna—Dream state 3. Sushupti—deep-sleep; 4. Turiya, the fourth one, above the mental state.

Various levels of consciousness in man are also mentioned. 1. Annamaya, the physical; 2. Pranamaya, the vital; 3. Manomaya, the mental. 4. Vijnanamaya, the supramental; 5. Anandamaya, the level of bliss.

There is mention of the plane of Truth as full of golden Light and also of the Supreme whose omnipotence rules the universe. There is an insistence on the dynamic aspect of the Divine.

There are speculations, based on personal experience about the states of Consciousness after death. The main aim was the attainment of Truth which is one with the Infinite and of Immortality. The liberation of the individual

from the ignorance of egoistic nature was the first step towards attaining perfection. The Upanishads believed in the divine potentiality of man.

(3) GITA

The Gita contains very rich psychological material. Its main trend is to integrate the three systems of Yoga- the Jnana, the Karma and the Bhakti. That would bring about the integration of the working of three principal faculties of man, the intellect, the will and the emotions. It trains these faculties to concentrate and then to purify them and ends by enlarging their scope from the finite to the infinite.

Gita utilizes the great psychological discovery of the Samkhya, the actual division between the Purusha, the witness self and Prakriti, the nature in man. This division

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as a fact of psychological experience is of fundamental importance. It is the beginning of the experience in which man realises that his entire being is not involved in the movement of Nature which is ignorant. He finds within himself a point where perfection in the sense of freedom from imperfect nature is already present. Step by step the witness (Sakshi) becomes the *Anumanta*, the giver of sanction, then he becomes the *Bharta*, the supporter of nature, then *Bhokta*, the one who enjoys the nature, and ultimately he is the Ishwar, the Lord of nature.

(4) BUDDHISM

Buddhism developed psychological systems of self- discipline whose chief aim is to free man from " suffering ". It has not the positive aim of the Upanishads and the Vedanta. It may be called a pragmatic approach as it does not try to address itself to the fundamental problem; it comes nearest to the current empirical schools of psychology and is almost existential in its metaphysical stand.

Abandonment of *Trishna*, the impulse, or the longing to have, is its main remedy for banishing suffering from life. The mind is trained to concentrate on the eight-fold path, right will, right thought etc. which gradually leads one to *Nirvana*, the highest state which is often described in negative terms.

On the metaphysical side the stress is on the doctrine of Karma which broadly interpreted, would mean that the energy released in an action, inner or outer, has a tendency to return to its source. Karma explains the differences in tendencies, aptitudes, capacities of individuals in life. Another idea which is basic to Buddhism is that there is no substratum for the individual being; in fact,

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there is no real individual, it is only a flux—a constant flow. of consciousness which gives the illusion of the persistent individual.

Psychologically it worked out a system of self-control and of mental concentration which is a great contribution of Buddhism. It got entangled, as other systems of psychological disciplines also did, into the regions of the vital being and often neglected the eightfold path for the grace of the various powers of the Buddhistic pantheon. Buddhism accepts rebirth as a necessary corollary to the doctrine of Karma which renders the temporary subject to re- actions of Karma and consequently to rebirth.

In the Nirvana the ego, perhaps the entire being, ceases and according to some schools this may lead to universal compassion and a dynamic flow of help and sympathy for the world which would bring the ultimate release of Nirvana to all and eliminate suffering from the world.

APPENDIX

"Indian Yoga is experimental psychology. Patanjali's Yoga-Sutras, the Upanishads—these and the Saiva Siddhanta treatises—furnish pioneering examples of experimental psychology."¹

"In Europe and America psychology is almost ceasing to be the analysis of mind. It is now concentrating on behaviour of organism in relation to their environment."²

"Activities ascribed to mental forces have been sought to be interpreted in terms of nervous mechanism and nervous integration. "³

¹ Presidential address by Dr. C. P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, Madras in the Psychology Conference.

² Ibid

³ Ibid

" Nature is ceasing to be regarded as a system of purely physical forces and in spite of the still widespread scepticism regarding spiritualists and even dowsers, there has been recently an unprecedented growth of belief in the possibility of telepathic transfer of thought from one individual to another. It is in fact becoming difficult to explain the whole human personality solely by the dynamics of the nervous system."⁴

" In Indian psychology they proceed from the basis of the supremacy of mind over matter and postulate Atman as the ultimate Reality of the universe. "

"Cartesian dualism never obtained a firm foothold in this Country. "⁵

Patanjali's Raja Yoga begins with the suppression of the undulations of Chitta, the basic stuff of consciousness. It prescribes Yama and Niyama in order to establish firm control of the vital nature which enables the mind to concentrate.

Meditation, Japa etc., are means to achieve Samadhi— complete absorption of the being into a state which may be Savikalpa or Nirvikalpa—that is to say, absorption with only one idea or vibration of consciousness or with no idea or vibration at all.

The processes prescribed are intended to change the ordinary consciousness into another state and also to make available extraordinary powers of nature.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

IV

SOME CONTRIBUTION OF SRI AUROBINDO TO PSYCHOLOGY

" Psychology is necessarily a subjective science and one must proceed in it from the knowledge of oneself to the knowledge of others. "

—*Sri Aurobindo*

" The material universe is only the facade of an immense building which has other structures behind it, and it is only if one knows the whole that one can have some knowledge of the truth of the material universe. There are vital, mental and spiritual ranges behind which give the material its significance. If earth is the only field of the spiritual evolution in Matter, (assuming that) then it must be a part of the total design. The idea that all the rest must be a waste is a human idea which would not trouble the vast Cosmic Spirit whose consciousness and life are everywhere in the slime and dust as much as the human intelligence. For us it is the development of the spiritual consciousness in the human body that matters.¹

(A)

SOME ERRORS CORRECTED

" St. Augustine was a man of God and a great saint, but great saints are not always, or often, great psychologists or great thinkers. The Psychology here is that of the most superficial schools, if not that of the man in the street;... I am aware that these errors are practically universal, for

¹On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 230

psychological enquiry in Europe (and without inquiry there can be no sound knowledge) is only beginning and has not yet gone very far, and what has reigned in man's minds up to now is a superficial statement of the superficial appearances of our consciousness as they look to us at first view and nothing more. But knowledge only begins when we get away from the surface phenomena and look behind them for their true operations and causes. To the superficial view of the outer mind and senses the sun is a little fiery ball circling in mid air round the earth and the stars twinkling little things stuck in the sky for our benefit at night. Scientific enquiry comes and knocks this infantile first view to pieces. The sun is a huge affair (millions of miles away from our air) around which the small earth circles, and the stars are huge members of huge systems indescribably distant which have nothing apparently to do with the tiny earth and her creatures. All science is like that, a contradiction of the sense view or superficial appearances of things and an assertion of truths which are unguessed by the common and the uninstructed reason. The same process has to be followed in psychology if we are really to know what our consciousness is, how it is built and made and what is the secret of its functionings or the way out of its disorder."

"There are several capital and common errors here:

1. That mind and spirit are the same thing;
2. That all consciousness can be spoken of as "Mind".
3. That all consciousness therefore, is of a spiritual substance.

4. That the body is merely Matter, not conscious, therefore something quite different from the spiritual part of nature."²

SOME FUNCTIONS

" First the spirit and the mind are two different things

²On Yoga II Tome One, P. 331-332

and should not be confused together. The mind is an instrumental entity or instrumental consciousness whose function is to think and perceive; the spirit is an essential entity or consciousness which does not need to think or perceive either in the mental or the sensory way, because whatever knowledge it has is direct or essential knowledge, 'Swayam- prakasa.'³

" Next, it follows that all consciousness is not necessarily of a spiritual make and it need not be true and is not true that the thing commanding and the thing commanded are the same, are not at all different, are of the same substance and therefore are bound or at least ought to agree together." ⁴

"Third, it is not even true that it is the mind which is commanding the mind and finds itself disobeyed by itself. First, there are many parts of the mind, each a force in itself with its formations, functionings, interests, and they may not agree. One part of the mind may be spiritually influenced and like to think of the Divine and obey the spiritual impulse, another part may be rational or scientific or literary and prefer to follow the formations, beliefs or doubts, mental preferences and interests which are in conformity with its education and its nature. But quite apart from that, what was commanding in St. Augustine may very well have been the thinking mind or reason while what was commanded was the vital, and mind and vital, whatever anybody may say, are not the same. The thinking mind or ' Buddhi' lives, however imperfectly in man, by intelligence and reason. Vital, on the other hand, is a thing of desires, impulses, force-pushes, emotions, sensations, seekings after life-fulfilment, possession and enjoyment; these are its functions and its nature;- it is that part of us which seeks after life and its movements for their own sake and it does not want to leave hold of them

³ On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 332

⁴ Ibid P. 332.

if they bring it suffering as well as or more than pleasure; it is even capable of luxuriating in tears and suffering as part of the drama of life. What then is there in common between the thinking intelligence and the vital and why should the latter obey the mind and not follow its own nature ? The disobedience is perfectly normal instead of being, as Augustine suggests, unintelligible. Of course, man can establish a mental control over his vital and in so far as he does it he is a man, because the thinking mind is a nobler and more enlightened entity and consciousness than the vital and ought, therefore, to rule and, if the mental will is strong, can rule. But this rule is precarious, incomplete and held only by much self discipline. For if the mind is more enlightened, the vital is nearer to earth, more intense, vehement, more directly able to touch the body. There is too a vital mind which lives by imagination, thoughts of desire, will to act and enjoy from its own impulse and this is able to seize on the reason itself and make it its auxiliary and its justifying counsel and supplier of pleas and excuses. There is also the sheer force of Desire in

man which is the vital's principal support and strong enough to sweep off the reason, as the Gita says, " like a boat on stormy waters, *Navamivambhasi*"⁵

" Finally, the body obeys the mind automatically in those things in which it is formed or trained to obey it, but the relation of the body to the mind is not in all things that of an automatic perfect instrument. The body also has a consciousness of its own and, though it is a submental instrument or servant consciousness, it can disobey or fail to obey as well. In many things, in matters of health and illness for instance, in all automatic functionings, the body acts on its own and is not a servant of the mind. If it is fatigued, it can offer a passive resistance to the mind's

5 On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 332-333

will. It can cloud the mind with ' Tamas' inertia, dullness fumes of the subconscious, so that the mind cannot act. The arm lifts, no doubt, when it gets the suggestion, but at first the legs do not obey when they are asked to walk; they have to learn how to leave the crawling attitude and movement and take up the erect and ambulatory habits When you first ask the hand to draw a straight line or to play music, it can't do it and won't do it. It has to be schooled, trained, taught, and afterwards it does automatically what is required of it. All this proves that there is a body consciousness which can do things at the mind's order, but has to be awakened, trained, made a good and conscious instrument. It can even be so trained that a mental will or suggestion can cure the illness of the body. But all these things, these relations of mind and body, stand on the same footing in essence as the relation of mind to vital and it is not so easy or primary a matter as Augustine would have it."⁶

" This puts the problem on another footing with the causes more clear and, if we are prepared to go far enough. it suggests the way out, the way of Yoga."⁷

" All this is quite apart from the contributing and very important factor of plural personality of which psychological enquiry is just beginning rather obscurely to take account. That is a more complex affair."⁸

(B)

THE MECHANICAL METHOD IN PSYCHOLOGY

" In psychology one can say that the mechanical or physiological approach takes hold of the thing by the blind

6 On Yoga II Tome One, P. 334

7 Ibid P. 334

9 bid P. 334

end and is least fruitful of all-for psychology is not primarily a thing of mechanism and measure, it opens to a vast field beyond the physical instrumentalities of the body- consciousness. In biology one can get a glimpse of something beyond mechanism, because there is from the beginning a stir of consciousness progressing and organising itself more and more for self-expression. But in physics you are in the very domain of the mechanical law where process is everything and the driving consciousness has chosen to conceal itself with the greatest thoroughness so that, " scientifically speaking ", it does not exist there. One can discover it there by occultism and yoga, but the methods of occult science and of yoga are not measurable or followable by the means of physical science, so the gulf remains in existence. It may be bridged one day, but the- physicist is not likely to be the bridge-builder, so it is no- use asking him to try what is beyond his province. "⁹

(C)

" To apply the same tests to phenomena of a different kind is as foolish as to apply physical tests to spiritual truth. One can't dissect God or see the soul under a microscope. So also the subjection of disembodied spirits or even of psycho-physical phenomena to tests and standards valid only for material phenomena is a most false and unsatisfactory method. Moreover, the physical scientist is for the most part resolved not to admit what cannot be neatly packed and labelled and docketed in his own system and its formulas. Dr. Jules Remains, himself a scientist as well as a great writer, makes experiments to prove that man can see and read ' with eyes blind-folded. The scientists refuse even to admit or record the results. Khuda Baksha comes along and proves.

9 On Yoga II. Tome One, P. 218

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it patiently, indubitably, under all legitimate tests. The scientists are quite unwilling to cede or record the fact even though his results are undeniable. He walks on fire unhurt and disproves all hitherto suggested explanations,—they simply cast about for another and still more silly explanation. What is the use of trying to convince people who are determined not to believe ? "10

(D)

" Psychologists of course, having to deal with mental movements, more easily recognise that there can be no real equation between them and physiological processes and at the most mind and body react to each other as is inevitable since they are lodging together. But even a great physical scientist like Huxley recognised that Mind was something quite different from Matter and could not possibly be explained in the terms of Matter. Only since then physical science became very arrogant and bumptious and tried to subject everything to itself and its processes. Now in theory it has begun to recognise its limitations in a general way, but the old mentality is still too habitual in most scientists) .to shake off yet."11

(i)

CONSCIOUSNESS

" Chitta really means the ordinary consciousness including the mind, vital and physical - but practically it can be taken to mean something central in the consciousness If that is centred in the Divine, the rest follows more or less

10 On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 219

11.Ibid P. 220

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quickly as a natural result."1

" Consciousness is not, to my experience, a phenomenon dependent on the reactions of personality to the forces of Mature and amounting to no more than a seeing or interpretation of these reactions. If that were so, then when the personality becomes silent and immobile and gives no reactions as there would be no seeing or interpretative action,

there would therefore be no consciousness. That contradicts some of the fundamental experiences of yoga, that is, a silent and immobile consciousness infinitely spread out, not dependent on the personality but impersonal and universal, not seeing and interpreting contacts but motionlessly self-aware, not dependent on the reactions, but persistent in itself even when no reactions take place. The subjective personality itself is only a formation of consciousness which is a power inherent, not in the activity of the temporary manifested personality, but in being, the Purusha. " ²

" Consciousness is a reality inherent in existence. It is there even when it is not active on the surface, but silent and immobile; it is there even when it is invisible on the surface, not reacting on outward things or sensible to them, but withdrawn and either active or inactive within; it is there even when it seems to us to be quite absent and the being to our view unconscious and inanimate."³

"Consciousness is not only power of awareness of self and things, it is or has also a dynamic and creative energy. it can determine its own reactions or abstain from reactions; It can not only answer to forces, but create or put out from itself forces. Consciousness is Chit but also Chit Shakti."⁴ Consciousness is usually identified with mind, but

¹ On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 347

² ibid P. 253-254

³ Ibid P. 254

⁴ Ibid P. 254

mental consciousness is only the human range which no more exhausts all the possible ranges of consciousness than human sight exhausts all the gradations of colour or human hearing all the gradations of sound—for there is much above or below that is to man invisible and inaudible. So there are ranges of consciousness above and below the human range, with which the normal human has no contact and they seem to it unconscious,—supramental or overmental and submental ranges. " ⁵

" When Yajnavalkya says there is no consciousness in the Brahman state, he is speaking of consciousness as the human being knows it. The Brahman state is that of a supreme existence supremely aware of itself, Swayamprakasa; it is Sachchidananda, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. Even if it be spoken of as beyond That, *parat param*, it does not mean that it is a state of Non-existence or Non-consciousness, but beyond even the highest spiritual substratum (the " foundation above " in the luminous paradox of the Rig Veda) of cosmic existence and consciousness.

"As it is evident from the description of Chinese Tao and the Buddhist Shunya that that is a Nothingness in which all is, so with the negation of consciousness here. Superconscient and subconscient are only relative terms; as we rise into the superconscient we see that it is a consciousness greater than the highest we yet have and therefore in our normal state inaccessible to us and, if we can go down into the subconscient, we find there a consciousness other than our own at its lowest mental limit and therefore ordinarily inaccessible to us. The Inconscient itself is only an involved state of consciousness which like the Tao or Shunya, though in a different way, contains all things suppressed within it so that under a pressure from above or within all can evolve out of it—" an inert Soul with a

On Yoga II, Book One, P. 254-255.

(Oinnambulist Force."⁶

" The gradations of consciousness are universal states not dependent on the outlook of the subjective personality: rather the outlook of the subjective personality is determined by the grade of consciousness in which it is organised according to its typical nature or its evolutionary stage. "⁷

" It will be evident that by consciousness is meant something which is essentially the same throughout but variable in states, condition and operation, in which in some grades or conditions the activities we call consciousness can exist either in a suppressed or an unorganised or a differently organised state; while in other states some other activities may manifest which in us are suppressed, unorganised or latent or else are less perfectly manifested, less intensive, extended and powerful than in those higher grades above our highest mental limit. "⁸

" It all depends upon where the consciousness places itself and concentrates itself. If the consciousness places or concentrates itself within the ego, you are identified with the ego - if in the mind, it is identified with the mind and its activities and so on. If the consciousness puts its stress outside, it is said to live in the external being and becomes oblivious of its inner mind and vital and in most psychic. If it goes inside, puts its centralising stress there, then it knows itself as the inner being or, still deeper, as the psychic being. If it ascends out of the body to the planes where self is naturally conscious of its wideness and freedom it knows itself as the Self and not the mind, life or body. It is this stress of consciousness that makes all the difference. That is why one has to concentrate the consciousness in heart or mind in

6 On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 254-255

7 Ibid P. 255

8 Ibid P. 255-256

order to go within or go above. It is the disposition of the consciousness that determines everything, makes one predominantly mental, vital, physical or psychic, bound or free separate in Purusha or involved in the Prakriti. "⁹

" Consciousness has no need of a clear individual " I " to dispose variously the centralising stress. Wherever the stress is put, the " I " attaches itself to that, so that one thinks of oneself as a mental being or physical being or whatever it may be. The consciousness in me can dispose its stress in this way or the other way; it may go down into the physical and work there in the physical nature keeping all the rest behind or above for the time or it may go up into the overhead level and stand above mind, life and body seeing them as instrumental lower forms of itself or act seeing them at all and merged in the free undifferentiated Self or it may throw itself into an active dynamic cosmic consciousness and identify with that or do any number of other things without resorting to the help of this much overrated and meddlesome fly on the wheel which you call the clear individual " I ". The real " I "—if you want to use that word—is not "clear individual", that is, a clear-cut limited separative ego, it is as wide as the universe and wider and can contain the universe in itself, but that is not the Ahankar, it is the Atman. "¹⁰

" Consciousness is a fundamental thing, the fundamental thing in existence-it is the energy, the motion, the movement of consciousness that creates the universe and all that is in it; not only the macrocosm but the microcosm is nothing but consciousness arranging itself. For instance, when consciousness in its movement or rather a certain stress of movement forgets itself in the action it becomes an apparently " unconscious " energy; when it forgets itself

9 On Yoga II, Book One P. 256

10 On Yoga II, Tome One P. 257

in the form it becomes the electron, the atom, the material" object. In reality it is still consciousness that works in the energy and determines the form and the evolution of form. When it wants to liberate itself, slowly, evolutionarily, out of Matter, but still in the form, it emerges as life, as animal, as man and it can go on evolving itself still further out of its involution and become something more than mere man. If you can grasp that, then it ought not to be difficult to see further that it can subjectively formulate- itself as a physical, a vital, a mental, a psychic consciousness ; all these are present in man, but as they are all mixed up together in the external consciousness with their real status behind in the inner being, one can only become fully aware of them by releasing the original limiting stress of the consciousness which makes us live in our external being and become awake and centred within in the inner being. As the consciousness in us, by its external concentration or stress, has to put all these things behind—behind a wall or veil, it has to break down the wall or veil and get back in its stress into these inner parts of existence—that is what we call living within; then our external being seems to us. something small and superficial, we are, or can become, aware of the large and rich and inexhaustible kingdom within. So also consciousness in us has drawn a lid or covering, or whatever one likes to call it, between the lower planes of mind, life, body supported by the psychic and the higher planes which contain the spiritual kingdom where the self is always free and limitless, and it can break or open the lid or covering and ascend there and become the Self free and wide and luminous or else bring down the influence, reflection, finally even the presence and power of the higher consciousness into the lower nature."¹¹

"Now that is what consciousness is - it is not composed.

¹¹ On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 257-258

of parts, it is fundamental to being and itself formulates any parts it chooses to manifest developing them from above downward by a progressive coming down from spiritual levels towards involution in Matter or formulating them in an upward working in the front by what we call evolution. If it chooses to work in you through the sense of ego, you think that it is the clear-cut individual " I " that does everything—if it begins to release itself from that limited working, you begin to expand your sense of " I " till it bursts into infinity and no longer exists or you shed it and flower into spiritual wideness. Of course, this is not what is spoken of in modern materialistic thought as consciousness, because that thought is governed by science and sees consciousness only as a phenomenon that emerges out of inconscient Matter and consists of certain reactions of the system to outward things. But that is a phenomenon of consciousness, it is not consciousness itself it is even only a very small part of the possible phenomenon of consciousness and can give no clue to Consciousness the Reality which is of the very essence of existence."¹²

(ii)

MIND

Mind is a faculty for seeking knowledge. Mind is that which does not know, which tries to know and which never knows except as in a glass darkly. It is a power which interprets truth of universal existence for practical uses of a certain order of things.

Mind is a reflective mirror which receives presentations or images of pre-existent Truth or Fact. It represents to itself the phenomena that is, or has been, from moment to moment.

Mind can conceive with precision divisions as real; it can conceive a synthetic totality.

But ultimate unity and absolute infinity are to it abstract notions and unseizable quantities; not something that is real to its grasp, much less something alone that is real.

Mind is only a preparatory form of our consciousness. It is an instrument of analysis and synthesis, but not of essential knowledge. Its function is to cut something from the Whole-Unknown-Thing-in-itself and call this delimitation whole.

Mission of mind is to train our obscure consciousness to enlighten its blind instinct, random intuition, vague perception till it becomes capable of a greater Light.

Mind is a passage, not a culmination.

(iii)

THE VITAL BEING

"There are four parts of the vital being-first, the mental vital which gives a mental expression by thought, speech or otherwise to the emotions, desires, passions, sensations and other movements of the vital being; the emotional vital which is the seat of various feelings, such as love, joy, sorrow, hatred, and the rest; the central vital which is the seat of the stronger vital longings and reactions, that is, ambition, pride, fear, love of fame, attractions and repulsions, desires and passions of various kinds and the field of many vital energies; last, the lower vital which is occupied with small desires and feelings, such as make the greater part of daily life, that is, food desire, sexual desire, small likings, dislikings, vanity, quarrels, love of praise, anger at blame, little wishes of all kinds, and a numberless host of other things. Their respective seats are : (1) The

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region from throat to the heart, (2) the heart (it is a double centre, belonging in front to the emotional and vital and behind to the psychic), (3) from the heart to the navel, (4) below the navel.¹

"There is a part of the nature which I have called the vital mind; the function of this mind is not to think and reason, to perceive, consider and find out or value things, for that is the function of the thinking mind proper, *buddhi*, -but to plan or dream or imagine what can be done. It makes formations for the future which the will can try to carry out if opportunity and circumstances become favourable or even it can work to make them favourable. In men of action this faculty is prominent and a leader of their nature; great men of action always have it in a very high measure. But even if one is not a man of action or practical realisation or if circumstances are not favourable or one can do only small and ordinary things, this vital mind is there. It acts in them on a small scale, or if it needs some sense of largeness, what it does very often is to plan in the void, knowing that it cannot realise its plans or else to imagine big things, stories, adventures, great doings in which oneself is the hero or the creator, "²

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" By material vital we mean the vital so involved in Matter as to be bound by its movements and gross physical character; the action is to support and energise the body and keep in it the capacity of life, growth, movement, etc., also of sensitiveness to outside impacts.³

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¹ On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 341-342

² Ibid P. 342

³ Ibid P. 349

" The nervous part of the being is a portion of the vital—it is the vital-physical, the life-force closely enmeshed in the reactions, desires, needs, sensations of the body. The vital proper is the life-force acting in its own nature, impulses, emotions, feelings, desires, ambitions, etc., having as their highest centre what we may call the outer heart of emotion, while there is an inner heart where are the higher or psychic feelings and sensibilities, the emotions or intuitive yearnings and impulses of the soul. The vital part of us is, of course, necessary to our completeness, but it is a true instrument only when its feelings and tendencies have been purified by the psychic touch and taken up and governed by the spiritual light and power."⁴

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" I make the distinction (Between the lower vital movements and the emotions of the heart) by noting where these things rise from. Anger, fear, jealousy touch the heart no doubt just as they touch the mind but they rise from the navel region and entrails (i.e. the lower or at highest the middle vital). Stevenson has a striking passage in the " Kidnapped" where the hero notes that his fear is felt primarily not in the heart but the stomach. Love, hope have their primary seat in the heart, so with pity etc."⁵

" But is it true that even anger which is of the lower vital and therefore close to the body, invariably produces these effects ? Of course the psychologist can't know that another man is angry unless he shows physical signs of it, but also he can't know what a man is thinking unless the man speaks or writes-does it follow that the state of thought cannot be "perceived" without its sign in speaking or

4. On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 349

5. Ibid P. 347

writing ? A Japanese who is accustomed to control all his emotions " and give no sign (if he is angry the first sign you will have of it is a knife in your stomach from a calm or smiling assailant) will have none of these things when he is angry, not even the ' ebullition' in the chest; in its place there will be a settled fire that will burn till his anger achieves itself in action. "⁶

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" A strong vital is one that is full of life-force, has ambition courage, great energy, a force for generosity in giving or for possession and lead and domination, a power to fulfil and materialise many other forms of vital strength there are also. It is often difficult for such a vital to surrender itself because of this sense of its own powers - but if it can do so, it becomes an admirable instrument for the Divine Work."⁷

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" No, a weak vital has not the strength to turn spiritually-and being weak, more easily falls under a wrong influence and even when it wants, finds it difficult to accept anything beyond its own habitual nature. The strong vital, when the will is there, can do it much easily; its one central difficulty is the pride of the ego and the attraction of its powers. "

" The chest has more connection with the psychic than the vital. A strong vital may have a good physique, but as often it has not - it draws too much on the physical, eats it up as it were."⁸

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⁶On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 347-348

⁷ Ibid, P. 348

⁸ Ibid P. 348

" The physical-vital is the being of small desires and greed etc. — the vital-physical is the nervous being; they are closely connected together."⁹

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" I do not know about subtle vital. One says subtle physical to distinguish from gross material physical, because to our normal experience all physical is gross, *sthula*. But the vital is in its nature non-material, so that the adjective is superfluous."¹⁰

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" This question has no practical meaning for the vital physical forces can be received from anywhere by the body, from around, below or above. The order of the planes is in reference to each other, not in reference to the body. In reference to each other, the vital physical is below the physical mind, but above the material; but at the same time these powers interpenetrate each other."¹¹

(iv)

SUBCONSCIENT

" In our yoga we mean by the subconscious that quite submerged part of our being in which there is no awakenly conscious and coherent thought, will or feeling or organised reaction, but which yet receives obscurely the impressions of all things and stores them up in itself and from it too all sorts of stimuli, of persistent habitual movements, crudely repeated or disguised in strange forms can surge up into

⁹ On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 349

¹⁰ Ibid P. 349

¹¹ Ibid P. 350

dream or into the waking nature. For if these impressions rise up most in dream in an incoherent and disorganised manner, they can also and do rise up into our waking consciousness as a mechanical repetition of old thoughts old mental, vital and physical habits or an obscure mind full of obstinate Sanskaras, impressions, associations, fixed notions, habitual reactions formed by our past, an obscure vital full of the seeds of habitual desires, sensations and nervous reactions, a most obscure material which governs much that has to do with the condition of the body. If is largely responsible for our illnesses; chronic or repeated illnesses are indeed mainly due to the subconscious and its obstinate memory and habit of repetition of whatever has impressed itself upon the body-consciousness. But this

subconscious must be clearly distinguished from the subliminal parts of our being such as the inner or subtle physical consciousness, the inner vital or inner mental; for these are not at all obscure or incoherent or ill-organised but only veiled from our surface consciousness. Our surface constantly receives something, inner touches, communications or influences, from these sources but does not know for the most part whence they come."¹

" The subconscious is universal as well as individual like all the other main parts of the Nature. But there are different parts or planes of the subconscious. All upon earth is based on the Inconscient as it is called, though it is not really inconscient at all, but rather a complete "Sub" conscience, a suppressed or involved consciousness, in which there is everything but nothing is formulated or expressed, The subconscious lies between this Inconscient and the conscious mind, life and body. It contains the potentiality of all the primitive reactions to life which struggle out to the surface from the dull and inert strands of Matter and form by a

¹ On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 358-359

constant development a slowly evolving and self-formulating consciousness; it contains them not as ideas, perceptions or conscious reactions but as fluid substance of these things. But also all that is consciously experienced sinks down into the subconscious, not as precise though submerged memories but as obscure yet obstinate impressions of experience, and these can come up at any time as dreams, as mechanical repetitions of past thought, feelings, actions etc. as 'complexes' exploding into action and event, etc., etc., the subconscious is the main cause why all things repeat themselves and nothing ever gets changed except in appearance. It is the cause why people say character cannot be changed, the cause also of the constant return of things one hoped to have got rid of for ever. All seeds are there and all Sanskaras of the mind, vital and body,—it is the main support of death and disease and the last fortress (seemingly impregnable) of the Ignorance. All too that is suppressed without being wholly got rid of sinks down there and remains as seed ready to surge up or sprout up at any moment. "²

" The subconscious is not the whole foundation of the nature; it is only the lower basis of the Ignorance and affects mostly the lower vital and physical exterior consciousness and these again affect the higher parts of the nature. While it is well to see what it is and how it acts, one must not be too preoccupied with this dark side or this apparent aspect of the instrumental being. One should rather regard it as something not oneself, a mask of false nature imposed on the true being by the Ignorance. The true being is the inner with all its vast possibilities of reaching and expressing the Divine and especially the inmost, the soul, the psychic Purusha which is always in its essence pure, divine, turned to all that is good and true and beautiful. The exterior being has to be taken hold of by the inner being and turned

² On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 359-360

into an instrument no longer of the upsurging of the ignorant subconscious Nature, but of the Divine. It is by remembering always that and opening the nature upwards that the Divine Consciousness can be reached and descend from above into the whole inner and outer existence, mental, vital, physical, the subconscious, the subliminal, all that we overtly or secretly are. This should be the main preoccupation. To dwell solely on the subconscious and the aspect of imperfection creates depression and should be avoided. One has to keep a right balance and stress on the positive side most, recognising the other but only to reject and change it. This and a constant faith and reliance on the Mother are what is needed for the transformation to come. "

" P. S. It is certainly the abrupt and decisive breaking that is the easiest and best way for these things-vital

habits."³

(v) THE SUBLIMINAL

" There is an inner as well as an outer consciousness all through our being, upon all its levels. The ordinary man is aware only of his surface self and quite unaware of all that is concealed by the surface. And yet what is on the surface, what we know or think we know of ourselves and even believe that that is all we are, is only a small part of our being and by far the larger part of us is below the surface, or, more accurately, it is behind the frontal consciousness, behind the veil occult and known only by an occult knowledge. Modern psychology and psychic science have begun to perceive this truth just a little. Materialistic psychology calls this hidden fact the Inconscient, although practically admitting that it is far greater, more powerful and profound than the

³ On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 360-361

surface conscious self,—very much as the Upanishads called in us the superconscient in us the Sleep-Self, although this Sleep-Self is said to be an infinitely greater Intelligence, Omniscient, Omnipotent, Prajna, the Ishwara. Psychic Science calls this hidden consciousness the Subliminal self and here too it is seen that this Subliminal self has more-powers, more knowledge, a freer field of movement than the smaller self that is on the surface. But the truth is that all that is behind, this sea of which our waking consciousness is only a wave or series of waves, cannot be described by any one term, for it is very complex. Part of it is subconscious lower than our waking consciousness, part of it is on a level with it but behind and much larger than it; part is above and superconscient to us. What we call our mind is only an outer mind, a surface mental action, instrumental for a partial expression of a larger mind behind of which we are not ordinarily aware and can only know by going inside ourselves. So" too what we know of the vital in us is only the outer vital, a surface activity partially expressing a larger secret vital which we can only know by going within. Equally, what we call our physical being is only a visible projection of a greater and subtler invisible physical consciousness which is much more complex, much more aware, much wider in its receptiveness, much more open and plastic and free."¹

(VI) SOUL OR THE PSYCHIC BEING

(a)

The Psychic Being

" The psychic being is in the evolution, part of the

¹ On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 353-354

human being, its divine part."¹

" The soul, the psychic being is in direct touch with the divine Truth, but it is hidden in man by the mind H vital being and the physical nature. "²

"The psychic being has always been valid, consenting to the play of mind, physical and vital, experiencing

everything through them in the ignorant mental, vital and physical way." ³

" Atma is not the same as psychic-Atma is the self which is one in all, calm, ever at peace, always free. The psychic being is the soul within that experiences life and develops with evolving mind and life and body." ⁴

" The psychic being is in the heart centre in the middle of the chest (not in the physical heart, for the centres are "in the middle of the body,) but it is deep behind." ⁵

" The psychic being is a Purusha, not a flame, - the psychic fire is not the being, it is something proper to it." ⁶

" The opening of the heart centre releases the psychic being which proceeds to make us aware of the Divine within us and of the higher Truth above us. " ⁷

(b)

Soul

" A Distinction has to be made between the soul in its essence and the psychic being. Behind each and all there is the soul which is the spark of the Divine; none could

¹ On Yoga II, Tome Two, P. 205

² Ibid, P. 206

³ Ibid, P. 221

⁴ Ibid, P. 222

⁵ Ibid, P. 226

⁶ Ibid, P. 231

⁷ Ibid, P. 275

exist without that. But it is quite possible to have a vital and physical being without a clearly evolved psychic being behind it. Still, one cannot make general statements that no aboriginal has a soul or there is no display of soul anywhere. " ⁸

" The inner being is composed of the inner mental, inner vital, inner physical, but that is not the psychic being. The psychic is the inmost being and quite distinct from these. The Word ' psychic' is indeed used in English to indicate anything that is other or deeper than the external mind, life and body, anything occult or supraphysical, but that is a use which brings confusion and error and we entirely discard it when we speak or write about yoga. In ordinary parlance we may sometimes use the word ' psychic' in the looser popular sense or in poetry, which is not bound to intellectual accuracy, we may speak of the soul - sometimes in the ordinary and more external sense or in the sense of the true psyche." ⁹

" The psychic being is veiled by the surface movements and expresses itself as best it can through these outer instruments which are more governed by the outer forces than by the inner influences of the psychic. But that does not mean that they are entirely isolated from the soul. The soul is in the body in the same way as the mind or vital—but the body it occupies is not this gross physical frame only, but the subtle body also. When the gross sheath falls away, the vital and mental sheaths of the body still remain as the soul's vehicle till these too dissolve. " ¹⁰

" The soul of a plant or an animal is not altogether dormant-only its means of expression are less developed

⁸ On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 309

⁹ Ibid P. 309-310

¹⁰ Ibid P. 310

than those of a human being. There is much that is psychic in the plant, much that is psychic in the animal. The plant has only the vital-physical evolved in its form, so cannot express itself; the animal has a vital mind and can, but its consciousness is limited and its experiences are limited so the psychic essence has a less developed consciousness and experience than is present or at least possible in man. All the same, animals have a soul and can respond very readily to the psychic in man."¹¹

" The ghost is of course not the soul. It is either the man appearing in his vital body or it is a fragment of his vital that is seized on by some vital force or being. The vital part of us normally exists after the dissolution of the body for some time and passes away into the vital plane where it remains till the vital sheath dissolves. Afterwards it passes, if it is mentally evolved, in the mental sheath to some mental world and finally the psychic leaves its mental sheath also and goes to its place of rest. If the mental is strongly developed, then the mental part of us can remain; so also can the vital, provided they are organised by and centred round the true psychic being for they then share the immortality of the psychic. Otherwise the psychic draws mind and life into itself and enters into an inter-natal quiescence. "¹²

(vii)

CENTRES OR CHAKRAS

"Everything here that belongs strictly to the earth plane is evolved out of the Inconscient, out of Matter - but the essential mental being exists already, nor involved, in the

¹¹On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 310

¹² Ibid, P. 310-311

mental plane. It is only the personal mental that is evolved here by something rising out of the Inconscient and developing under a pressure from above.

The tendency to inquire and know is in itself good, but it must be kept under control. What is needed for progress in Sadhana is gained best by increase of consciousness and experience and of intuitive knowledge.

Above the head is the universal or Divine Consciousness and Force. The Kundalini is the latent power asleep in the Chakras."¹

" It is so that the inner consciousness is arranged. There are five main divisions of this ladder. At the top above the head are layers (or as we call them planes) of which we are not conscious and which become conscious to us only by sadhana—those above the human mind that is the higher consciousness. Below from the crown of the head to the throat are the layers (they are many of them) of the mind, the "three principal being one at the top of the head communicating with the higher consciousness, another between the eyebrows where is the thought, sight and will, a third in the throat which is the externalising mind. A second division is from the shoulders to the navel ;these are the layers of the higher vital presided over by the heart centre where is the emotional being with the psychic hidden behind it. From the navel downwards is the rest of the vital being containing several layers. From the bottom of the spine downward are the layers of the physical consciousness proper, the material, and below the feet is the subconscient which has also many levels. "²

The Centres or Chakras are Seven in numbers :

¹ On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 336

² Ibid, P. 372

1. The thousand-petalled lotus on the top of the head.
2. In the middle of the forehead, the Agna Chakra—; (will, vision, dynamic thought.)
3. Throat-Centre-externalising mind.
4. Heart-lotus-emotional centre. The psychic is behind it.
5. Navel centre, higher vital (proper)
6. Below navel—the lower vital.
7. Muladhara—the physical.

All these centres are in the middle of the body; they are supposed to be attached to the spinal chord; but in fact all these things are in the subtle body, ' Sukshma Deha ', though one has the feeling of their activities as if in the physical body when the consciousness is awake. "³

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In the process of our yoga the centres have each a fixed psychological use and general function which base all their special powers and functionings. The Muladhara governs the physical down to the subconscious; the abdominal centre, Svadhishtana, governs the lower vital; the navel centre, Nabhi padma, or manipura, governs the larger vital; the heart centre—hrt-padma, or Anahata, governs the emotional being; the throat centre, Vishuddha, governs the expressive and externalising mind; the centre between the eye-brows, Agnachakra, governs the dynamic mind, will, vision, mental formation; the thousand-petalled lotus, Sahasradala, above commands the higher thinking mind, houses the still higher illumined mind and at the highest opens to the intuitive through which or else by an over- flooding directness the overmind can have the rest communication or an immediate contact. "⁴

³OnYoga II, Tome One, P. 368-369

⁴ Ibid, P. 369

" Heart is the seat of two powers; in front the higher vital or emotional being, behind and concealed the soul or psychic being. "

" The colours of the lotuses and number of petals are respectively from bottom to top:- (i) Muladhara, or physical consciousness centre, four petals, red; [ii] the abdominal centre, six petals, deep purple red; (iii) the navel centre, ten petals, violet; (iv) the heart centre, twelve petals,, golden pink; (v) the throat centre, sixteen petals, grey; (vi) the forehead centre between the eye-brows, two petals, white; (vii) the thousand-petalled lotus above- the head, blue with gold light around.

' -The functions are, according to our yoga, (1) Commanding physical consciousness and the subconscious, (2) commanding the small vital movements, the little greeds, lusts, desires, the small sense-movements; (3) commanding the- larger life-forces and the passions and larger desire-movements (4) commanding the higher

emotional being with the- psychic deep within it; (5) commanding expression and externalisation of the mind movements and mental forces; (6) commanding thought, will and vision;(7) commanding the higher thinking mind and the illumined mind and opening upward to intuitive and overmind."⁵

" When we speak of Purusha in the head, heart, etc, we are using a figure. The Muladhara from which the Kundalini rises is not in the physical body, but in the subtle body (the subtle body is that in which the being goes out in deep trance, or more radically, at the time of death); so also are all the centres. But as the subtle body penetrates and is. interfused with the gross body, there is a certain correspondence between these Chakras and certain centres in the-' physical proper. So figuratively we speak of the Purusha in this or that centre of the body."⁶

⁵ On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 370

⁶ Ibid, P. 373

PART VI

VEDA, UPANISHADS AND GITA

[*NOTE* : The series was begun with this subject : "the Veda, Upanishads and the Gita ", on the 4th of December 1961. It was the day on which Sri Aurobindo withdrew from the body. So, the series was begun with salutation to him in the words of the late C. R. Reddy, the Vice Chancellor of Andhra University.

" In all humility and devotion I hail Sri Aurobindo as the sole sufficing genius of the age. He is more than the hero of the nation. He is amongst the saviours of humanity, who belong to all ages and all nations, the Sanatanas, who leaven our existence with their eternal presence, whether we are aware of it or not. "]

Agni : Agni is said to be all the other gods, he is the One that becomes all; at the same time he is said to contain all the gods in himself as the nave of a wheel contains the spokes, he is the One that contains all and yet as Agni he is described as a separate deity, One who helps all the others, exceeds them in force and knowledge, yet is inferior to them in Cosmic position and is employed by them as messenger, priest and worker - the creator of the world and father, he is yet the son born of our works, he is, that is to say, the original and manifested indwelling Self or Divine, the One that inhabits all.¹

VEDA

It is not possible to deal with the three subjects at length; for each of them might easily require a life-time for study.

¹The Life Divine, P. 145

It is Sri Aurobindo's interpretations of these that can be attempted in outline; for even a detailed exposition of one subject, like the Veda, would be outside the scope of the attempt. On the Veda alone he has written two voluminous books : "On the Veda" and "Hymns to the Mystic Fire. " It would be possible only to indicate in what particular respect Sri Aurobindo's interpretation is marked by his own Vision.

How Sri Aurobindo came to the study of the Veda :

Sri Aurobindo is not a scholar who takes up the work of interpreting the Veda; his entry in the Vedic literature is best given in his own words :

" First, it seems to me advisable to explain the genesis of the theory in my own mind, so that the reader may better understand the line I have taken or, if he chooses, check my prepossessions or personal preference which may have influenced or limited the right application or reasoning to this difficult problem. " ²

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" Like the majority of educated Indians I had passively accepted without examination; before myself reading the Veda, the conclusions of European scholarship both as to the religious and as to the historical and ethical sense of the ancient hymns. In consequence, following again the ordinary line taken by modernised Hindu opinion, I regarded the Upanishads as the most ancient source of Indian thought and religion, the true Veda, the first book of Knowledge...."

" My first contact with Vedic thought came indirectly while pursuing certain lines of self-development in the

way of Indian yoga, which without my knowing it, were spontaneously converging towards the ancient and now unfrequented

²On the Veda, P. 42

paths followed by our forefathers. At this time there began to arise in my mind an arrangement of symbolic names attached to certain psychological experiences which had begun to regularise themselves; and among them there came the figures of three female energies, Ila, Saraswati Sarama, representing severally three out of four faculties of the intuitive reason, revelation, inspiration and intuition. Two of these names were not well known to me as names of Vedic Goddesses, but were connected rather with the current Hindu religion or with old Puranic legend, Saraswati, goddess of learning and Ila, mother of the Lunar dynasty. But Sarama was familiar enough. I was unable, however, to establish any connection between the figure that arose in my mind and the Vedic hound of heaven, who was associated in my memory with Argive Helen and represented only an image of the physical Dawn entering in its pursuit of the vanished herds of Light into the cave of the Powers of darkness. When once the clue is found, the clue of the physical Light imaging, the subjective, it is easy to see that the hound may be the intuition entering into the dark caverns of the subconscious mind to prepare the delivery and out- flashing of the bright illuminations of knowledge which have there been imprisoned. "³

{ II }

"It is my stay in Southern India which first seriously turned my thoughts to the Veda. Two observations that were forced on my mind, gave a serious shock to my second- hand belief in the racial division between Northern Aryans and Southern Dravidians. The distinction had always rested for me on a supposed difference between the physical types of Aryan and Dravidian, and a more definite incompatibility

³ On the Veda, P. 42-43

between the Northern Sanskritic and the Southern non-Sanskritic tongues.I could not, however, belong in southern India without being impressed by the general recurrence of northern or " Aryan" types in the Tamil race....."

" But what then of the sharp distinction between Aryan and Dravidian races created by the philologists ? It disappears. "

" On examining the vocables of the Tamil language, in appearance so foreign to the Sanskrit form and character, I yet found myself continually guided by words or by families of words supposed to be pure Tamil in establishing new relations between Sanskrit and its distant sister, Latin and occasionally, between the Greek and the Sanskrit.....And this Dravidian language that I came first to perceive what seems to me now the true law, origins and, as it were, the embryology of the Aryan tongues. "⁴

" It was, therefore, with a double interest that for the first time I took up the Veda in the original, though without any intention of a close or serious study. It did not take long to see that the Vedic indications of a racial division between Aryan and Dasyus and the identification of the latter with the indigenous Indians were a far flimsier character than I had supposed. But more interesting to me was the discovery of a considerable body of

profound psychological thought lying neglected in these ancient hymns. "⁵

{ III }

" I was helped in arriving at this result by my fortunate ignorance of the commentary of Sayana. For I was left free to attribute their natural psychological significance

4 On the Veda, P. 45

5 Ibid, P. 45

to many ordinary and current words of the Veda, such as *dhi*, thought or understanding; *manas*, mind, *mail* thought, feeling or mental state; *manisha*, intellect, *ritam* truth; to give their exact shade to *kavi*, seer, *manishi*, thinker *vipra*, *vipaschit*, enlightened in the mind and a number of similar words;..⁶

{ IV }

"On one condition this transformation into psychological complexion is frequently complete, the condition that we should, admit the symbolic character of the Vedic sacrifice. We find in the Gita the word Yajna, sacrifice, used in a symbolic sense for all action, whether internal or external, that is consecrated to the gods or to the Supreme ... I found in the Veda itself there were hymns in which the idea of the Yajna or of the victim is openly symbolical, others in which the veil is quite transparent... If the yajna is the action consecrated to the Gods, I could not but take the yajaman as the doer of the action.. he must be the soul or the personality as the doer. But there were also the officiating priests, *hota*, *ritwij*, *purohit*, *brahman*, *adhvaryu*... I found the gods were continually spoken of as priests of the offering and in many passages it was undisguised by a non-human power or energy which presided over the sacrifice. "⁷

{ V }

" The Angirasa legend and Vritra mythus are the two principal parables of the Veda; they occur and recur everywhere ... when we have determined their sense, we have

6 On the Veda, P. 46

7 Ibid, P. 49-50

determined the sense of the whole Rik Samhita. "⁸

" We have concluded that the Angirasa Rishis are bringers of the Dawn, rescuers of the Sun out of the darkness, but that this Dawn, Sun, Darkness are figures used with a spiritual significance. The central conception of the Veda' is the conquest of the Truth out of the darkness of Ignorance and by the conquest of the Truth the conquest also of Immortality.⁹

" The seven divine Angirasas are sons or powers of Agni," powers of the Seer-Will, the flame of the divine force instinct with divine Knowledge which is' kindled for the victory.¹⁰

THE RIG VEDA

Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Veda is psychological and spiritual. It unveils the mystic import of the Vedic symbols on the basis of internal evidence. Sri Aurobindo argues that corresponding to the school of Vedic mysteries there were such schools in Egypt, Greece and Asia Minor.

That Sayana's Bhashya-commentary-is not the sole undisputed authority on the meaning of the Vedic hymns is amply proved by Yaska's Nirukta, the first attempt at preserving the Vedic knowledge current in Yaska's time. Yaska is prior to Sayana, and he admits triple interpretation of every hymn-*Tan-Adhibhautik, Adhidaivik, Adhyatmik-and* in the course of his exegesis mentions more than twenty schools and individuals who give different interpretation of the hymns.

Yaska in his introduction admits ten unknown-anavagaam- categories showing clearly the uncertainty that prevailed in his times about the meaning of the Veda.

8 On the Veda, P. 277

9 Ibid P. 278

10 Ibid P. 278

The Western scholarship almost, entirely relies on Sayana and it is not so much interested in finding the meaning of the hymns as in interpreting the meaning assigned to them by Sayana. But as I have just shown, the meaning of the hymns had become vague and uncertain even in Yaska's time. Sayana's Bhashya could hardly be accepted as their most authoritative exposition. Besides the Western Schools are more interested in finding the history, social customs, institutions in the Vedas which might support their hypothesis of a primitive Indian world.

Much has been made of the word ' Arya ' by foreign scholars and their Indian followers. The word 'Arya' आर्य occurs 33 times in the Rig Veda; 22 times it is applied to Indra, 6 times to Agni. The remaining five references do not indicate any racial conflict.¹¹The word Dasa दस्यु occurs 80 times, and Dasyu दस्यु 70 times.

Sri Aurobindo's interpretation is based on :

1. Internal evidence of the Vedic hymns. He regards Veda as of one piece; even a cursory glance would show that all the Mandals deal with one subject- matter, and have a common form. It must therefore lead to one significance.
2. There are special words used in the Veda which are the key-words and have a double-meaning; this has grammatical justification.
3. Metrical development of the hymns indicates a high degree of cultural advance.
4. All through the Veda symbols are used profusely- even the ceremony of sacrifice, yajna, is symbolic including even the participants and the materials.
5. The psychological words used in the Veda indicate

¹¹ तिस्रः प्रजा आर्या ज्योतिरग्रा: VII. 33. 7
तिस्रो वाचः प्र वद ज्योतिरग्रा VII. 01-1
अपावृणोत् ज्योतिः आर्याय II. 11-18

a highly developed society, at least an intellectual oligarchy.

6. The gods and their functions are symbolic and psychological.

7. The legends in the Veda are also symbolic and capable of psychological interpretation.

Special words with philological justification:

'go' गो; 'ashwa' अश्व; 'vrita' वृत; 'Vrika' वृक; 'Vamadeva' वामदेव; 'Dirghatamas' दीर्घतमस्; 'Parashara' पराशर; 'Angirasa' अंगिरस; 'Angirastama' अंगिरस्तम; 'Gavishtira' गविष्टिर; 'Gotama' गोतम; 'Vishwamitra' विश्वामित्र; 'Vasishtha' वसिष्ठ; 'Bharadwaja' भरद्वाज; 'Bhaga' भग; 'Dhenu' धेनु; 'Vana' वन; 'Dasyu' दस्यु; 'Vala' वल; 'Panis' पणिस; 'Vrishan' वृषन्; 'Brahma' ब्रह्मा; 'Brihat' बृहत्; 'Barhi' बरिहि;

Ex: 'go' , 'गो; ' means both 'cow' and 'ray of light'; Parashara is regarded as a proper name; but in the hymns it carries its root-meaning - " one who overcomes the enemies" It is used as an adjective of Indra in the hymns. ' Gotama ' गोतम; means " One, most full of light". Dirghatamas, " One, who is, or was, long in darkness ". Vrita " One who covers "; Vrika " One who tears "; Vishwamitra "The friend of all " " Universal friend; " Panis " The trafficker "; Dhenu " One who nourishes. "3

Sacrifice-yajna-"यज्ञ, in the Veda is symbolic. Sacrifice really is a means of interchange between men and the gods. Sacrifice in the Veda is Adhwara, a pilgrimage, and a battle. The officiating priests: *Hota*, one who calls; *Adhwaryu*, the priest of the journey; *Ritwik*, one who sacrifices at the

2 ३ द्विबहि ' Dwibarhi' - " One who is nourished or increased Ivy two worlds " Sayana X. 116.1 (At times even Sftyana stumbles into correct symbolic sense).

3 For further clarification refer to "Studies in Vedic Interpretation" by the author, Chowkhambha Sanskrit Series, Benaras.

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right season according to law; Brahma the voice of Rhythm the reciter of the word of creative power welling from the soul.

The fruits of the sacrifice - *go*, *ashwa*, *rayi*, *ratna*^ *vira*, *praja*, *tanaya* - also are symbolic.

The offerings— *ghrita*, *soma*, *purodash* - are also symbolic.4

4 यज्ञो हि त इन्द्र वर्धनो भू दुर्ताप्रयः III .32. Yajna is symbolic. In 1.163 Ashwa is symbolic - the whole Sukta being dedicate to Ashwa e. g. हिरण्यशृङ्गोऽय्यो अस्य पादा मनोजवा अवर इन्द्र आसीत् "The Horse has the horns of gold and feet of steel; it has the speed of mind - he was like another inferior Indra. " Soma is symbolic in 1X.113.

अतुवाकेन सत्येन श्रद्धया तपसा सुत । इन्द्रायैन्दो परि स्रव ॥
यत्र ज्योतिरजसं यस्मिन्लोके स्वहितम् । लोका यत्र ज्योतिष्मन्तस्तत्र
मां अमृतं कृधि ॥

Pressed out by the Truthful speech, by truth, by faith and by Tapas. O Indu - flow for Indra's sake.

Where the light is unfailing, in the plane wherein the Heaven (of mind) is established, where the peoples are full of light - there, O Soma, make me immortal.

'go' is symbolic in III. 30. 10; cows here are identical with light, and light is one with 'rivers' and with vani, speech :

सुगान् पथो अकृणोन्निरजे गाः प्रावन् वाणीः पुरुहूतं धमन्तीः
Vrishabha-The Bull is symbolic : स रेताधा वृषभः शश्वतीनां
स्मन्नात्मा जगतः तस्युपश्व VII, 101. 6. He is the Bull that

gives the seed, the Bull of Immortality, in whom rests the self the moving and the unmoving. 'Ghrita' is symbolic. Even Sayana at times accepts the symbolic sense e. g. आपृणि आगतदीप्ति स गत क्रोधो वा VI. 55.1. Sayana

Words formed from धृ showing the various symbolic appli :

cations : आधृणि, धृताची, धृतपृथा, धृतधी, धर्म, धृतपृष्ठा, धृत-
दुरते, धृतस्तुतिः, धृतश्चुतं, धृतवसानाः, धृतपृष्, धृतप्रतीक,
धृतवती, धृतपृचा, धृतवतिनी, धृतवृधा—

A small list of psychological words⁵ used in the Rig Veda showing clearly that the Vedic Rishis were far from
a. primitive state of culture.

Satyam-----	Truth of being
Ritam-----	Truth of movement, of action, a law
Brihat-----	Vast, all-pervading
Dhi-----	Intellect
Mati-----	Thinking
Manisha-----	Mentalising
Jna-----	To know
Budh -----	To be aware, to awake
Chetana-----	Consciousness
Chit-----	To be conscious
Chitti-----	Consciousness
Achitti -----	Unconsciousness
Dha with Ava-----	To place (the mind) upon (something).
Man-----	To think
Vicheta-----	One supremely -conscious
. Sumana-----	One with a happy state of mind or thought
Shiva-----	The beneficent

देवासो अग्निं जनयन्त चित्तिभिः	III. 2-3
विप्रासो अग्निं महयन्त चित्तिभिः	III. 3-3
ऋतावान ऋतजाता अनृतद्विषः ।	VII. 66-13
अपादजीर्षां सुहृमानो अंताऽऽयो युवानो वृषभस्य नीळे	IV. 1-II
चित्तिं अचित्तिं चित्तवद् विद्वान् । पृष्टेव वीता वृजिना च मर्तान्	IV, 2-II
इन्द्रो देवेषु चेतति	VII. 32-28
ऋतावानावृतमा घोषतो बृहत्	VIII. 25-4
ऋतं बृहत्	IX. 108-8
पवमान ऋतं बृहत् शुक्रं ज्योतिरजीजनत् । कृष्णा तमांसि जघनत् ।	IX. 66-24
अन्तर्हर्षग्नि ईयसे	II. 6-7

Kalyana-----	Welfare, state of spiritual attainment.
Dhira-----	One who has the calm intellect
Vipra-----	One who is illumined
Medhavi-----	One who is a genius (of quick comprehension)
Vicharshani-----	One who has the illumined sight
Vipaschit-----	One whose consciousness is illumined

Pracheta -----	One whose consciousness is expanded, active
Kavi-----	The Seer
Kratu-----	Will
Rishi -----	One with a vision
Daksha-----	One with will or power
Hridaya-----	The heart
Mayas-----	Bliss
Bhadram-----	Happy beauty
Rayi -----	Delight
Ratnam-----	Shining joy
Moda-----	Sweet-intoxicating-delight
Pramoda-----	More intoxicating delight
Vid -----	To know
Vidwan -----	The knower
Swasti -----	Happy state of being
Varna-----	Delight
Vana-----	Delight
Sumati-----	Happy state of mind

The use of these words containing various psychological functions and even shades, e. g. *Dhi, Mali, Chetana* etc., shows the advanced state of the Vedic seers.

VEDIC GODS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SYMBOLIC 6

The first Sukta of the third Mandala (iii. 1) of Vishwamitra

6 A monogram in the Vedic gods has been written by Sri Aurobindo. It is now the foreword to the Hymns to the Mystic Fire.

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is symbolic ; there the relation between Agni, Rivers and Waters is stated indicating the symbolic nature of the god Agni as well as that of the Rivers and the Waters.

In 1.26.2 Agni is said to be *Sada Yavishtha manma- bhih* " Eternally, the most youthful by thought-forces ". In 1.73.2 Fire is said to be *Satya manma* " One with truthful thoughts ".

In IV. 39. 1-6 Dadhikravan has only spiritual functions. So also in IV. 40 Dadhikravan, a form of Agni, is spoken of as performing the functions of the Gods. In IV. 40.5-the last Rik; Dadhikravan is so openly symbolic as to leave no •doubt in the minds even of the most reluctant.

Saraswati, either the river or goddess, or both, is *Sadhayanti Dhiyam nah* " perfects our intelligence "; Usha the goddess Dawn is *Yuvati pnrani* the " semipiternal young beauty ", and Agni, the god of Fire, representing the Divine Will, is " the Divine guest in the mortals. "

In III. 32. 12 Vishwamitra says to Indra: "The sacrifice becomes thy increaser, O Indra, and the sacrifice in which Soma is pressed is dear to thee; thou, worthy of sacrifice, protect the sacrifice by the sacrifice; may this sacrifice guard thy thunderbolt in the killing of the coverer. "

Also in I. 31. 1. Agni is not the material fire : "Thou, O Fire, art the original Angirasa Seer, thou, a God, hast

become the beneficent comrade of the gods. " Further in I. 31. 7 the Rishi says " 0 Fire, thou upholdest the mortal in the highest status of immortality for inspired hearing day after day; for him who desires the double birth, thou makest for him, the seer, delight and enjoyment. "

" 0 Fire, thou art easy to sacrifice to for men, thee the Bhrigus established among men for (attaining) divine birth, beautiful like delightful wealth. " I. 58. 6.

Here the aim of the sacrifice is clearly stated to be the

7. सदा यविष्ठ मन्मभिः

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attainment of " divine birth " which would make man realise Immortality, the Delight of the Eternal. "

In I. 62. 2. the Rishi exhorts the gathering "to hold up powerfully a great surrender-a salutation; by that surrender our ancient forefathers, the Angirasas, knowers of the path, discovered the Ray Cows. " Here the effectivity of the salutation - surrender - to Indra is stressed and the Angirasas found out - not the animal - cows - the Ray-Cows by pursuing the path he knew.

It has been argued sometimes that the Veda speaks of the gods but not of the One, Infinite, the Brahman; therefore- the schools of monistic Vedanta are not really founded on the Veda, though they offer to the latter Up homage. This is not true though it must be emphasised that as the Vedic Seers are not laying down any school of philosophy they speak not primarily about the One. But there are clear statements to show that to them the multiplicity of the gods was not a dividing bar, they hold that all the gods were the names and aspects of the One :'

एकं सद्ब्रिधा बहुधा वदन्ति; तत् एकम्; ऋतं बृहत् IX.108.8
महद्देवानां असुरत्वमेकम् I; IX.66.24
एक एवाग्निर्ब्रह्मा समिद्धः, एकं वा इदं वि ब्रभूव सर्वम् VIII.58.2.

. Legends : The Vedic legends at first sight appear, to be historical or a mixture of myths and history, but on • closer examination they are found to contain symbolic sense. The Angirasa legend, in particular, is one such.

In IV. 3. 11 "Angirasa seers are said to break open the- hill-(mountain) by the truth ! and they united themselves with the Ray-Cows; the heroes happily sat round the Dawn; when Fire was born then Heaven (higher mental world) became manifest"s

The breaking open of the hill or mountain by the Truth indicates the symbolic nature of the mountain and that the. action of the Angirasa seers.

8 These translations are from the " Hymns to the Mystic fire".

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In V. 1. 8 Agni is clearly symbolic and so is Vrishabha, the Bull. " The purifier, he is rubbed bright and pure, he ' who is proclaimed by the seers, one who is the dweller in his own house, and is our benignant guest; the Bull of the thousand horns because thou has strength of that, 0 Fire, thou predest in puissance all others ".

In VIII. 9.4 the Rishi says that the Ashwins became conscious of Vritra-the Coverer-by the sweet (or honeyed) Soma drink ! thus Vritra and Soma must bear symbolic significance.

III.39. 5 says "Indra with the ten Dashgwa Rishis found out the Sun living in darkness—That Truth ". Here the finding of the Sun is the finding of that Truth.

In X.62.3 the Angirasa seers "make the Sun ascend in heaven by the Truth"—*Ritena Suryamarohayat divi....*

In VII. 23. 3. Indra is said to " have killed many Vritras" and he obstructs by his might both heaven and earth. Some hymns that bear symbolic sense :

It may be of interest to point out, in conclusion, certain hymns that evidently bear a spiritual or symbolic significance.

I. 163. This whole Sukta dedicated to Ashwa-the Horse- is openly symbolic. The Horse rises from the sea, and is swift like the hawk, he is Yama, and also Aditya. It is Horse with golden horns and steel hooves, it has speed of mind, the Horse is like inferior Indra !

I 50. 10. " Looking beyond the darkness, we saw the Light beyond, higher still we entered (went to) the godhead, the Sun, the Highest Light among the gods. "

This is, clearly, the expression of the experience of the ascent of human consciousness to the Light above the mind.

V. 15. 2. " By the Truth they hold the Truth that holds a!l, in the might of the Sacrifice, in the Supreme ether, they who reached the gods seated in the Law that is upholder of heaven, reached by the godheads born the unborn. "

V. 19.1. " State upon state is born, covering upon covering has become conscious and awake, in the lap of the Mother

he sees. "

V. 62.1. " There is a Truth covered by a Truth, where they unyoke the horses of the Sun; the ten hundreds stood together, there was That one; I saw the greatest (best, most glorious) of the embodied gods. "

VIII. 58. 2. "It is only one Fire that is kindled in many ways, one Sun that dominates over all; one Dawn that makes all this shine, it is the One that has become various by all this."

I. 115. I. " The Sun is Self of all that is moving and unmoving. "

I. 20.1. " This hymn of praise is made for the divine birth - for the birth of the god. "

II. 6. 7. " O Fire, thou movest within having knowledge of both the Births. "

APPENDIX

WHY THE WAY IS HIDDEN

" The World lost its proper course, and the course it took only led it further astray. The World and the Way, *being* thus lost to each other, how could the men of the Way bring it again to the World ? And how could the World rise to an appreciation of the Way ? Since the Way had no means to make itself conspicuous in the World, and the World had no- means of rising to an appreciation of the Way then, though sagely men might not keep to the hills and forests, their virtue was hidden - hidden, but not because they themselves sought to hide it. The sages were under the compulsion of their times. When these conditions shut them up entirely from such action as they could do, they struck their roots deeper in themselves, were perfectly still and they waited. It was thus they preserved the Way in their own persons."

" The hypothesis I propose is that the Rig-veda is itself the one considerable document that remains to us from the early period of human thought of which the historic Eleusinian and Orphic mysteries were the failing remnants, when the spiritual and psychological knowledge of the race was concealed, for reasons now difficult to determine, in a veil of concrete and material figures and symbols which protected the sense from the profane and revealed it to the initiated. One of the leading principles of the mystics was the sacredness and secrecy of self-knowledge and the true knowledge of the God. This wisdom was, they thought, unfit, perhaps even dangerous - to the ordinary mind or in any case liable to perversion and misuse and loss of virtue if revealed to vulgar and un-purified spirits. Hence they favoured the existence of an outer

¹ Chuang Tzu XVI, 3 Volume II No. 8, May 1957.

worship, effective but imperfect, for the profane, and inner discipline for the initiate, and clothed their language in words and images which had, equally, a spiritual sense for the elect and a concrete sense for the mass of ordinary worshippers. The Vedic hymns were conceived and constructed on this principle. Their formulas and ceremonies are, overtly, the details of! an outward ritual devised for the Pantheistic Nature-Worship which was then the common religion, covertly the sacred words, the effective symbols of a spiritual experience and knowledge and a psychological discipline of self-culture which were then the highest achievement of the human race. The ritual recognised by Sayana may, in its externalities, stand the naturalistic sense discovered by European scholarship may, in its general conceptions, be accepted; but behind them there is always the true and still hidden secret of the Veda, the secret words *Ninya Vacamsi*, which were spoken for the purified in soul and the awakened in knowledge. To disengage this less obvious but more important sense by fixing the import of Vedic terms, the sense of Vedic symbols and the psychological functions of the Gods is thus a difficult but necessary task, for which these chapters and the translations that accompany them are only a preparation."²

" Their aim was illumination, not logical conviction, their ideal the inspired seer, not the accurate reasoner. Indian tradition has faithfully preserved this account of the origin of the Vedas. The Rishi was not the individual composer of the hymn, but the seer (*Drasta*) of an eternal truth and an impersonal knowledge. The language of Veda itself is *Sruti*, a rhythm not composed by the intellect but heart, a divine Word that came vibrating out of the Infinite to the inner audience of the man who had previously made himself fit for the impersonal knowledge. The words themselves *Dristi* and *Sruti*, sight and hearing, are Vedic expressions;

these and cognate words signify in the esoteric terminology of the hymns revelatory knowledge and the contents of inspiration."

"In the Vedic Idea of the revelation there is no suggestion of the miraculous or the supernatural. The Rishi, who employed these faculties, had acquired them by a progressive self-culture ".³

" We have at any rate, the same notions repeated from hymn to hymn with the same constant terms and figures and frequently in the same phrases with an entire indifference to any search for poetical originality or any demand for novelty of thought and freshness of language. No pursuit of aesthetic grace, richness or beauty induces these mystic poets to vary the consecrated from which had become for them a sort of divine algebra transmitting the eternal formulae of the Knowledge to the continuous succession of the initiates. "⁴

" It is even possible that its most ancient hymns are a comparatively modern development or version of a more ancient s lyric evangel couched in the freer and more pliable forms of a still earlier human speech. Or the whole voluminous mass of its litanies may be only a selection by Veda Vyasa out of more richly vocal Aryan past. Made, according to the common belief, by Krishna of the Isle, the great traditional sage, the colossal compiler (Vyasa), with his face turned towards the commencement of the Iron Age, towards the centuries of increasing twilight and final darkness, it is perhaps only the last testament of the Ages of Intuition, the luminous Dawns of the Forefathers, to their descendents,

³ On the Veda, P. 11

⁴ Ibid P. 12

⁵ The Veda itself speaks constantly of " Ancient " and " Modern " Rishis, (Parva....Nutanah), the former remote enough to be regarded as a kind of demigods, the first founders of knowledge.

to a human race already turning in spirit towards the lower levels and the more easy and secure gains, secure perhaps only in appearance of the physical life and of the intellect and the logical reason."⁶

" The Rig Veda is one in all its parts. Whichever of its ten Mandalas we choose, we find the same substance, the , same ideas, the same images, the same phrases. The Rishis are the seers of a single truth and use in its expression a common language. They differ in temperament and personality; some are inclined to a more rich, subtle and profound use of Vedic symbolism; others give voice to their spiritual experience in a barer and simpler diction, with less fertility of thought, richness of poetical image or depth and fullness of suggestion. Often the songs of one seer vary in their manner, range from the utmost simplicity to the most curious richness. If there are rising and fallings in the same hymn, it proceeds from the most ordinary convention of- the general symbol of sacrifice to a movement of packed and complex thought. Some of the Suktas are plain and almost modern in their language; others baffle us at first by their semblance of antique unity of spiritual experience, nor are they complicated by any variation of the fixed terms and the common formulae. In the deep and mystic style of Dirghatamas Auchathya as in the melodious lucidity of Medhatithi Kanwa, in the puissant and energetic hymns of Vishwamitra as in Vashishtha's even harmony we have the same firm foundation of knowledge and the same scrupulous adherence to the sacred conventions of the initiates."⁷

" The internal evidence of the Riks themselves establishes that this significance is psychological, as otherwise the terms lose their fixed value, their precise sense, necessary connection and their constant recurrence in relation to

6. On the Veda, P. 13-14

7 Ibid, P. 67

to be regarded as fortuitous and void of reason or purpose.

"We shall find that the whole of the Rig Veda is practically a constant variation of this double theme, the preparation of the human being in mind and body and the fulfilment of the godhead or immortality in him by his attainment and development of the Truth and the Beatitude."⁸

"The Rishi next passes to the Vishvadevas, all the gods or the all-gods. It has been disputed whether these Vishva- devas form a class by themselves or are simply the gods in their generality. I take it that the phrase means the universal collectivity of the divine powers; for this sense seems to me best to correspond to the actual expressions of the hymns in which they are invoked."⁹

"They are fosterers or increasers of man and upholders of his labour and effort in the work, the sacrifice '*omasas carsanidhrta*'. Sayana renders these words protectors and sustainers of men. I need not enter here into a full justification of the significances which I prefer to give them;

for I have already indicated the philological method which I follow. Sayana himself finds it impossible to attribute always the sense of protection to the words derived from the root "AV", "AVAS", "UTI", "UMA", etc. which are so common in the hymns, and is obliged to give to the same word in different passages the most diverse and unconnected significance".

"Similarly, while it is easy to attribute the sense of "Man" to the two kindred words '*Carsoni*' and '*Kristi*' when they stand by themselves, this meaning seems unaccountably to disappear in compound forms like *vicarsani visvacarsani, visvasristi*. Sayana himself is obliged to render *visvacarsani*, "all-seeing" and not "All-man". I do not admit the possibility of such abysmal variations in fixed Vedic terms. AV

8 On the Veda, P. 90

9 Ibid, P. 99

can mean to be, have, keep; contain, protect; become, create foster, increase, thrive, prosper, gladden, be glad; but it is the sense of increasing or fostering which seems to me to prevail in the Veda. *Cars* and *Krs* were originally derivate roots from *Car* and *Kr* both meaning to do, and the sense of laborious action or movement still remains in *Krs*, to drag, to plough. *Carsani* and *Kristi* mean therefore effort, laborious action or work or else the doers of such action. They are two among the many words, *Karma, Apas, Kara, Kri, Duvas* etc.) which are used to indicate the Vedic work, the sacrifice, the toil of aspiring humanity, the *Arati* of the Aryan."¹⁰

"The number 'seven' plays an exceedingly important part in the Vedic system, as in most ancient schools of thought. We find it recurring constantly—the seven delights, *sapta ratnani*; the seven flames, tongues of rays of Agni, *sapta arcisah, sapta jvalah*; the seven forms of the Thought- principle, *sapta dhitayah*; the seven Rays or Cows, forms of the Cow, unslayable, Aditi, mother of the gods, *sapta gavah*; the seven rivers, the seven mothers of fostering cows, *septa matarah, sapta dhenavah*, a term applied indifferently to the Rays and the Rivers. All these sets of seven depend, it seems to me, upon the Vedic classification of the fundamental principles, the *tattvas*, of existence. The enquiry into the number of these *tattvas* greatly interested the speculative mind of the ancients and in

Indian philosophy we find various answers ranging from the One upwards and running into twenties. In Vedic thought the basis chosen was the number of the psychological principles, because all existence was conceived by the Rishis as a movement of conscious being. However merely curious or barren these speculations and classifications may seem to the modern mind, they were no mere dry metaphysical distinctions, but closely

connected with a living psychological practice of which they were to a great extent the thought-basis, and in any case we must understand them clearly if we wish to form with any accuracy an idea of this ancient and far off system. "11

" The antique view of the world as a psycho-physical and not merely a material reality is at the root of the ancient ideas about the efficacy of the *mantra* and the relation of the gods to the external life of man; hence the force of prayer, worship, sacrifice for material ends; hence the use of them for worldly life and in so-called magic rites which come out prominently in the Atharva Veda and is behind much of the symbolism of the Brahmanas.¹² But in man himself the gods are conscious psychological powers. Will- powers, they do the works of will; they are the thinkings in our hearts; they are the lords of delight who take delight they travel in all the directions of the thought. Without them the soul of man cannot distinguish its right nor its left, what is in front of it nor what is behind, the things of foolishness or the things of wisdom; only if led by them can it reach and enjoy ' the fearless Light' . For this reason Dawn is addressed ' O thou who art human and divine ' and the gods constantly described as the ' Men ' or human powers (*manushah*, *narah*); they are our ' luminous seers ', ' our heroes ', ' our lords of plentitude '. They conduct the sacrifice in their human capacity (*manusvat*) as well as receive it in their high divine being. Agni is the priest of the oblation, Brihaspati the priest of the word. In this sense Agni is said to be born from the heart of man; all the gods are thus born by the sacrifice, grow, and out of their human action assume their divine bodies. Soma, the wine of the world-delight,

11. On the VedaTp. 111-12

12 This is the real secret of the external sense of Veda which is all that the modern scholars have been and so imperfectly understood. Even the exoteric religion was much more than a mere Nature worship.

rushing through the mind which is its 'luminous, wide- extended ' strainer of purification, cleansed there by the ten sisters pours forth giving birth to the gods. "13

" The Veda is a book of esoteric symbols, almost of, spiritual formulae, which masks itself as a collection of ritual poems. The inner sense is psychological, universal, .impersonal; the ostensible significance and the figures which were meant to reveal to the initiates what they concealed from the ignorant, are to all appearance crudely concrete, intimately personal, loosely occasional and allusive. To this lax outer garb the Vedic poets are sometimes careful to give a clear and coherent form quite other than the strenuous inner soul of their meaning; their language then becomes a cunningly woven mask for hidden truths. More often they are negligent of the disguise which they use, and when they thus rise above their instrument, a literal and external translation gives either a bizarre, unconnected sequence of sentences or a form of thought and speech strange and remote to the uninitiated intelligence. It is only when the figures and symbols are made to suggest their concealed equivalents that there emerges out of the obscurity a transparent and well-linked though close and subtle sequence of spiritual,

psychological and religious ideas. It is this method of suggestion that I have attempted.'¹⁴

" Confronted with the stately hymns of the ancient dawn, we are conscious of a blank incomprehension. And we leave them as pray to the ingenuity of the scholar who gropes for forced meanings amid obscurities and incongruities where the ancients bathed their souls in harmony and light. '"¹⁵

" The Vedic language as a whole is a powerful and remarkable instrument, terse, knotted, virile, packed, and in its turns careful rather to follow the natural flight of the thought in

13. On the veda, P. 548-549

14. Ibid, P. 415

15. Ibid, P. 416

the mind than to achieve the smooth and careful constructions and the clear transitions of a logical and rhetorical syntax. But translated without modification into English, such a language would become harsh, abrupt and obscure, a dead and heavy movement with nothing in it of the morning vigour and puissant stride of the original. I have, therefore, preferred to throw it in translation into a mould more plastic and natural to the English tongue, using the construction and devices of transition which best suit a modern speech while preserving the logic of the original thought; and I have never hesitated to reject the bald dictionary equivalent of the Vedic word for an ampler phrase in the English where that was necessary to bring out the full sense and associations. Throughout I have kept my eye fixed on my primary object—to make the inner sense of the Veda seizable by the cultured intelligence of today. "¹⁶

"Who in this age of Iron shall have the strength to recover the light of the Forefathers or soar above the two enclosing firmaments of mind and body into their luminous empyrean of the infinite Truth? The Rishis sought to conceal their knowledge from the unfit, believing perhaps that the corruption of the best might lead to the worst and fearing to give the potent wine of the Soma to the child and the weakling. But whether their spirits still move among us looking for the rare Aryan soul in a mortality that is content to leave the radiant herds of the Sun for ever imprisoned in the darkling cave of the Lords of the sense-life or whether they await in their luminous world the hour when the Marut shall again drive abroad and the Hound of Heaven shall once again speed down to us from beyond the rivers or Paradise and the seals of the heavenly waters be broken and the cavern shall be rent and the immortalising wine shall be pressed out in the body of man by the electric thunder-stones, their

16. On the Veda, P. 420.

secret remains safe to them. "¹⁷

" Our life is a horse that neighing and galloping bears us onward and upward; its forces are swift-hoved steed; the liberated powers of the mind are wide-winged birds; this mental being or this soul is the upsoaring Swan or the Falcon that breaks out from a hundred iron walls and wrests from the jealous guardians of felicity the wine of the Soma. Every shining godward Thought that arises from the secret abysses of the heart is a priest and a creator and chants a divine hymn of luminous realisation and puissant fulfilment. . We seek for the shining gold of the Truth; we lust after a heavenly treasure.

"The soul of man is a world full of beings, a kingdom in which armies clash to help or hinder a supreme conquest, a house where the *gods* are our guests and which the demons strive to possess; the fullness of its energies and wideness of its being make a seat of sacrifice spread, arranged and purified for a celestial session."⁸

"The Rig-veda arises out of the ancient Dawn a thousand voiced hymn lifted from the soul of man to an all-creative Truth and an all-illuminating Light. Truth and Light are synonymous or equivalent words in the thought of the Vedic seers even as are their opposites. Darkness and Ignorance. The battle of the Vedic Gods and Titans is a perpetual conflict between Day and Night for the possession of the triple world of heaven, mid-air and earth and for the liberation or bondage of the mind, life and body of the human being, his mortality or his immortality. It is waged by the Powers of a supreme Truth and Lords of supreme light against other dark Powers who struggle to maintain the foundations of this falsehood in which we dwell and the iron walls of these hundred fortified cities of the Ignorance. "19

17. On the Veda P. 421

18 Ibid P. 349

19. Ibid. P. 525.

THE UPANISHADS

Sri Aurobindo's approach to the Upanishads is not merely intellectual; he used them and the Gita as treasures of spiritual experience during the early period of his sadhana. To him they are not repositories of intellectual philosophies to be used in metaphysical discussions, but are inspired and intuitive- expressions of the seers continuing the spiritual tradition of the Veda.

He has given detailed interpretation of the Isha and Kena. An early translation of the eight Upanishad as also a revised one of the Mandukya is available. In his interpretation of the Upanishad he follows the same line that he does in that of the Veda relying on the straightforward meaning of words and internal evidence of the text. This is what he says about them: " Here the intuitive mind and intimate psychological- experience of the Vedic seers passes into a supreme culmination in which the Spirit, as is laid in a phrase of the Katha Upanishad, discloses its own very body, reveals the very word of its self-expression and discovers to the mind the- vibration of rhythms which repeating themselves within in the spiritual hearing seems to bind up the Soul and set it satisfied and complete on the heights of self-knowledge. "

He says further: "These works are not philosophical speculations of the intellectual kind, a metaphysical analysis which- labours to define notions, to select ideas and discriminate those that are true, to logicise truth or else to support the mind in its intellectual preferences by dialectical reasoning and is content to put forward an exclusive solution of existence in the light of this or that idea of the reason and see all things from that viewpoint, in that focus and determining perspective."

"The *Upanishads* are epic hymns of self-knowledge and?

The Foundation of Indian Culture,?, 305-306.

world-knowledge and God-knowledge. "22

Some writers have advanced the contention that the *Upanishads* represent the Jnana Kanda in opposition to KarmaKanda of the Veda: the Vedas stand for the rituals and Upanishads for knowledge. They even assert that the Upanishads are a revolt against the Vedic ritualism. Those opinions are not supported by proper study of the Riks or of the Upanishads. The core of the effort, both of the Veda and the Upanishads, is the attainment of a spiritual state which can lift man out of ignorance. Only, the Upanishads speak of the experience in intuitive, inspired and

revelatory speech which is different from that of the Veda. The Veda speaks in the language of symbols and is written at a time when Sanskrit speech was plastic and the words retained the memory of their origins. The Rishis speak out boldly about the visions they saw as concrete spiritual realities related to outer ceremonials of the sacrifice which was their mystic symbol of man's communication with the divine powers that surround him outwardly as well as inwardly. The difference in the language of the Veda and that of the Upanishads is marked: where we have Agni, Indra, Aditi, Surya etc. in the Veda, in the latter we have Jnana, Satya, Brahma, Prakriti, Atma, but still as Sri Aurobindo has pointed out in his foreword to the " Hymns to the Mystic Fire, " there are passages wherein the two types of expression meet. The Upanishad, like the Veda, aimed at attaining a secret knowledge: Artabhaga is asked by Yagnavalkya to retire into secrecy to speak about the problem of condition of the Soul after death.

There is hardly an Upanishad which does not include some Vedic hymns in its body, very often in a different context from that in the Veda. It shows the profound reverence in which the Vedas were held by the seers of the Upanishads.

2. ibid.

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For example, when Satyakama Jabala delays in imparting spiritual instruction to the young disciple his wife chides him and says:

मा त्वा अग्नयः परिप्रवोचम् (Chh. IV. 10.2)

" Let not the Fires instruct the seeker before you do. " Fire as a God was worshipped by the seers of the Upanishads. In Kathopanishad Nachiketa-Fire is mentioned as the deity that can help the aspirant to realise the Higher consciousness.

The Upanishads accepted the Vedic symbols in their psychological significance; for instance, धेनु Dhenu ' the fostering cow is spoken as 'वाचं धेनुमुपासीत । तस्याः चत्वारः स्तनाः ॥

" The fostering cow, the speech, must be worshipped; she has four udders. " (Brihad 5. 5. 8.) This has clear reference to Sukta 164 of the I Mandala.

That the sacrifice - Yagna - was symbolic to the seers of the Upanishads - as it was later to the writer of the Gita also is clear from texts like आदित्य एव समित् (VI. 1. 9. Brihad) and then सवन्तमर एव समित्

" The Sun is the offering holy wood for the sacrifice, so also " the year is the offering wood." Also असौ वा आदित्यो देव मधु Chhando 1.4)" That Sun - the son of Aditi - is the honey of the Gods " where the Sun and Honey both are openly symbolic.

The opening verse of the Brihadaranyaka shows not only that sacrifice was symbolic but that the universe itself is symbolised as the Horse-Sacrifice, Ashwamedha. This is the Ashwamedha in which Samudra is spoken as related to the Ashwa and to Usha, the goddess Dawn, who is the head of the sacrificial horse उषा वै अश्वमेधस्य शिरः ।

Thus the symbolism of the Veda is woven in these ancient Upanishads. Long ago I collected a list of Vedic words used in the Upanishads almost in the same sense : Ex. वामः Vama : meaning 'delight'. That sacrifice is symbolic hardly admits of any doubt in face of Upanishadic texts like पुरुषो वाच

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यज्ञः (Chhando 3. 16. 1.) " The Purusha is, indeed, the sacrifice" which is followed by the text dividing man's life into three parts, symbolically represented by the rhythms like Gayatri, Trishtubha, and Jagati, corresponding to the

morning, afternoon and evening sacrifice lasting 24, 44 and 48 years of life respectively, according to the number of words of the rhythm. यस्य यानि चतुर्विंशति वर्षाणि तस्मात् स्तवनं चतुर्विंशत्यक्षरा गायत्री गायत्र्यं प्रातःस्तवनम् (Chhando 3.16.1)

Aditya, generally identified with the Sun, is said to be the Brahman: आदित्यो ब्रह्म (Chhando III. 19)

If we examine some of the passages in which the Upanishads employ the Vedic words in the same sense we find that the symbolic sense is also accepted by them. तद्वचततद्वनं नाम "The name of That is that Delight ". तद्वचनमित्युपासितव्यम् " As that Delight one should seek it - follow after it. " :

The Upanishad employing its own terminology suddenly brings in the Vedic symbol as in:

विज्ञानतारक्षीर्यस्तु मनः प्रग्रहवान्नरः ।

सोऽध्वनः पारमाप्नोति तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम् ॥ (Katha I.3.9)

" That man who uses the mind for reins and the knowledge for the driver, reaches the end of his road—the highest seat of Vishnu." The " highest seat of Vishnu " is a Vedic phrase.³ So also,

हंसः शुचिपद् वसुरन्तरिक्षसद्गोता वेदिपदतिथिर्दुरोणसत् ।

नृपद् वहिर्पिसद् व्योमसदब्जा गोजा ऋतजा अद्रिजा ऋतम् ॥

Of the Katha is the same as Rig-veda IV.40.5. "Lo, the Swan whose dwelling is in the purity. He is Vasu in the inner regions, the Sacrificer at the altar, the Guest in the vessel of the drinking: he is in man, in the great Ones, and his home is in the Law (of the Truth), his dwelling is in the firmament: he is all that is born of the water, and all that is born of earth,

³ This is related to 1.22.20; 1.154.5

Taittiriya I.A.3 v. 9.

and all that is born on the mountains. He is the Truth, He is the mighty one." अनृतं उभयतः सत्येन गृहीतम् (Katha A.2. Valli. 5)

" Falsehood is embraced on both sides by Truth-partakes the nature of truth itself. " (Brihad. 5. 5' 1.) This can be compared to V. 5. 7. of the Rigveda.

Here the universal manifestation is spoken of as the Ashwattha tree: "This eternal Ashwattha tree has its root above and branches stretching below; that is the brilliant pure, that is the Brahman, that is what is called Immortal. "

(Katha 2. Valli 6. 1.)

ऊर्ध्वमूलोऽवाक् शाखः एषोऽश्वत्थः सनातनः ।

तदेव शुक्रं तद्ब्रह्म तदेवामृतमुच्यते ॥

The tendency to turn spiritual experience into symbols seems almost inevitable because that seems to be the only way to concretise it.

The Vedic Rik 1.164. 12 is literally repeated in the Prashnopanishad.

Sometimes even the original text of the Upanishad runs into the language of the Rig Veda: take the Taittiriya text in which Indra plainly appears as the power and godhead of the divine mind.

यच्छंदसावृषभो विप्रवरूपः छंदोभ्योद्धमृतात् संबभूव ।

समेन्द्रो मेधया स्पृणोतु । अमृतस्य देव धारणो भूयासम् ।

(Taittiriya I. V. 4)

"He who is the Bull of the Vedas of the universal form, he who was born in the sacred rhythms from the Immortal - may Indra satisfy me through the intelligence. O God, may I become a vessel of the Immortal. "

And a kindred passage may also be cited from the Isha, in which Surya the Sun-God is invoked as the godhead of knowledge whose supreme form of effulgence is the oneness of the Spirit and his rays dispersed here on the mental level are the shining diffusion of the thought mind and conceal his own infinite Supramental truth, the body and self of this

Sun, the truth of the spirit and the Eternal

हिरण्यमयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम् ।
तत्त्वं पूषन्नपायूष् सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥ (Isha 15.)
पूषन्नेक्यं यमं सूर्यं प्राजापत्यं अग्रं रश्मीन्समूहं ।
तेजो यमे रूपं कस्याणतमं तत्ते पश्यामि योऽसावसौ पुरुषः सोऽहमस्मि ॥

(Isha 16.)

" The face of the Truth is covered with a golden lid: O fostering Sun, that uncover for the law of the truth, for Sight. O fosterer, O Sole Rishi, O controlling Yama, Surya, O Son of the Father of creatures, marshal and mass thy rays: , the Lustre that is thy most blessed form of all, that I see, He who is this, this Purusha, He am I. " (Isha 16.)

The kinship in difference of these passages with the imagery and style of the Veda is evident and the last indeed paraphrases or translates into a later and more open style a Vedic verse of Atris.V. 62. 1:

ऋतेन ऋतमपिहितं ऋतं वा सूर्यस्य यत्र विमुच्यन्त्यश्वान् ।
दश शता सह तस्युस्तदेकं देवानां श्रेष्ठं वपुषामपश्यम् ॥

"Hidden by your truth is the Truth that is constant for ever where they unyoke the horses of the Sun. There the ten thousands stand together, That is the One; I have seen the Supreme Godhead of the embodied gods. "

In this text is expressed the aspiration of the human Soul:

" From non-being lead me to Being, from darkness lead me to Light, from death lead me to Immortality. "

This finds expression in the Riks:

असतो मा सद्गमय तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय मृत्योर्माऽमृतं गमय ।
(Brihad 1. 3. 28)
उद् वयं परि ज्योतिष्पश्यंतः उत्तरं
देवं देवता सूर्यमगन्म ज्योतिरुत्तमम् । (Rig Veda)

The symbolic nature of the sacrifice was very well-known to the Upanishads, for it says : Aditya आदित्य is the Samit,

the holy wood for offering. The Sun is the holy wood offered; रदमया धूमः " The rays of the Sun are the smoke " : तस्मिन् देवाः

अद्वाजंति " In it the gods offer Faith. "

Even some Vedic words find a symbolic meaning in the Upanishads अदमास्ये अंतरति सोऽयास्य (Ayasya is one of the seers of the Rig Veda). One who sits in the inner being is Ayasya.

" Likewise, of that Mind sky is the body. Its light form is you Sun. As far as Mind extends, so far extends the sky, so far Sun. " I. 5. 12.

अवेतस्य मनसो वा शरीरं । ज्योतिरूपं असौ आदित्यः ।
तद् यावद् एव मनस्तावती वा । स्तावान् असौ आदित्यः ॥

These two, Sun and Fire entered into a sexual union,. there from was born breath. He is Indra,,he is without a rival.. " These are all alike , all Infinite " (Brih. 1. 5. 13.)

The Vedic symbolism finds place in the Brihadaranyak in the following : (Brihad 2. 5. 18)

पुरश्चक्रे द्विपदः पुरश्चक्रे चतुष्पदः
पुरः स पक्षीभूत्वा पुरः पुरुष आविषत्

" Citadels with two feet he made, citadels with four feet he did make; in the citadels he, having become a bird-into- the citadels he Purusha-the person-entered. "

Brihad. 2. 5. 19. comp: VI. 47. 18. Rig Veda :

इन्द्रो मायाभिः पुरुरूपं दृश्यते
युवतानि अस्य दश्यः शतदशत्वदवै
दृश्योऽयं वै दशसहस्राणि वह्नि च ।

" Indra by his magic powers-powers of formation-goes. about in many forms, yoked are his ten hundred steeds." He, the Soul, verily, is the steeds ". (Compare R. VI. 47.18)

THE GITA

The Gita differs from all the scriptures of the world in that it is not a book of philosophy seeking for setting forth.

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an explanation of the cosmos, neither is it a book of revealed religion. It is a book that addresses itself to a life-situation. It is not written in the cell of the philosopher or in the forest groves to answer the *why* and *wherefore* of the world and life. It answers the question: how to act *in life* in a critical situation 'created by conflicting values. In this regard the Gita agrees perfectly with Sri Aurobindo's vision of the Reality, for he insists that life, and therefore all action, should be molded *by* the Divine dwelling in the heart of man - he wants human life to become divine.

Gita tells us that the value of action depends not upon its outer form but on the psychological basis from which it proceeds. It points a practical path to reach the basis, the true source of action. In this respect Gita is value-centric. It shows that normally man acts under the pressure of desires, emotions, greed, ambition-in short on the basis of ego. This is not the right basis. It is, or should be accepted as, only a temporary basis which serves some preliminary purpose of the growth of man towards the Light. The right basis of action, the Gita says, is not even social morality or ethical idealism. The true source of action is the Divine Will in the individual discoverable by him.

Gita teaches that Life and action are not to be renounced but their ignorant-egoistic - basis has to be rejected and it has to be changed into the true basis. It declares that a Divine Will is actively at work and can, and does, intervene. in a critical life-situation in the case of an individual or a collectivity. When the individual gives up his egoistic initiation of action then an impersonal and even a Divine Will can be discovered and obeyed. This great truth is crucial because it has a direct bearing on the goal of life, the highest fulfilment of man on earth.

The difficulty is that of discovering the Divine Will; for men have so many ideas, ideals, values etc. in life by which they seek to govern, partially through their conduct. Gita

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is catholic in its scope and accepts all lesser ideals and values as a preparatory stage, as steps on the way to the discovery of the Divine Will. But it insists again and again upon the necessity of making the discovery. Though in a certain sense everything happens by the sanction of the Divine Will discoverable. This is the problem set before Arjuna in the Gita. One may equate the Divine Will to a principle, to an idea, an ideal, a value - which one follows but over and above - independent of all such intermediate, permissible standards, there is a Divine Will which is to be discovered. A divine purpose is at work in the universe in the individual's life and in that of the collectivity.

Gita points out psychological processes and methods by which one can gradually progress towards the discovery of the Divine Will. It can be arranged in the form of a graded rise with methodical steps. One has to begin by doing action without desire for the result, with an attitude of equality- *samata-in* which neither good nor adverse result affects the inner balance and the fundamental attitude of detachment. In fact the establishment of ornate, equality, in the consciousness under all conditions is the sign that one has succeeded in giving up the desire or attachment for the fruit of action.

Gita suggests a further step. On the basis of the Sankhya realisation it speaks of the two parts of human consciousness, a realisable dichotomy in the inner being. There is in each individual a part that can separate itself from his nature, from the mind and all its ideas, suggestions, movements, from the emotions, feelings and their actions and reactions, from the desires, impulses and passions of the vital, and from the body, and remain unaffected by it. It is the Purusha as the Sakshi, the witness consciousness. Gita says that by practising this separation of Purusha and Prakriti man would be able to control his nature more effectively and it would serve as the initial step in the process of transformation of nature.

Gita points out the distinction between Tyaga and Sannyasa

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external and true renunciation. There was an excessive otherworldly stress in the spiritual ideals of India for centuries, though renunciation of life as an indispensable condition for spiritual realisation was not accepted in the Vedic age. Nor was it accepted in the Upanishads.

The conception of the Divine in the Gita is not that of a static being, it is dynamic. Gita may be said to be unique in emphasising this aspect and relating it to life. This Omnipresent Reality has a purpose, a divine purpose, and life is meant to be the field for the working out of that purpose and even the battle-field of Kurukshetra is not exempted from it. By implication, and even by open declaration, Gita says that life is not altogether governed by the ego - either individual or collective. In fact Sri Aurobindo suggests that Kurukshetra can be taken as the symbol of the battle of life in which forces of Light and Darkness are constantly clashing. As regards the dilemma of Arjuna, Sri Krishna assures him that the Divine Will shall be fulfilled as far as the battle of Kurukshetra is concerned, even if Arjuna does not participate in it as its instrument. Krishna says to Arjuna in effect :Kurukshetra is not your battle only though each participant has joined it for his own purpose it is mine and I have a purpose to carry out and it would be carried out at any cost. We might note that the Gita teaches that collective life has a divine purpose to fulfil.

The world we live in wears the appearance of an inert, in- conscient creation, and the human life is full of the play of ignorant forces and is undivine. Many religious and philosophical systems have given great prominence e. g.. Buddhism to this aspect. To Gita the world is not altogether undivine. It devotes four chapters to the Vibhuti Yoga and shows how the world is beautiful, magnificent and divine. Even Matter which is regarded as inert can be sublime-the Himalayas are the sublime in Matter. In fact these four chapters of the Gita may be regarded as a detailed Bhashya—exegesis-

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the opening verse of the Ishopanishad : *Isha Vasyamidam Sarvam yat Kincha Jagatyam Jagat*, "All this (Universe here manifested) is for habitation by the Lord-whatever is moving in the universal movement." Sri Krishna points out in effect that the Divine is not absent from the world. He is here flowing in the rivers and in the vegetable kingdom. Gita makes us feel the divine Presence in the world, for the world is not merely what our senses represent it to be, the Divine is there even though unperceived.

One of the basic ideas of the Vedanta - derived from the Sankhya system is that Purusha-the self, is eternally

free- Nitya mukta-but Prakriti, Nature, is and is condemned to remain, bound - it is eternally ignorant and imperfect. Gita points out that as the Purusha, the Self is eternally free so is Prakriti also a claimant not only to freedom but even to perfection. This can be seen by studying the implications of some aspects of the Gita. Even though the essential divinity is the same in the Saint and the Sinner, still the Saint- Sadhu has to be protected and saved and the wicked destroyed. The distinction between ' Sadhu '-the Saint, the Mahatma, the great Soul, or the Sreshta and the ordinary man is due to what they express in their Nature, in their Prakriti. That may be regarded as the first step of the movement of Prakriti towards freedom and perfection.

Next, the Gita speaks of the Vibhuti special becoming. The Vibhuti embodies not merely the nature of a Sadhu, not merely heightened human perfection but some quality, some aspect of the Divine and his power. That may be regarded as the second step in nature's ascent to freedom and perfection. In the Vibhuti nature rises to far greater heights' than even the highest attainment reached by man. For example, the non-violence practised by Mahatma Gandhi far surpasses the ordinary practice of it by man. In that sense he can be called the Vibhuti of Ahimsa.

In the Avatar, the incarnation, nature attains its highest

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perfection. The Avatar aspect is an important part of Indian conception of the Divine and it has been brought into prominence by Gita, which points out the evolutionary significance of the phenomenon of Avatarhood. The Divine is not some absentee land-lord away from life, it can take up human nature and a human form. Some religions, like Christianity, accept one and only one incarnation of the Divine. They practically limit the Omnipotence to one single act-but to the Hindu view Omnipotence of God cannot be limited to one incarnation and therefore the Hindu admits many in- carnations including that of Christ. Sri Krishna says : "I have accepted human birth and action; one who knows my birth and action as divine really knows me."

Gita points out that divine action by the human being is possible; it is possible by a gradual development of the human consciousness. This is made clear in the Vibhuti Yoga chapters by Sri Krishna declaring: पांडवानां अर्जुनोऽहं " I am Arjuna among the Pandavas " and Arjuna would be carrying the Divine Will and therefore doing divine action if he participated in the battle. To act in life from a divine poise is possible and even a Five Year Plan, Tibetan situation and some disturbing incident can seek guidance from it.

Sri Aurobindo's last chapter in the "Essays on the Gita" is not merely a brilliant summary of its teaching but is the most inspired message in modern writings on the Gita.

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THE AUTHOR

Born at Surat in 1893, 'Sri Ambubhai Purani had his early education in Bombay, from where he graduated on 1913. Together with his illustrious brother Sri Chhotubhai Purani, he pioneered the gymnastic movement in Gujarat. It was at this time that he came under the spell of Sri Aurobindo and yearned to seek the path of God-realization through Yoga, as preached by the great saint of Pondicherry. He migrated to Pondicherry in 1923 in order to practise *Sadhana* for Poorna Yoga at the feet of the Master. There he had the unique advantage of initiation in Yoga by Sri Aurobindo himself. He remained in the Ashram as a *Sadhaka* till his demise on December 11,1965.

It was as an exponent of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy" that Sri Purani attained international eminence. His masterly exposition on the life and teachings of Sri Aurobindo ranks as a standard publication in the subject.,. His English rendering of the Saint's epic *Savitri* stands in a class by itself. He has to his credit 50 books in Gujarati, including the translations of Sri aurobindo's *Atmasidi. Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Vijnana, Yoga, Karma Yoga* and the essays on *Bhagavad Gita*.

"THE END"