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A flame of aspiration for dynamic truth



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## Is Violence Dispensable?

Untold misery and suffering in the aftermath of the two World Wars saw Pacifism becoming an international issue and gaining an increasing appeal, propounding over a period two types of proponents of peace: those who have a stake commercially across or within nations, who prosper only in times of peace and those who are devoid of vitality and harbour fears of destruction. There is a minority too, categorised as the third type: those who know that the truth of humanity lies above all forms of hatred and violence. This according to them is possible when the human being reaches the acme of his self.

These constitute the underlying feeling of the majority of the world population, despite which war and other violations—both on Nature and humanity—remain a reality. Though there has not been a World War in the last several decades wars between States and within State boundaries appear to be on the rise. A State becomes so many nations at the cost of much bloodshed. Another State can hold together only by resorting to violence. Eventually it is the ego—individual or collective—which is the root cause of oppression and all other forms of injustice. Till the ego melts away from the mind of humanity, a clash of forces will remain. In such a scenario, what is it that we as right thinking people must do? Should we stand aloof from the struggle as Pacifists or should we participate putting our strength on the side of the Right?

As Sri Aurobindo says, "This world, this manifestation of the Self in the material universe is not only a cycle of inner development, but a field in which the external circumstances of life have to be accepted as an environment and an occasion for that development. It is a world of mutual help and struggle; not a serene and peaceful gliding through easy joys is the progress it allows us, but every step has to be gained by heroic effort and through a clash of opposing forces."

— *Essays on the Gita*

There is a Kshatriya in all of us which is frequently dormant or else gone astray. Those of us who wish for peace on earth will have to participate in the struggle, so that truth prevails. A genuine peace will come when war ceases to be a psychological necessity for humanity. For that too we must strive simultaneously. The answer lies in achieving a fine balance between the two apparently opposing forces: one which we must exert on the situation so that the problem may get resolved in a peaceful manner and the other which we must employ when the need arises for participation in the struggle between the truth and the falsehood.

And what is the sign of the coming of the true peace according to Sri Aurobindo?

"Only when man has developed not only a fellow-feeling with all men, but a dominant sense of unity and commonality, only when he is aware of them not merely as brothers,—that is a fragile bond,—but as parts of himself, only when he has learned to live, not in his personal and communal ego-sense but in a large universal consciousness, can the phenomenon of war, with whatever weapons, pass out of his life without the possibility of return. Meanwhile, that he should struggle even by illusions towards that end, is an excellent sign; for it shows that the truth behind the illusion is pressing towards the hour when it may become manifest as reality."

— *The Passing of War*

**Editor**

# Savitri

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(extract)

*Sri Aurobindo*

Bliss is the secret stuff of all that lives,  
Even pain and grief are garbs of world-delight,  
It hides behind thy sorrow and thy cry,  
Because thy strength is a part and not God's whole,  
Because afflicted by the little self  
Thy consciousness forgets to be divine  
As it walks in the vague penumbra of the flesh  
And cannot bear the world's tremendous touch,  
Thou criest out and sayst that there is pain.  
Indifference, pain and joy, a triple disguise,  
Attire of the rapturous Dancer in the ways,  
Withhold from thee the body of God's bliss,  
Thy spirit's strength shall make thee one with God,  
Thy agony shall change to ecstasy,  
Indifference deepen into infinity's calm  
And joy laugh nude on the peaks of the Absolute.



# Kurukshetra

*Sri Aurobindo*

Before we can proceed, following in the large steps of the Teacher of the Gita, to watch his tracing of the triune path of man,—the path which is that of his will, heart, thought raising themselves to the Highest and into the being of that which is the supreme object of all action, love and knowledge, we must consider once more the situation from which the Gita arises, but now in its largest bearings as a type of human life and even of all world-existence. For although Arjuna is himself concerned only with his own situation, his inner struggle and the law of action he may follow yet, as we have seen, the particular question he raises, in the manner in which he raises it does really bring up the whole question of human life and action, what the world is and why it is and how possibly, it being what it is, life here in the world can be reconciled with life in the Spirit. And all this deep and difficult matter the Teacher insists on resolving as the very foundation of his command to an action which must proceed from a new poise of being and by the light of a liberating knowledge.

But what, then, is it that makes the difficulty for the man who has to take the world as it is and act in it and yet would live, within, the spiritual life? What is this aspect of existence which appals his awakened mind and brings about what the title of the first chapter of the Gita calls significantly the Yoga of the dejection of Arjuna, the dejection and discouragement felt by the human being when he is forced to face the spectacle of the universe as it really is with the veil of the ethical illusion, the illusion of self-righteousness torn from his eyes, before a higher reconciliation with himself is effected? It is that aspect which is figured outwardly in the carnage and massacre of Kurukshetra and spiritually by the vision of the Lord of all things as Time arising to devour and destroy the creatures whom it has made. This is the vision of the Lord of all existence as the universal Creator but also the universal Destroyer, of whom the ancient Scripture can say in a ruthless image, "The sages and the heroes are his food and death is the spice of his banquet." It is one and the same truth seen first indirectly and obscurely in the facts of life and then directly and clearly in the soul's vision of that which manifests itself in life. The outward aspect is that of world-existence and human existence proceeding by struggle and slaughter; the inward aspect is that of the universal Being fulfilling himself in a vast creation and a vast destruction. Life a battle and a field of death, this is Kurukshetra; God the Terrible, this is the vision that Arjuna sees on that field of massacre.

War, said Heraclitus, is the father of all things, War is the king of all; and the saying, like most of the apophthegms of the

Greek thinker, suggests a profound truth. From a clash of material or other forces everything in this world, if not the world itself, seems to be born; by a struggle of forces, tendencies, principles, beings it seems to proceed, ever creating new things, ever destroying the old, marching one knows not very well whither,—to a final self-destruction, say some; in an unending series of vain cycles, say others; in progressive cycles, is the most optimistic conclusion, leading through whatever trouble and apparent confusion towards a higher and higher approximation to some divine apocalypse. However that may be, this is certain that there is not only no construction here without destruction, no harmony except by a poise of contending forces won out of many actual and potential discards, but also no continued existence of life except by a constant self-feeding and devouring of other life. Our very bodily life is a constant dying and being reborn, the body itself a beleaguered city attacked by assailing, protected by defending forces whose business is to devour each other; and this is only a type of all our existence. The command seems to have gone out from the beginning, "Thou shalt not conquer except by battle with thy fellows and thy surroundings; thou shalt not even live except by battle and struggle and by absorbing into thyself other life. The first law of this world that I have made is creation and preservation by destruction."

Ancient thought accepted this starting-point so far as it could see it by scrutiny of the universe. The old Upanishads saw it very clearly and phrased it with an uncompromising thoroughness which will have nothing to do with any honeyed glosses or optimistic scuttling of the truth. Hunger that is Death, they said, is the creator and master of this world, and they figured vital existence in the image of the Horse of the sacrifice. Matter they described by a name which means ordinarily food and they said, we call it food because it is devoured and devours creatures. The eater eating is eaten, this is the formula of the material world, as the Darwinians rediscovered when they laid it down that the struggle for life is the law of evolutionary existence. Modern Science has only rephrased the old truths that had already been expressed in much more forcible, wide and accurate formulas by the apophthegm of Heraclitus and the figures employed by the Upanishads.

Nietzsche's insistence upon war as an aspect of life and the ideal man as a warrior,—the camel-man he may be to begin with and the child-man hereafter, but the lion-man he must become in the middle, if he is to attain his perfection,—these now much-decried theories of Nietzsche have, however much we may differ from many of the moral and practical conclusions he drew from them, their undeniable justification and re-

call us to a truth we like to hide out of sight. It is good that we should be reminded of it; first, because to see it has for every strong soul a tonic effect which saves us from the flabbiness and relaxation encouraged by a too mellifluous philosophic, religious or ethical sentimentalism, that which loves to look upon Nature as love and life and beauty and good, but turns away from her grim mask of death, adoring God as Shiva but refusing to adore him as Rudra; secondly, because unless we have the honesty and courage to look existence straight in the face, we shall never arrive at any effective solution of its discards and oppositions. We must see first what life and the world are; afterwards, we can all the better set about finding the right way to transform them into what they should be. If this repellent aspect of existence holds in itself some secret of the final harmony, we shall by ignoring or belittling it miss that secret and all our efforts at a solution will fail by fault of our self-indulgent ignoring of the true elements of the problem. If, on the other hand, it is an enemy to be beaten down, trampled on, excised, eliminated, still we gain nothing by underrating its power and hold upon life or refusing to see how firmly it is rooted in the effective past and the actually operative principles of existence.

War and destruction are not only a universal principle of our life here in its purely material aspects, but also of our mental and moral existence. It is self-evident that in the actual life of man intellectual, social, political, moral we can make no real step forward without a struggle, a battle between what exists and lives and what seeks to exist and live and between all that stands behind either. It is impossible, at least as men and things are, to advance, to grow, to fulfil and still to observe really and utterly that principle of harmlessness which is yet placed before us as the highest and best law of conduct. We will use only soul-force and never destroy by war or any even defensive employment of physical violence? Good, though until soul-force is effective, the Asuric force in men and nations tramples down, breaks, slaughters, burns, pollutes, as we see it doing today, but then at its ease and unhindered, and you have perhaps caused as much destruction of life by your abstinence as others by resort to violence; still you have set up an ideal which may some day and at any rate ought to lead up to better things. But even soul-force, when it is effective, destroys. Only those who have used it with eyes open, know how much more terrible and destructive it is than the sword and the cannon; and only those who do not limit their view to the act and its immediate results, can see how tremendous are its after-effects, how much is eventually destroyed and with that much all the life that depended on it and fed upon it. Evil cannot perish without the destruction of much that lives by the evil, and it is no less destruction even if we personally are saved the pain of a sensational act of violence.

Moreover, every time we use soul-force we raise a great force of Karma against our adversary, the after-movements

of which we have no power to control. Vashishth uses soul-force against the military violence of Vishwamitra and armies of Huns and Shakas and Pallavas hurl themselves on the aggressor. The very quiescence and passivity of the spiritual man under violence and aggression awakens the tremendous forces of the world to a retributive action; and it may even be more merciful to stay in their path, though by force, those who represent evil than to allow them to trample on until they call down on themselves a worse destruction than we would ever think of inflicting. It is not enough that our own hands should remain clean and our souls unstained for the law of strife and destruction to die out of the world; that which is its root must first disappear out of humanity. Much less will mere immobility and inertia unwilling to use or incapable of using any kind of resistance to evil, abrogate the law; inertia, Tamas, indeed, injures much more than can the rajasic principle of strife which at least creates more than it destroys. Therefore, so far as the problem of the individual's action goes, his abstention from strife and its inevitable concomitant destruction in their more gross and physical form may help his own moral being, but it leaves the Slayer of creatures unabolished.

For the rest, the whole of human history bears witness to the inexorable vitality and persistent prevalence of this principle in the world. It is natural that we should attempt to palliate, to lay stress on other aspects. Strife and destruction are not all; there is the saving principle of association and mutual help as well as the force of dissociation and mutual strife; a power of love no less than the power of egoistic self-assertion; an impulse to sacrifice ourselves for others as well as the impulse to sacrifice others to ourselves. But when we see how these have actually worked, we shall not be tempted to gloss over or ignore the power of their opposites. Association has been worked not only for mutual help, but at the same time for defence and aggression, to strengthen us against all that attacks or resists in the struggle for life. Association itself has been a servant of war, egoism and the self-assertion of life against life. Love itself has been constantly a power of death. Especially the love of good and the love of God, as embraced by the human ego, have been responsible for much strife, slaughter and destruction. Self-sacrifice is great and noble, but at its highest it is an acknowledgement of the law of Life by death and becomes an offering on the altar of some Power that demands a victim in order that the work desired may be done. The mother bird facing the animal of prey in defence of its young, the patriot dying for his country's freedom, the religious martyr or the martyr of an idea, these in the lower and the superior scale of animal life are highest examples of self-sacrifice and it is evident to what they bear witness.

But if we look at after results, an easy optimism becomes even less possible. See the patriot dying in order that his country may be free, and mark that country a few decades after the Lord of Karma has paid the price of the blood

and the suffering that was given; you shall see it in its turn an oppressor, an exploiter and conqueror of colonies and dependencies devouring others that it may live and succeed aggressively in life. The Christian martyrs perish in their thousands, setting soul-force against empire-force that Christ may conquer, Christianity prevail. Soul-force does triumph, Christianity does prevail,—but not Christ; the victorious religion becomes a militant and dominant Church and a more fanatically persecuting power than the creed and the empire which it replaced. The very religions organise themselves into powers of mutual strife and battle together fiercely to live, to grow, to possess the world.

All which seems to show that here is an element in existence, perhaps the initial element, which we do not know how to conquer either because it cannot be conquered or because we have not looked at it with a strong and impartial gaze so as to recognise it calmly and fairly and know what it is. We must look existence in the face if our aim is to arrive at a right solution, whatever that solution may be. And to look existence in the face is to look God in the face; for the two cannot be separated, nor the responsibility for the laws of world-existence be shifted away from Him who created them or from That which constituted it. Yet here too we love to palliate and equivocate. We erect a God of Love and Mercy, a God of Good, a God just, righteous and virtuous according to our own moral conceptions of justice, virtue and righteousness, and all the rest, we say, is not He or is not His, but was made by some diabolical Power which He suffered for some reason to work out its wicked will or by some dark Ahriman counterbalancing our gracious Ormuzd, or was even the fault of selfish and sinful man who has spoiled what was made originally perfect by God. As if man had created the law of death and devouring in the animal world or that tremendous process by which Nature creates indeed and preserves but in the same step and by the same inextricable action slays and destroys. It is only a few religions which have had the courage to say without any reserve, like the Indian, that this enigmatic World-

Power is one Deity, one Trinity, to lift up the image of the Force that acts in the world in the figure not only of the beneficent Durga, but of the terrible Kali in her blood-stained dance of destruction and to say, "This too is the Mother; this also know to be God; this too, if thou hast the strength, adore." And it is significant that the religion which has had this unflinching honesty and tremendous courage, has succeeded in creating a profound and widespread spirituality such as no other can parallel. For truth is the foundation of real spirituality and courage is its soul. *Tasyai..... satyam āyatanam.*

All this is not to say that strife and destruction are the alpha and omega of existence, that harmony is not greater than war, love more the manifest divine than death or that we must not move towards the replacement of physical force by soul-force, of war by peace, of strife by union, of devouring by love, of egoism by universality, of death by immortal life. God is not only the Destroyer, but the Friend of creatures; not only the cosmic Trinity, but the Transcendent; the terrible Kali is also the loving and beneficent Mother; the lord of Kurukshetra is the divine comrade and charioteer, the attracter of beings, incarnate Krishna. And whithersoever he is driving through all the strife and clash and confusion, to whatever goal or godhead he may be attracting us, it is—no doubt of that—to some transcendence of all these aspects upon which we have been so firmly insisting. But where, how, with what kind of transcendence, under what conditions, this we have to discover; and to discover it, the first necessity is to see the world as it is, to observe and value rightly his action as it reveals itself at the start and now; afterwards the way and the goal will better reveal themselves. We must acknowledge Kurukshetra; we must submit to the law of Life by Death before we can find our way to the life immortal; we must open our eyes, with a less appalled gaze than Arjuna's to the vision of our Lord of Time and Death and cease to deny, hate or recoil from the universal Destroyer.

*Essays on the Gita*

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*.....But let us suppose that the physical shock of war is prevented, not by law, but by the principle of enforced arbitration in extreme cases which might lead to war; not by the creation of an international authority, but by the overhanging threat of international pressure. The state of covert war will still continue; it may even take new and disastrous forms. Deprived of other weapons the nations are bound to have increasing resort to the weapon of commercial pressure, as did Capital and Labour in their chronic state of "pacific" struggle within the limits of the national life. The instruments would be different, but would follow the same principle, that of the strike and the lockout which are on one side a combined passive resistance by the weaker party to enforce its claims, on the other a passive pressure by the stronger party to enforce its wishes. Between nations, the corresponding weapon to the strike would be a commercial boycott, already used more than once in an unorganised fashion both in Asia and Europe and bound to be extremely effective and telling if organised even by a politically or commercially weak nation. For the weaker nation is necessary to the stronger, if as nothing else, yet as a market or as a commercial and industrial victim. The corresponding weapons to the lockout would be the refusal of capital or machinery, the prohibition of all or of any needed imports into the offending or victim country, or even a naval blockade leading, if long maintained, to industrial ruin or to national starvation. The blockade is a weapon used originally only in a state of war; but it was employed against Greece as a substitute for war; and this use may easily be extended in the future. There is always too the weapon of prohibitive tariffs.*

*Sri Aurobindo*  
*The Ideal of Human Unity*

# The Concept of Integral Education

*Kireet Joshi*

In the history of the development of education, we find in certain systems of education a stress on harmonious development of the physical, the vital and the mental aspects of personality. Such, indeed, was the Greek ideal of education, which has reappeared in the modern West, and which influences the modern educational thinking in India. It has also been recognised that there have been systems of education laying great stress on the building up of the character and on the inculcation of moral virtues. In some systems of education, an attempt has been made to provide for the study of some religious text and for some religious practice. There is also a tendency to suggest a system of education in which all the above elements would, in some way, be incorporated.

There are, however, certain important developments which necessitate a clearer and a more radical concept of integral education.

Firstly, there is, today, an unparalleled width and depth of inquiry, which requires a new kind of education that would simultaneously be comprehensive and specialised or varied so as to suit each individual. Secondly, the modern human personality has become, as never before, subject to psychological turmoil, imposing a new dimension in education that still remains undefined and insufficiently explored. Thirdly, there is a great quest all over the world for the synthesis of knowledge and culture. Ancient knowledge is being re-discovered in the context of modern knowledge. The humanist and the technologist are finding themselves in greater and greater need of each other; and the scientist and the mystic are getting ready to embrace each other. The educational implications of these developments are obvious. Our educational syllabi have to reflect the latest trends of synthesis, and our educational objectives must include the idea of preparing a new kind of man who can consciously and progressively harmonise within himself the broad vision of the humanist and the skill of the technologist; the disciplined will-force of the moralist and the refined imagination of the artist; the scrupulous knowledge of the scientist and the sublime vision of the wisdom and ever-growing perfection of the mystic.

At a still deeper level, we have the most profound concern of our times, namely, that of an unprecedented crisis which can be considered evolutionary in character, a crisis that occurs in a species at a time when some kind of mutation is imminent. As Sri Aurobindo declares:

“At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny; for

a state has been reached in which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way. A structure of the external life has been raised up by man's ever active mind and life-will, a structure of an unmanageable hugeness and complexity, for the service of his mental, vital, physical claims and urges, a complex political, social, administrative, economic, cultural machinery, and organised collective means for his intellectual, sensational, aesthetic and material satisfaction. Man has created a system of civilisation which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and is still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilise and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites. For no greater seeing mind, no intuitive soul of knowledge has yet come to his surface of consciousness which could make this basic fullness of life a condition for the free growth of something that exceeded it .... A greater whole-being, whole-knowledge, whole-power is needed to weld all into a greater unity of whole-life.”\*

If human existence were of one piece, solely material-vital, or solely mental, or solely spiritual, problems of human life would not have reached the kind of criticality that we are facing today. But the human being is a triple web, a thing mysteriously physical-vital, mental and spiritual at once, and not knowing what are the true relations of these things, we have been led to a situation where we are obliged to listen to the conflicting voices and their imperatives, and we do not know what to follow and what to reject. Against this background, deeper questions both of life and education have become extremely urgent and imperative.

The first danger in this situation is a resurgence of the old vital and material primitive barbarian in a civilised form. This danger is likely to overcome humanity if there is no high and strenuous mental and moral ideal controlling and uplifting the vital and physical man in us and no spiritual ideal liberating him from himself into his inner being. Even if this relapse is escaped, there is another danger. For there may come about a crystallization into a stable comfortable mechanised social living without ideal or outlook. The present world situation seems to be fast developing into that kind of crystallization over larger and larger areas of the world. Rational thought can, indeed, if it continues to develop on higher and higher domains,



prevent this peril. Unfortunately, the rational thought of today is still disinclined to mediate between the life and the body on the one hand, and something higher and greater within the human being, the spiritual reality on the other. In that situation, humanity may succumb to the comforts of mechanised social living and may even succeed in burying the deep call of the spirit. This burial would mean perilous suffocation of evolutionary urge to arrive at the fullest possible perfection of the individual and the society and the perfection of the relationship between the individual and the society.

Self-exceeding or self-transcendence is the fundamental law of the nature of the human being, and if humankind comes to the paralysing situation where the urge to exceed the limits of the mental human being is buried under the heavy weight of the civilisation of comfort and pleasure, of continuous competition and conflict and of disabling appetites of egoistic life, controlled by dehumanising machinery of civilisation, then the human being will have frustrated the purposes of evolution, and those powers which lie at the summit of the possibilities of human personality. This is the heart of evolutionary crisis, and this crisis can be averted only if we are able to work at the highest frontiers of human resources and open up the gates of the forces and powers which lie beyond these frontiers in the realm of the Spirit.

One favourable factor which is likely to help humanity is the contemporary dissatisfaction that has arisen with materialism on the one hand, and on the other hand with spirituality which has been negating the meaning and purposefulness of the material world. After centuries of experiments, materialism is gradually giving way to the pressures of new discoveries which require exploration of the psychical and spiritual domains. Similarly, centuries of experiments in the spiritual fields have shown that the neglect of material life and neglect of collective welfare result in poverty or bankruptcy and even in economic and political slavery. As Sri Aurobindo pointed out :

“It is therefore of good augury that after many experiments and verbal solutions we should now find ourselves standing today under the presence of... two extremes.... In Europe and in India, respectively the negation of the materialist and the refusal of the ascetic have sought to assert themselves as the sole truth and to dominate the conception of Life. In India, if the result has been a great heaping up of the treasures of the spirit,—or of some of them,—it has also been a great bankruptcy of Life; in Europe, the fullness of riches and triumphant mastery of world's powers and possessions have progressed towards an equal bankruptcy in the things of the Spirit.... Therefore the time grows ripe and the tendency of the world moves towards a new and comprehensive affirmation in thought and in inner and outer experience and to its corollary, a new and rich self-fulfilment in an integral

human existence for the individual and for the race.”\*

It has now become clear that the knowledge of the Spirit and the knowledge of Matter need to be blended and synthesised; the supracosmic aim of life has to be enlarged by integrating with it the cosmic aim of life; the realisations of the Spirit have to be extended so as to cover the domain of Matter. And in doing so, all that is intermediate between Spirit and Matter has also to be perfected and brought into unity in complete integration. All this has to be done both at the collective level and at the individual level, and in doing so, we shall find it necessary to develop integral education.

If we analyse the human being, we shall find that between two poles of the body and the spirit, there are three other elements, the vital, the mental and the psychic. We shall again find that all these elements have a constitutional relationship among them; they do not stand in relation of juxtaposition. The physical and the vital can, to a great extent, be controlled and guided by the mental, and up to a certain stage of development, the mind can act as the leader, justifying the description of the mental in the Taittiriya Upanishad, of *manomaya*, as *shariraprananeta*. But the leadership of the mind is rather restricted, and as the rational ethical and aesthetic powers begin to develop, the mind finds itself incapable of resolving the conflicts between the rational pursuit of truth, aesthetic pursuit of beauty, and ethical pursuit of the good. The mind is found also to be incapable of dealing successfully with the forces of Unreason which surge up constantly from the vital and the physical, which, in turn, are greatly dominated by the forces of the subconscious and the unconscious. The time must come when the psychic being, which is called in the Upanishad *antaratman* or which is described in the Veda as the Mystic Fire (Agni), has to be brought forward as the priest (*purohita*) of the human journey. And as the psychic being develops, there comes about a powerful opening of the doors of the domains of the spiritual consciousness, which culminate in the supramental, which is called in the Taittiriya Upanishad, *vijnanamaya*, which alone has been found capable of establishing the true integration of all the powers of the being under its natural and spontaneous sovereignty.

The knowledge of the secrets of this entire process of development is largely contained in the Veda and the Upanishads, and what we find missing there has been discovered and perfected by Sri Aurobindo. It is in the light of all this knowledge that we can speak today with great assurance of the concept and practice of integral education and the ancient secrets of the reign of Spirit over mind, life and the body and the modern secrets of utilisation of the life in perfecting the instrumentality of the body, life and mind.

Integral education would not only aim at the integral development of personality, but it would also embrace all knowledge in its scope. It would pursue physical and psychical sciences not merely to know the world and Nature in her processes and to use them for material needs,

but to know through them the Spirit in the world and the ways of the Spirit in its appearances. It would study ethics in order not only to search for the good as the mind sees it, but also to perceive the supraethical Good. Similarly, it would pursue Art not merely to present images of the subjective and objective world, but to see them with significant and creative vision that goes behind their appearances and to reveal the supra-rational Truth and Beauty. It would encourage the study of humanities, not in order to foster a society as a background for a few luminous spiritual figures so that the many necessarily remain for ever on the lower ranges of life, but to inspire the regeneration of the total life of the earth and to encourage voluntary optimism for that regeneration in spite of all previous failures. Finally, it would encourage unity of knowledge and harmony of knowledge, and it would strive to foster the spirit of universality and oneness.

An important characteristic of integral education is its insistence on simultaneous development of Knowledge, Will, Harmony and Skill as also of all the parts of the being to the extent possible from the earliest stages of education. And since each individual child is unique in the composition of its qualities and characteristics, its capacities and potentialities, its predominant inclinations and propensities, integral education in its practice tends to become increasingly individualised. Again, for this very reason, the methods of education become increasingly dynamic, involving active participation of the child in its own growth.

Sri Aurobindo speaks of three principles of teaching, and they all need to be fully implemented in the practice of integral education. Sri Aurobindo states, "The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or task master, he is a helper and a guide. His business is to suggest and not to impose.... The second principle is that the mind has to be consulted in its own growth. The idea of hammering the child into shape desired by the parent or teacher is a barbarous and ignorant superstition. It is he himself who must be induced to expand in accordance with his own nature.... The chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use.... The third principle of education is to work from near to the far, from that which is to that which shall be .... The free and natural growth is the condition of genuine development...."

These principles, when implemented, provide a basis of a system of a natural organisation of the highest processes and movements of which the human nature is capable. The first task of the teacher is to observe every child and to develop dynamic methods by which the child can be lifted up in its totality into a higher light which can sharpen, chisel, purify, perfect and transform every part of the being in a state of constant balance and integrity. This would mean application of every possible method even to the minutest details and to

the actions which may seem most insignificant in their appearances with as much care and thoroughness as to the greatest. For there is nothing too small to be used and nothing too great to be attempted.

There are three instruments of the teacher: instruction, example and influence. The good teacher will seek to awaken much more than to instruct; he will aim at the growth of the faculties and the experiences by a natural process and free expansion. He will not impose his opinions on the passive acceptance of the receptive mind; he will throw in only what is productive and sure as a seed which will grow under the benign fostering within. He will know that the example is more powerful than instruction. Actually, the example is not that of the outward acts but of the inner motivation of life and the inner states and inner activities. Finally, influence is more important than example. For influence proceeds from the power or contact of the teacher with his pupil, from the nearness of his soul to the soul of another, infusing into the pupil, even though in silence, all that which the teacher himself is or possesses. The good teacher is himself a constant student. He is a child leading children, and a light kindling other lights, a vessel and a channel.

In our present system of education, we are too occupied with the mental development, and we give a preponderant importance to those qualities which are relevant to subject-oriented, book-oriented and examination-oriented system. We do not give so much importance to the development of powers of understanding as to the powers of memory. We do not emphasise the development of imagination as much as we emphasise the power of knowing facts. We do not give importance to the pursuit of Truth as much as to the pursuit of piecemeal information. Some place is, indeed, being given to physical education and aesthetic education, but these aspects of education are so peripheral that they tend to be almost neglected. In regard to inner domains of personality, the situation is totally unsatisfactory. We sometimes speak of value education, but the situation is so confusing that there is great need to clarify the entire domain of moral and spiritual values which would also throw considerable light on what we should mean by psychic and spiritual education.

A question is often raised as to whether there is any valid distinction between moral and spiritual values. In answer, it must be said that much depends upon what we intend to include in our definition of the word "morality" or of the word "spirituality". In Indian thought, the distinction between morality and spirituality has been clearly made and we have two definite terms, *naitika* and *adhyatmika*, having their specific and distinguishing connotations. The word "morality" connotes a pursuit of the control and mastery over impulses and desires under the guidance and supervening inspiration of a standard of conduct formulated in consideration of man's station and duties in the society or in consideration of any discovered or prescribed

intrinsic law of an ideal. Morality is often conceived as a preparation for spirituality. Spirituality, on the other hand, begins when one seeks whatever one conceives to be the ultimate and absolute for its own sake unconditionally and without any reserve whatsoever. Moreover, while morality is often limited to the domains of duties, spirituality is fundamentally a search of the knowledge of the highest and the absolute by direct experience and of manifestation of this knowledge in every mode of feeling, thinking and acting.

Again, what is called religious is distinguishable from the moral and the spiritual. The differentia by which religion can be distinguished from morality and spirituality are : (i) a specific religious belief; (ii) certain prescribed acts and (iii) a religious authority to which religious matters are referred for final decision.

Both moral and spiritual values can be practised irrespective of whether one believes in one religion or another or whether one believes in no religion. Both morality and spirituality can be independent of rituals and ceremonies or of any acts specifically prescribed by any particular religion, and both of them are independent of any authority except that of direct, abiding and verifiable experience.

Spirituality proceeds directly by change of consciousness, change from the ordinary consciousness to a greater consciousness in which one finds one's true unegoistic being and comes first into direct and living contact and then into union with the Spirit. In spirituality, this change of consciousness is the one thing that matters, nothing else. Both morality and religion in their deepest core touch spirituality and may prepare the change of consciousness, but spirituality not only aims at the total change of consciousness, but even its method is that of a gradual and increasing change of consciousness. In other words, spirituality is an exploration of consciousness through progressive change of consciousness.

In the spiritual consciousness, and in the knowledge that it delivers, there is the fulfilment of the highest that morality and religion in their deepest core seek and succeed only when they cease to be limited within their specific boundaries. It replaces the moral law by a progressive law of self-perfection spontaneously expressing itself through the individual nature. No more in this operation is the imposition of a rule or an imperative on the individual nature. The spiritual law respects the individual nature, modifies it and perfects it, and in this sense, it is unique for each individual and can be known and made operative only during the course of the change of consciousness. In its progressive movement, it may, if necessary, provide a short or long period of governance by a moral law, but always as a provisional device and always looking for going beyond into a plane of spontaneous expression of the Right and the Good. To spiritual consciousness, moral virtue is not valuable in itself, but only as an expression of a complex of certain quantities which are, for the time being, for the given individual.

necessary and useful in an upward journey. For the spiritual consciousness, what is commonly called vice has too, behind it a complex of certain qualities which have a certain utility in the economy of Nature, and can, therefore, be converted by placing them in their right place, as a complement to what lies in consciousness behind the commonly called virtues.

Spirituality is not confined merely to the aspect of conduct; it includes all works and strives by the method of a progressive change of consciousness for the perfect harmonisation of all the aspects of works; and through this striving it realises also the unity of works with the highest Knowledge and deepest Love.

For the spiritual consciousness, what is commonly called agnosticism, skepticism, atheism, positivism or free thinking, has behind it a concern and a demand for a direct knowledge, which if rightly understood, recognised, respected and fulfilled, would become a powerful complement to what lies in consciousness behind the commonly accepted religious qualities of faith and unquestioning acceptance of dogmatic teachings and injunctions.

For spirituality always looks behind the form to essence and to the living consciousness; and in doing so, it brings to the surface that which lies behind, and its action is therefore of a new creation. Spirituality transcends the forms and methods of morality and religion and recreates its own living and progressive forms.

In the words of Sri Aurobindo, " Spirituality is in its essence an awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self or soul which is other than our mind, life and body, an inner aspiration to know, to feel, to be that, to enter into 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."\*

Spirituality and spiritual values and the methods of realising them are distinctive. A mere learning about spirituality is not spirituality; even the most catholic book on spirituality cannot be a substitute for the direct practice of inner change of consciousness by which one can perceive and realise the inner and higher Self and transform the workings of the outer instruments of nature. The education that aims at inculcation of spiritual values and at the synthesis of these values with the dynamic demands of life must be quite radical. It would not do merely to prescribe a few graded books on morality or spirituality and to allot a certain fixed quantities of hours for the study of these books. Spirituality is a living process and spiritual or true education is a process of kindling inner light. Again, spiritual values are central values and they must therefore govern and guide all the values and aspects of education.

In various domains of education, spiritual consciousness can be aided by promoting certain specific values. In the domain of physical education, the values that we ought to promote are those of health, strength, plasticity, grace and beauty. In the domain of vital education, the values that we ought to promote would be those of harmony and friendliness, of courage and heroism, of endurance and perseverance, and the irresistible will to conquer the forces of ignorance, division and injustice. In the domain of mental development, the values that we ought to seek would be those of utmost impartiality, dispassionate search of the Truth, Calm and Silence, and widest possible synthesis. The values pertaining to the aesthetic development would be those of the vision of the Beauty and creative joy of the deepest possible aesthetic experience and expression.

Moreover, life itself is the great teacher of life; therefore, unless spiritual values are the very atmosphere and life-breath of the educational environment, they cannot be truly and effectively brought home to the students.

The pursuit of the spiritual values is, in fact, the pursuit and cultivation of the truths and powers of two over-ruling aspects of personality, namely, what we have called the psychic and the spiritual.

The psychic being is the real individual, the real person behind all personality; it is integrative but unegoistic, and, little by little, it projects itself into the body, life and mind, in proportion to their right development, and suffuses them with its light and purity and establishes by its progressive governance a harmony of the different parts of the being. It is that which knows its real mission as an individual expression in the totality of all the individuals in the world, a mission that is unique to itself. Its goal is a higher realisation upon earth and its law of action is that of mutuality and unity.

While the psychic is the inmost and deepest being in us, the spiritual is the highest and transcendental. While psychic life is the life of immortality and of endless time and limitless space, the spiritual consciousness, on the other hand, means to live the infinite and the eternal, to throw oneself outside all creation beyond time and space.

And there is still a higher ingredient, supramental consciousness, which reconciles the transcendental tendency of the spiritual and the immanence of the psychic as also the powers and perfections of the mental, the vital and the physical.

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*The mother-tongue is the proper medium of education and therefore the first energies of the child should be directed to the thorough mastering of the medium. Almost every child has an imagination, an instinct for words, a dramatic faculty, a wealth of idea and fancy. These should be interested in the literature and history of the nation. Instead of stupid and dry spelling and reading books looked on as a dreary and ungrateful task, he should be introduced by rapidly progressive stages to the most interesting parts of his own literature and the life around him and behind him, and they should be put before him in such a way as to attract and appeal to the qualities of which I have spoken. All other study at this period should be devoted to the perfection of the mental functions and the moral character. A foundation should be laid at this time for the study of history, science, philosophy, art, but not in an obtrusive and formal manner. Every child is a lover of interesting narrative, a hero-worshipper and a patriot. Appeal to these qualities in him and through them let him master without knowing it the living and human parts of his nation's history. Every child is an enquirer, an investigator, analyser, a merciless anatomist. Appeal to those qualities in him and let him acquire without knowing it the right temper and the necessary fundamental knowledge of the scientist. Every child has an insatiable intellectual curiosity and turn for metaphysical enquiry. Use it to draw him on slowly to an understanding of the world and himself. Every child has the gift of imitation and a touch of imaginative power. Use it to give him the ground work of the faculty of the artist.*

*It is by allowing Nature to work that we get the benefit of the gifts she has bestowed on us. Humanity in its education of children has chosen to thwart and hamper her processes and, by so doing, has done much to thwart and hamper the rapidity of its onward march. Happily, saner ideas are now beginning to prevail. But the way has not yet been found. The past hangs about our necks with all its prejudices and errors and will not leave us: it enters into our most radical attempts to return to the guidance of the all-wise Mother. We must have the courage to take up clearer knowledge and apply it fearlessly in the interests of posterity. Teaching by snippets must be relegated to the lumber-room of dead sorrows. The first work is to interest the child in life work and knowledge, to develop his instruments of knowledge with the utmost thoroughness, to give him mastery of the medium he must use. Afterwards, the rapidity with which he will learn will make up for any delay in taking up regular studies, and it will be found that, where now he learns a few things badly, then he will learn many things thoroughly well.*

**Sri Aurobindo**  
*A Preface on National Education*

# The True Fulfilment Of Man

*As an Individual and as a Race*

*Jugal Kishore Mukherjee*

Earth-life appears to us to be a vast arena where individuals and collectivities, communities and nations, all are seeking after self-expression and self-fulfilment. Self-possession, self-affirmation and self-expansion constitute the threefold urge of all living beings.

But where is the guarantee that all these diverse self-affirmations will move in perfect harmony and mutual adaptability? Where is the assurance that the self-affirmation of the individual will not go counter to the self-affirmation of the collective being, and vice versa?

Rather, one meets the contrary phenomenon all around. We notice clash, discord and disharmony reigning supreme everywhere. Individuals clashing with individuals, communities colliding with communities, nations warring against nations— this is the normal spectacle hailing our eyes.

But certainly this cannot be the ideal way of living. Harmony, and not disharmony and discord, should be the keynote of all right living, whether individual or collective. But till this day, man's attempts at harmonisation have all miscarried and failed. He has tried his hand at a number of remedies, but the disease seems to have defied all palliatives up till now.

In spite of his great and elaborate material civilisation man has not travelled a whit towards true unity with his fellow-beings. Essentially, in his nature he has remained the same uncultured aboriginal lurking stealthily in darkness to prey upon others in order to grow in his own stature. Self-aggrandisement at the expense of all others, this principle still holds its sway over the nature of man. Even in the limited field of his own personal life he has not succeed in establishing inner concord and harmony.

But the question is, why so? Why is all this clash and collision and disharmony? What is the root-cause of this ignoble failure on the part of man to organise his individual and collective life on the basis of harmony and union? If we really want to construct our society on an ideal basis, we have to touch and tackle the problem at its very root. To manipulate only on the surface without caring to go into the fundamentals of the problem, this is precisely the reason why man has till this day failed in his attempt to usher in the rule of the Spirit upon earth.

Man has persistently dreamt of a perfected life upon earth, but a life attaining perfection must embrace at

the same time three distinct perfections : (i) a total self-finding and self-fulfilment of the individual in himself, (ii) an integral flowering of the collective being and (iii) the perfectly harmonious mutual relation between individual and individual, between society and society, and between individual and society. These three perfections are in no way incompatible with one another, rather they constitute one harmonious whole and are the natural corollaries of one single attainment. We shall try to see, in the course of our essay, what that single attainment is. But before that let us examine whether these perfections are at all feasible, so long as man remains what he is now.

At present man the individual conceives of himself as a separative ego, separated from others, separated even from his own true and permanent self. As a result, he does not know in what consists his true fulfilment. Groping blindly in the world, he is tossed hither and thither by the impact of the world-forces. Vain of his 'freewill', he is merely a tool in the hands of the cosmic energies. His nature is too complex for him to grapple with it. In his apparent manifestation he seems to himself to be a multiperson. He has in him a physical being, a life-being, a mental being, all apparently seeking for their separate fulfilment. He is actuated by numberless forces, each of them straining after its separate satisfaction. The individual feels himself lost in the medley of impulsion. To strike an accord between all these divergent pulls is a task too difficult for his mind to execute. As a result, he suffers from a constant sense of confusion, frustration and friction, and an inner disharmony and disequilibrium.

Throughout his long history man has tried in diverse ways to solve this insistent problem. The best of all his attempts so far has been to try to govern his life with the enlightened reason. But life is not entirely rational, and human vital nature and ego are too strong to be subordinated by the mental reason.

And this is not all. Our surface existence is not the whole of our existence; it is only the summit of an iceberg the major portion of which remains submerged in a vast and obscure subcontinent, and thus hidden from the outer view of man. This subconscious is the field of all sorts of blind and powerful impulses which surge up now and then to the surface and smash to pieces everything bright and golden erected there in the course of long labour and preparation. So long as this subcontinent part of man's nature remains untackled and



untransformed, the individual cannot be made perfect and remoulded ' in the image of God.'

The second perfection, the perfection of the collective being, remains in its turn unfulfilled. For the collective being has to formulate and express itself through the individuals in order to become conscious, and the community cannot be expected to be perfect except through the perfection of the constituting individuals.

Let us now analyse the possibility or otherwise of the third perfection: harmonious mutual relation between individual and individual, and between individual and society. This too is bound to remain an unrealised chimera until and unless man transcends his present egocentric nature. For ego means separating, division and fragmentation. The consciousness, knowledge and will of the egoistic individual remain divorced from the consciousness, knowledge and will of all other individuals and as a result the minds, hearts and lives of the constituting individuals in a human society cannot be perfectly and harmoniously accommodated. Ego, by definition, misses the truth of the whole and tries to assert itself for the sake of its separate advantage. Consequently life-discord, conflict and disharmony are bound to arise. No amount of political, social or other externally operated panaceas can solve this problem. The most drastic changes attempted by them will come to naught, for the root-canker of all ills, the ego, is left unscathed. The individual continues to be governed by the vital desires and passions and moved by all sorts of ignorant forces.

Being thus baffled in his efforts at squaring accounts between his own individual self-affirmation and the self-affirmation of the collective being, man has tried in desperation to cling to one or the other of two extreme views.

In one of these views, man has over-emphasised the so-called self-fulfilment of the individual. But if by individual self-fulfilment is meant the satisfaction of the urges of one's separative ego, then disunity and discord are sure to crop up. Being spiritually ignorant and at the same time unaware of the truth of other individuals, the individual is bound to be anarchic and wound other's interests in order to aggrandise his own blinded ego. Thus he will destroy altogether the very foundation of a successful collective living.

In the other extreme view, the society has been made all in all, the communal ego has been elevated to the status of an uncompromising master at whose altar the individual is forced to immolate himself. But in this way, neither the individual nor the society stands to gain. For the collective consciousness is always less evolved than the consciousness of the best individuals forming it, and the

collective being can progress and move forward only through the enlightened consciousness of its individuals. So, if the society tries to crush the individual, it does so only at the risk of the drying up of its own hidden springs of creative activity. It becomes in the long run mechanised and all further evolutionary possibility of progress recedes from it.

In fact, we have to seek the solution elsewhere than in these two diametrically opposite views of life. For we have seen that the malady of the individual is that he has not found his true being, his authentic individuality. Before any attempt at ushering in a truly perfected human living can be taken in hand, the ego has perforce to be dethroned from its present elevated pedestal. But it may be argued that if the ego is abolished, man is sure to lose his individuality at the same time.

But, precisely, this is an erroneous way of looking at the reality. For the ego is not the individual. The true individuality of a man lies in his psychic being, his spiritual individuality, which is preparing through his evolution to emerge in the front of his consciousness. Its emergence and subsequent integral self-manifestation—and not the satisfaction of the mere egoistic will-to-live—is the true object of individual being and living.

But since the evolution is progressive, the true person does not and cannot show himself at once in the outward nature. He is now, as it were, the constitutional monarch, and his false deputy, the ego, is governing the nature of man. But the first preoccupation of man should be to discover this secret person and dwell in his consciousness.

But this is not enough in itself. For, ordinarily, spirituality liberates and illumines mostly the inner ranges of the being. But so long as it has to work through the instrumentality of mind, it loses its effectivity and can only influence the outer earth-life but not bring about any radical transformation of life. In order to transform effectively a nature created by the Ignorance, a higher instrumental dynamics than Mind is absolutely needed. This superior dynamics with perfect effective power has been called by Sri Aurobindo the supramental Truth-Consciousness-Force or simply the Supermind. This is a supreme power of the Spirit, which is bound to appear overtly in earth-nature in the inexorable march of evolution. For, the terrestrial evolution is essentially an evolution of consciousness-force and not merely an evolution of forms, and the oestrus of evolution has by no means stopped with the emergence of man, the glorified mental animal. Life emerged in Matter; Mind has followed Life. But Mind is not the highest possible Power of the Spirit and in the inevitability of things. Supermind, the supremely dynamic Gnosis, is bound to emerge in terrestrial evolution and become in time

the principal instrumentation of divine manifestation here upon earth.

But wherein lies the essential difference between the nature of mind as we know it and the nature of Supermind? To put it in brief, mental nature is based on a consciousness of the finite, whereas supramental nature is a consciousness and power of the Infinite. Mind sees, feels, thinks, senses with division and separation as its starting-point, also as its most dominant trait; but Supermind, whose very nature is Truth-Consciousness, bases itself intrinsically and always on the standpoint of essential and inalienable oneness, and regards everything, even the most diverse and glaring multiplicity, in the light of this oneness. Its will, ideas, feelings, sense are all made of the stuff of oneness and its dynamic action invariably proceeds upon that secure basis.

Supermind being a unitarian, integralising and harmonic consciousness, the supramental being, in contrast with the present mental being, will succeed in founding all his living, whether individual or collective, on an innate sense and effective realisation of harmonic unity in his own inner and outer life as well as in his group-life. All other beings would be to him his own selves. He will realise himself to be a soul of the All-Soul, "a centre of differentiation of the one personal Consciousness, a centre of determination of the one total movement." The individual will then know that he is not only himself but also all others, that the total universal movement is one and indivisible. To quote from Sri Aurobindo :

"The supramental being in his cosmic consciousness seeing and feeling all as himself would act in that sense; he would act in a universal awareness and a harmony of his individual self with the total will, of his individual action with the total action... His cosmic individuality would know the cosmic forces and their movement and their significance as part of himself, and the truth-consciousness in him would see the right relation at each step and find the dynamic right expression of that relation." (The Life Divine, p. 974)

Unity, mutuality and harmony will thus be the law of a common collective life. But because of that it need not be feared that the group-life will be just a white monotone excluding from itself all the manifold richness of a polychrome diversity. Indeed, there will be infinite variation in the manifestation of the individuals constituting a gnostic society. But since each one will be aware of the total truth of things and beings and of their inner self which is also the self of all, this diversity will never clash with the inherent unity of the movement.

Thus all problems of living, individual and collective, will then be definitively solved. And let us recall that three movements are necessary for remedying the ills of human life. Firstly, each individual has to awake to his now secret spiritual individuality and make it the centre of his living. Secondly, he has to open himself fully to the riches of the Spirit above. Thirdly, he has to invoke the Supramental Gnosis so that it can come down and transform his nature in its absolute entirety. For it is pertinent to remember that Supermind alone possesses the requisite power to change human nature down to the subconscious and the inconscient.

But to many, even to most, the solution suggested by us may appear to be ideal but never realisable in practice. For none of the three aforementioned psychological movements is easy to undertake and fulfil even for the rare individuals. So, how can we reasonably expect that human collectivity will either take to or persevere in this improbable attempt ?

But the eye of spiritual vision holds out the hope, nay, the assurance that man has reached a crucial point in his evolutionary march where Supramental Gnosis is in the foreseeable future going to emerge overtly in the earth-nature. The evolutionary nîsus is still working and just as it has brought out successively Life and Mind out of the apparently inconscient shell of Matter, so also it is going to release the involved Supermind in the not too distant a future. The Supermind from above from its station in the non-manifest is not only ready to descend, it has, in fact, already descended into earth-nature. It is now actively at work here and, as a preparatory measure, trying to fully awaken a few individuals to the divine possibility upon earth itself and convert their mind, life and body into perfect receptacles and vehicles of manifestation of the supramental Truth-Consciousness. And once this is effected, once the Supramental Power fully takes its stand and gets organised in the nature of a few individuals, it will become operative in the collective life also. And like some dissolving acid it will then cut its way through the obstinate obstacles and the dark resistance of the present human nature, a nature of ignorance and perversity, and establish its divine sway here upon the earthly plane. And in the 'divine Event' lies man's true fulfilment and as a race.

The rationalists may wink at this possibility and the atheists may scoff at the idea but time has come when it is necessary to put the right diagnosis of man's age-old problem and its only veritable solution before the discerning spirit of those who do not shrink from the adventure of the Unknown and are ready to attempt the apparently impossible.

# The Ideals of the Indian Spiritual Tradition and Mahatma Gandhi

Mangesh Nadkarni

During its long and uninterrupted history of several millennia, two different spiritual ideals seem to have appealed most to the Indian mind. One is the ideal of the Rishi represented best by Vyas during an early phase of our history and by Sri Aurobindo in our own age, and the other is the ideal of the monk represented with equal force by Buddha and Shankara, and a host of others deeply venerated by the popular mind, and which in recent years received a further stimulus under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi. The Mahatma was aiming at building India in the image of Ramrajya, a land of moral perfection, into a community of saints and monks but the resources he tapped were not the higher hidden intensities of the spirit within but the all too fragile powers of ethical idealism and sentimentalism. His methods and motives were readily comprehensible to the Western world and received appreciation and encouragement from it. The Mahatma was truly a titan and has his claims to greatness on several counts, but it is my feeling that his impact on the Indian mind on the whole strengthened rather than weakened its life and world-negating propensities.

The Rishi aims at a perfection of the whole being of man, not of his soul alone but also of the instruments of the soul, namely, the physical, vital and mental being of man, and he aims at achieving this perfection here on earth. The Monk, on the other hand, seeks primarily the liberation of the soul from bondage and refuses to acknowledge the claims of the instruments of the soul to perfection. The Rishi accepts the claim of the Spirit as much as that of Matter and this leads him to a joyous acceptance of the world and life. The Monk, on the other hand, is enamoured of the Spirit so much that he refuses to accept Matter; and this leads him to negate this world and life.

The world-shunning monk by his *tapasyā* and renunciation may well find his own individual salvation, but he cannot be the true guide and lawgiver of a society. The monastic attitude implies a fear, an aversion, a distrust of life and its aspirations. Therefore we cannot really expect an ascetic to guide wisely that with which he is entirely out of sympathy. His guidance, if anything, will only persuade a society to withdraw from life as much as possible. The spirituality of the Rishi, on the other hand, draws back from life to envelop it without being dominated by it, and therefore does not suffer from this disability. This spiritual guide who can guide human life towards its perfection is typified in the ancient Indian ideal of the Rishi. A Rishi "can guide the world humanly as God guides it divinely, because like the Divine he is in the life of the world and yet above it." (Sri Aurobindo: SABCL Vol. 15; 168)

The colouring of world-negation has so strongly affected the Indian mentality that European scholars like Schopenhauer and Albert Schweitzer who looked at the Indian tradition through the eyes of Shankara found world-negation and pessimism as one of its distinguishing features. Albert Schweitzer, a sympathetic viewer of the Indian spiritual culture on the whole, finds that world and life-negation plays a great part in Indian thought although he does not deny that in the Upanishads and in many other Indian writings, world and life-affirmation too finds strong expression. He (Schweitzer: 1957) states the difference between these two attitudes as follows :

"World and life-affirmation consists in this: that man regards existence as he experiences it in himself and as it has developed in the world as something of value per se and accordingly strives to let it reach perfection in himself, whilst within his own sphere of influence he endeavours to preserve and to further it.

As against this, world and life-negation consists in regarding existence as he experiences it in himself and as it has developed in the world as something meaningless and sorrowful and resolves accordingly to bring life to a standstill in himself by mortifying his will to life and to renounce all activity which aims at improvement of the conditions of life in this world."

Although the ideal of the Rishi has had long spells of influence during the early phase of Indian history, from the Vedic times almost to the end of the first millennium it is the ideal of the monk that has by and large been India's inspiration during the last one thousand years. Ever since Buddha blew the conch of the everlasting NO, more than two millennia ago, the ideal of the monk has fascinated the Indian psyche in various degrees, and consequently there has been in the Indian mind a certain tendency towards a lofty and austere exaggeration of the ascetic and life-negating impulse. But Buddhism burst upon India at a time when Indian civilisation was still in its youthful exuberance. Besides, as Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, Buddhism did not lose sight of the truth that man must develop himself under the conditions of the present ignorance before he can attain to knowledge. Therefore Buddhism was still able to give to the Indian mind a great and powerful discipline for the life of man on earth. Nevertheless, eventually the Indian mind threw out Buddhism precisely because it was not happy with the emphasis on negation implicit in Buddhism. The bias

towards negation was, however, reinforced very powerfully by the philosophy of Shankara, and this happened to coincide with a progressive decline in the vitality of the Indian race. This led to the distortion of the larger Indian ideal of the Rishi. This has no doubt led to "a great heaping up of the treasures of the Spirit" but it has also led to an increasing bankruptcy of life during the last one thousand years. This period has witnessed the rapid decline of India in most fields of life; the superabundant vital energy and the joy of life and joy of creation which were the hallmark of India during the early phase of its history and no more in evidence, and India's scientific and critical mind seems to have gone into a slumber. This is also the millennium which saw Afghans, Turks, Mongols, Portuguese, Dutch, French and English get the better of us militarily and politically. For far too long, has the creative genius of India been under the spell of the gospel of the Monk and until it begins to respond wholeheartedly to the call of the Rishi India will remain cheated of its true destiny. In Sri Aurobindo's words :

"It is this revolt of Spirit against Matter that for two thousand years since Buddhism disturbed the balance of the old Aryan world, has dominated increasingly the Indian mind..... All have lived in the shadow of the great Refusal and final end of life for all is the garb of the ascetic. The general conception of existence has been permeated with the Buddhistic theory of the chain of Karma and with the consequent antinomy of bondage and liberation, bondage by birth, liberation by the cessation from birth. Therefore all voices are joined in one great consensus that not in this world of dualities can there be our kingdom of heaven, but beyond, whether in the joys of the eternal Vrindavan or the high beatitude of Brahmaloaka, beyond manifestations in some ineffable Nirvana or where all separate experience is lost in the featureless unity of the indefinable existence. And through many centuries a great army of shining witnesses, saints and teachers, names sacred to Indian memory and dominant in Indian imagination, have borne always the same witness and spelled always the same lofty and distant appeal,—renunciation the sole path of knowledge, acceptance of physical life the act of the ignorant, cessation of birth the right use of human birth, the call of the Spirit, the recoil from Matter." (Sri Aurobindo: SABCL Vol. 18 p. 23)

Vyasa has been one of the most articulate advocates of the Rishi ideal in Indian history. Sri Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa as he is known to Indian legend and history, whether this is the name of an individual or of a tradition, has played a unique role in defining and disseminating the spiritual culture of India. As Vedavyasa, the editor of the Vedas, he compiled and integrated the spiritual and cultural achievements of the early Aryans and synthesised them with the contributions from the non-Aryan societies. He evolved through the Gita and the life of Sri Krishna a unique synthesis of the Jnana, Bhakti and Karma yogas.

Through his *Brahmasutras*, he laid the metaphysical foundation for an integral view of life. And finally as the author of the Mahabharata, the great epic, and of the Puranas, he helped carry the loftiest moral, social and spiritual ideals to the common people. Therefore more than any other figure, historical or legendary, Vyas may be said to have been the architect and builder of early Hindu civilization and culture.

In the Upanishads we have the concept of two Purushas, the Kshara, one entangled in Prakriti, the mutable Purusha in Prakriti, and the Akshara, one who is free from it, called the immutable Self, aloof from Prakriti and her evolutes. In the Gita Vyasa develops the most revolutionary concept of the Purushottama (the Supreme person) to which the Kshara Purusha (the mutable Nature) and the Akshara Purusha (the immutable Spirit) owe their origin. The immobile unity of the Akshara Purusha and the mobile multiplicity of the Kshara Purusha both belong to the Purushottama, but he transcends both. Besides, Vyasa also introduces the concept of the two Prakritis. These theoretical innovations give Nature in Vedantic philosophy a new respectability. In the Gita Vyasa deviates from the strict Sankhyan position on Prakriti. He postulates a higher Prakriti (Para Prakriti) in addition to the lower Prakriti of the three modes of the Sankhya. In the lower Nature (Prakriti) each being appears as the ego; in the higher Nature he is the *jiva* or the individual soul. Thus the Gita deifies evolutionary Nature when it states that the Para Prakriti (the higher creative force of the Absolute Reality) itself has become *jiva*. Life-forms in this evolutionary Nature are thus a part of the Divine intentionality of purpose in this world. In other words, this evolutionary world of which we each are a part is real, and what is more, it is a part of the divine becoming. There cannot be a more triumphant vindication of life-acceptance and world-acceptance. Thus Vyasa gave to Hinduism through the Gita a shining manifesto of world and life-affirmation more than two millennia ago.

And yet most modern Hindus, when asked to cite verses from the Gita which typically convey its central message are, more often than not, likely to cite verses like (XII : 13) rather than verses like (XI : 33)

*advēṣṭa sarvabhūtānāṃ maitraḥ karuṇa eva ca  
nirmamo nirahankārah samadukhasukhah kshami*  
(XII:13)

(Bearing ill-will to none, and having friendship and compassion for all beings, free from egoism and I-ness and my-ness even minded in pain).

*tasmāt twam uttiṣṭha yasho labhasva, jivā shatrun  
bhunkshva rājyam samruddham  
maya eva ete nihatāhā purvameva, nimittamātram  
bhava savyasācin*

(XI:33)

(Therefore, arise thou and gain glory, conquer thy enemies and enjoy an opulent kingdom. By me already they are

slain, do thou become the occasion only, O Savyasachin.)

Verse XII:13 describes the virtues especially appropriate to a monk. The Gita does not ask Arjuna to stop at this point. The inner poise described in this verse is necessary so that one can base the outer action and life on this foundation. Gita is not a book of practical ethics but of the spiritual life. It teaches not a human and not even merely a moral but a divine action. It teaches us the abandonment of all other standards of duty or conduct for a selfless performance of the divine will working through our nature (Sri Aurobindo : *Essays on the Gita*). So the Lord asks Arjuna to act as instructed in verse XI:33. This is the verse which invites Arjuna to perform his *dharma* as one whose will has become one with that of the Divine, and who is totally surrendered to the Divine. This is the final and compelling command to action given to the protagonist of the world-battle.

And yet we have been reading world-negation as the message not only of the Gita but also even of such a powerful world-affirming Upanishad as the Isha. This is because action directed at achieving success in this world becomes meaningless in the context of Shankara's rigorous monism which rejects the world as an illusion. This is total travesty of facts since the ideal of the world-renouncing monk is not the only or even the more predominant trend in the Indian scriptures as has been shown by Sri Aurobindo.

Even today most educated Indians assume that the Indian spiritual tradition teaches world-negation. We have among the Indian intelligentsia broadly two classes: I shall call them Believers and non-Believers, for want of better terms. The Believers are more vocal and articulate, but both share the conviction, that the Indian spiritual tradition was essentially a life-negating, non-materialistic idealism. The class of non-Believers consists of people owing intellectual allegiance to different shades of Marxism, the intellectual dilettante, and the fairly successful tribe of pen-pushers who are content to scoff at everything in elegant English. Then there are the Believers, who tacitly assume that India's creative capacity in religion and philosophy came to an end with the great Acharyas. The commentaries of Indian scriptures they read happen to be in English with detailed footnotes which make as many references to the Prasthanatrayi as to modern physics, biology and psychology, and this is the basis of their claim to modernity and to a scientific bent of mind.

While discussing the mind set of contemporary India it is impossible to ignore the role that Mahatma Gandhi played in shaping it. During the crucial years of our freedom struggle, the Mahatma wielded a powerful and an almost all-eclipsing influence on the Indian psyche, and it is necessary here to consider briefly the nature of this influence. Did the impact of the Mahatma on the Indian mind help weaken or strengthen the life-negating tendency of the Indian

mind? In my view, the Mahatma's impact strengthened the life-negating proclivity of the Indian mind, even among the educated; it reinforced the swing of the Indian mind away from the ideals of Vyasa to those of Shankara.

The Mahatma's influence on the Indian mind, both of the English-educated intelligentsia of his time and of the masses in India was truly phenomenal. His appeal to Indian intellectuals came from the fact that he was able to win the approbation and esteem of Western intellectuals such as Bernard Shaw, Einstein and George Orwell and also of the leaders of the Christian church in the West, such as Stanley Jones, Carl Heath and Romain Rolland. In fact, it is significant that no other Indian leader in any field of thought or action has been able to get the understanding and appreciation that he received from such a wide spectrum of Western opinion. In other words, the Mahatma was far more comprehensible to the western mind than any of the other exemplars of the Indian spiritual tradition, such as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Sri Ramana Maharshi, or Sri Aurobindo. The Mahatma was eminently acceptable to the Indian intelligentsia since its gods owe their power and existence to the gods acceptable to its counterpart in the West.

Furthermore, he also succeeded in gaining acceptance as the true standard bearer of the Indian spiritual wisdom. He was able to establish his credentials as a saint, as a renouncer, fairly early in his leadership of the Indian freedom struggle. His loin cloth, his famous vows of celibacy, his fasts and prayer meetings resounding with *rāmdhun*, his diet of goat's milk, his train journeys in III class, his insistence on living like the poorest of the poor, in the scavengers' colony in Delhi, etc. gave him a great reputation as a renouncer. And as Romila Thapar (1978) has pointed out, renouncers have always had a great charismatic hold on Indian society. Indian mythology and folklore and even history are studded with the careers of successful renouncers. There is no limit to their powers, even Gods fear them. The ascetic in Indian society was respected above the king for he is associated with powers beyond the ordinary, symbolised as magical powers. It is this which attracts the respect and awe of the lay community. The Mahatma readily fell into this image of the renouncer, and that explains his enormous hold on the Indian mind in general.

But while admitting the Mahatma's claims to being a most impressive renouncer, it must be pointed out that, the Mahatma really showed no great sensitivity to the peculiar spiritual genius of India. He was primarily a moralist, and the resources of the spiritual tradition of India remained largely unrecognised by him. He tried to force the Hindu spiritual tradition into the straitjacket of the moral paradigm of Ruskin, Tolstoy and other Christian moralists. Temporarily at least, he succeeded in this almost completely because some of the most intelligent of his contemporaries had no hesitation in accepting his peculiar version of the



Indian tradition. But it seems to me that this exaltation and glorification of the purely ethical ideal had the effect of diverting renaissance India from working out its true destiny. After lying quiescent for nearly a thousand years, India was rising again in the early years of this century to free herself from the self-woven shackles of her old spirituality and to work out the possibility of a new spirituality. Through the influence of people like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Vivekanand, Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, India was at long last moving away from the spirituality of world-negation to the spirituality of world-affirmation, from the ideals of the Monk to the ideals of the Rishi. In my view, the Mahatma's influence acted as a break to India's progress in this direction.

In maintaining that the attainment of salvation is the ultimate aim of a man's life, the Mahatma was true to the age-old Indian tradition, but it is not clear what his understanding of the concept of salvation was. An erudite study (Iyer: 1978, p.80) of his social and political thought explains this concept as follows:

"To Gandhi, as to the Buddha, the pursuit of salvation is a form of exalted selfishness unless it means the detached, dedicated service of humanity for its own sake. All of us are obliged to place our resources at the disposal of humanity. The social and political reformer requires a rigorous discipline no less than the mystic or the recluse; in fact, he needs it even more insofar as he has chosen the more exacting task of introducing the monastic ideal into politics and society. Gandhi was more concerned with the elevation of his fellow men through his own example and teaching than with his own salvation or self-realization."

There are several assumptions made by the author of this quote about spirituality which may or may not be Gandhian but they are certainly not Indian. For example, Iyer maintains here that for the Buddha the pursuit of salvation meant detached, dedicated service of humanity for its own sake. I do not think this would be acceptable either to traditional Buddhism or Hinduism. But let that pass. Consider again Iyer's observation that for the Mahatma the moral elevation of his fellowmen by introducing them to the monastic ideal meant more than his own self-realisation, and that in this again he was like the Buddha. The Buddha turned his attention to saving souls only after he had made sure that he had saved his own soul, and not before. But the Mahatma, we are told, was keener on saving other souls before he had saved his own! For the modern English educated Indian mind this looks like a commendable position to take. But if we really understand the meaning of the metaphor "saving one's soul" in the light of Indian spirituality, then we realise that unless one has saved one's own soul, in other words, experienced the spiritual being or Reality one is and the world is, one would not even know how to help someone else to save his soul. This is one more instance where an ethical ideal is mistaken for the spiritual.

It seems to me that the Mahatma mistook the means for the end, since salvation or self-realisation can come only after self-purification, he regarded the ethical disciplines necessary for this as absolute. He had his favourite set of ethical principles, viz. truth, non-violence, continence, tastelessness, non-stealing, non-possession, fearlessness, removal of untouchability, bread-labour, religious tolerance and *swadeshi*, and he gave an absolute value to each one of them. For him the strict observance of these principles became an end in itself. For example, non-violence was for him such an absolute principle that he was inclined to amend the Gita to bring it in line with his own position. In the introduction to his Gujarati translation of the Gita, he wrote: "Let it be granted that according to the letter of the Gita it is possible to say that warfare is consistent with the renunciation of fruit. But after forty years of unremitting endeavour fully to enforce the teaching of the Gita in my own life, I have in all humility, felt that perfect renunciation is impossible without perfect observance of *ahimsā* (non-violence) in every shape and form." (Louis Fischer: 1983, p.41) Thus he decided to change the Gita to make it a gospel of non-violence. Even in this, some admirers of the Mahatma, Louis Fischer, for example, have seen his greatness, and lauded him for his refusal to be bound by uncogent texts, concepts and situations. What was really not congenial to the Mahatma was the spiritual core of the Gita, which teaches not the performance of human action but a divine action, a selfless performance of the Divine will working through our nature.

The Indian tradition has a totally different perspective on morality. It looks upon the moral rule as a stop-gap which men are obliged to use, very uncertainly and stumblingly, until they can see things wholly in the light of the spirit. The Indian tradition makes a clear distinction between the spiritual life, the religious life and the ordinary life of which morality is a part. The ordinary life is a life in which the human consciousness is separated from its own true self and from the Divine and is led by the laws of the Ignorance. The religious life is a movement of the same ignorant human consciousness turning or trying to turn away from its ordinary poise to the greater Divine consciousness, but since it does not yet possess the knowledge, it is led by the dogmatic tenets and rules of some sect or creed which claims to have found the way to the beatific Beyond. The religious life may be the first approach to the spiritual but it is often a turning about in a round of rites, ceremonies and practices. The spiritual life proceeds directly by a change of consciousness, a change from ordinary consciousness, ignorant and separated from its true self and from God, to a greater consciousness in which one finds one's true being and comes into direct and living contact and then into union with the Divine. For the spiritual seeker this change of consciousness is what matters most. (Sri Aurobindo: SABCL Vol. XII: 137).

Morality is a part of the ordinary life; it is an attempt to govern the outward conduct by certain mental rules. Man's

vital will and impulses often tend to run wild and need to be curbed with the mental power and its decrees. When the vital will is submitted to the mental power and its discipline, we are in the domain of morality. When the vital will and mental power both are submitted to something higher, to the Divine law, then the true spiritual life begins. Such a life is beyond all egoistic motives and selfish aims. The spiritual ideal goes beyond the mind; it enters into the deeper consciousness of the Spirit and acts out of the truth of the Spirit. Morality may be the first necessary step of the spiritual journey but it is no more than that. This does not mean that a spiritual man discards moral principles or defies them. When spiritual consciousness dawns, the problems as now perceived by the mind do not arise because we then have a vision which sees the world differently and a guidance which at present is not available to us.

In fact, undue and exclusive emphasis on morality can sometimes be a check on spiritual effort as the Mother has pointed out (Complete Works of the Mother: Vol.III:143). It is very difficult for a man who is smug about his being on the high moral ground to progress beyond this stage. He is comfortably settled in his virtue and has no longer the humility or aspiration needed for spiritual progress.

If what I am discussing here were merely the philosophy of the Mahatma by which he chose to live his own personal life, his way to the Divine, his own yoga, I would not have raised this issue here at all since I respect all yogas. But the Mahatma sought to impose this philosophy on all his followers because he was very serious about purifying politics. The Mahatma was verily the 'uncrowned King of India' and his charisma was such that he was in a position to influence a large section of those who worked in the various fields of national life under his leadership. In a controversy with Lokamanya Tilak, who held that politics could not be regarded solely from a religious point of view, he argued, "The epitome of religions is to promote Purushartha, and Purushartha is nothing but a desperate attempt to become a Sadhu, i.e. to become a gentleman in every sense of the term." (Iyer: 1978. p.51).

Gandhi in his sincere desire to purify politics insisted that all his followers and the entire nation of which he was the supreme leader adhere to the ideal of the *sādhu*, the saintly person, the morally perfect and liberated man. He constantly exhorted his countrymen to accept these moral ideals. He never paused to consider whether it was fair to ask a whole country or large masses of ordinary men and women to rise almost overnight to the status of a saint. For a saint the Gita's ideal described in verse XII.13 referred to above is the right ideal. Self-defence and attack are needless to him. Strife does not belong to the soul of such a person, sacrifice and self-giving are the whole of his action. But no people have reached that level and therefore to expect an entire society to follow a law or principle involuntarily or ignorantly or contrary to the truth of one's consciousness is to push

them on the way to falsehood and self-destruction. People may profess adherence to these high ethical values of a saint, particularly if they are invested with the glamour of idealism as the Mahatma did but their nature would constantly drive them towards their normal unregenerate behaviour. This is a sure way of making people *mithyāchāris*, hypocrites. This brings no growth, farther no development, assures no spiritual merit. On the other hand, it weakens the people and demoralises them since it is in their case no more than a crude repression of their nature. Turning the other cheek to the smiter is as dangerous as it is impracticable in the case of such people. It makes them encourage injustice until it becomes totally intolerable and all the dams of moral restraint are breached and people are carried off in a flood of violence. One tries to appear saintly although one's being clamours for vital, physical and egoistic fulfilment of all sorts. One pretends to loathe wealth and property but secretly cherishes them. This leads to hypocrisy and corruption. The Gita (verse no. III:6) contains a clear and sharp warning about this: "He who quells his sense organs of action but sits remembering in his heart the objects of sense, that man of bewildered soul is termed a hypocrite."

This high-pressure technique of elevating people is alien to the Indian way of life. In the Indian tradition there is the important notion of *adhikāra*. Every person should be allowed to grow according to his nature. Ultimately, it is the high-pitched spiritual ideal and standard of conduct perfect and absolute that is the goal put before every one by the Hindu religion. But it also recognises that there are infinite differences between man and man; some are more inwardly evolved than others; many if not most, are infant souls incapable of great steps and difficult effort. Each needs to be dealt with according to his nature and soul stature. Hinduism marks three broad stages in the growing human consciousness: stage one consists of people who are crude, still outward, still vitally and physically minded; stage two consists of people who are more developed, more spiritually evolved, gifted with a conscious intelligence, a larger vital and aesthetic opening, and a stronger ethical power. At the third stage we have people who are fit for the spiritual heights, and ready to tread the summits of spiritual experience. This is rather like the distinction made in the Tantrik tradition between the animal man, the hero man, and the divine man, *pashu*, *vira*, *deva*. To try to impose on people still at the *pashu* stage, the *dharma* of the *devas* is to inflict psychological violence on them. Instead of strengthening them it only weakens them in the long run.

Something like this seems to have happened under the Mahatma's influence in India. It was as if marching orders were to be given to a whole nation to transform itself into a community of *sādhus* almost overnight. Under the excitement and heady idealism of the freedom struggle, it looked for a while as if Gandhi had almost brought about a miracle. Our freedom struggle for the most part remained a non-violent struggle under his leadership. Several people chose a

life of voluntary poverty, and a few even took the vow of celibacy. This moral euphoria was fairly widespread and we began to pat our own backs as a specially virtuous people. But as subsequent developments were to reveal, for most people this show of virtue was no more than an expediency. Not many people really believed in the ideal of voluntary poverty; even their commitment to non-violence was no more than a strategy dictated by the circumstances. But for the Mahatma, non-violence was no mere strategy or policy. He said: "The religion of non-violence is not merely for the *rishis* and saints. It is for the common people as well. Non-violence is the law of our species, as violence is the law of the brute." Non-violence is unquestionably part of the highest ideal, but it must have a spiritual or at least a psychological basis. To ask man to be non-violent without first trying to bring about a complete change in his nature is to ask for the impossible. "The gospel of non-violence can never succeed merely as a mental or moral principle and may even leave things worse than before", Sri Aurobindo had warned. This was also the view of some of the other contemporaries of the Mahatma, like Tilak. History has shown that these leaders were right. Even such a great admirer of the Mahatma as Sharma (1956) summed up the Mahatma's success in this field as follows :

"His higher and main objective was to make his countrymen accept non-violence as the law of life in all their activities and to lay the foundations in India of a non-violent state of village republics possessing no military force and no large-scale industrial machinery. In this he may be said to have failed completely, as his countrymen did not rise to the occasion and carry out his teaching. Far from fulfilling his expectations, we may say they sank even lower than before, when we take into account the appalling outrages and bloodshed which preceded and followed the partition of India. For a time violence stalked the land naked and unashamed, and at last carried the great Apostle of Non-violence himself. This showed how grievously the Mahatma had miscalculated the forces of evil arrayed against him and how greatly he has exaggerated to himself the capacities of his countrymen."

If this was Sharma's evaluation in 1956, I wonder what he would have said if he were writing this evaluation in 1993 when an orgy of violence seems to have engulfed the country. The Mahatma struggled all his life to bring purity to politics, and *aparigraha* (non-possession of wealth and property) was one of the vows he expected all those who worked in the public field to take. But did all those who professed *aparigraha* and participated in the freedom struggle wearing the coarse *khaddar* and Gandhi cap really believe in *aparigraha*? Subsequent history of the political and public life of the country gives a clear and loud answer to this question. We see in the country today every day how corruption has spread like a cancer through the entire fabric of our society, beginning with the politicians, bureaucrats, petty officials, business men,

and many segments of the society and how it embraces almost all aspects of life, including the economic and social systems and the cultural milieu. (Srinivasan: 1991)

There can be no doubt about the Mahatma's sincerity and the thoroughness of his search for the truth regarding morals and politics. It is also very admirable that he was against double standards one of personal morality and the other of public morality. But his titanic efforts to alter the very nature of man on the basis of moral and mental principles have decidedly proved counterproductive, and have strengthened the life-negating propensities of the Indian mind.

Swami Vivekananda (Complete Works: Vol. 5, pp.445-447) has explicitly stated that it is a mistake to preach the ideals of monkhood to the whole country. He makes a distinction between Dharma and Mukti. Dharma, according to him is that which makes man seek for happiness in this world or the next. And Mukti is that which aims at the liberation which takes one beyond the iron shackles of this world and the golden ones of the next. He goes on to point out:

"There was a time in India when Dharma was compatible with Mukti,... On the advent of Buddhism, Dharma was entirely neglected, and the path of Moksha alone became predominant,... However, the central fact is that the fall of our country, of which we hear so much spoken, is due to the utter want of this Dharma. If the whole nation practices and follows the path of Moksha, that is well and good; but is that possible? Without enjoyment renunciation can never come; first enjoy and then you can renounce. Otherwise if the whole nation, all of a sudden takes up Sannyasa, it does not gain what it desires, but it loses what it had into the bargain—the bird in the hand is fled, nor is that in the bush caught."

When an individual embraces *aparigraha* (non-possession) or *brahmacharya* (continence) and poverty as ideals for his personal life, he deserves our highest respect; but if he preaches these as national ideals, as the Mahatma did, he proves to be a negative force, a force indirectly weakening the country.

Nirodbaran: *Sadhak and Poet*

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# Consciousness Approach to Business Management - 4

*Money, Motivation & Progress*

Gary Jacobs.

What has been said regarding animate and inanimate objects is equally true of money. It responds to attention. Keeping an exact account of what is spent is one form of attention which promotes a non-stop flow of funds for work. The principle of total and proper utilization also applies. It can be seen that when one is left with a few more dollars and further finance is not forthcoming, the incoming money flow awaits the spending of the last cent. If money has been improperly expended on a certain item and efforts are taken to reverse the previous act, before long further sources of funds are revealed.

But money is not merely an object. Rather the material currency employed "... is the visible sign of a universal force, and this force in its manifestation on earth works on the vital and physical planes and is indispensable to the fullness of the outer life. In its origin and its true action it belongs to the Divine." (Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*). "... money is not meant to make money....

Money is meant to increase the wealth, the prosperity and the productiveness of a group, a country or, better, of the whole earth. Money is a means, a force, a power, and not an end in itself. And like all forces and all powers, it is by movement and circulation that it grows and increases its power, not by accumulation and stagnation." (*The Mother*). The normal human consciousness fails to see the Divine in money, and it wants to possess it for its value in fulfilling desires and the self-gratification of man's ego. Money is a form of the Divine in manifestation and it has a higher role to play in the life of each individual and the collectivity.

A business institution is based primarily on the motivation of economic self-interest directly in competition with others. Yet one can see in a larger view that, through this competition, not only a single business and its employees but the economy as a whole grows and prospers. The principle of competition is true at one level. But a higher truth is that of association, mutual interchange and collective progress. Wealth is not a fixed quantity in the world to be fought over. It is an ever-expanding movement of prosperity fostered by the creative activity of institutions. In the long run a successful institution is only possible in a strong economy where others also prosper and the individual success adds to the collective prosperity.

When a business institution recognizes this interdependence between all elements of the economy and chooses for its motivation and practical philosophy the develop-

ment and prosperity of the economy as a whole, it oversteps the narrow bounds of competitive self-interest and rises to a higher level of idealism. All its decisions, policies, actions have a broader perspective and a sounder basis. The result is that, having renounced the primary emphasis on its own survival, it becomes an essential component of the larger economic system. Life responds through the entire system to ensure that the company survives and prospers. In its activity the company becomes a broad channel for the flow of prosperity into the system. It attracts wealth to itself, and freely distributes it to the rest, far more than was possible by its narrower pursuit.

For an individual or an institution, the true attitude towards money is neither a greed to possess it for oneself nor an active distaste for wealth or the activities which create it. Money is a power of the Divine to be utilized for the development and prosperity of every man, institution, country, all mankind.

## II

This subject has already been discussed in terms of the institution as a whole and its governing ideal. The same holds true for every smaller unit of the company down to the individual. Simply stated, the principle is that the higher, less selfish, personal and egoistic one's motivation, the more he grows, and the more he receives. On the lower levels man is motivated by a desire for reward — money, fame, prestige, respect, success. At a higher level he works out of interest. Interest is a broader, less personal, more mental motive than desire. By choosing it one does not necessarily sacrifice the lower rewards but adds to them the satisfaction which comes from following one's interest. The highest level of motivation is service to another, to the firm, community, society, mankind, the Divine. Service brings with it the pure joy of self-giving and in the process life sees to it that one's desires and interests are also fulfilled. The basis of service is a decision to give of oneself. It is man's highest motive for action and it is the key to life. The principle of giving can be applied at all levels. One can give wealth and material possessions, give interest or attention, sympathy, psychological support, etc. When the management of an institution is able to practise this in its relationship with employees, other institutions and the society at large, then it opens the way for an unlimited growth, expansion and prosperity.

## III

Progress is normally thought of as the end result, the goal of all one's efforts, not something that can itself be practised as a principle. But it need not be so, if one makes

progress the governing ideal of all work and at every moment chooses it in favour of any other alternative. Progress means a constant effort to upgrade one's ideas, services, employees and systems. One may strive for the progress not only of the institution but of all its members, of all other institutions, of the larger society of which they are a part. To do this one must remember in every situation that the important thing is progress. No single job, no opportunity for quick profit should move him to waver from this principle.

The key to progress can be found in the Mother's statement that one must always strive for perfection and that the particular level of perfection attainable today does not matter so long as one reaches at least one step higher tomorrow. Life never stands still. If we do not progress we regress. The best way to start is by a period of sincere self-observation. Examine the entire institution as a whole and in all its parts and let each man examine himself also. Then whatever the result one must be objective and not criticize or condemn himself or others, only let one know what he is. Then take the decision that tomorrow each aspect or as many aspects as possible must be upgraded one step. It is helpful to keep a journal of one's observations and to then put in writing a plan for progress in the coming day and week. The programme must not be just a glimmering ideal one would like to attain. Then that small step should be implemented. This can be done on a group basis for the entire organisation or each department but it can also be done by every individual working member. Daily each man can decide to take one step towards greater perfection in work, a step which he can take himself independent of the behaviour of others. Let him daily take new steps while maintaining all the perfection attained in previous days. This maintaining of what has been previously accomplished is essential.

What one achieves in himself he has the power to pass on to others only after he has gained complete mastery of it. There is an age-old principle, "Practise what you preach". Better than this, practise to perfection and communicate that perfection to others by a silent will and a living example. In this light, every job is an opportunity for progress. If one concentrates on growth, expansion and rising to higher levels of motivation, one creates an atmosphere which attracts success, prosperity and new opportunity. It is not necessary to share these thoughts with others in the institution if there is any resistance to them. All that one has to do if he accepts them is to work silently along these lines, exhausting his personal and official capacities.

His responsibility ends there. Where he ends, life will take over.

#### IV

The basis of the Consciousness Approach is the correspondence between man's inner consciousness and events in outer life. Man is normally aware only of physical needs, life impulses, feelings and thoughts. Therefore the outer life of most men is a response to the quality of these inner elements. By changing the inner condition, one brings about a responsive change in the external world.

But consciousness is not limited to this. Behind the surface personality in man lies his true inner being. By contacting this deeper center he gains freedom from all the conflicting elements of his personality and the power to mould them into a unified harmonious whole. He discovers the Divine within himself. So too, behind and within all other living beings and material objects, there is a center of pure consciousness. By entering into conscious relationship with that center in other things and beings he gains a direct knowledge of his external environment and the power to influence conditions and events. He discovers the Divine in the world and in life.

In this truer perspective the term Consciousness Approach means that all the problems of life, rather all items of life, positive and negative, are referred to one center in man, i.e. his deepest inner consciousness. That should be the only center of reference. The usual standards of behaviour, viz. mental understanding, ethical norms, social expectations, are for this purpose discarded. Therefore the method is applicable only in so far as one places total reliance on the inner consciousness to the exclusion of normal methods of life. By an inner mastery it is possible to control all outer events.

There has been no attempt here to construct a new system of business management. Systems are mental. Rather it is to evoke a response in the reader to the existence of a deeper center of functioning in man from which all the problems which perpetually confront life and mind can be effectively resolved in a higher order. The detailed discussion of principles is intended to stimulate the mind to seek this deeper center. This center, the true being in man, is the source of unlimited consciousness which can be channeled into creativity on any plane of existence. Yet the greater achievement is to forego the utilization of this consciousness for one's own ends and instead become a conscious personality through which it can flow in effectuating its own creative intention. That intention is nothing less than the progressive evolution of the individual and the human collectivity towards a life of greater knowledge, love, power and beauty.



# A Stainless Steel Frame

Nolini Kanta Gupta

Corruption is the order of the day. In all walks of life, wherever we have to live and move, we come across the monster; we cannot pass him by, we have to accost him (even in the Shakespearean sense, that is) welcome him, woo him. It is like one of the demons of the Greek legends that come out of the unknown, the sea or the sky, to prey upon a helpless land and its people until a deliverer comes.

Corruption appears today with a two fold face, Janus like: violence and falsehood. In private life, in the political field, in the business world, in social dealings, it is now an established practice, it has gained almost the force of a law of nature that success can be achieved only with these two comrades on your either side. A gentle, honest, peace-loving man is inevitably pushed back, he has to go to the wall; a straightforward truthful candid soul will get no hearing and make no living. From high diplomacy on the international level to village pettifoggery, from the blast of the atom bomb to the thrust of the dagger, we have all the degrees of the two cardinal virtues that make up the warp and woof of modern life.

In the old world—not so old however, for the landslide started in fact with the First World War—evil there was and abundantly in man and in man's society, but it was not accepted as virtue or even as an acceptable or inevitable thing. It was tolerated, suffered, and generally with a heavy heart. Indeed the heart was sound, it was the flesh only that was weak. There was an idealism, an aspiration and although one could not always live up to it, yet one did not deny it or spurn it; one endeavoured as best one could, even though in leisure hours, in the inner mind and consciousness at least, to obey and follow its dictates. It is the Nazi theory of life that brought to the very forefront and installed in the consciousness of man Evil as Good, Falsehood as Truth. That is pragmatism with a vengeance. Whatever leads to success, to worldly success, that is to say, brings you wealth, prosperity, power to rule over men and things, enriches you in your possession—*vittena*, as the Upanishad terms it—that is Good, that is Truth. All the rest are mental conceptions, notions, abstractions, day-dreams meant to delude you, take you away from the road to your fulfilment and achievement. That is how we have listened to the voice of Mephistopheles and sold away our soul.

The government of a country is, as we know, the steel frame that holds together the life of its people: it is that that gives the primary stability and security, scope and free play to all its activities. In India it was the pride of the British that they built up such a frame; and although that frame sometimes

seemed almost to throttle the nation in its firm and rigid grip, still today we are constrained to recognise that it was indeed a great achievement: *Pax Britannica* was in fact a very efficient reality. The withdrawal of the power that was behind us has left the frame very shaky; and our national government is trying hard to set it up again, strengthening, reinforcing, riveting wherever and however necessary. But the misfortune is that the steel has got rusted and worn out from inside.

In other words, a diminution of public morality and collective honesty has set in, an ebbing of the individual consciousness too that made for rectitude and justice and equity and fair dealing. Men who are limbs of that frame, who by their position ensure the strength of that frame—the bolts and nuts, screws and hinges—have, on a large scale, allowed themselves to be uncertain and loose in their moral make-up. Along with the outer check, the inner check too has given way: hence the colossal disintegration, the general debacle in the life of the body politic and the body social.

How to stop this rot that is gaining ground every day, how to react against the inexorable chain reaction that is leading to a final explosion? It is not merely the laymen but the members of the very supporting frame itself, as I have said, that have fallen and gone over to the enemy. And the fact is true not only of the political frame, but the social frame too made up of the elite, the intelligentsia. The remedy that easily suggests itself and is being attempted and applied is something Catonian, that is to say, a greater stringency of external rules and regulations, enforcement of punishment, even of heavy punishment as a deterrent of crime.

The institution of punishment is no longer respected or appreciated in modern times to the same extent as in the past, even a century ago. When character goes awry, punishment is of no avail. Punishment does not cure or redeem the criminal; it often hardens, fixes the trait that is sought to be eradicated. Fear of punishment does not always prevent one from doing wrong things. Often danger has an irresistible fascination for a certain type of temperament, especially danger of the wrong kind—indeed the greater the wrong, the greater the danger and the greater the fascination. "To live dangerously" is the motto of the heroic soul, as well as of the lost soul. A strong penal system, a rigorous policing is of help no doubt to maintain "peace and order" of some kind in a society; but that is an external pressure which cannot last very long or be effective in the end.

So the ideal proposed is that of moral regeneration. But what is the kind of moral regeneration and how is it to be effected? All depends upon that. If you issue some moral rules and regulations, inscribe them on pillars, print them in pamphlets, preach them from the platform and the pulpit, these things have been done in the past and for ages, the result is not assured and the world goes its way as ever. Something more than mental and moral rules has to be discovered: some dynamic and irresistible element in man has to be touched, evoked and brought out, something that challenges the whole world and maintains its truth and the fiat of its truth. That is the inmost soul in man, the real being behind all the apparent forms of his personality, the divine element, the very Divine in him. It is the outer man, the marginal man, man in his inferior nature that lives and moves in normal circumstances; instead, the central man, man in his higher and highest nature has to come out and take his place in the world.

What is needed then is an army of souls: individuals, either separately or in groups, who have contacted their inmost reality, their divinity, in some way or other—men with a new consciousness and aspiration, a new life and

realisation. They will live in the midst of the general degeneration and disintegration, not aloof and immured in their privacy of purity, but take part in the normal activities of everyday life, still acting from the height and depth of the pure consciousness prove by their very living that one can be in the world and yet not of it, doing what is necessary for the maintenance and enhancement of life and yet not stooping to the questionable ways that are supposed to be necessary and inevitable. In other words, they will disprove that safety and success and prosperity in life can be had only if one follows the lead of Evil, if one sells one's soul. On the contrary, by living out one's divine essence one will have conquered the world—*ihaiya tairjitam*. At every moment, in all circumstances one follows the voice of the highest in oneself. If it is that and no other inferior echo, then one becomes fearless and immortal and all-conquering.

Such souls living and moving among men with little faith and in circumstances adverse and obscure will forge precisely the new steel frame, the stainless steel frame upon which the new society will be securely based.

*Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta Vol II*

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*Human society has in its growth to pass through three stages of evolution before it can arrive at the completeness of its possibilities. The first is a condition in which the forms and activities of the communal existence are those of the spontaneous play of the powers and principles of its life. All its growth, all its formations, customs, institutions are then a natural organic development,—the motive and constructive power coming mostly from the subconscious principle of the life within it,—expressing, but without deliberate intention, the communal psychology, temperament, vital and physical need, and persisting or altering partly under the pressure of an internal impulse, partly under that of the environment acting on the communal mind and temper.....*

*A second stage of the society is that in which the communal mind becomes more and more intellectually self-conscious, first in its more cultured minds, then more generally, first broadly, then more and more minutely and in all the parts of its life....Its first advantages are those which go always with the increase of a clear and understanding and finally an exact and scientific knowledge and the culminating stage is the strict and armoured efficiency which the critical and constructive, the scientific reason used to the fullest degree offers as its reward and consequence. Another and greater outcome of this stage of social evolution is the emergence of high and luminous ideals which promise to raise man beyond the limits of the vital being, beyond his first social, economic and political needs and desires and out of their customary moulds and inspire an impulse of bold experiment with the communal life which opens a field of possibility for the realisation of a more and more ideal society.....*

*On the other hand the tendency of the reason when it pretends to deal with the materials of life as its absolute governor; is to look too far away from the reality of the society as a living growth and to treat it as a mechanism which can be manipulated at will and constructed like so much dead wood or iron according to the arbitrary dictates of the intelligence. The sophisticated, labouring, constructing, efficient, mechanising reason loses hold of the simple principles of a people's vitality; it cuts it away from the secret roots of its life. The result is an exaggerated dependence on system and institution, on legislation and administration and the deadly tendency to develop, in place of a living people, a mechanical State. An instrument of the communal life tries to take the place of the life itself and there is created a powerful but mechanical and artificial organisation; but as the price of this exterior gain, there is lost the truth of life of an organically self-developing communal soul in the body of a free and living people.....*

*It is only by reaching a third stage of the evolution....when man in the collectivity begins to live more deeply and to govern his collective life neither primarily by the needs, instincts, intuitions welling up out of the vital self, nor secondarily by the constructions of the reasoning mind, but first, foremost and always by the power of unity, sympathy, spontaneous liberty, supple and living order of his discovered greater self and spirit in which the individual and the communal existence have their law of freedom, perfection and oneness.*

**Sri Aurobindo**  
*The Foundations of Indian Culture*

# On Religion

*The Mother*

*What is exactly the nature of religion? Is it an obstacle in the way of the spiritual life ?*

Religion belongs to the higher mind of humanity. It is the effort of man's higher mind to approach, as far as lies in its power, something beyond it, something to which humanity gives the name God or Spirit or Truth or Faith or Knowledge or the Infinite, some kind of Absolute, which the human mind cannot reach and yet tries to reach. Religion may be divine in its ultimate origin; in its actual nature it is not divine but human. In truth we should speak rather of religions than of religion; for the religions made by man are many. These different religions, even when they had not the same origin, have most of them been made in the same way. We know how the Christian religion came into existence. It was certainly not Jesus who made what is known as Christianity, but some learned and very clever men put their heads together and built it up into the thing we see. There was nothing divine in the way in which it was formed, and there is nothing divine either in the way in which it functions. And yet the excuse or occasion for the formation was undoubtedly some revelation from what one could call a Divine Being, a Being who came from elsewhere bringing down with him from a higher plane a certain Knowledge and Truth for the earth. He came and suffered for his Truth; but very few understood what he said, few cared to find and hold to the Truth for which he suffered. Buddha retired from the world, sat down in meditation and discovered a way out of earthly suffering and misery, out of all this illness and death and desire and sin and hunger. He saw a Truth which he endeavoured to express and communicate to the disciples and followers who gathered around him. But even before he was dead, his teaching had already begun to be twisted and distorted. It was only after his disappearance that Buddhism as a full-fledged religion reared its head founded upon what the Buddha is supposed to have said and on the supposed significance of these reported sayings. But soon too, because the disciples and the disciples' disciples could not agree on what the Master had said or what he meant by his utterances, there grew up a host of sects and subsects in the body of the parent religion—a Southern Path, a Northern Path, a Far Eastern Path, each of them claiming to be the only, the original, the undefiled doctrine of the Buddha. The same fate overtook the teaching of the Christ; that too came to be made in the same way into a sect and organised religion. It is often said that, if Jesus came back, he would not be able to recognise what he taught in the forms that have been imposed on it, and if

Buddha were to come back and see what has been made of his teaching, he would immediately run back discouraged to Nirvana! All religions have each the same story to tell. The occasion for its birth is the coming of a great Teacher of the world. He comes and reveals and is the incarnation of a Divine Truth. But men seize upon it, trade upon it, make an almost political organisation out of it. The religion is equipped by them with a government and policy and laws, with its creeds and dogmas, its rules and regulations, its rites and ceremonies, all binding upon its adherents, all absolute and inviolable. Like the State, it too administers rewards to the loyal and assigns punishments for those that revolt or go astray, for the heretic and the renegade.

The first and principal article of these established and formal religions runs always, "Mine is the supreme, the only truth, all others are in falsehood or inferior." For without this fundamental dogma, established credal religions could not have existed. If you do not believe and proclaim that you alone possess the one or the highest truth, you will not be able to impress people and make them look to you.

This attitude is natural to the religious mind; but it is just that which makes religion stand in the way of the spiritual life. The articles and dogmas of a religion are mind-made things and if you cling to them and shut yourself up in a code of life made out for you, you do not know and cannot know the truth of the Spirit that lies beyond all codes and dogmas, wide and large and free. When you stop at a religious creed and tie yourself in it, taking it for the only truth in the world, you stop the advance and widening of your inner soul. But if you look at religion from another angle, it need not always be an obstacle to all men. If you regard it as one of the higher activities of humanity and if you can see in it the aspirations of man without ignoring the imperfection of all man-made things, it may well be a kind of help for you to approach the spiritual life. Taking it up in a serious and earnest spirit, you can try to find out what truth is there, what aspiration lies hidden in it, what divine inspiration has undergone transformation and deformation here by the human mind and a human organisation, and with an appropriate mental stand you can get religion even as it is to throw some light on your way and to lend some support to your spiritual endeavour.

In all religions we find invariably a certain number of people who possess a great emotional capacity and are

full of a real and ardent aspiration, but have a very simple mind and do not feel the need of approaching the Divine through knowledge. For such natures religion has a use and it is even necessary for them; for, through external forms, like the ceremonies of the Church, it offers a kind of support and help to their inner spiritual aspiration. In every religion there are some who have evolved a high spiritual life. But it is not the religion that gave them their spirituality; it is they who have put their spirituality into the religion. Put anywhere else, born into any other cult, they would have found there and lived there the same spiritual life. It is their own capacity, it is some power of their inner being and not the religion they profess that has made them what they are. This power in their nature is such that religion to them does not become a slavery or a bondage. Only as they have not a strong, clear and active mind, they need to believe in this or that creed as absolutely true and to give themselves up to it without any disturbing question or doubt. I have met in all religions people of this kind and it would be a crime to disturb their faith. For them religion is not an obstacle. An obstacle for those who can go farther, it may be a help for those who cannot, but are yet able to travel a certain distance on the paths of the Spirit. Religion has been an impulse to the worst things and the best; if the fiercest wars have been waged and the most hideous persecutions carried on in its name, it has stimulated too supreme heroism and self-sacrifice in its cause. Along with philosophy it marks the limit the human mind has reached in its highest activities. It is an impediment and a chain if you are a slave to its outer body; if you know how to use its inner substance, it can be your jumping-board into the realm of the Spirit.

One who holds a particular faith or who has found out some truth, is disposed to think that he alone has found the Truth, whole and entire. This is human nature. A mixture of falsehood seems necessary for human beings to stand on their legs and move on their way. If the vision of the Truth were suddenly given to them they would be crushed under the weight.

Each time that something of the Divine Truth and the Divine Force comes down to manifest upon earth, some change is effected in the earth's atmosphere. In the descent, those who are receptive are awakened to some inspiration from it, some touch, some beginning of sight. If they were capable of holding and expressing rightly what they receive, they would say, "A great force has come down; I am in contact with it and what I understand of it, I will tell you." But most of them are not capable of that, because they have small minds. They get illumined, possessed, as it were, and cry, "I have the Divine Truth, I possess it whole and entire." There are now upon earth at least two dozen Christs, if not as many Buddhas; India alone can supply any number of Avatars, not to speak of minor manifestations. But in this

way, the whole thing begins to look grotesque; but if you see what is behind, it is not so stupid as it seems at the first glance. The truth is that the human personality has come in contact with some Being, some Power and under the influence of education and tradition calls it Buddha or Christ or by any other familiar name. It is difficult to affirm that it was Buddha himself or the very Christ with whom there was the contact, but none can assert either that the inspiration did not come from that which inspired the Christ or the Buddha. These human vessels may very well have received the inspiration from some such source. If they were modest and simple, they would be content to say that much and no more; they would say, "I have received this inspiration from such and such a Great One", but instead they proclaim, "I am that Great One." I knew one who affirmed that he was both Christ and Buddha! He had received something, had experienced a truth, had seen the Divine Presence in himself and in others. But the experience was too strong for him, the truth too great. He became half crazy and the next day went out into the streets, proclaiming that in him Christ and Buddha had become one.

One Divine Consciousness is here working through all these beings, preparing its way through all these manifestations. At this day it is here at work upon earth more powerfully than it has ever been before. There are some who receive its touch in some way, or to some degree; but what they receive they distort, they make their own thing out of it. Others feel the touch but cannot bear the force and go mad under the pressure. But some have the capacity to receive and the strength to bear, and it is they who will become the vessels of the full knowledge, the chosen instruments and agents.

If you want to appraise the real value of the religion in which you are born or brought up or to have a correct perspective of the country or society to which you belong by birth, if you want to find out how relative a thing the particular environment is into which you happened to be thrown and confined, you have only to go round the earth and see that what you think good is looked upon as bad elsewhere and what is considered as bad in one place is welcomed as good in another. All countries and all religions are built up out of a mass of traditions. In all of them you will meet saints and heroes and great and mighty personalities as well as small and wicked people. You will then perceive what a mockery it is to say, "Because I am brought up on this religion, therefore it is the only true religion; because I am born in this country, therefore it is the best of all countries." One might as well make the same claim for his family, "Because I come of this family that has lived in the same place for many years or so many centuries, therefore I am bound by its traditions; they alone are the ideal."

Things have an inner value and become real to you only

when you have acquired them by the exercise of your free choice, not when they have been imposed upon you. If you want to be sure of your religion, you must choose it; if you want to be sure of your country, you must choose it; if you want to be sure of your family, even that you must choose. If you accept without question what has been given you by Chance, you can never be sure whether it is good or bad for you, whether it is the true thing for your life. Step back from all that forms your natural environment or inheritance, made up and forced upon you by Nature's blind mechanical process; draw within and look quietly and dispassionately at things. Appraise them, choose freely. Then you can say with an inner truth, "This is my family, this my country, this my religion."

If we go a little way within ourselves, we shall discover there is in each of us a consciousness that has been living throughout the ages and manifesting in a multitude of forms. Each of it has been born in many different countries, belonged to many different nations, followed many different religions. Why must we accept the last one as the best? The experiences gathered by us in all these many lives in different countries and varying religions, are stored up in that inner continuity of our consciousness which persists through all births. There are multiple personalities there created by these past experiences, and when we become aware of this multitude within us, it becomes impossible to speak of one particular form of truth as the only truth, one country as our only country, one religion as the only true religion. There are people who have been born into one country, although the leading elements of their consciousness obviously belong to another. I have met some born in Europe who were evidently Indians; I have met others born in Indian bodies who were as evidently Europeans. In Japan I have met some who were Indian, others who were European. And if any of them goes to the country or enters into the civilisation to which he has affinity, he finds himself there perfectly at home.

If your aim is to be free, in the freedom of the Spirit, you must get rid of all the ties that are not the inner truth of your being, but come from subconscious habits. If you wish to consecrate yourself entirely, absolutely and exclusively to the Divine, you must do it in all completeness; you must not leave bits of yourself tied here and there. You may object that it is not easy to cut away altogether from one's moorings. But have you never looked back and observed the changes that have taken place in you in the course of a few years? When you do that, almost always you ask yourself how it was that you could have felt in the way you felt and acted as you did act in certain circumstances; at times, even, you can no longer recognise yourself in the person you were only ten years ago. How can you then bind

yourself to what was or to what is or how can you fix beforehand what may or may not be in the future?

All your relations must be newly built upon an inner freedom of choice. The traditions in which you live or are brought up have been imposed on you by the pressure of the environment or by the general mind or by the choice of others. There is an element of compulsion in your acquiescence. Religion itself has been imposed on men; it is often supported by a suggestion of religious fear or by some spiritual or other menace. There can be no such imposition in your relation with the Divine; it must be free, your own mind's and heart's choice, taken up with enthusiasm and joy. What union can that be in which one trembles and says, "I am compelled, I cannot do otherwise"? Truth is self-evident and has not to be imposed upon the world. It does not feel the need of being accepted by men. For it is self-existent; it does not live by what people say of it or on their adherence. But one who is founding a religion needs to have many followers. The strength and greatness of a religion is adjudged by men according to the number of those that follow it, although the real greatness is not there. The greatness of spiritual truth is not in numbers. I knew the head of a new religion, the son of its founder, and heard him say once that such and such a religion took so many hundreds of years to be built up and such another so many hundreds of years, but they within fifty years had already over four million followers. "And so you see", he added, "what a great religion is ours!" Religions may reckon their greatness by the number of their believers, but Truth would be Truth if it had not even a single follower. The average man is drawn towards those who make great pretensions; he does not go where Truth is quietly manifesting. Those who make great pretensions need to proclaim loudly and to advertise; or otherwise they would not attract great numbers of people. The work that is done with no care for what people think of it is not so well known, does not so easily draw multitudes. But truth requires no advertisement; it does not hide itself but it does not proclaim itself either. It is content to manifest, regardless of results, not seeking approbation or shunning disapprobation, not attracted or troubled by the world's acceptance or denial.

When you come to the Yoga, you must be ready to have all your mental buildings and all your vital scaffoldings shattered to pieces. You must be prepared to be suspended in the air with nothing to support you except your faith. You will have to forget your past self and its clings altogether, to pluck it out of your consciousness and be born anew, free from every kind of bondage. Think not of what you were, but of what you aspire to be; be altogether in what you want to realise. Turn from your dead past and look straight towards the future. Your religion, country, family lie there; it is the DIVINE.

*Questions and Answers 1929-31*



# Self

*Sri Aurobindo*

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He said, "I am egoless, spiritual, free,"

Then swore because his dinner was not ready.

I asked him why. He said, "It is not me,

But the belly's hungry god who gets unsteady."

I asked him why. He said, "It is his play.

I am unmoved within, desireless, pure.

I care not what may happen day by day."

I questioned him, "Are you so very sure?"

He answered, "I can understand your doubt.

But to be free is all. It does not matter

How you may kick and howl and rage and shout,

Making a row over your daily platter.

"To be aware of self is liberty,

Self I have got and, having self, am free."