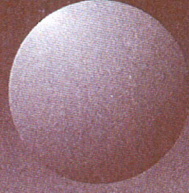


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A flame of aspiration for dynamic truth

A Journal dedicated to the Social and Political Vision of Sri Aurobindo

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Savitri

In commemoration of Sri Aurobindo's 125th birth anniversary, Sri Aurobindo Research Foundation presented a contemporary dance ballet based on Sri Aurobindo's epic poem 'Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol' on 17 January 1998. This is his masterwork in which can be found his entire Integral Yoga as well as the deepest aspects of life and the world. Over a period of many decades he wrote and rewrote Savitri seeking to embody in the words themselves the highest spiritual consciousness. As a result the words themselves—beyond the lofty ideas they express—have a mantric power to bring the experience of which they speak. About it, he said, *"I used 'Savitri' as a means of ascension. I began with it on a certain mental level, each time I could reach a higher level, I rewrote from that level. In fact, 'Savitri' has not been regarded by me as a poem to be written and finished, but as a field of experimentation to see how far poetry could be written from one's own yogic consciousness and how that could be made creative."*

The legend of 'Savitri' is taken from the Mahabharata, India's ancient epic. The original story is fairly simple. Savitri, the daughter of a king, first meets Satyavan in a forest, living the life of a hermit. He is the son of a deposed king, Dyumathsena, who has gone blind and lost his kingdom, and retired with his wife and son to a simple existence in the forest. When Savitri returns home to tell her parents of Satyavan, the divine sage Narad warns that Satyavan would die in a year. Despite this news, Savitri is steadfast in her choice, and returns to marry her beloved Satyavan and live in the forest hermitage. One year later, Yama comes for Satyavan, and takes his soul. Despite all the efforts of Yama to leave her behind, Savitri follows them into the land of Death. In the original version, he grants her any wish she wants, if she will only go back, and she asks for sight for her father-in-law, his kingdom returned, and many sons for herself. Yama grants these, but Savitri points out that she can only have sons if her husband is returned to her, and so the God relents, and Satyavan is saved.

In Sri Aurobindo's adaptation of this classic tale, the main elements are retained but heightened and expanded into spiritual symbols. In a short note, he has explained his view of the legend:

"The tale of Satyavan and Savitri is recited in the Mahabharata as a story of conjugal love conquering death. But this legend is, as shown by many features of the human tale, one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle. Satyavan is the soul carrying the divine truth of being within itself but descended into the grip of death and ignorance; Savitri is the Divine Word, daughter of the Sun, goddess of the supreme Truth who comes down and is born to save; Ashwapati, the Lord of Tapasya, the concentrated energy of spiritual endeavor that helps us to rise from the mortal to the immortal planes; Dyumathsena, Lord of the Shining Hosts, father of Satyavan, is the Divine Mind here fallen blind, losing its celestial kingdom of vision, and through that loss its kingdom of glory. Still this is not a mere allegory, the characters are not personified qualities, but incarnations or emanations of living and conscious Forces with whom we can enter into concrete touch and they take human bodies in order to help man and show him the way from his mortal state to a divine consciousness and immortal life."

The dance performance was very well received by the people of Baroda. It was performed by the Auroville Dance Company—an international troupe of 8 different nationalities from Auroville—which has been a laboratory for dancers from diverse backgrounds such as classical ballet, contemporary dance, martial arts, hathayoga, even volleyball who had worked with choreographers trained in different styles and were still searching for different modes of expression. The challenge to this group has been to create a cohe-

sion amongst this diversity by finding movements to create an expression moving freely through various dance and movement vocabularies. For Paulo, the choreographer, the attempt had been to create a work that would have a spontaneous rigour combined with freedom, something with both simplicity as well as complexity.

It was this search of the Auroville Dance Company to express a higher truth through dance, which is not merely contemporary but has a spiritual basis even in its very movements, which prompted us to bring them to Baroda. Their search for an expression of Truth coincides with our search at Sri Aurobindo Research Foundation. It is our hope that this performance would have been a source of inspiration to those connected to various fields of art and culture. And if it has been able to touch on a deeper level several others also, the event would be considered a success.

- *Editor.*

Thy peace, O Lord, a boon within to keep
Amid the roar and ruin of wild Time
For the magnificent soul of man on earth.
Thy calm, O Lord, that bears thy hands of joy.
Thy oneness, Lord, in many approaching hearts,
My sweet infinity of thy numberless souls.
Thy energy, Lord, to seize on woman and man,
To take all things and creatures in their grief
And gather them into a mother's arms.
Thy embrace which rends the living knot of pain,
Thy joy, O Lord, in which all creatures breathe,
Thy magic flowing waters of deep love,
Thy sweetness give to me for earth and men.

Savitri (Book 11, Canto 1)

Perfection of the Body

Sri Aurobindo

The perfection of the body, as great a perfection as we can bring about by the means at our disposal, must be the ultimate aim of physical culture. Perfection is the true aim of all culture, the spiritual and psychic, the mental, the vital and it must be the aim of our physical culture also. If our seeking is for a total perfection of the being, the physical part of it cannot be left aside; for the body is the material basis; the body is the instrument, which we have to use. *Sariram khalu dharmasādhanam*, says the old Sanskrit adage,—the body is the means of fulfillment of *dharma*, and *dharma* means every ideal which we can propose to ourselves and the law of its working out and its action. A total perfection is the ultimate aim which we set before us, for our ideal is the Divine Life which we wish to create here, the life of the Spirit fulfilled on earth, life accomplishing its own spiritual transformation even here on earth in the conditions of the material universe. That cannot be unless the body too undergoes a transformation, unless its action and functioning attain to a supreme capacity and the perfection which is possible to it or which can be made possible.

I have already indicated in a previous message a relative perfection of the physical consciousness in the body and of the mind, the life, the character which it houses as, no less than an awakening and development of the body's own native capacities, a desirable outcome of the exercises and practices of the physical culture to which we have commenced to give in this Ashram a special attention and scope. A development of the physical consciousness must always be a considerable part of our aim, but for that the right development of the body itself is an essential element; health, strength, fitness are the first needs, but the physical frame itself must be the best possible. A divine life in a material world implies necessarily a union of the two ends of existence, the spiritual summit and the material base. The soul with the basis of its life established in Matter ascends to the heights of

the Spirit but does not cast away its base, it joins the heights and the depths together. The Spirit descends into Matter and the material world with all its lights and glories and powers and with them fills and transforms life in the material world so that it becomes more and more divine. The transformation is not a change into something purely subtle and spiritual to which Matter is in its nature repugnant and by which it is felt as an obstacle or as a shackle binding the Spirit; it takes up Matter as a form of the Spirit though now a form which conceals and turns it into a revealing instrument, it does not cast away the energies of Matter, its capacities, its methods; it brings out their hidden possibilities, uplifts, sublimates, discloses their innate divinity. The divine life will reject nothing that is capable of divinisation; all is to be seized, exalted, made utterly perfect. The mind now still ignorant, though struggling towards knowledge, has to rise towards and into the supramental light and truth and bring it down so that it shall suffuse our thinking and perception and insight and all our means of knowing till they become radiant with the highest truth in their inmost and outermost movements. Our life, still full of obscurity and confusion and occupied with so many dull and lower aims, must feel all its urges and instincts exalted and irradiated and become a glorious counterpart of the supramental super-life above. The physical consciousness and physical being, the body itself must reach a perfection in all that it is and does which now we can hardly conceive. It may even in the end be suffused with a light and beauty and bliss from the Beyond and life divine assume a body divine.

But first the evolution of the nature must have reached a point at which it can meet the Spirit direct, feel the aspiration towards the spiritual change and open itself to the workings of the Power which shall transform it. A supreme perfection, a total perfection is possible only by a transformation of our lower or human nature, a transformation of

the mind into a thing of light, our life into a thing of power, an instrument of right action, right use for all its forces, of a happy elevation of its being lifting it beyond its present comparatively narrow potentiality for a self-fulfilling force of action and joy of life. There must be equally a transforming change of the body by a conversion of its action, its functioning, its capacities as an instrument beyond the limitations by which it is clogged and hampered even in its greatest present human attainment. In the totality of the change we have to achieve, human means and forces too have to be taken up, not dropped but used and magnified to their utmost possibility as part of the new life. Such a sublimation of our present human powers of mind and life into elements of a divine life on earth can be conceived without much difficulty; but in what figure shall we conceive the perfection of the body?

In the past the body has been regarded by spiritual seekers rather as an obstacle, as something to be overcome and discarded than as an instrument of spiritual perfection and a field of the spiritual change. It has been condemned as a grossness of Matter, as an insuperable impediment and the limitations of the body as something unchangeable making transformation impossible. This is because the human body even at its best seems only to be driven by an energy of life which has its own limits and is debased in its smaller physical activities by much that is petty or coarse or evil, the body in itself is burdened with the inertia and inconscience of Matter, only partly awake and, although quickened and animated by a nervous activity, subconscious in the fundamental action of its constituent cells and tissues and their secret workings. Even in its fullest strength and force and greatest glory of beauty, it is still a flower of the material Inconscience; the inconscient is the soil from which it has grown and at every point opposes a narrow boundary to the extension of its powers and to any effort of radical self-exceeding. But if a divine life is possible on earth, then this self-exceeding must also be possible.

In the pursuit of perfection we can start at either end of our range of being and we have then to use, initially at least, the means and processes proper to our choice. In Yoga the process is spiritual and psychic; even its vital and physical processes are

given a spiritual or psychic turn and raised to a higher motion than belongs properly to the ordinary life and Matter, as for instance in the Hathayogic and Rajayogic use of the breathing or the use of Asana. Ordinarily a previous preparation of the mind and life and body is necessary to make them fit for the reception of the spiritual energy and the organisation of psychic forces and methods, but this too is given a special turn proper to the Yoga. On the other hand, if we start in any field at the lower end we have to employ the means and processes which Life and Matter offer to us and respect the conditions and what we may call the technique imposed by the vital and the material energy. We may extend the activity, the achievement, the perfection attained beyond the initial, even beyond the normal possibilities but still we have to stand on the same base with which we started and within the boundaries it gives to us. It is not that the action from the two ends cannot meet and the higher take into itself and uplift the lower perfection; but this can usually be done only by a transition from the lower to a higher outlook, aspiration and motive: this we shall have to do if our aim is to transform the human into the divine life. But here there comes in the necessity of taking up the activities of human life and sublimating them by the power of the spirit. Here the lower perfection will not disappear; it will remain but will be enlarged and transformed by the higher perfection, which only the power of the spirit can give. This will be evident if we consider poetry and art, philosophic thought, the perfection of the written word or the perfect organisation of earthly life: these have to be taken up and the possibilities already achieved or whatever perfection has already been attained included in a new and greater perfection but with the larger vision and inspiration of a spiritual consciousness and with new forms and powers. It must be the same with the perfection of the body.

The taking up of life and Matter into what is essentially a spiritual seeking, instead of the rejection and ultimate exclusion of them which was the attitude of a spirituality that shunned or turned away from life in the world, involves certain developments which a spiritual institution of the older kind could regard as foreign to its purpose. A divine life in the world or an institution having that

for its aim and purpose cannot be or cannot remain something outside or entirely shut away from the life of ordinary men in the world or unconcerned with the mundane existence; it has to do the work of the Divine in the world and not a work outside or separate from it. The life of the ancient Rishis in their Ashrams had such a connection; they were creators, educators, guides of men and the life of the Indian people in ancient times was largely developed and directed by their shaping influence. The life and activities involved in the new endeavour are not identical but they too must be an action upon the world and a new creation in it. It must have contacts and connections with it and activities which take their place in the general life and whose initial or primary objects may not seem to differ from those of the same activities in the outside world. In our Ashram here we have found it necessary to establish a school for the education of the children of the resident Sadhaks teaching upon familiar lines though with certain modifications and taking as part and an important part of their development an intensive physical training which has given form to the sports and athletics practised by the Jeunesse Sportive of the Ashram and of which this Bulletin is the expression. It has been questioned by some what place sports can have in an Ashram created for spiritual seekers and what connection there can be between spirituality and sports. The first answer lies in what I have already written about the connections of an institution of this kind with the activities of the general life of men and what I have indicated in the previous number as to the utility such a training can have for the life of a nation and its benefit for the international life. Another answer can occur to us if we look beyond first objects and turn to the aspiration for a total perfection including the perfection of the body.

In the admission of an activity such as sports and physical exercises into the life of the Ashram it is evident that the methods and first objects to be attained must belong to what we have called the lower end of the being. Originally they have been introduced for the physical education and bodily development of the children of the Ashram School and these are too young for a strictly spiritual aim or practice to enter into their activities and it is not certain that any great number of them will enter

the spiritual life when they are of an age to choose what shall be the direction of their future. The object must be the training of the body and the development of certain parts of mind and character so far as this can be done by or in connection with this training and I have already indicated in a previous number how and in what direction this can be done. It is a relative and human perfection that can be attained within these limits; anything greater can be reached only by the intervention of higher powers, psychic powers, the power of the spirit. Yet what can be attained within the human boundaries can be something very considerable and sometimes immense: what we call genius is part of the development of the human range of being and its achievements, especially in things of the mind and will, can carry us halfway to the divine. Even what the mind and will can do with the body in the field proper to the body and its life, in the way of physical achievement, bodily endurance, feats of prowess of all kinds, a lasting activity refusing fatigue or collapse and continuing beyond what seems at first to be possible, courage and refusal to succumb under an endless and murderous physical suffering, these and other victories of many kinds sometimes approaching or reaching the miraculous are seen in the human field and must be reckoned as a part of our concept of a total perfection. The unflinching and persistent reply that can be made by the body as well as the mind of man and by his life-energy to whatever call can be imposed on it in the most difficult and discouraging circumstances by the necessities of war and travel and adventure is of the same kind and their endurance can reach astounding proportions and even the unconscious in the body seems to be able to return a surprising response.

The body, we have said, is a creation of the Inconscient and itself inconscient or at least subconscious in parts of its self and much of its hidden action; but what we call the Inconscient is an appearance, a dwelling place, an instrument of a secret Consciousness or a Superconscient which has created the miracle we call the universe. Matter is the field and the creation of the Inconscient and the perfection of the operations of inconscient Matter, their perfect adaptation of means to an aim and end, the wonders they perform and the marvels of beauty they create, testify, in spite of all

the ignorant denial we can oppose, to the presence and power of consciousness of this Superconscience in every part and movement of the material universe. It is there in the body, has made it and its emergence in our consciousness is the secret aim of evolution and the key to the mystery of our existence.

In the use of such activities as sports and physical exercises for the education of the individual in childhood and first youth, which should mean the bringing out of his actual and latent possibilities to their fullest development, the means and methods we must use are limited by the nature of the body and its aim must be such relative human perfection of the body's powers and capacities and those of the powers of mind, will, character, action of which it is at once the residence and the instrument so far as these methods can help to develop them. I have written sufficiently about the mental and moral parts of perfection to which these pursuits can contribute and this I need not repeat here. For the body itself the perfections that can be developed by these means are those of its natural qualities and capacities and, secondly, the training of its general fitness, as an instrument for all the activities which may be demanded from it by the mind and the will, by the life-energy or by the dynamic perceptions, impulses and instincts of our subtle physical being which is an unrecognised but very important element and agent in our nature. Health and strength are the first conditions for the natural perfection of the body, not only muscular strength and the solid strength of the limbs and physical stamina, but the finer, alert and plastic and adaptable force which our nervous and subtle physical parts can put into the activities of the frame. There is also the still more dynamic force which a call upon the life-energies can bring into the body and stir it to greater activities, even feats of the most extraordinary character of which in its normal state it would not be capable. There is also the strength which the mind and will by their demands and stimulus and by their secret powers which we use or by which we are used without knowing clearly the source of their action can impart to the body or impose upon it as masters and inspirers. Among the natural qualities and powers of the body which can be thus awakened, stimulated and trained to a normal activity we must reckon dexterity and stability in all kinds of physical action such as swiftness in the race, dexter-

ity in combat, skill and endurance of the mountaineer, the constant and often extraordinary response to all that can be demanded from the body of the soldier, sailor, traveller or explorer to which I have already made reference or in adventure of all kinds and all the wide range of physical attainment to which man has accustomed himself or to which he is exceptionally pushed by his own will or by the compulsion of circumstance. It is a general fitness of the body for all that can be asked from it which is the common formula of all this action, a fitness attained by a few or by many, that could be generalised by an extended and many-sided physical education and discipline. Some of these activities can be included under the name of sports; there are others for which sport and physical exercises can be an effective preparation. In some of them a training for common action, combined movement, discipline are needed and for that our physical exercises can make one ready; in others a developed individual will, skill of mind and quick perception, forcefulness of life-energy and subtle physical impulsion are more prominently needed and may even be the one sufficient trainer. All must be included in our conception of the natural powers of the body and its capacity and instrumental fitness in the service of the human mind and will and therefore in our concept of the total perfection of the body.

There are two conditions for this perfection, an awakening in as great and entirely as possible of the body consciousness and an education, an evolution of its potentialities, also as entire and fully developed and, it may be, as many-sided as possible. The form or body is, no doubt, in its origin a creation of the Inconscient and limited by it on all sides, but still of the Inconscient developing the secret consciousness concealed within it and growing in light of knowledge, power and Ananda. We have to take it at the point it has reached in its human evolution in these things, make as full a use of them as may be and, as much as we can, further this evolution to as high a degree as is permitted by the force of the individual temperament and nature. In all forms in the world there is a force at work, unconsciously active or oppressed by inertia in its lower formulations, but in the human being conscious from the first, with its potentialities partly awake, partly asleep or latent: what is awake in it we have to make fully conscious; what is asleep we have to arouse and set to

its work; what is latent we have to evoke and educate. Here there are two aspects of the body consciousness, one which seems to be a kind of automatism carrying on its work in the physical plane without any intervention of the mind and in parts even beyond any possibility of direct observation by the mind or, if conscious or observable, still proceeding or capable of continuing, when once started, by an apparently mechanical action not needing direction by the mind and continuing so long as the mind does not intervene.

There are other movements taught and trained by the mind which can yet go on operating automatically but faultlessly even when not attended to by the thought or will; there are others which can operate in sleep and produce results of value to the waking intelligence. But more important is what may be described as a trained and developed automatism, a perfected skill and capacity of eye and ear and the hands and all the members prompt to respond to any call made on them, a developed spontaneous operation as an instrument, a complete fitness for any demand that the mind and life-energy can make upon it. This is ordinarily the best we can achieve at the lower end, when we start from that end and limit ourselves to the means and methods which are proper to it. For more we have to turn to the mind and life-energy themselves or to the energy of the spirit and to what they can do for a greater perfection of the body. The most we can do in the physical field by physical means is necessarily insecure as well as bound by limits; even what seems a perfect health and strength of the body is precarious and can be broken down at any moment by fluctuation from within or by a strong attack or shock from outside: only by the breaking of our limitations can a higher and more enduring perfection come. One direction in which our consciousness must grow is an increasing hold from within or from above on the body and its powers and its more conscious response to the higher parts of our being. The mind pre-eminently is man; he is a mental being, and his human perfection grows the more he fulfills the description of the Upanishad, a mental being, Purusha, leader of the life and the body. If the mind can take up and control the instincts and automatisms of the life-energy and the subtle physical consciousness and the body, if it can enter into them, consciously

use and, as we may say, fully mentalise their instinctive or spontaneous action, the perfection of these energies, their action too becomes more conscious and more aware of itself and more perfect. But it is necessary for the mind too to grow in perfection and this it can do best when it depends less on the fallible intellect of physical mind, when it is not limited even by the more orderly and accurate working of the reason and can grow in intuition and acquire a wider, deeper and closer seeing and the more luminous drive of energy of a higher intuitive will. Even within the limits of its present evolution it is difficult to measure the degree to which the mind is able to extend its control or its use of the body's powers and capacities and when the mind rises to higher powers still and pushes back its human boundaries, it becomes impossible to fix any limits: even, in certain realisations, an intervention by the will in the automatic working of the bodily organs seems to become possible. Wherever limitations recede and in proportion as they recede, the body becomes a more plastic and responsive and in that measure a more fit and perfect instrument of the action of the spirit. In all effective and expressive activities here in the material world the cooperation of the two ends of our being is indispensable. If the body is unable whether by fatigue or by natural incapacity or any other cause to second the thought or will or is in any way irresponsible or insufficiently responsive, to that extent the action fails or falls short or becomes in some degree unsatisfying or incomplete. In what seems to be an exploit of the spirit so purely mental as the outpouring of poetic inspiration, there must be responsive vibration of the brain and its openness as a channel for the power of the thought and vision and the light of the word that is making or breaking its way through or seeking for its perfect expression. If the brain is fatigued or dulled by any clog, either the inspiration cannot come and nothing is written or it fails and something inferior is all that can come out; or else a lower inspiration takes the place of the more luminous formulation that was striving to shape itself or the brain finds it more easy to lend itself to a less radiant stimulus or else it labours and constructs or responds to poetic artifice. Even in the most purely mental activities the fitness, readiness or perfect training of the bodily instrument is a condition indispensable. That readiness, that response too is part of the total perfection of the body.

The essential purpose and sign of the growing evolution here is the emergence of consciousness in an apparently inconscient universe, the growth of the consciousness and with it growth of the light and power of the being; the development of the form and its functioning or its fitness to survive, although indispensable, is not the whole meaning or the central motive. The greater and greater awakening of consciousness and its climb to a higher and higher level and a wider extent of its vision and action is the condition of our progress towards that supreme and total perfection which is the aim of our existence. It is the condition also of the total perfection of the body. There are higher levels of the mind than any we now conceive and to these we must one day reach and rise beyond them to the heights of a greater, a spiritual existence. As we rise we have to open to them our lower members and fill these with those superior and supreme dynamisms of light and power; the body we have to make a more and more and even entirely conscious frame and instrument, a conscious sign and seal and power of the spirit. As it grows in this perfection, the force and extent of its dynamic action and its response and service to the spirit must increase, the control of the spirit over it also must grow and the plasticity of its functioning both in its developed and acquired parts of power and in its automatic responses down to those that are now purely organic and seem to be the movements of a mechanic inconscience. This cannot happen without a veritable transformation and a transformation of the mind and life and the very body is indeed the change to which our evolution is secretly moving and without this transformation the entire fullness of a divine life on earth cannot emerge. In this transformation the body itself can become an agent and a partner. It might indeed be possible for the spirit to achieve a considerable manifestation with only a passive and imperfectly conscious body as its last or bottommost means of material functioning, but this could not be anything perfect or complete. A fully conscious body might even discover and work out the right material method and process of a material transformation. For this, no doubt, the spirit's supreme light and power and creative joy must have manifested on the summit of the individual consciousness and sent down their fiat into the body, but still the body may take in the working out its

spontaneous part of self-discovery and achievement. It would be thus a participator and agent in its own transformation and the integral transformation of the whole being; this too would be a part and a sign and evidence of the total perfection of the body.

If the emergence and growth of consciousness is the central motive of the evolution and the key to its secret purpose, then by the very nature of that evolution this growth must involve not only a wider and wider extent of its capacities but also an ascent to a higher and higher level till it reaches the highest possible. For it starts from a nethermost level of involution in the Inconscience which we see at work in Matter creating the material universe; it proceeds by an Ignorance which is yet ever developing knowledge and reaching out to an ever greater light and ever greater organisation and efficacy of the will and harmonisation of all its own inherent and emerging powers; it must at last reach a point where it develops or acquires the complete fullness of its capacity and that must be a state or action in which there is no longer an ignorance seeking for knowledge but Knowledge self-possessed, inherent in the being, master of its own truths and working them out with a natural vision and force that is not afflicted by limitation or error. Or if there is a limitation, it must be a self-imposed veil behind which it would keep truth back for a manifestation in Time but draw it out at will and without any need of search or acquisition in the order of a right perception of things or in the just succession of that which has to be manifested in obedience to the call of Time. This would mean an entry or approach into what might be called a truth-consciousness self-existent in which the being would be aware of its own realities and would have the inherent power to manifest them in a Time-creation in which all would be Truth following out its own unerring steps and combining its own harmonies; every thought and will and feeling and act would be spontaneously right, inspired or intuitive, moving by the light of Truth and therefore perfect. All would express inherent realities of the spirit; some fullness of the power of the spirit would be there. One would have overpassed the present limitations of mind: mind would become a seeing of the light of Truth, will a force and power of the Truth, life a progressive

fulfilment of the Truth, the body itself a conscious vessel of the Truth and part of the means of its self-effectuation and a form of its self-aware existence. It would be at least some initiation of this Truth-Consciousness, some first figure and action of it that must be reached and enter into a first operation if there is to be a divine life or any full manifestation of a spiritualised consciousness in the world of Matter. Or, at the very least, such a Truth-Consciousness must be in communication with our own mind and life and body, descend into touch with it, control its seeing and action, impel its motives, take hold of its forces and shape their direction and purpose. All touched by it might not be able to embody it fully, but each would give some form to it according to his spiritual temperament, inner capacity, the line of his evolution in Nature: he would reach securely the perfection of which he was immediately capable and he would be on the road to the full possession of the truth of the Spirit and of the truth of Nature.

In the workings of such a Truth-Consciousness there would be a certain conscious seeing and willing automatism of the steps of its truth which would replace the infallible automatism of the inconscient or seemingly inconscient Force that has brought out of an apparent Void the miracle of an ordered universe and this could create a new order of the manifestation of the being in which a perfect perfection would become possible, even a supreme and total perfection would appear in the vistas of an ultimate possibility. If we could draw down this power into the material world, our age long dreams of human perfectibility, individual perfection, the perfectibility of the race, of society, inner mastery over self and a complete mastery, governance and utilisation of the forces of Nature could see at long last a prospect of total achievement. This complete human self-fulfillment might well pass beyond limitations and be transformed into the character of a divine life. Matter after taking into itself and manifesting the power of life and the light of mind would draw down into it the superior or supreme power and light of the spirit and in an earthly body shed its parts of inconscience and become a perfectly conscious frame of the spirit. A secure completeness and stability of the health and strength of its physical tenement could be maintained by the will and force of this inhabitant; all the natural capacities of the physical frame,

all powers of the physical consciousness would reach their utmost extension and be there at command and sure of their flawless action. As an instrument the body would acquire a fullness of capacity, a totality of fitness for all uses which the inhabitant would demand of it far beyond anything now possible. Even it could become a revealing vessel of a supreme beauty and bliss,—casting the beauty of the spirit suffusing and radiating from it as a lamp reflects and diffuses the luminosity of its indwelling flame, carrying in itself the beatitude of the spirit, its joy of the seeing mind, its joy of life and spiritual happiness, the joy of Matter released into a spiritual consciousness and thrilled with a constant ecstasy. This would be the total perfection of the spiritualised body.

All this might not come all at once, though such a sudden illumination might be possible if a divine Power and Light and Ananda could take their stand on the summit of our being and send down their force into the mind and life and body illumining and remoulding the cells, awaking consciousness in all the frame. But the way would be open and consummation of all that is possible in the individual could progressively take place. The physical also would have its share in that consummation of the whole.

There would always remain vistas beyond as the infinite Spirit took up towards higher heights and larger breadths the evolving Nature, in the movement of the liberated being towards the possession of the supreme Reality, the supreme existence, consciousness, beatitude. But of this it would be premature to speak: what has been written is perhaps as much as the human mind as it is now constituted can venture to look forward to and the enlightened thought understand in some measure. These consequences of the Truth-Consciousness descending and laying its hold upon Matter would be a sufficient justification of the evolutionary labour. In this upward all-uplifting sweep of the Spirit there could be a simultaneous or consecutive downward sweep of the triumph of a spiritualised Nature all-including, all-transmuting and in it there could occur a glorifying change of Matter and the physical consciousness and physical form and functioning of which we could speak as not only the total but the supreme perfection of the body.

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Educational Objectives and the Contemporary Teacher

Kireet Joshi

In order to understand the meaning and significance of the role that the contemporary teacher is called upon to play, we need to clarify to ourselves the fundamentals of education as also the perennial and emerging objectives of education.

There are three fundamental ideas underlying the educational process. There is, first, the pursuit of man to know himself and the universe and to relate himself with the universe as effectively as possible. This pursuit constitutes the very theme of human culture, and education derives its fundamental thrust from the cultural setting at a given point of time. Secondly, there is a process of transmission of the accumulated results of the past to the growing generation so as to enable it to carry forward the cultural heritage and to build the gates and paths of the future. And, thirdly, there is in the process of transmission a deliberate attempt to accelerate as far as possible the process of human progress. These three premises provide us with the basic indications of what may be called the perennial objectives of education.

Being at once a product and instrument of culture, education must promote the highest aims of culture, and, in particular, it must encourage and foster the quest for the knowledge of man and the universe, as also the arts and sciences of their interrelationship. Secondly, education should aim at building new bridges between the past and the future. And, thirdly, education should endeavour to discover and apply increasingly efficient means of the right rhythms of acceleration of human progress.

But apart from these perennial objectives, there are, in every age and in every important phase of transition, certain special objectives relevant to certain special needs. And, from this point of view, there are at least three emerging objectives, namely, education for peace, education for development, and education for the integral growth of personality.

Let us dwell briefly on these objectives so as to clarify what they really signify and mean.

Education for Peace

An elementary condition in which man finds himself in his relation with his fellow-beings and the world is that of struggle for existence. This struggle is often portrayed as a battle between the creature and Nature. But while we may not belittle the role that is played by the sense of battle and conquest that seem inherent in certain stages of human endeavour we observe that as man becomes increasingly self-conscious there grows in him an irresistible tendency to learn the laws of harmony of himself with the universe. In recent times, however, a new dimension has been added because of the increasing world-tensions which have reached such a high pitch that the human survival itself has become endangered. This has led to the realization of an imperative need of directing our efforts to generate and strengthen forces of understanding, harmony and peace.

Peace is sometimes conceived negatively so as to mean mere absence of war. But peace is fundamentally a positive concept, and while in the highest sense it refers to 'peace that passeth understanding', it is, in the context of dynamism, the stable foundation of all harmonious activities. Peace is a positive striving, and in the present condition of the world, this striving implies a rigorous pursuit of international understanding and cooperation. In the field of education, this implies an international dimension and a global perspective at all levels and in all its forms. It also implies understanding and respect for all peoples, their cultures, civilizations, values and ways of life, including domestic ethnic culture and cultures of other nations. At a deeper level we should mean by international understanding not merely knowledge of other countries, cultures and peoples, but also a responsi-

ble commitment to the idea and practice of the Family of Man. In other words, international understanding should mean a commitment to that mode of consciousness in which mutual dependence of each upon all and of all upon each is indispensable.

Indeed, international understanding does not emerge merely from exchange of ideas but it emanates fundamentally from an increasing exploration of man within himself and from a discovery of the inner identity and universality of man. A divided man is not only at war with himself but is also at war with others. Again, it is largely man's ignorance of himself and his own incapacities which condemn him to respond to outside influences which engender divisions, tensions and discords. Finally, it is man's failure to discover any durable meaning or aim of life that reduces him to become a plaything of the forces of degeneration, decay and destruction. An integrated man, in possession of himself and set in dynamic search of knowledge and power in service of the highest conceivable aim of life, can effortlessly become a potent instrument of harmonious relationships and of peace. It follows, therefore, that the promotions of education and training so as to multiply human beings of this kind is evidently one of the most important objectives that the contemporary teacher is called upon to promote.

We may even go farther. Today the ideal of human unity is more or less vaguely making its way to the front of our consciousness, and the increasing advocacy of the world peace is preparing a firm foundation for the realization of this ideal. The intellectual and material circumstances of the age have prepared and almost imposed this ideal, especially the scientific discoveries which have made our earth so small that its vastest kingdoms seem now no more than the provinces of a single country. But it is necessary to remember that when material circumstances favour a great change but the heart and mind of the race are not really ready, failure may be predicted. Indeed, this failure can be prevented if men become wise in time and accept the inner change along with external readjustment. And it is here that education can play a crucial role, since it is through education that the heart

and mind of the race can most effectively be made ready for the needed change.

If we examine closely, we shall find that the growing search for the unification of mankind reveals one basic tension. This tension results from two opposing but equally powerful tendencies, the one towards uniformity, and the other towards unity. The two seems similar to each other and yet they engender such dissimilar consequences that it becomes necessary to recognize the dangers of the one and the difficulties of the other, and to conceive or design appropriate lines of action. In doing so, care should be taken to recognize the needs and truths of collective life of mankind. Uniformity, if led to its logical extreme, would impose not only the rule of one language, but also the overpowering dominion of one aspect of culture. Unity, on the other hand, would permit differences and differentiations which would pose difficulties of separativeness and psychological tensions. Yet, unity in diversity is preferable to uniformity; for while the problems arising out of uniformity seem to demand an unacceptable solution which would imprison for ever the freedom of the human spirit, the problems arising out of the drive towards unity seem capable of a solution, which requires difficult but attainable cultivation of the deeper and higher faculties of personality. The task before us is, therefore, to prepare men and women in such a way that the preferred ideal of unity can be realized without the avoidable pains of conflicts and tensions.

Education for Development

Man's increasing capacity to change or determine the conditions of his life has been responsible for his continuous progress and his thrust towards the future. To develop this capacity has been one of the perennial objectives of education. But since the industrial revolution, and increasingly since the subsequent revolutions, man's pace of progress has grown manifold, and his thrust towards the future has become more persistent and more deliberate. It is in this context that education for progress and development has emerged as one of the major objectives of education.

Development is, however, an ambiguous concept and needs to be clarified. Development may sometimes come to be identified with the growth

of excessive consumption, competition and self-assertiveness. To the rationalistic and idealistic mind, this concept is decidedly negative. A more acceptable concept of development involves two ingredients: productivity and social justice has grown and it is even felt that social justice must precede economic growth. Again, social justice can be conceived in terms of several alternative frameworks of economy and polity, although the increasing tendency today is to combine democracy and socialism and to aim at the synthesis of liberty, equality and fraternity.

But what exactly should we mean by combining democracy and socialism? We should mean by democracy not any particular form of economic or political framework but the freedom of the individual to grow towards his self-perfection by means of self-determination. Similarly, we should mean by socialism not the deification of the state but a cultivated awareness of the collectivity and a voluntary subordination of the individual to the needs and decisions of the collectivity as an integral part of the process of the individual and collective perfection. Or, in other words, when we speak of democratic socialism, we should mean a state of existence where collectivity respects the freedom of the individual in his pursuit of perfection, and where the individual freely sacrifices his narrow interests and his egoism in the interests of the development of the collectivity.

Development ought to aim at the growth of this kind of inter-relationship between the individual and the collectivity. But even this is not enough. Development needs the promotion of science and technology. Fortunately, science and technology have reached today amazing heights of achievement. But in order that the pace of progress is enhanced, there must be a positive encouragement to the development of scientific temper and to the right use of scientific and technological knowledge in solving both our economic and cultural problems. This encouragement can best be expected from the teacher, and this is what is rightly expected from the contemporary teacher.

The development of scientific temper often remains confined to the cultivation of a mere attitude of questioning. But there are four important

ingredients of scientific temper and all of them need to be developed as adequately as possible. These are: impartial observation, untiring experimentation, unprejudiced consideration of every point of view relevant to the enquiry; and courage to go to the end of the enquiry until the ascertainable truth emerges through a process of verification and utmost possible synthesis of arguments and counter-arguments.

The development of a robust but refined scientific brain is an undeniable necessity. By implication, it follows that the contemporary teacher is required to endeavour to embody in himself the ideal modes of scientific thinking and to practise scientific methods in his quest of knowledge.

Sometimes a sharp contrast is drawn between creativity and scientific attitude. Often this contrast is portrayed to show a conflict between art and science. But if we look into the problem closely, we shall find that this conflict is imaginary rather than real. As a matter of fact, science itself can be conceived as a creative activity. For creativity is, in its essence, an outpouring expression of curiosity or urge that issues from an intimate experience or from some achieved fullness or irresistible need for fullness. In this light, science, no less than art, is a creative expression, and even when the scientific method insists on an austere and colourless adherence to facts, the rigorous discipline of science can be sustained only by the creative impulse. And we cannot forget to note that the framing of hypothesis which is a part of the process of scientific induction requires on the part of the scientist a fertile but rigorous imagination. We may also note that adherence to facts is itself an act of disciplined creativity, pierce through the veil of appearances.

It must, however, be admitted that artistic creativity is a neglected area, and a great effort is needed to promote, in particular, the value of art. It is also time that teachers are asked to evolve ways and means by which educational process is transformed into creative experience. This is particularly necessary when we speak of weaving culture into education. It is necessary that our educational system should provide op-

opportunities and conditions under which the faculties of imagination, of adventure, of profound sensitivity, of colourful and rhythmic expression can grow and blossom. We have been neglecting literature and poetry, painting and music, dance and drama. The minimum that is necessary, and which should find a legitimate place in any scheme of education is the appreciation of art.

It needs to be underlined that one cannot appreciate art unless one has practised one's own discipline as a creative activity or practised some art, at least, as an amateur. Mere information on creativity is not enough. What is basically required is some direct experience of painting or music or dance or drama or architecture or poetry. It has been said, and quite rightly, that cultural experience grows and develops under the sense of leisure. But our educational programmes are not designed with a view to permit the required interweaving of leisure with activities of rigorous and disciplined studies. It is for this reason that it has been contended that our educational system has succeeded in exiling romance of learning and joy of creativity from the portals of learning. It is high time that this situation is reversed, and once again the major responsibility for this comes to be fixed on the contemporary teacher.

Development needs also to be related to the highest conceivable principles and values. These belong to the realms which are not necessarily visible physically but which are approachable more easily through the mind and the spirit. If we examine this domain closely, it will become clear that we are here in need of a new programme of research. If this research comes to be encouraged, we might not only discover new and rich contents of the ethical and spiritual domains but we might also open up a new domain where the modern trends of science can meet and converge on the ancient and reascent knowledge of the secrets of spiritual perfection.

But here, again, we begin to make a very heavy demand on the contemporary teacher.

Education for Integral Personality

There are various notions of what constitutes per-

sonality. Sometimes a distinction is made between personality and character. In one view personality is regarded as a fixed structure of recognizable qualities expressing a power of being and individuality. According to another idea, while personality is a flux of self-expressive or sensitive and responsive being, character is formed fixity of a pattern of structure of qualities. But if we examine the matter closely, we find that there is in every one a double element, the unformed though limited flux of being out of which personality is fashioned and the personal formation out of that flux. The formation may become rigid and ossify or it may remain sufficiently plastic and change constantly and develop. But for a proper definition of personality, we should take into account this flux and this fixity but also a third element, the individual or the person of whom the personality is a self-expression. This individual is sometimes conceived as the ego. But ego, when examined critically, reveals itself as a finite looking at itself as self-existent and yet unstable in its status and its movement—a self-contradiction. According to certain dominant trends of Indian thought, there is a distinction between the ego and the individual. The egoistic personality is, according to this thought, a personality that is at war with itself. The true individual is harmonious, and it admits its dependence upon the whole, and lives in and through relations of mutuality and harmony. It is the discovery and development of this individual that is relevant to the integration of personality.

It has been suggested quite rightly that the most important exercise that is directly relevant to the growth of integral personality is to examine life and to discover the highest possible aim of life. Historically, there have been three major aims of life. There is a view, first, that the aim of life is to prepare oneself for a life in another world, which is sometimes conceived as heaven or paradise. According to the second view, the aim of life is to seek liberation not only from the physical world but also from any possible worldly existence, physical or supra physical. According to the third view, the cosmos or physical universe is the only reality or is the only reality that we can know, and therefore to do the utmost that one can in the physical world, to improve its condition and to improve man's happiness or well-being or perfection in the

physical world is the highest conceivable aim of life. This view has, again, several varieties such as materialistic, vitalistic, pragmatic and idealistic. It is easy to refrain from entering into the domain of discussion as to which of these aims of life is valid or invalid. It is also easy to affirm one view or the other with some kind of exclusiveness. But confronted with various alternatives, the human mind cannot remain satisfied unless it investigates the conflicting views and arrives at a conclusion or at some kind of synthesis.

This investigation, if encouraged and promoted rightly and imaginatively through out the educational process, would go a long way in helping students to develop their personality and to achieve progressively inner and outer harmony and integration.

It has been suggested, again, quite rightly, that the development of integral personality will depend upon a simultaneous development of as many powers and faculties of human personality as possibly can rightly be balanced in each individual. A right balance of the development of body, heart and mind by means of the cultivation of faculties that promote knowledge, power, harmony and skill is the right condition of the integral development of personality. It has been pointed out that if the basic powers of personality are rightly balanced throughout the process of development, and if a healthy equilibrium of these powers is upheld progressively, then we can ensure a healthy development of an integral personality. There is here a clear recognition that this implies a life-long process of development, but it is underlined that it must begin right from the beginning, and that life-long education is a natural corollary of the idea of the development of integral personality.

A progressive development of various parts of the being, physical, vital, rational, aesthetic, moral and spiritual, is a necessary condition of the integral growth. And the development of faculties and capacities of these various parts of the being is closely connected with the question of value-oriented education. For values are the ultimate ends that personality seeks to embody, express and fulfil. Cor-

responding to each capacity there are specific values. For instance, corresponding to our physical capacities, there are values of health, strength, plasticity, grace and beauty. Corresponding to our rational capacities, there are values of truth, clarity, subtlety, complexity, impartiality and globality. Corresponding to the capacities of moral will, there are over-arching values of the good and the right. Corresponding to our aesthetic capacities, there are values of beauty and joy. And corresponding to our spiritual capacities, there are values of absoluteness and perfection. The psychological correlation between the capacities of personality and their corresponding values is often obscured by attempts that confine values exclusively to the domain of morality or by attempts to derive values and morality from a particular religion. It is true that religions prescribe values and very often they have well-knit codes of moral conduct. However, values are at the same time, so to say, autonomous and are found to be the highest expressions of our psychological fulfilment. They can and do stand apart and independent of any particular code of conduct of any particular system. In education, we should promote values in their psychological aspect as a part of the development of personality.

The role that emerges for the teacher in relation to this objective of the integral development of personality is perhaps most exacting. This role demands from the teacher subtler dimensions. For what is needed here is the involvement of the total being of the teacher and the learner in the learning process. The question here is not merely to deal with subjects and books but also with faculties and capacities, with their growth and their harmony, and with the combined power of concentration and will that need to be developed in various parts and aspects of the growing being. The teacher will need to have not only a high degree of proficiency in his own subject or discipline, but he will also need to arrive, as rapidly as possible, at a considerable maturity of the growth of his own personality, and he will need to look upon his work of teaching as a part of the discipline required for the development of his own personality. It is only when the teacher grows in his own personality that he can contribute to the fashioning of the personality of the learners.

Lines of Past and Future Evolution of the Spanish Language

Bel Atreides

It is surprising that in our time, even now at the end of the 20th century, people who are supposed to be intelligent and responsible, if asked about the health of a language, are only able to answer in statistical terms: if the number of its speakers has increased, if the number of foreign students of that language has grown, if the number of rules protecting it in bilingual communities has increased, if the number of books published in it every year is now higher ... then the health of the language is good. It does not matter at all if out of three hundred million speakers, for instance, two hundred and ninety are total or functional illiterates and have a terminological capital of only five hundred to a thousand words with which to construct their confused and limited conceptual reality. It does not matter if they use words in an unreflecting way, as labels to be attached to objects according to an immutable habit. The shallowness of the books published, the low levels reached by the foreign students, the trend of decay which many regulations disguise, are of no account—because from the official point of view everything is a question of numbers and proportions: the health of a language depends on the amount of noise it can make.

Here we are not using the concept of health in an arbitrary way. Health is an organism's condition of creative harmony; it is, in fact, what makes it an organism rather than a sum of conflicting elements. And in a dynamic world, where stagnation results in death, health is an evolutionary reality ... or better, it is the very reason of evolution: its cause, its end and its soul. A language is healthy when it evolves. But not every kind of change is evolutionary, nor every disorderly expansion, every numerical profusion. Evolution is transformation towards a higher level of organisation: not noise, but music. And because language is primarily the expressive instrument of consciousness, it inevitably follows the progress of consciousness.

Now how does consciousness evolve? What are its lines of progress, the consequences of its advance?

On one hand, consciousness grows in intensity; on the other, in extension. An increase of the perceptive, discriminative, relational capacity, of the concern for precision and exactness in comprehension, a sense of beauty and harmony and force ensouled in the elements that constitute reality and in its organic whole, are, broadly speaking, immediate effects of the first process. A shift of the primary focus of its awareness and preoccupation from outer to inner space, from the concrete and particular to the general and abstract, from physical actualities to emotional, aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual ones, with the awakening of existing capacities to the lights and intensities of these new dimensions, constitutes the second of these processes. To this twofold movement language responds by developing the tools needed to embody and convey the new capacities, meanings, and concerns, so as to be capable of naming, specifying and objectifying the landscapes of the new dimensions it is trying to seize. Therefore a language evolves the more it becomes capable of naming Reality—not merely physical reality, but Integral Reality, with all its many dimensions—with cognitive minuteness, evocative force, beauty, and convincing and shaping power. A language progresses the more it adapts its terminological capital, its structures and rhythms to this demanding task.

When we speak about the evolution of consciousness, we always have to take two facts into account: first, that consciousness is not linear, but cyclic, following the rhythms of different cultural and historical periods; second, that it occurs, asymmetrically but interrelatedly, in two different dimensions: the individual and collective ones. The same applies to language. At the beginning of history we find highly evolved languages, that are capable of handling with incomparable accuracy and capacity of evocation the highest spiritual actualities and the subtlest psychological processes, such as Sanskrit and Pali. We find deeply intellectualised tongues, such as Greek and Latin; or languages of a vast and intuitive richness, such as classical Chinese, whose true conceptual

reach can hardly be grasped by the scholars of our age. Some of these languages inseminated others, were recast in them, or fragmented to give rise to multifarious offspring when the cultures of which they were instruments collapsed, so that new languages could begin their own vital cycles along new paths corresponding to new historical periods. On the other hand, we have Spanish of Borges, the English of Faulkner, the French of Anatole France, the Portuguese of Fernando Pessoa, the German of Rilke, or the Russian of Turgenev, alongside cloudy and defiling streams of language. From the point of view of the evolution of language it is important to remember these two factors, because a language will be more evolutionary, on one hand, the more capacity it demonstrates for assimilating and expressing the highest achievements of its mother-tongues and, on the other, the more a critical mass of speakers approaches the expressive possibilities of its great masters.

Spanish is one of the south-occidental medieval tongues born from the decomposition of Latin. In its origins it constituted the last phase of the involutive process of that mother-tongue; it was a popular language, simplified in structure, used only for dealing with day-to-day outer actualities, cut off from higher thought—for which Latin, Greek, and Arabic were used—and unworthy of leaving written testimony. But it was endowed with a powerful, unexpected vitality. Latin provided its substance and most of its original vocabulary. Greek contributed much to build up its philosophic, abstract dimension. Arabic left on it the profoundest imprint the European tongues received from that semitic source; but as Spanish was to become the vehicle of a Christian culture, the conceptual universe of the intellectualised Arab, despite its lavish subtlety, did not bear fruit in the Spanish language, and the words derived from this mother-tongue refer mainly to vital actualities specially or originally connected with the Muslims: names of professions, tools, etc. Gothic and Hebrew have left scarcely a hint in it of their presence on the Peninsula. The contact with the Amerindian tongues enriched Spanish very little, apart from a few words that mostly refer to actualities proper to those vanished cultures. Later, Latin America became a great generator of terms and expressions, but while it is true that these add variety and local flavour to the Hispanic language, they do not make it deeper and

vaster, they do not conquer for Spanish new fields and dimensions of experience, they do not fill its philosophical and spiritual insufficiencies, but remain on the level of the outermost vitality and have hardly any application outside their native contexts. Spanish also received inputs from other languages of the Peninsula which grew alongside it: Galician, Catalan, Basque and Portuguese. Other European languages made gifts to it: French with part of its military vocabulary, Dutch with its maritime terminology, English with technical terms ... And finally, even so distant a tongue as Sanskrit has left traces of its presence in Spanish with a handful of words, most of which have entered via the Romany of the gypsies—a process which casts little credit on our culture's capacity of understanding, assimilating and benefiting from the expressive possibilities of such a highly evolved language as the Sanskrit of ancient India.

The outcome of all this is a tongue which lacks the phonetic richness of Russian, the flexibility of English, the musicality of Italian, the combinatory capacities of highly intellectualised languages such as Sanskrit, Greek or German ... But a tongue of clear sonority, distinct phonemes, orthography that is to a great extent faithful to the pronunciation, in all of which something transpires of the Spanish tendency towards the concrete and the actual; a tongue whose rhythms are created by the polysyllabism of its words and its preference for stressing the penultimate syllable; a tongue that is capable of short and middle-length sentences, but which has somehow to be forced before it will manifest long or dense sequences of thought, that other languages, more supple or with more combining capacity, can express more compactly, facilitating philosophic reflection and lofty speculative flights. Spanish is a language that is in principle suitable for every level of expression, but it has undoubtedly produced its finest fruits in the fields of poetry and narrative. It is a language, finally, whose general turn seems to be towards outer actualities.

If we examine the past evolution of the Spanish language, it is interesting to distinguish three crucial moments: the second half of the 13th century, when, due to the cultural efforts of King Alfonso the Wise, Spanish became at last a literary and scientific language; the end of the 15th century, with the publication of Nebrija's grammar, the first in

any modern language; and the Golden Century (from the middle of the 16th century to the middle of the 17th) a period during which Spanish is born to mysticism, and simultaneously reaches a level of development that allows it to become the vehicle of one of the most brilliant outflowerings of universal literature.

Alfonso X of Castile, the Wise King found himself faced with the twofold necessity of creating a national consciousness and making a culture that was independent from the church, removing it from the sphere of ecclesiastical Latin. For both functions the Castilian language was to serve him well—a language that unlike Latin, the tongue of the church, could be shared by all his subjects, Jewish, Islamic and Christian alike. This was a high moment for Spanish; for the replacement of Latin by the vernacular as the official language of the state signified, on one hand, an open door to religious conciliation and, on the other, an attempt at democratising culture. Seen from another angle, it was an official sanction of the fact that a section of the masses who used to speak an illiterate hybrid jargon had risen at last to a higher level of culture. We can see here one of the consequences—or, seen teleologically, one of the reasons—of the historical cycles: an apparently involutive and disintegrating movement of high cultural values serves at last to recover from ignorance a vast human mass for which those values had become unattainable in their pure form. Each time the gap between the level of the elite and of the mass exceeds a critical distance, the world of the elite must collapse so that its fragments can become seeds which, sown in the fertile slime of the mass, will await the propitious season to produce their golden harvests. Without this cyclic becoming, no general evolution of humanity would be possible, but only the ascent of the few to some unpredictable higher state, isolated amongst vast barbarous masses avoided, massacred or enslaved by the former. The vital cycle of languages reflects this fact perfectly.

Among the various efforts made by Alfonso X the Wise to elevate the Castilian language, the Translator's School of Toledo, founded by the King, played a decisive role. Translation is not only one of the main paths through which a language finds access to the achievements of higher cultures; when

the translator tries to be faithful to the spirit of the text as well as to its literal sense, it poses serious challenges to the language, and overcoming these is always a gain for it. Creation of new terminology; development of rhythms and structures which, without betraying the spirit of one's own language, make it more capable of housing the spirit of the other one; exploration of new modes of expression, and finally, access to new imaginative, sonorous or conceptual worlds—these are the prizes that crown the translator's triumph. In this important moment of its formative process, Spanish explored for the first time in a cultured and rigorous way its derivative, generating and assimilative possibilities; above all, it tested the degree of dependence or independence it could establish relative to Latin; and it did all these things in the freedom of its youth.

This moment of great flexibility had to be followed by a time of fixing and establishing, which came with the Renaissance. A grammar is always a gesture of self-awareness of the language: the tongue trying to tell itself what it is and, in its seeking for general rules that make it explainable, telling itself how it must behave for greater understanding and uniformity in human communication. Explicitly or implicitly, in every grammar there is a standardising tendency. And as in other fields of life, the standard here too has a twofold role: on one side, it organises elements that are in disorder; but, on the other, it can become a too-rigid structure which frustrates the lofty flights of the spirit towards higher states of manifestation. This has happened and tends to happen specially in languages, like Spanish, which have the good or bad fortune of living under the watchful eye of an Academy that guards their 'purity'.

Nebrija's grammar had the value of helping to fix the Castilian language, developing criteria for the choice between the diverse phonetical and orthographical variants of different words, offering perspectives for the regulation of a syntax independent from Latin. And this took place when Spain was on the verge of its imperial leap, when a still-unregulated Spanish tongue was about to be spoken in vast territories spread over four continents. From the evolutionary point of view, this standardising endeavour still belongs to a lower stage. A grammar will be more self-aware and more

valuable the more it detaches itself and confronts in a wide and keen-eyed spirit the understanding of secret flexible rules—not those of historical development, nor the human compromises assumed for clarity and uniformity in communication—that govern the language in its evolution to the expressive Ideal. The biblical myth of the Logos or Divine Word; of the primordial language of humanity, unified and possessing a metaphysical correspondence between word and referent; and of the Tower of Babel and the separation of the human tongues, express three different moments in the involutive arc of language: the word as sound-embodiment of the Divine Force, with all its creative potential; the word as sound-body and diaphanous expression of a transcendent and human reality, with all its evocative and cognitive power; and, finally, the word as deformation, as a construction of the ignorance starting from a diffuse memory of an ancient truth. The true grammar would discover for us the ways by which our present ignorant tongues can rise again to the Divine Verb, that is, to the supreme expressive faculty of an Integral Consciousness, but without losing the countless vital and cultural achievements which represent its diversity in manifestation. Therefore in cultures with a metaphysical perspective of language, such as the Hebrew and the Indian ones, cultures which have tried to turn language not only into a useful tool for the expression of ultimate truths but into a permanent vehicle of Truth, the great philologists have come from the field of mysticism. Inevitably, if man must conquer new dimensions of consciousness without falling silent for ever, language has to keep company with him and the future linguists will probably be *yogis*—or, if this word is too much for some of our readers, let us say rather, 'students and adepts of the psychology of the depths'.

After the third of the formative moments we have distinguished above, Spanish had already reached a state of full maturity. On one side, our great writers enriched it with new terminology, new rhythms and structures, making it serve the subtly intellectualised conceptual and cultural games of Quevedo and Gongóra; the vital and passionate outbursts of Lope and Caderon; as well as the vast range of imagination and varied tones of Cervantes. On the other side, our mystics mastered it for the expression, generally symbolic, of their inef-

fable experiences. It is interesting to note that, unlike Sanskrit, Spanish has not developed a highly specialised and discriminative mystic terminology. Perhaps because of the national temperament's innate tendency towards concrete, physical things; or because the writer had to remain within—or pretend to do so—the orthodoxy of the Catholic church; or because of some rigidity of the language; or through the combination to one extent or another of all these reasons, our mystics choose in general to load with new transcendent meanings words whose referential world remains that of the external and vital realities, raising them in this way to a higher level of content. This proposition is offered here only as a suggestive intuition which it would be desirable to corroborate or refute by deeper research into the works of our mystic poets, particularly San Juan de la Cruz, the most speculative of them all.

Long though this journey through history may have been, it was indispensable to explore the lines of past evolution of the Spanish language in order to understand what will be the paths of its future evolution. In the first place, it was necessary to understand in what sense language is a progressive reality, and how this is to be seen from the perspective of a cyclic and still unfinished evolution of human consciousness. We have here a possibility of advancing from each of the two terms of the relation: a progress in individual or collective consciousness will bring about linguistic advance; but also, a concern for the development of the language will lead to the possession of new conceptual dimensions, resulting in a step forward, even though a limited one, in the evolution of consciousness. Something of the need to transcend the limitations of an inherited language can be felt in the two great literary experiments of James Joyce: *Ulysses* and above all, *Finnegan's Wake*, which have been emulated in Spanish in the indigestible novel of Julián Ríos Larva. In these works there is an attempt to find new forms of expression by the deconstruction and reconstruction of words, by the artificial generation of new terms, or by the systematic violation of traditional linguistic structures, in a spirit similar to that of a biologist dividing and recombining molecules out of mere scientific curiosity. Like such experiments, those of Joyce and Ríos have no greater interest

for the evolution of language than laboratory demonstrations ... among other reasons, because the outcome is too artificial and subjective.

Certainly, some true masters of the Spanish language, such as Valle Inclán and Borges, may also seem, from a certain point of view, subjective and artificial. But in their case, what evokes this impression is not the creation of a synthetic idiolect, useless for life since the product of the fruitless mental lucubration of a single individual, but the distance which exists between the linguistic skill of these two great artists and the limited expressive possibilities of the majority of Spanish-speaking people. Borges is a classicist possessing a powerfully intellectualised literary consciousness that reaches back into the past to take up again themes, words and images which often lie beyond the bounds of common use. Valle Inclán expresses an intuitive and fruitfully creative consciousness projecting itself towards the future through bold avenues of linguistic renewal, discovering masterly rhythms and vocabulary, and often outdistancing the intelligence of his reader. But neither of them, however sophisticated their language may seem, transgresses the evolutionary spirit of Spanish. On the contrary, from a deep identification with it both win a new expressive power for the Spanish tongue ... while making themselves, by this very achievement, sadly incomprehensible to many people.

We have stated above that the evolution of a language depends partly on the existence of a critical mass of native speakers whose linguistic skill approaches that of the great masters of the tongue. In fact, this is the only factor which can prevent the gap between common speech and the language of a cultured elite becoming unbridgeable. This is not just a theme for fantasy literature. Although from causes very different from those which in the past led to this happening in languages such as Latin, and those which in our day are bringing it about in tongues such as Tamil, this is a less remote possibility for Spanish than it might seem. A misleading political language that is involved and void of content, an emotive and empty advertising jargon, a pitifully shallow literary and journalistic language, constitute powerful degrading currents which are leading to the establishment of a conceptual universe based on merely slogans and shared by a vast collectivity of

poorly individualised minds. Education, as conceived at present in our nation, is not helping to reverse this trend; and the linguistic decay which accompanies our present collective banalization cannot but accelerate it. We can turn to some classics of Science Fiction for a representation of the kind of society such currents, overflowing and unrestrained, could eventually produce.

Nevertheless, it is only education that can lead to the creation of such a critical mass of skillfully expressive native speakers. And not only a school and university education but an integral and unending one: an education that does not consist of an indigestible accumulation of data, rules and classifications, but which means initiation into the use of language as a creative instrument; an education that helps to make conscious the physical, vital, mental, and supra-intellectual dimensions of the linguistic universe; that helps to awaken the aesthetic, evocative, cognitive, formative possibilities of each linguistic entity; an education that aims to make each speaker into a creator and recreator of his native language, fully aware that this is no final reality but something alive that is moving into the future along the evolutionary lines determined by its own unique spirit.

If a change in the concept of education is indispensable for the creation of a critical mass of speakers who are truly skilled in their language, translation can constitute again today, as it did in the past, an important factor for the future evolution of the Spanish language. To become intellectualised, Spanish had to assimilate the essence of the Greek and Latin conceptual worlds, a task which it undertook by the translation of their classics. To achieve supra-intellectualisation, one path for Spanish, the exogenous path, would be through translating works in which a supra-intellectual or 'overhead' inspiration can be perceived. The Vedas and other works from the same spiritual source of inspiration would help, no doubt, if they were not being translated in a merely academic perspective and spirit and by individuals incapable of rising beyond the mental horizon, which is what has been happening, even in the best of cases, until now. But while the difficulties posed by these mystic works of old are in many cases practically unsurmountable, this is not the case with other great

literary achievements, of this century. In our own day, the pressure of a new consciousness in world literature is a concrete and visible fact to the sensitive critic. There is not only an attempt to imagine, paint, describe this new consciousness; occasionally, in the most unexpected fields of literature, it even speaks through an inspired author, giving us a glimpse of a new vision of things:

“The pilgrim has no interest in the gods, nor in any earthly thing. He makes no effort to contact them, and they ignore him if they see him at all, small, elusive waveform that he is. He watches their enormous bodies rise and fall in the tidal drifts of sun and moon, breaking through the ionosphere in liquid sprays of electric fire, like whales in a burning sea,” A. A. Attanasio, one of the great masters of the contemporary epic novel, has written in his book *The Dragon and the Unicorn*, moved by his own intuition of the gods.

In addition to the doors that can be opened by translation, forcing the language to conquer new horizons, evolution of the language will also doubtless be furthered by a recovery of past formulae: archaic or disused forms or ancient phonetic variants of a word will live again to embody new meanings or simply to add beauty where their sound or rhythm or exotic flavour make it appropriate; and when the spirit of the language allows it and the artist in language sees hidden possibilities, those ancient forms will engender new linguistic offspring. For to a vast and intense consciousness variety and multiplicity are not a problem, do not imply chaos, as they may to one that moves between narrower horizons; it is able to intuit a secret underlying order and distil the best from it, to arrive at the most powerful, beautiful and wisest expression.

We have referred to the artist in language. Perhaps, describing this figure, we could summarise all the lines of progress which Spanish will have to follow in recreating itself; for it will be in such a one that the new tongue will take an initial form. What will he be like, this artist in language, this new Dante who is able to renew the language by the pressure of his higher consciousness, using purely native means? What will he be like, this alchemist of words? Not only will he reopen the ancient Catilean mines; he will also thoroughly explore the mines of Greek and

Latin, to extract from them the precious metal which still can enrich us; he will delve deeper in knowledge of the inner dynamism of his language; he will be aware of all its formative and generating processes, the ways in which it can assimilate expressive capital from other languages—either stamping it with its own seal and character, something of its own nature and atmosphere and transforming it into an apparently indigenous product; or allowing it to preserve its own distinctive, even exotic flavour. This word-wizard will be able to distinguish the different levels of consciousness implicit in the development and coinage of new expressive possibilities, and will mark out paths of progress leading the language to the richest and most powerfully expressive domains of consciousness. He will go on deepening his knowledge of his native language, of its living and progressive nature. And he will turn to other languages, either ones belonging to the same family as his own, or even those of distant and different groups, in order to learn to handle them easily, to discover in them their own formative and evolutionary process, to understand their expressive possibilities, and to find out how far these already exist in his own language in a more or less veiled or latent way, or can be made applicable to it. This transmuter of tongues will conquer for Spanish as much of the flexibility of the English as his own subject-matter allows him; as much of the combinatory possibilities of Greek as will serve to perfect its expression; as much of Sanskrit terminology as will help to make specific its mystic and psychological universe. He will go deep into the meaning of words, into their etymology and historical burden, and into their referential implications and relations with the rest of universal reality. And he will do all this not with the ambition to leave the stamp of his own individuality upon the language, but as a lover of the language, ready to efface himself so that its spirit can possess and use him as a one instrument in its ongoing evolution.

These are the individuals and the steps that Spanish—and the other languages of mankind—are waiting for, to initiate the new movement of transformation that will make them into fit tools for the new consciousness that is awaiting humanity as the brightest promise of its future.

'In Search of the Soul of Spain' CIRHU PAPERS

The Political Legacy of Sri Aurobindo

Sachidananda Mohanty

The traditional view of Sri Aurobindo is that he was a poet and a mystic who propounded the theory of creative evolution, the system of Integral Yoga and established an Ashram in the South of India. Romain Rolland called him the greatest synthesis between the East and the West. Aldous Huxley nominated him for the Nobel Prize for Literature. Rabindranath treated him as his leader. To his followers, Sri Aurobindo was an Avatar who envisioned a new millennium, the coming of a new race, a new species of humanity whose guiding principle in life would not be the fractured human mind but what he termed in *The Life Divine* as the Supermind or the Gnostic Consciousness. His detractors, however, find fault with Sri Aurobindo's retreat from political action to the life as a spiritual recluse.

Both the groups however see Sri Aurobindo as conveniently closeted within the domain of the 'spiritual'. To most of our countrymen, 'the spiritual' evokes other-worldly concerns, matters of our soul rather than of the world. Thus, we think of Sri Aurobindo as we think of the Buddha, Mahavira, Shankara, Vivekananda, Ramakrishna and Ramana Maharshi. It is rarely that we associate some of these figures with our mundane or worldly fate.

Take Sri Aurobindo, for instance. For most part of his life, he remained committed to the fate of India and the world. This covers his fiery *Bande Mataram* days (1905-1910), the imprisonment in the Alipore Jail, his concern over the fate of World War II and opposition to Nazism, the Cripps Mission to India and the Independence Day message in 1947, his message during the Korean War and his opposition to Stalinism. In his message on Korea on 28.6.1950, for instance, Sri Aurobindo observed prophetically:

“I do not know why you want a line of thought to be indicated to you for your guidance in the affair of Korea. There is nothing to hesitate about there, the whole affair is as plain as a pike-staff. It is the first move in the Communist plan of campaign to

dominate and take possession first of these northern parts and then of South East Asia as preliminary to their manouvers with regard to the rest of the continent in passing, Tibet as a gate opening to India. If they succeed, there is no reason why domination of the whole world should not follow by steps until they are ready to deal with America. That is, provided the war can be staved off with America until Stalin can choose his time. Truman seems to have understood the situation if we can judge from his moves in Korea, but it is to be seen whether he is strong enough and determined enough to carry the matter through. The measures he has taken are likely to be incomplete and unsuccessful, since they do not include any actual military intervention except on sea and in the air. That seems to be the situation; we have to see how it develops. One thing is certain that if there is too much shilly-shallying and if America gives up now her defence of Korea, she may be driven to yield position after position until it is too late: at one point or another she will have to stand and face the necessity of drastic action even if it leads to war. Stalin also seems not to be ready to face at once the risk of a world war and, if so, Truman can turn the tables on him by constantly facing him with the onus of either taking that risk or yielding position after position to America. I think that is all that I can see at present; for the moment the situation is as grave as it can be.”¹

During his political exile in Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo spoke out his mind to visitors like Devdas Gandhi, Lajpat Rai, Purushothamdas Tandon, C.R. Das and other nationalists on national and international issues. He even sent an emissary when Sir Stafford Cripps visited India on his mission.

On the occasion of the independence of India on 15th of August 1947, Sri Aurobindo said:

“August 15th, 1947 is the birthday of free India. It marks for her the end of an old era, the beginning

of a new age. But we can also make it by our life and acts as a free nation an important date in a new age opening for the whole world, for the political, social, cultural and spiritual future of humanity.

“August 15th is my own birthday and it is naturally gratifying to me that it should have assumed this vast significance. I take this coincidence, not as a fortuitous accident, but as the sanction and seal of the Divine Force that guides my steps on the work with which I began life, the beginning of its full fruition. Indeed, on this day I can watch almost all the world-movements which I hoped to see fulfilled in my life-time, though then they looked like impracticable dreams, arriving at fruition or on their way to achievement. In all these movements free India may well play a large part and take a leading position.

“The first of these dreams was a revolutionary movement which would create a free and united India. India today is free but she has not achieved unity. For if it lasts, India may be seriously weakened, even crippled: civil strife may remain always possible, possible even a new invasion and foreign conquest. India's internal development and prosperity may be impeded, her position among the nations weakened, her destiny impaired or even frustrated. This must not be, the partition must go.

“Another dream was for the resurgence and liberation of the peoples of Asia and her return to her great role in the progress of human civilisation...

“The third dream was a world-union forming the outer basis of a fairer, brighter and nobler life for all mankind...

“Another dream, the spiritual gift of India to the world has already begun. India's spirituality is entering Europe and America in an ever increasing measure. That movement will grow; amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice.

“The final dream was a step in evolution which would raise man to a higher and larger

consciousness and begin the solution of the problems which have perplexed and vexed him since he first began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society. This is still a personal hope and an idea, an ideal which has begun to take hold both in India and in the West on forward-looking minds.

“Such is the content which I put into this date of India's liberation; whether or how far this hope will be justified depends upon the new and free India.”²

At least two separate efforts were made by nationalists inviting Sri Aurobindo during his Pondicherry phase to join active politics. One was by Joseph Baptista who offered Sri Aurobindo the editorship of an English daily, to be brought out from Bombay as the organ of a new political party under the leadership of Tilak and others. The other was Dr. Munje, a prominent Congress leader of Nagpur who met and talked to Sri Aurobindo and invited him to take up the Presidentship of the Indian National Congress. To Baptista, Sri Aurobindo said that he himself must be “internally armed and equipped for my work before I leave it.” Though he was in his ‘cave of Tapasya’, Sri Aurobindo declared that he “does not at all look down on politics or political action”. He went on to say:

“I have always laid a dominant stress and I now lay an entire stress on the spiritual life, but my idea of spirituality has nothing to do with ascetic withdrawal or contempt or disgust of secular things. There is nothing secular, all human activity is for me a thing to be included in a complete spiritual life, and the importance of politics at the present time is very great. But my line and intention of political activity would differ considerably from anything now current in the field... What preoccupies me now is the question what it (India) is going to do with its self-determination, how will it use its freedom, on what lines is it going to determine its future...?”³

Maintaining that he was a believer in the ideal of social democracy that Baptista's believed in, Sri Aurobindo said that it was “not in any of the form now current” and that he was not “altogether in love with the European kind.” He stated that “India having a spirit of her own and a governing

temperament and proper to her own civilization, should in politics as in everything else strike out her own original path and not stumble in the wake of Europe."⁴ Similarly, in a letter dated 30 August, 1920 to an admirer, Sri Aurobindo outlined conflicting views he had vis-a-vis the current Congress leadership, its philosophy and programme of action. As he concludes:

"The central reason, however, is that I am no longer first and foremost a politician but have definitely commenced another kind of work with a spiritual basis, a work of cultural and economic reconstruction of an almost revolutionary kind and am even making or at least supervising a sort of practical or laboratory experiment in that sense which needs all the attention and energy that I am spare."⁵

The same sentiment was voiced in Sri Aurobindo's letter to Barindra Kumar Ghose, his younger brother. In a message dated 1 December, 1922 Sri Aurobindo spelt out his approach in the following lines:

"I do not believe that the Mahatma's principle can be the true foundation or his programme the true means of bringing out the genuine freedom and greatness of India, her Swarājya and Samrājya. On the other hand, others would think that I was sticking to the school of Tilak nationalism. That also is not the fact ...

"I hold that school to be out of date. My own policy, if I were in the field, would be radically different in principle and programme from both, however, it might coincide in certain points."⁶

Those who are concerned about the grave crisis in India should read in particular two essays by Sri Aurobindo: 'The Unhindu Spirit of Caste Rigidity' and 'The Hindu Sabha'. For here, we find all the answers to two of the crucial problems in India, namely cultural Nationalism and Social Justice. In one, Sri Aurobindo affirms the baneful influence of caste stratification and the need for democratic power sharing, and in the other, he rejects the action of Hindu Nationalism in modern lines. "We do not understand Hindu nationalism as a possibility under modern conditions," he says. His answer is clear. Though largely Hindu, it has to be a nationalism that is plural, composite and encompass

all the cultural and religious stands of the land.

It is true that Sri Aurobindo spearheaded during the freedom struggle, the Bengali religious nationalism. Like Bipinchandra and Vivekananda, he believed in the cultural and civilizational missions of India to the world. But he had nothing to do with the Hindu Right. As Sri Aurobindo put it vividly: "Recover the source of all strength in yourselves and all else would be added to you, social soundness, intellectual pre-eminence, political freedom, the mastery of human thought." The primacy that he sought for was not for hegemony or dominance but what Partha Chatterji would aptly term as one of "the two forms of anti-colonial nationalism one outer and material, the other inner and spiritual". As Chatterji explains, the imitation of the coloniser by the subject nation exposes the nationalistic endeavour to the loss of "the distinctive spiritual essence of the national culture". Similarly, regarding the resolution of the Hindu-Muslim problem Sri Aurobindo had this to say:

"Hindu-Mahomedan unity cannot be effected by political adjustments or Congress... It must be sought deeper down in the heart and in the mind, for where the causes of disunion are, there the remedies must be sought. As a political question the Hindu-Mahomedan problem does not interest us at all, as a national problem it is of supreme importance."

It is clear therefore that though committed to a spiritual view of India and the world's future, a political understanding of national and international affairs was integral to Sri Aurobindo's thinking. In laying stress on the primacy of inner change, Sri Aurobindo did not exclude the importance of external action. He emphasized constantly on diversity, on federalism and confederalism, on self-determination and freedom as the key principles of human progress. Much before ethnicity became a watch-word, Sri Aurobindo saw the crucial role that language, culture and ideology played at the collective domain. In his message to Andhra University in 1948, for instance, Sri Aurobindo spoke of the importance of India's regional cultures. His analysis of the role of culture in providing a living unity to our collective living is absolutely masterly:

"In taking over the administration from Britain we had inevitably to follow the line of least resistance

and proceed on the basis of the artificial British-made provinces, at least for the time; this provisional arrangement now threatens to become permanent, at least in the main and some see an advantage in this permanence. For they think it will help the unification of the country and save us from the necessity of preserving regional sub-nations which in the past kept a country from an entire and thorough-going unification and uniformity. In a rigorous unification they see the only true union, a single nation with a standardised and uniform administration, language, literature, culture, art, education, all carried on through the agency of one national tongue. How far such a conception can be carried out in the future one cannot forecast, but at present it is obviously impracticable and it is doubtful if it is for India truly desirable.”⁷

At the international level, Sri Aurobindo spoke of the need to democratize the security council at the U.N., prophesized that Communism of the Bolshevik kind would not remain a monolith and that certain forms of it might even take the shape of a Cooperative Socialism more in keeping with the freedom of the individual being and the ultimate realization of human unity. This position of Sri Aurobindo is borne out by what he observed in a significant passage in 1949:

“Sri Aurobindo is in no way bound by the present world's institutions or current ideas whether in political, social or economic field; it is not necessary

for him either to approve or disapprove of them. He does not regard either capitalism or orthodox socialism as the right solution for the world's future; nor can he admit that the admission of private enterprise by itself make the society capitalistic, a socialistic economy can very well admit some amount of controlled or subordinated private enterprise as an aid to its own working or a partial convenience without ceasing to be socialistic. Sri Aurobindo has his own views as to how far Congress economy is intended to be truly socialistic or whether that is only a cover, but he does not care to express his views on that point at present.”⁸

These were some of the seed ideas and founding principles of Sri Aurobindo's political philosophy. Many of them have already been realized. Today liberation of India and Asia are an accomplished fact. And we are inexorably heading towards the actualization of the rest. As we celebrate India's 50th anniversary that coincides with Sri Aurobindo's birthday on 15 August, we shall do well to salute Sri Aurobindo and his political legacy for the building of modern India.

References:

1. Sri Aurobindo, On Himself (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1985), pp.416-417.
2. Ibid, pp.404-407.
3. Ibid, p.430.
4. Ibid, p.431.
5. Ibid, pp.432-433.
6. Ibid, p.438.
7. Ibid, p.409.
8. Ibid, p.413.

... There are deeper issues for India herself, since by following certain tempting directions she may conceivably become a nation like many others evolving an opulent industry and commerce, a powerful organisation of social and political life, an immense military strength, practising power-politics with a high degree of success, guarding and extending zealously her gains and her interests, dominating even a large part of the world, but in this apparently magnificent progression forfeiting its Swadharma, losing its soul. Then ancient India and her spirit might disappear altogether and we would have only one more nation like the others and that would be a real gain neither to the world nor to us. There is a question whether she may prosper more harmlessly in the outward life yet lose altogether her richly massed and firmly held spiritual experience and knowledge. It would be a tragic irony of fate if India were to throw away her spiritual heritage at the very moment when in the rest of the world there is more and more a turning towards her for spiritual help and a saving Light. This must not and will surely not happen; but it cannot be said that the danger is not there. There are indeed other numerous and difficult problems that face this country or will very soon face it. No doubt we will win through, but we must not disguise from ourselves the fact that after these long years of subjection and its cramping and impairing effects a great inner as well as outer liberation and change, a vast inner and outer progress is needed if we are to fulfil India's true destiny.

Sri Aurobindo
On Himself

Physical Education

The Mother

Of all the domains of human consciousness, the physical is the one most completely governed by method, order, discipline, procedure. The lack of plasticity and receptivity in matter has to be replaced there by an organisation of details, at once precise and comprehensive. In this organisation one must not forget, however, that all the domains of the being are interdependent and interpenetrating. Yet, even if a mental or vital implosion is to be expressed physically it must submit to an exact and precise procedure. That is why all education of the body, if it is to be effective, must be rigorous and detailed, foreseeing and methodical. That will be translated into habits: the body is a being of habits. But these should be controlled and disciplined, yet at the same time supple enough to adapt themselves to the circumstances and the needs of the growth and development of the being.

All education of the body should begin at the very birth and continue throughout life: it is never too soon to begin nor too late to continue.

The education of the body has three principal aspects: (1) control and discipline of functions, (2) a total, methodical and harmonious development of all the parts and movements of the body and (3) rectification of defects and deformities, if there are any.

It may be said that from the very first days, almost even from the first hours, of his life the child should undergo the first part of the programme in the matter of food, sleep, evacuation, etc. If the child, from the very beginning of his existence, takes to good habits, that will save him a good deal of trouble and inconvenience all the rest of his life. And also those who have the charge to watch over him during his first years will find their task very much easier.

Naturally, this education, if it is to be rational, enlightened and effective, must be based upon a minimum knowledge of the human body, its structure and its functions. As the child grows, he

must gradually acquire the habit of observing the functioning of his organs so that he may control them more and more, taking care that this functioning is normal and harmonious. In the matter of positions, postures and movements, bad habits are formed too early and too quickly that may have disastrous consequences for the whole life. Those who take the question of education seriously and wish to give their children all facilities to develop normally will easily find the necessary hints and instructions. The subject is being more and more carefully studied, and many books have appeared and are appearing which give all the information and guidance needed on the subject.

It is not possible for me to enter into details of the execution, for each problem is different from another and the solution should suit the individual case. The question of food has been studied by experts at length and with care; the dietary to help children in their growth is generally known and can be usefully followed. But it is very important to remember that the instinct of the body, so long as it remains intact, knows more than any theory. Thus, if you wish that your children should develop normally, you must not force them to eat food for which they have a disgust; for often the body possesses a sure instinct as to what is harmful to it, unless the child is particularly capricious.

The body in its normal state, that is to say, if there is no intervention of mental notions or vital impulses, knows also very well what is good and necessary for it; but this can happen effectively when the child has been taught with care and has learnt to distinguish desires from needs. He must develop a taste for food that is simple and healthy, substantial and appetising, without any useless complications. He must avoid, in his daily food, all that merely stuffs and causes heaviness; particularly he must be taught to eat according to his hunger, neither more nor less, and not to make food an occasion to satisfy his greed and gluttony.

From one's very childhood, one should know that one eats in order to give to the body strength and health, and not to enjoy the pleasures of the palate. The child should be given the food that suits his temperament, prepared with all care for hygiene and cleanliness, pleasant to the taste and yet very simple; it must contain all the chemical and dynamic elements that are necessary for the development and the balanced growth of all the parts of the body.

Since the child will be given only the food needed for maintaining health and supplying necessary energy, one must be very careful not to use food as a means of coercion or punishment. The habit of telling a child: "You were not a good boy, you will not be given your dessert, etc." is totally disastrous. You create in this way in his little consciousness the impression that food is given to him chiefly to satisfy his greed and not because it is indispensable for the good functioning of his body.

Another thing should be taught to a child from his early years: the taste for cleanliness and hygienic habits. But if you wish to form in the child this taste for cleanliness and respect for the rules of hygiene, you must take great care not to instill into him the fear of illness. Fear is the worst incentive for education and the surest way of attracting what is feared. Yet, while not fearing illness, one need have no inclination for it either. There is a current belief that brilliant minds have weak bodies. It is a delusion and has no basis. There was perhaps an epoch when a romantic and morbid taste for physical unbalance prevailed; but, fortunately, that tendency has disappeared. Nowadays a well-built, solid, muscular, strong and perfectly balanced body is appreciated at its true value. In any case, children should be taught to have respect for health, admiration for a healthy man whose body knows how to repel attacks of illness. Often a child pretends illness to escape a troublesome necessity, a work that does not interest him or even simply to move the heart of his parents and get them to satisfy some caprice. Children must also be taught, as early as possible, that this procedure is not worth the game and that they are not more interesting by being ill; rather the contrary. The weak have a tendency to believe that their weaknesses make them particularly interesting and to use this weakness

and even their illness, if necessary, as means of attracting towards them the attention and sympathy of persons who are around them and live with them. On no account should this pernicious tendency be encouraged. Children should be taught that to be ill is a sign of failing and inferiority, not of a virtue or a sacrifice.

That is why it would be good for the child, as soon as he is able to make use of his limbs, to devote some time daily to developing methodically and normally all the parts of his body. Every day some twenty or thirty minutes, preferably on waking if possible, will suffice to assure the good functioning and balanced growth of his muscles, preventing at the same time stiffening of the joints and of the spine that comes about much earlier than it is supposed. In the general programme of education for children, sports and outdoor games should be given a fair place; that, more than all the medicines of the world, will assure them good health. An hour's moving about in the sun does more to cure weakness or anemia than a whole armoury of tonics. My advice is that medicine should not be taken unless it is absolutely impossible to do otherwise; and this 'absolutely impossible' must be absolutely strict. Although there are, in this programme of physical culture, certain well-known general lines as to how best to develop the human body, still if the method is to be fully effective, each case should be considered individually, if possible with the help of a competent person, otherwise by consulting books on the subject that have already been or are being published.

But in any case, a child, whatever may be his activities, should have a sufficient number of hours for sleep. This number will vary with age. In the cradle, the baby should sleep, longer than it remains awake. The number of hours for sleep will diminish as the child grows. But till the adult age the number should not be less than eight hours and that in a quiet and well-ventilated place. The child should never be made to stay up uselessly. The hours before midnight are the best for resting the nerves. Even during the waking hours, relaxation is an indispensable thing for everyone who wishes to maintain the nervous balance. To know how to relax the muscles and the nerves is an art, which should be taught to children even when very young.

There are many parents who, on the contrary, force their children to constant activity. When the child remains quiet, they imagine he is ill. There are even parents who have the bad habit of making their child do household work at the expense of his rest and relaxation. Nothing is worse than that for a growing nervous system, which cannot stand the tension of too continuous an effort or an activity imposed upon it and not freely chosen. I hold against all current ideas and prejudices that it is not fair to demand services from a child, as if it were his duty to serve his parents. The contrary would be more true: certainly it is natural that parents should serve their children, at least take great care of them. It is only if the child chooses freely to work for the family and does the work as a play that the thing is admissible. And even then, one must be careful that it diminishes in no way the hours of rest absolutely necessary for the body to function properly.

I said that even from a young age children should be taught respect for physical health, strength and balance. The great importance of beauty must also be insisted upon. A young child should aspire for beauty, not for the sake of pleasing others or gaining fame, but for the love of beauty itself: for beauty is the ideal which physical life has to realise. In every human being there is the possibility of

establishing harmony among the different parts of the body and the different movements when the body is in action. The human body that undergoes a rational method of physical culture from the beginning of its existence can realise its own harmony and thus be fit to express beauty. When we shall speak of the other aspects of an integral education, we shall see what are the inner conditions to be fulfilled if this beauty is to be manifested one day.

Till now I have referred only to the education to be given to children; for, a good many bodily defects and malformations can be avoided by an enlightened physical education given at the proper time. But if, for some reason or other, this education has not been given during childhood and even in youth, it can begin at any age and followed throughout life. But the later one begins, the more one must be prepared to meet bad habits that have to be corrected, rigidities to be made supple, malformations to be rectified. And this preparatory work will need much patience and perseverance before one can start on a constructive programme for the harmonisation of the form and its movements. But if you hold within yourself the living ideal of beauty that is to be realised, you are sure to reach the goal you aim at.*

'Bulletin of Physical Education'.

Physical culture is the process of infusing consciousness into the cells of the body. One may not know it, but it is a fact. When we concentrate to make our muscles move according to our will, when we endeavour to make our limbs more supple, to give them an agility, or a force, or a resistance, or a plasticity which they do not naturally possess, we infuse into the cells of the body a consciousness which was not there before, thus turning it into an increasingly homogeneous and receptive instrument, which progresses in and by its activities. This is the primary importance of physical culture. Of course, that is not the only thing that brings consciousness into the body, but it is something which acts in an overall way, and this is rare. I have already told you several times that the artist infuses a very great consciousness into his hands, as the intellectual does into his brain. But these are, as it were, local phenomena, whereas the action of physical culture is more general. And when one sees the absolutely marvellous results of this culture, when one observes the extent to which the body is capable of perfecting itself, one understands how useful this can be to the action of the psychic being which has entered into this material substance. For naturally, when it is in possession of an organised and harmonised instrument which is full of strength and suppleness and possibilities, its task is greatly facilitated.

I do not say that people who practise physical culture necessarily do it for this purpose, because very few are aware of this result. But whether they are aware of it or not, this is the result. Moreover, if you are at all sensitive, when you observe the moving body of a person who has practised physical culture in a methodical and rational way, you see a light, a consciousness, a life, which is not there in others.

The Mother

On Thoughts and Aphorisms—Jnana II