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What is Spiritual Economics ?

'Economics' may be defined as the science of production and distribution of wealth which measures the condition of a nation or any other collectivity with regard to prosperity. Today we are faced with the question of an appropriate form of economics for the world. State socialism has failed us and Capitalism with its drive towards globalisation and liberalisation has not yielded the desired results. Market forces seem to rule the world at the cost of social equity or there is an attempt at social justice with a strangling of the economy. Is it merely the absence of the implementation of a system to its logical conclusion which causes failure or is there a need to find a new system which guarantees success? We are told that what we need is a human face to economics, one which will put the human being and his concerns as the centre, not simply the generation of wealth. There are yet other proponents of the ecological view of life who emphasise the need to realise that the human being is only one component of the web of life and until we realise that, humanity may soon cease to be, for the interconnectedness of life has not been acknowledged and acted upon. From the objective concept of market economics to social justice to the consideration of ecological realities, the concept of life for the human being has been widening. Admittedly, not much has changed in actuality but the change in the thought process itself augurs well for the future.

A further dimension is added when the true existence of the human being is seen as beyond though inclusive of his physical, vital and mental self, when the soul is seen as the central reality. The psychic being which is the aspect of the soul put forth in evolution grows and develops during and over lifetimes. The circumstances it responds to and creates are utilised for its progress. There is a similar psychic being for a nation or any other collectivity. Such a point of view would radically alter the perceptions on everything in society including economics.

As Sri Aurobindo said –

“A spiritualised society would live like its spiritual individuals, not in the ego but in the spirit, not as the collective ego, but as the collective soul Therefore a society which was even initially spiritualised would make the revealing and finding of the divine Self in man the whole first aim of all its activities, its education, its knowledge, its science, its ethics, its art, its economical and political structure. ... The aim of its economics would be not to create a huge engine of production, whether of the competitive or the co-operative kind, but to give to all men – not only to some but to all men each in his highest possible measure – the joy of work according to their own nature and free leisure to grow inwardly, as well as a simply rich and beautiful life for all.”

- Sri Aurobindo, *'The Human Cycle'*, pp. 239-241.

Hence economics would not simply be about Capital and Labour, industry and agriculture, employment and development. It would also be more than the relationship of humanity to its environment, it would be the means to create a society where every human being could reach his or her own total fulfilment of life on earth and ultimately fulfil the divine purpose of all existence.

Editor

The Infinitesimal Infinite

Sri Aurobindo

Out of a still Immensity all came!

These million universes were to it

The poor light-bubbles of a trivial game,

A fragile glimmer in the Infinite.

It could not find its soul in all that vast:

It drew itself into a little speck

Infinitesimal, ignobly cast

Out of earth's mud and slime strangely awake,—

A tiny plasm on a little globe

In the small system of a dwarflike sun,

A little life wearing the flesh for robe,

A little mind winged through wide space to run!

It lived, it knew, it saw its self sublime,

Deathless, outmeasuring Space, outlasting Time.

Collected Poems

Matter

Sri Aurobindo

He arrived at the knowledge that Matter is Brahman.

Taittiriya Upanishad

We have now the rational assurance that Life is neither an inexplicable dream nor an impossible evil that has yet become a dolorous fact, but a mighty pulsation of the divine and Existence. We see something of its foundation and its principle, we look upward to its high potentiality and ultimate divine out-flowering. But there is one principle below all the others which we have not yet sufficiently considered, the principle of Matter upon which Life stands as upon a pedestal or out of which it evolves like the form of a many-branching tree out of its encasing seed. The mind, life and body of man depend upon this physical principle, and if the out-flowering of Life is the result of Consciousness emerging into Mind, expanding, elevating itself in search of its own truth in the largeness of the supramental existence, yet it seems also to be conditioned by this case of body and by this foundation of Matter. The importance of the body is obvious; it is because he has developed or been given a body and brain capable of receiving and serving a progressive mental illumination that man has risen above the animal. Equally, it can only be by developing a body or at least a functioning of the physical instrument capable of receiving and serving a still higher illumination that he will rise above himself and realise, not merely in thought and in his internal being but in life, a perfectly divine manhood. Otherwise either the promise of Life is cancelled, its meaning annulled and earthly being can only realise Sachchidananda by abolishing itself, by shedding from it mind, life and body and returning to the pure Infinite, or else man is not the divine instrument, there is a destined limit to the consciously progressive power which distinguish him from all other terrestrial existences and as he has replaced them in the front of things, so another must eventually replace him and assume his heritage.

It seems indeed that the body is from the beginning the soul's great difficulty, its continual stumbling-

block and rock of offence. Therefore, the eager seeker of spiritual fulfilment has hurled his ban against the body and his world-disgust selects this world-principle above all other things as an especial object of loathing. The body is the obscure burden that he cannot bear; its obstinate material grossness is the obsession that drives him for deliverance to the life of the ascetic. To get rid of it he has even gone so far as to deny its existence and the reality of the material universe. Most of the religions have put their curse upon Matter and have made the refusal or the resigned temporary endurance of the physical life the test of religious truth and of spirituality. The older creeds, more patient, more broodingly profound, not touched with the torture and the feverish impatience of the soul under the burden of the Iron Age, did not make this formidable division; they acknowledged Earth the Mother and Heaven the Father and accorded to them an equal love and reverence; but their ancient mysteries are obscure and unfathomable to our gaze who, whether our view of things be materialistic or spiritual, are alike content to cut the Gordian knot of the problem of existence with one decisive blow and to accept an escape into an eternal bliss or an end in an eternal annihilation or an eternal quietude.

The quarrel does not really commence with our awakening to our spiritual possibilities; it begins from the appearance of life itself and its struggle to establish its activities and its permanent aggregations of living form against the force of inertia, against the force of inconscience, against the force of atomic disaggregation which are in the material principle the knot of the great Denial. Life is at constant war with Matter and the battle seems always to end in the apparent defeat of Life and in that collapse downward to the material principle which we call death. The discord deepens with the appearance of Mind; for Mind has its own quarrel with both Life and Matter: it is at constant war with their limitations, in constant subjection to and

revolt against the grossness and inertia of the one and the passions and sufferings of the other; and the battle seems to turn eventually, though not very surely, towards a partial and costly victory for the Mind in which it conquers, represses or even slays the vital cravings, impairs the physical force and disturbs the balance of the body in the interests of a greater mental activity and a higher moral being. It is in this struggle that the impatience of life, the disgust of the body and the recoil from both towards a pure mental and moral existence take their rise. When man awakens to an existence beyond Mind, Body and Life are condemned as the trinity of the world, the flesh and the devil. Mind too is banned as the source of all our malady; war is declared between the spirit and its instruments and the victory of the spiritual Inhabitant is sought for in an evasion from its narrow residence, a rejection of mind, life and body and a withdrawal into its own infinitudes. The world is a discord and we shall best solve its perplexities by carrying the principle of discord itself to its extreme possibility, a cutting away and a final severance.

But these defeats and victories are only apparent, this solution is not a solution but an escape from the problem. Life is not really defeated by Matter; it makes a compromise by using death for the continuance of life. Mind is not really victorious over Life and Matter, but has only achieved an imperfect development of some of its potentialities at the cost of others which are bound up with the unrealized or rejected possibilities of its better use of life and body. The individual soul has not conquered the lower triplicate, but only rejected their claim upon it and fled from the work which spirit had undertaken when it first cast itself into form of universe. The problem continues because the labour of the Divine in the universe continues, but without any satisfying solution of the problem or any victorious accomplishment of the labour. Therefore, since our own standpoint is that Sachchidananda is the beginning and the middle and the end and that struggle and discord cannot be eternal and fundamental principles in His being but by their very existence imply labour towards a perfect solution and a complete victory, we must seek that solution in a real victory of Life over Matter through the free and perfect use of body by Life, in a real victory of Mind over Life and Matter through a free and perfect use

of life-force and form by Mind and in a real victory of Spirit over the triplicity through a free and perfect occupation of mind, life and body by conscious spirit; in the view we have worked out this last conquest can alone make the others really possible. To the end, then, that we may see how these conquests can be at all or wholly possible, we must find out the reality of Matter just as, seeking the fundamental knowledge, we have found out the reality of Mind and Soul and Life.

In a certain sense Matter is unreal and non-existent; that is to say, our present knowledge, idea and experience of Matter is not its truth, but merely a phenomenon of particular relation between our senses and the all-existence in which we move. When Science discovers that Matter resolves itself into forms of Energy, it has hold of a universal and fundamental truth; and when philosophy discovers that Matter only exists as substantial appearance to the consciousness and that the one reality is Spirit or pure conscious Being, it has hold of a greater and complete, a still more fundamental truth. But still the question remains why Energy should take the form of Matter and not of mere force-currents or why that which is really Spirit should admit the phenomenon of Matter and not rest in states, velleities and joys of the spirit. This, it is said, is the work of Mind or else, since evidently Thought does not directly create or even perceive the material form of things, it is the work of Sense; the sense-mind creates the forms which it seems to perceive and the thought-mind works upon the forms which the sense-mind presents to it. But, evidently, the individual embodied mind is not the creator of the phenomenon of Matter; earth-existence cannot be the result of the human mind which is itself the result of earth-existence. If we say that the world exists only in our own minds, we express a non-fact and a confusion; for the material world existed before man was upon the earth and it will go on existing if man disappears from the earth or even if our individual mind abolishes itself in the Infinite. We must conclude then that there is a universal Mind, subconscious to us in the form of the universe or superconscious in its spirit, which has created that form for its habitation. And since the creator must have preceded and must exceed its creation, this really implies a superconscient Mind which by the instrumentality of a universal sense

creates' in itself the relation of form with form and constitutes the rhythm of the material universe. But this also is no complete solution; it tells us that matter is a creation of Consciousness, but it does not explain how Consciousness came to create Matter as the basis of its cosmic workings.

We shall understand better if we go back at once to the original principle of things. Existence is in its activity a Consciousness-Force which presents the workings of its force to its consciousness as forms of its own being. Since Force is only the action of one sole-existing Conscious-Being, its results can be nothing else but forms of that Conscious-Being. Substance of Matter, then, is only a form of Spirit. The appearance which this form of Spirit assumes to our senses is due to that dividing action of Mind from which we have been able to deduce consistently the whole phenomenon of the universe. We know now that Life is an action of Conscious-Force of which material forms are the result; Life involved in those forms, appearing in them first as inconscient force, evolves and brings back into manifestation as Mind the consciousness which is the real self of the force and which never ceased to exist in it even when unmanifest. We know also that Mind is an inferior power of the original conscious Knowledge or Supermind, a power to which Life acts as an instrumental energy; for, descending through Supermind, Consciousness or Chit represents itself as Mind, Force of consciousness or Tapas represents itself as Life. Mind, by its separation from its own higher reality in Supermind, gives Life the appearance of division and, by its farther involution in its own life-force, becomes subconscious in Life and thus gives the outward appearance of an inconscient force to its material workings. Therefore, the inconscience, the inertia, the atomic disaggregation of Matter must have their source in this all-dividing and self-involving action of Mind by which our universe came into being. As Mind is only a final action of Supermind in the descent towards creation and Life an action of Conscious-Force working in the conditions of the Ignorance created by this descent of Mind, so Matter, as we know it, is only the final form taken by conscious-being as the result of that working. Matter is substance of the one Conscious-Being phenomenally divided within itself by the action of a universal Mind²,—a division which the individual mind repeats and dwells in, but which does not

abrogate or at all diminish the unity of Spirit or the unity of Energy or the real unity of Matter.

But why this phenomenal and pragmatic division of an indivisible Existence? It is because Mind has to carry the principle of multiplicity to its extreme potential which can only be done by separateness and division. To do that it must, precipitating itself into Life to create forms for the Multiple, give to the universal principle of Being the appearance of a gross and material substance instead of a pure or subtle substance. It must, that is to say, give it the appearance of substance which offers itself to the contact of Mind as stable thing or object in an abiding multiplicity of objects and not of substance which offers itself to the contact of pure consciousness as something of its own eternal pure existence and reality or to subtle sense as a principle of plastic form freely expressive of the conscious being. The contact of mind with its objects creates what we call sense, but here it has to be an obscure externalised sense which must be assured of the reality of what it contacts. The descent of pure substance into material substance follows, then, inevitably on the descent of Sachchidananda through Supermind into mind and life. It is a necessary result of the will to make multiplicity of being and an awareness of things from separate centres of consciousness the first method of this lower experience of existence. If we go back to the spiritual basis of things substance in its utter purity resolves itself into pure conscious being, self-existent, inherently self-aware by identity, but not yet turning its consciousness upon itself as object. Supermind preserves this self-awareness by identity as its substance of self-knowledge and its light of self-creation, but for that creation presents Being to itself as the subject-object one and multiple of its own active consciousness. Being as object is held there in a supreme knowledge which can, by comprehension, see it both as an object of cognition within itself and subjectively as itself, but can also and simultaneously, by apprehension, project it as an object (or objects) of cognition within the circumference of its consciousness, not other than itself, part of its being, but a part (or parts) put away from itself, that is to say, from the centre of vision in which Being concentrates itself as the Knower, Witness or Purusha. We have seen that from this apprehending consciousness arises the movement

of Mind, the movement by which the individual knower regards a form of his own universal being as if other than he; but in the divine Mind there is immediately or rather simultaneously another movement or reverse side of the same movement, an act of union in being which heals this phenomenal division and prevents it from becoming even for a moment solely real to the knower. This act of conscious union is that which is represented otherwise in dividing Mind obtusely, ignorantly, quite externally as contact in consciousness between divided beings and separate objects: and with us this contact in divided consciousness is primarily represented by the principle of sense. On this basis of sense, on this contact of union subject to division, the action of the thought-mind founds itself and prepares for the return to a higher principle of union in which division is made subject to unity and subordinate. Substance, then, as we know it, material substance, is the form in which Mind acting through sense contacts the Conscious-Being of which it is itself a movement of knowledge.

But Mind by its very nature tends to know and sense substance of Conscious-Being, not in its unity or totality but by the principle of division. It sees it, as it were, in infinitesimal points which it associates to gather in order to arrive at a totality, and into these viewpoints and associations cosmic Mind throws itself and dwells in them. So dwelling, creative by its inherent force as the agent of Real-Idea, bound by its own nature to convert all its perceptions into energy of life, as the All-Existent converts all His self-aspectings into various energy of His creative Force of consciousness, cosmic Mind turns these, its multiple viewpoints of universal existence, into standpoints of universal Life; it turns them in Matter into forms of atomic being instinct with the life that forms them and governed by the mind and will that actuate the formation. At the same time, the atomic existences which it thus forms must by the very law of their being tend to associate themselves, to aggregate; and each of these aggregates also, instinct with the hidden life that forms and the hidden mind and will that actuate them, bears with it a fiction of a separated individual existence. Each such individual object or existence is supported, according as the mind in it is implicit or explicit,

unmanifest or manifest, by its mechanical ego of force, in which the will-to-be is dumb and imprisoned but none the less powerful, or by its self-aware mental ego in which the will-to-be is liberated, conscious, separately active.

Thus not any eternal and original law of eternal and original Matter, but the nature of the action of cosmic Mind is the cause of atomic existence. Matter is a creation; and for its creation the infinitesimal, an extreme fragmentation of the Infinite, was needed as the starting-point or basis. Ether may and does exist as an intangible, almost spiritual support of Matter, but as a phenomenon it does not seem to our present knowledge at least, to be materially detectable. Subdivide the visible aggregate or the formal atom into essential atoms, break it up into the most infinitesimal dust of being, we shall still, because of the nature of the Mind and Life that formed them, arrive at some utmost atomic existence, unstable perhaps but always reconstituting itself in the eternal flux of force, phenomenally, and not at a mere unatomic extension incapable of contents. Unatomic extension of substance, extension which is not an aggregation, coexistence otherwise than by distribution in space are realities of pure existence, pure substance; they are a knowledge of Supermind and a principle of its dynamism, not a creative concept of the dividing Mind, though Mind can become aware of them behind its workings. They are the reality underlying Matter, but not the phenomenon which we call Matter. Mind, Life, Matter itself can be one with that pure existence and conscious extension in their static reality, but not operate by that oneness in their dynamic action, self-perception and self-formation.

Therefore we arrive at this truth of Matter that there is a conceptive self-extension of being which works itself out in the universe as substance or object of consciousness and which cosmic Mind and Life in their creative action represent through atomic division and aggregation as the thing we call Matter. But this Matter, like Mind and Life, is still Being or Brahman in its self-creative action. It is a form of the force of conscious Being, a form given by Mind and realised by Life. It holds within it as its own reality consciousness concealed from itself, involved and absorbed in the result of its own self-formation and

therefore self-oblivious. And, however brute and void of sense it seems to us, it is yet, to the secret experience of the consciousness hidden within it, delight of being offering itself to this secret consciousness as object of sensation in order to tempt that hidden godhead out of its secrecy. Being manifest as substance, force of Being cast into form, into a figured self-representation of the secret self-consciousness, delight offering itself to its own consciousness as an object,—what is this but Sachchidananda? Matter is Sachchidananda represented to His own mental experience as a formal basis of objective knowledge, action and delight of existence.

'The Life Divine'

Notes :

1. Mind, as we know it, creates only in a relative and instrumental sense; it has an unlimited power of combination, but its creative motives and forms come to it from above; all created forms have their base in the Infinite above Mind, Life and Matter and are here represented, reconstructed—very usually misconstrued—from the infinitesimal. Their foundation is above, their branchings downwards, says the Rig Veda. The superconscious Mind of which we speak might rather be called an Overmind and inhabits in the hierarchical order of the powers of the Spirit, a zone directly dependent on the supramental consciousness.
2. Mind is here used in its widest sense including the operation of an Overmind power which is nearest to the supramental Truth-Consciousness and which is the first fountain of the creation of the Ignorance.

How does Sir James Jeans or any other scientist know that it was by a "mere accident" that life came into existence or that there is no life anywhere else in the universe or that life elsewhere must either be exactly the same as life here under the same conditions or not existent at all? These are mere mental speculations without any conclusiveness in them. Life can be an accident only if the whole world also is an accident—a thing created by Chance and governed by Chance. It is not worthwhile to waste time on this kind of speculation, for it is only the bubble of a moment.

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

In this development there are stages—the whole truth cannot be known till all are passed and the final stage is there. The stage in which you are is one in which the self is beginning to be realised, the self free from all embodiment and not depending on embodiment for its perpetual existence. It is therefore natural that you should feel the embodiment to be something quite subordinate and like the earth-life of Jeans almost accidental. It is because of this stage that the Mayavadins, taking it for final, thought the world to be an illusion. But this is only a stage of the journey. Beyond this Self which is static, separate, formless, there is a greater Consciousness in which the Silence and the Cosmic Activity are united but in another knowledge than the walled-in ignorance of the embodied human being. This Self is only one aspect of the Divine Reality. It is when one gets to that greater Consciousness that cosmic existence and form and life and mind no longer appear to be an accident but find their significance. Even there are two stages, the overmental and the supramental, and it is not till one gets to the last that the full truth of existence can become entirely real to the consciousness. Observe what you experience and know that it has its value and is indispensable as a stage, but do not take the experience of a stage for the final knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo
Letters on Yoga

Growing Demands on the Contemporary Teacher

Kireet Joshi

All eyes seem to be turning on education. The contemporary civilization is science-based, and during the recent times, there has been an increasing growth of democracy. There is also today an unprecedented explosion of information and unprecedented speed of communication. As a result, increasing masses of the human race are getting seized by the need to grow in awareness and knowledge and to determine their future by conscious and deliberate participation in the process of development. The goal of education for all has gained universal acceptance. In every discipline educational activities are being designed to upgrade knowledge and to update skills. Early childhood education is being increasingly emphasized; programmes are being envisaged and implemented to encourage involvement of adults in helping young children overcome socio-economic or socio-cultural handicaps and prepare themselves for school life. School education is being intensified and diversified. Higher education and research are undergoing momentous changes as a result of unparalleled width and depth of contemporary quest. Adult education and lifelong education are being advocated with an increasing insistence; bridges between the world of education and the world of work are being built, and higher targets are being pursued to help people broaden their cultural background, enhance their potential and talents, and develop their personalities. The ideal of learning society is being increasingly acknowledged.

Two global problems have, in particular, come to underline the importance of education and to influence profoundly the objectives of education. First is the problem of peace. At a time when the advancing knowledge has the potentiality to serve the highest aims of civilization, man seems to be drifting in a direction that might bring about a fatal disaster. Every passing day shows up the danger threatening peace. Tensions of all kinds are becoming more marked. The arms race which swallows up enormous sums of money which would be enough to eradicate poverty and restore human

dignity to the hundreds of millions of inhabitants of the developing countries, runs directly to counter the efforts made to establish a new world of justice, equality and unity. More than ever, there is a felt need to build urgently and imperatively the defences of peace in the minds and hearts of men. And, it is increasingly realized that education, suitably designed, can prove to be the most effective means of building these defences.

The second problem is that of development. At a time when the world is shrinking, the gulf between the rich and the poor is widening. The sharp disparities of development and asymmetrical relations among nations are impelling disadvantaged countries to seek unattainable goals. The resulting vicious circle of dilemmas and predicaments can be broken, it seems, only if it is realized that development like peace is indivisible and that not by competition and exploitation but by mutual help and co-operation can the goals of development be realized. But in order that this realization comes to be shared and practised, increasingly and effectively, there must come about a change in attitudes and a change in the very working of the human consciousness. And this task can best be accomplished, it is being admitted increasingly, by education that does not merely instruct but which also illumines and transforms the ordinary springs of thought and action.

Several other tendencies and trends, too, are at work. There is today a great quest all over the world towards the synthesis of knowledge and synthesis of culture. Ancient knowledge is being recovered in the context of modern knowledge. Humanities, sciences and technologies are being brought closer to each other. The need to synthesize the pursuits of ethics and aesthetics is being felt more and more imperatively. And, there is a growing aspiration to build bridges between science and spirituality.

It is being affirmed more and more insistently that what we need today is man-making education. It is pointed out that our present educational system

is subject-oriented and book-oriented and that books and subjects have come to occupy in our thinking and in our educational practice such an exclusive place that the learner and his personality receive little attention. What is, therefore, proposed is the development of the powers and faculties of human personality, particularly those of concentrated thought and will. Detailed and comprehensive programmes of education are being formulated, the chief aim of which is the development of integral personality.

It is in this context that a special stress is being laid on the process of self-learning, learning to learn, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to become. New methods of teaching and learning are being advocated which place the learner in the centre of the educational process.

At no stage of human history was the drive towards totality and all-comprehensiveness so imperative as it is today. For, at no stage was civilization so multidimensional as it is today. The wheels of the world are spinning so fast today that we are all obliged to overpass our limitations continuously and interminably. The framework of our life is under constant pressure of change. The scientist of today runs the risk of becoming an obscurantist of tomorrow unless he accomplishes some kind of a leap in the meantime. Nor can the scientist of today ignore the demands of ethics and aesthetics, unless he prefers to become obsolete in the march of time. Some generality or some specialization,

which were valid and useful till yesterday, are increasingly losing their relevance, and we are proceeding towards the future where a peculiar combination of wide comprehensiveness and effective specialization will become imperative, and they will have to be fused together.

This need is further reinforced by the crisis of which we hear so insistently. This crisis seems to have arisen from the fact that while the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development, in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way. A structure of external life has been raised up. This structure is increasingly becoming so huge and complex that it cannot be managed by our limited capacities. The system of civilization created by man has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilize and manage. While the external man has grown, the internal man remains neglected. The resulting crisis demands, therefore, the development of the inner man and organized integration of the internal and external man. If education has to become an instrument of meeting this crisis, its aim should be to cultivate, sharpen and transform the faculties and powers of personality leading towards their increasing integration and perfection.

It is against this background that the contemporary teacher finds himself under a growing pressure to enlarge his functions and to prepare himself for an increasingly difficult role.

Personality Traits of a Successful Teacher

1. Complete self-control not only to the extent of not showing any anger, but remaining absolutely quiet and undisturbed under all circumstances.
2. In the matter of self-confidence, must also have a sense of the relativity of his importance. Above all, must have the knowledge that the teacher himself must always progress if he wants his students to progress, must not remain satisfied either with what he is or with what he knows.
3. Must not have any sense of essential superiority over his students nor preference or attachment whatsoever for one or another.
4. Must know that all are equal spiritually and instead of mere tolerance must have a global comprehension or understanding.
5. "The business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material." (Sri Aurobindo, The Human Cycle)

The Mother
On Education

Introduction to the Aspects of the Constitution of India

Some Aurobindonian Perspectives

Kosha Shah

...Sri Aurobindo Research Foundation has been formed to articulate and develop the social, political, economic and educational thought of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and apply it to the important issues of the day. The core of this work is to establish a link between an inner spiritual life and an outer worldly life. More directly, the manifestation of spirituality in the workings of our collective life. It has been vastly presumed that spirituality is something we hold in our private lives and that the 'real' world has its own 'practical' approach which we must conform to if we wish to succeed, or for that matter even merely survive.

Spirituality is often seen as synonymous with religion or morality and ethics. But religion is frequently about intellectual dogmas, forms and ceremonies, some fixed and rigid moral code or some religio-political or religio-social system. Whereas spirituality, to quote Sri Aurobindo, is –

“... not a high intellectuality, not idealism, not an ethical turn of mind or moral purity and austerity, not religiosity or an ardent and exalted emotional fervour, not even a compound of all these excellent things ... Spirituality is in its essence an awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self, soul which is other than our mind, life and body, an inner aspiration ... to enter into contact with the greater Reality beyond and pervading the universe which inhabits also our own being ... a transformation of our whole being as a result of the aspiration ... a growth or waking into a new becoming or new being, a new self, a new nature.”

The Life Divine Pg. 857

If spirituality is so deep and vast an approach and contained within every religion, how can it exclude life itself? How can it limit itself to the seeking of 'moksha' and 'nirvana' and a 'heaven' which are focused only on life beyond earthly existence and excluding the perfection of life on earth? India

has long suffered the consequences of the Illusionist philosophies from within the folds of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. Life on earth has been neglected and seen as a burden to be borne, until after several lifetimes, we reach a stage when we need not take up a human existence any more. We would then merge in the Brahman or dissolve into the Non-Being. The human body has been seen simply as a shell for the soul which hinders its spiritual progress. The question as to why the soul came into being at all remains then unanswered if we take the premise that the ultimate aim is to again go out of Existence.

But if we go back to the Vedas, we will find that terrestrial life was given equal importance as the life beyond and its spiritualisation a necessity. It was only in the post-Vedic times that one particular aspect of spirituality was given a greater emphasis. But as this idea of the negation of life on earth on the basis of Illusionism came to dominate Indian life and philosophy, the influence of true spirituality on society weakened. And religion, not spirituality, was relegated its place in temples, ashrams, ceremonies and rituals.

In modern times, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda articulated the first decisive step towards the true spiritual approach to life which was not simply religious. One of its aims was the regeneration of India with a spiritual foundation. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother took this further and made the spiritual approach integral saying, “All life is Yoga”, including in it the physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual aspects of the human being and their transformation as central to the Integral Yoga. They spoke of evolution on earth even beyond the human species thus making clear the reason for the existence of the soul. Sri Aurobindo has written extensively on Indian society in his book *The Foundations of Indian Culture*. The other books of his which are pertinent to the subject of this seminar are *The*

Human Cycle and *The Ideal of Human Unity and War and Self-Determination*. *The Human Cycle* deals with the history of the stages of social evolution leading ultimately to a spiritualised society. It speaks about the soul of a nation, its similarity to the human soul and how it evolves over a period of time. *The Ideal of Human Unity* is about political evolution in the national and international context which shows the way towards a world union whose base will not simply be trade, commerce and other political or economic exigencies but will be based upon the true relationship between nations and their inner realities. In both these books he has outlined the possibilities available to us to achieve these goals. More, he has said that this collective evolution is inevitable in the course of the evolution of Nature and will be achieved regardless of whether humanity consciously co-operates or not. But if humanity—even nations—consciously work towards the goal, much pain and suffering can be avoided. That choice lies within each of us and a short-sightedness on our part delays the coming into existence of a new society, a new world.

India's truth lies in spirituality and its manifestation in life. But over the centuries she has divorced the two creating an artificial schism. And then she has looked to the West for answers to the problems which have been self-created. How can this gap be bridged? How can we go from the Age of Reason to a true Subjective Age and towards a spiritualised society? Today it is the Constitution of a country which determines the direction of public life and shapes the ideals of a society. What are the ideals that we, as a nation, should live by and embody in our Constitution? What should be our relationship with other nations? These are some of the questions we hope to address during this seminar. We cannot claim, of course, that these are the views that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother would have held given the circumstances today.

But this is a humble attempt to find out what they could possibly be on the basis of what They have said.

There are many eminent speakers today—social and political thinkers and philosophers—who have studied the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and have put their views in the context of the Constitution of India. There have been many other seminars before this one which have taken up different aspects of the Constitution. But the emphasis of this Seminar is how to bring in the spiritual aspect within the context of our Constitution—in a way, to redefine 'Secularism' in the Indian context. It is possible that we may not be able to come to a definite consensus at the end of these two days. But it is our hope that this beginning will have paved the way for others to make a similar connection between the so-called 'esoteric' and the so-called 'mundane'. 'So-called' because in reality they are not separate, it is simply an error in perception. I quote Sri Aurobindo again—

"Politics, society, economy are in the first form of human life simply an arrangement by which men collectively can live, produce, satisfy their desires, enjoy, progress in bodily, vital and mental efficiency; but the spiritual aim makes them more than this, first, a framework of life within which man can seek for and grow into his real self and divinity, secondly, an increasing embodiment of the divine law of being in life, thirdly, a collective advance towards the light, power, peace, unity, harmony of the diviner nature of humanity which the race is trying to evolve. This and nothing more but nothing less, this in all its potentialities, is what we mean by a spiritual culture and the application of spirituality to life."

The Foundations of Indian Culture Pg. 430

From the introduction to the theme of the Seminar on Aspects of the Constitution of India—Some Aurobindonian Perspectives held on 28-29 November 1998 at Baroda

One must not confuse a religious teaching and a spiritual teaching. Religious teaching belongs to the past and stops all progress, spiritual teaching is the teaching of the future. It enlightens the consciousness and prepares it for the future realisation. A spiritual teaching is above religions and strives towards a total truth. It teaches us to come into direct contact with the Divine.

The Mother
Mother's Agenda, Vol. 13

Critical Evaluation of Marx's Theory of Class-Struggle and International Socialism

Kishor Gandhi

1. Critique of Marx's Theory of Class—Struggle as the Lever of Social Change

I have already explained before that according to Marx social change or development at all stages of history occur by the dialectical process of class-struggle. This central idea of his theory is contained in the famous sentence occurring in his *Communist Manifesto*: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class-struggle." He maintains that at all stages of human history the productive system gets divided into two antagonistic classes because of their conflicting economic interests, and all great developments in history occur as a result of the struggle between them. This class-struggle therefore is the lever of all historical or social change. The present capitalist period is the penultimate stage because it brings about the last conflict, the proletariat revolution to overthrow the capitalists, after which the final perfect socialist stage will arrive, in which there will be no classes and therefore all class-conflict will end.

In my criticism of Marx's dialectical and historical materialism the main point that I have stressed is that it is extremely one-sided, in the sense that it takes one element of the total complex social system which has only a temporary and relative importance and, by over-exaggerating its role, makes it the sole or exclusive cause or determinant of social change at all times. The same criticism applies to his theory of class-struggle.

In all human societies at all times classes have existed, but the underlying cause of all these class-divisions was not always divergent economic interests, as Marx asserts, though the economic interests have been a factor of varying importance everywhere. In fact non-economic factors like religion, race, language and culture have often overridden the importance of the economic interest in the formation of class-divisions. The most important example which can be cited to prove this point is the Chaturvarna system in ancient India.

But it is true also to a sufficient degree of all early Asiatic and European societies.

Also the assertion of Marx that class-struggle is the only cause of all social change is not invariably true. Class-struggle has often played a dominant role in social change but it has not been the only cause operating at all times. And even when class-conflict is the dominant cause, it is not always due to the disparity of economic interests only. An impartial study of history reveals that in all spheres of social life—not only economic but also political, religious, cultural, linguistic and racial—there is often a conflict, which divides people into opposing camps. To ignore this and to assert that the underlying cause of all these conflicts in different spheres is always the conflict of economic interests and that social change or development occurs at all times due to it only is an extreme exaggeration which does not stand the scrutiny of historical evidence.

Moreover, the role of conflict in social development is over-exaggerated by Marx. Conflict in human life is the result of man's aggressive vital-egoistic nature which more or less predominates at all stages of social evolution, but it is not the only factor, for co-operation and mutual aid have also played an important part in the relations between the classes and the upward evolution of society. In Sri Aurobindo's view, social life and development are governed by both these motives—conflict and co-operation—and for a right view of social evolution due importance must be given to both and not exclusively to conflict as Marx does. To quote Sri Aurobindo's own words:

"Human life is moved by two equally powerful impulses... it works by strife, but also by mutual assistance and united effort; it uses two diverse convergent forms of action, two motives which seem to be contradictory but are in fact always coexistent, competitive endeavour and co-operative endeavour. It is from this character of the dynamism of life that

the whole structure of human society has come into being, and it is upon the sustained and vigorous action of this dynamism that the continuance, energy and growth of all human societies depends.”²

Further, while admitting the due role of conflict in social life and development we have to note that the conflict is not always between classes. In fact, the more important conflict is between the individual and the society. Marx in his writings gives little importance to man as an individual and over-emphasises the importance of the class and that too of the economic class only. This is because he attaches great value to economic production as the primary necessity of human life. As production is a collective action, it is the collective, i.e. the class composed of individuals whose economic conditions are similar, that is the unit of society for Marx. The individual apart from the class to which he belongs by similar economic occupation is of no significance to him. But this view of Marx is again an over-exaggeration because, though conflict between different varieties of classes (not economic classes alone) has always been there in social life, the more significant conflict is between the individual and the society or the community to which he belongs. As Prof. Carew Hunt points out:

“Marx’s thesis that all conflict among men arises from the class-struggle, albeit of tactical value and calculated to convince the masses that their misfortunes are attributed to the capitalist system and will disappear with the victory of the proletariat, is nonetheless fallacious. For the supreme source of conflict is the inevitable opposition between the claims of the individual and those of the society, a conflict which is not reducible to class-struggle and cannot be dialectically resolved because it is a part of the unchanging human situation.”³

It is this perpetual conflict between the claims of the individual and the claims of the society that has created the two opposing ideals of individualism and collectivism. As Sri Aurobindo observes:

“In the conflict of the claims of society with the claims of the individual two ideal and absolute solutions confront one another. There is the demand of the group that the individual should subordinate himself more or less completely or

even lose his independent existence in the community, the smaller must be immolated or self-offered to the larger unit... The ideal and absolute solution from the individual’s standpoint would be a society that existed not for itself, for its all-overriding collective purpose, but for the good of the individual and his fulfilment, for the greater and more perfect life of its members.”⁴

It is this conflict between the individual and the society that is the more significant cause of social change and development than the conflict of classes within the society. It is so very significant that in Sri Aurobindo’s view it lies “at the very roots of human civilisation”⁵ and persists at all stages of human evolution in one form or another.

Further, Marx’s idea that all members of a class have a solidarity and unity of purpose necessary for struggle against the opposing class with which its interests are in conflict is not wholly true but an over-simplification like all the other ideas of his theory. In conflict between the two classes, each class is also riven by internal dissensions more or less acute. As Popper in his book *The Open Society and its Enemies* observes:

“Indeed, the divergence of interest within the ruling and the ruled classes goes so far that Marx’s theory of classes must be considered as a dangerous over-simplification, even if we admit that the issue between the rich and the poor is always of fundamental importance. One of the great themes of mediaeval history, the fight between popes and emperors, is an example of dissension within the ruling class. It would be probably false to interpret this quarrel as one between exploiter and exploited.”⁶

So Marx’s theory that common economic interests make working-men an exclusive social class, and that they conflict with the opposite economic interests of the capitalist class is no more than an unverified assumption. Hendrik de Man who rejects this theory points out: “There is no common bond of economic interest that completely unites the workers and puts them persistently in opposition to property owners. On the contrary, economic considerations often create divisions among wage-earners and unite them with their

employers. As vendors of labour, working-men are competitors; they compete individually among themselves for the same jobs... Economic motives lead workers to forsake their fellows. They aspire to rise to the ranks of petty bourgeoisie, and so they become patriotic. When, on the other hand, they co-operate in an aggressive movement against capitalism they do so under the impulsion of economic conditions rather than from their common moral revulsion against a system that seems to them to be unjust and ugly.”⁷

Because of this, in actual fact, neither the capitalists nor the workers form themselves into solid compact classes to carry on a united struggle between them, as Marx asserts. Both are riven by internal sectional dissensions within them which often drive them to make a common cause with the opposing class against their own class members. The divisions between the skilled and unskilled or the white and coloured workers of the same industry as also between the workers of different industries clearly expose the myth of workers’ solidarity.

2. Critique Of Marx’s Prophecy of International Socialism

Marx not only maintained that all the workers of a country will develop a common class-consciousness to fight against the capitalists of the same country but that eventually workers of all countries will unite together to fight jointly against capitalism all over the world. His *Communist Manifesto* ends with a stirring call to all the workers of the world to rise in a mighty revolution to destroy capitalism from every country: “The workers have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workers of the world, unite!”

His contention is that the nationalist sentiment of patriotism, which usually unites all the members of a nation overriding all their class-differences, will not eventually be able to stand in the way of bringing together the working classes of all nations because the economic class-interest, which divides people into rich and poor, is the strongest of all bonds and it will eventually overcome all other differences of race, religion and nationality and turn the proletariat struggle into an international movement to overthrow capitalism from every part of the world.

That this prophecy of Marx has been patently

disproved by the actual events that followed is clearly evident from the way in which the workers of each belligerent country in the two World Wars gave full support to their national governments in complete disregard of their much talked-of international solidarity to fight against world-capitalism. What happened during the two World Wars has fully exposed the fallacy of Marx’s idea because the nationalist sentiment of patriotism of the workers proved to be stronger than their economic class-interest and they joined with the capitalist governments of their own country to fight against the workers of other countries.

Some of the staunchest socialist followers of Marx of the pre-war period were so much shaken by this abandonment of “class-consciousness” by the workers of different countries that they were compelled either to modify or reject altogether Marx’s theory of international socialism. Here I may refer to the Belgian writer Hendrik de Man who was an eminent protagonist of Marxism in Belgium in the pre-war period but afterwards was forced to reject orthodox Marxism because of his own experience and observation of working-class movement during the war. Writing about this change in H. de Man, F. W. Cocker observes:

“That experience ‘rubbed the corners off’ his socialist orthodoxy, by showing him that working-men have no overwhelming sense of solidarity of interest or opinion with other working-men who make up some world-wide or nation-wide class of workers... The outbreak of the World War... shook his Marxist faith to its foundations. How could millions of socialists abandon their alleged working-men’s class consciousness as well as their duty to take up arms against their fellows? The answer is that Marxism supplied them with no idealistic appeal strong enough to overcome... Their somewhat broader sentiments of national solidarity.”⁸ In H. de Man’s own words: “Marxism failed to disclose to socialists the way that could lead them to fulfil their duty to humanity.”⁹

Sri Aurobindo also repeatedly makes the same criticism of Marx’s prophecy that workers of different countries will eventually join together to form an international movement to fight against the capitalists. I quote here only one passage from *The Ideal of Human Unity*:

“... this socialistic... internationalism was recently put to the test, the fiery test of the European war, and thus tried, was found sadly wanting. In every country, the Socialist party shed its internationalist promise with the greatest ease and lightness, German socialism, the protagonist of the idea, massively leading the way in this formidable abjuration... Russian socialism, it may be said, has, at least in its extremer form, shown a stronger root of internationalist feeling. But what it has actually attempted to accomplish is a development of Labour rule on the basis of a purified nationalism, non-aggressive except for revolutionary purposes and self-contained, and not on the large international idea. In any case, the actual results of the Russian attempt show only up to the present a failure of the idea to acquire the vital strength and efficiency which would justify it to life; it is possible to use them much more as a telling argument against internationalism than a justification of its truth or at least of its applicability in the present stage of human progress.”¹⁰

The most convincing proof of the invalidity of Marx's doctrine of class-struggle inevitably turning into an international movement is provided by what happened in Russia itself after the Russian revolution of 1917. Lenin, who was the most eminent follower of Marx and who was mainly responsible for the successful enthronement of Marxist socialism in Russia after the revolution and for the building up of the communist state there, was himself initially an ardent protagonist of international socialism; but even during his lifetime, and more so after his death, a serious cleavage occurred on this issue among the most prominent leaders of the Communist Party, some of whom rejected it and favoured the policy of national socialism. The central figure in this total reversal was Lenin's successor Stalin who championed the principle of “Socialism in one country”. This was officially ratified in December 1925 by the Fourteenth Congress of the Communist Party which endorsed Stalin's new policy. After this endorsement the movement of international socialism was abandoned and socialism in one country, even if surrounded by other capitalist countries in the world, became the official policy of the Communist Party of Russia. Subsequent events in Russia during Krushchev's

leadership and later on have further consolidated Stalin's policy, and now not only Russia but all other communist countries including China have accepted the policy of co-existence with the capitalist states. And the movement of international socialism has suffered a further setback from the fact that even those communist countries which had formed a bloc to fight against capitalist countries have themselves split, each developing its own brand of socialism. Witness the most significant break up of the monolithic combination of the two most powerful and largest communist countries—Russia and China.

It is thus evident that Marx's prophecy that by an inexorable scientific law of social evolution, of which class-struggle is the key-factor, the workers of all nations will join hands to fight against and vanquish the capitalists of all countries, has proved to be a delusion, and not only a large number of his staunch doctrinal followers everywhere have rejected it but even in Russia, the homeland of proletariat revolution where it succeeded in establishing a communist state following Marx's ideology, the Communist Party has been officially compelled to move away from it as an impracticable chimera in the changed world-conditions.

It may be added here that the most damaging blow to Marx's doctrine has been dealt not only by this shattering of his vain dream of world-socialism but by what is happening in Russia—the citadel of Marxist socialism—in recent years under the leadership of M. Gorbachev. Not only has he consolidated the policy of communist countries co-existing with the capitalist ones in a harmonious world-order but, moving daringly forward, he has radically altered Russia's communist economic system by introducing in it several features of capitalism. This most amazing phenomenon is not confined to Gorbachev's Russia alone but has also spread to other communist countries like China and others in Eastern Europe which had so far strictly adhered to orthodox Marxist communism. They have now been compelled to introduce important elements of capitalist economy in their state policy because of very serious drawbacks of the communist system. Thus not only Marx's dream of socialism conquering the world in accordance with his so-called scientific interpretation of social

change has vanished like a mirage but even socialism itself is rapidly disintegrating in countries which had adhered to it as the surest path to the great millennium ushering in the ultimate stage of perfect society. There can be no more telling proof of the bankruptcy of Marxist doctrine than its utter failure in so many countries in the world which had zealously accepted and rigorously practiced it as their inviolable gospel, and their gradual acceptance of capitalist economy which they had so far rejected as the source of all human misery and evil and treated it with contempt and hostility. History seems to be repeating itself; the Marxist socialists who were aspiring for the victory of socialism all over the world are now gradually admitting capitalism in their own countries. Capitalism, instead of vanishing from the world, not only still thrives but is making serious inroads in socialist countries themselves. Marx has proved to be a false prophet. Significantly, the same phenomenon is occurring in the capitalistic countries also. They too are introducing increasingly more and more socialistic policies in their systems. Both are becoming mixed economies so that there is no such thing now as exclusive capitalism facing exclusive communism locked in a somber struggle to destroy each other, as Marx predicted that it must happen.

3. Critique of Marx's Theory of Economic Exploitation

Apart from this historical disproof of Marx's theory of class-struggle, its chief defect is his contention that economic inequality is the sole underlying cause of all exploitation and oppression in social life. I have explained before that, according to him, at all stages of social or historical evolution, from the most primitive to the modern capitalist, society gets divided into two antagonist classes, viz., the producers who go on becoming richer and fewer and the workers who become poorer and more numerous, and that the former invariably oppress and exploit the latter. Marx asserts that this disparity of wealth is the basic cause of all oppression, exploitation, injustice and misery in human society all through history. And, therefore, when economic disparity is removed by the final revolution all the evils of society will disappear and in the classless socialist millennium that will follow all men will live in complete peace, happiness and harmony in a spirit of true fraternity.

This assertion of Marx again, like so many of his other assertions, is so obviously fallacious that one is compelled to say that it clearly betrays his extremely poor knowledge of human nature. Oppression and exploitation, in a more or less severe degree, have been a universal and constant phenomenon in the relations between individuals, classes and nations, but they have other and often deeper roots than mere divergent economic interest. And they can be as formidable and tyrannical in a classless socialist society as in any other. Russia itself after the revolution, especially during Stalin's regime, is a patent example of the worst kind of despotism and tyrannical oppression unparalleled in human history. Its only equivalent in modern times is Germany during Hitler's time. Certainly, this was not due only to the disparity of wealth between the rich and poor in these countries.

Wealth and power it brings, is no doubt one of the chief causes of oppression, exploitation and injustice in human relations. But surely it is not their only cause. Nor is it the underlying cause of all other types of oppression and exploitation. In ancient and medieval periods the upper classes who dominated and exploited the lower classes were not necessarily the wealthier sections of the society. Aristocracy in many societies in the East and the West has not always been plutocracy. At different periods of history different classes—priestly, military, racial, as well as economic—have wielded enormous oppressive power over large sections of society. The modern period in which the rich capitalists openly or covertly rule the whole social order and oppress and exploit all other sections of society is only a passing phase in history and its characteristic feature cannot be extended to cover the whole range of human history, as Marx does in his theory of historical materialism. I have already quoted one passage from Sri Aurobindo's *The Ideal of Human Unity* in which he has very vividly emphasised this point.¹¹ So I need not repeat it here.

In Sri Aurobindo's view, the root-cause of all oppression, exploitation, tyranny and injustice is the ego,—especially the vital ego,—in man, class or nation, and money or wealth is only one of the means through which it manifests its propensities. Power, possession, expansion, enjoyment are the

basic tendencies of man's vital egoistic nature and in pursuing them on an ever-extending scale it pays scant regard to moral rules of justice, honesty and fair-play. Self-aggrandisement even at the cost of others is its very nature and it is this which impels it to commit overt or covert aggression and exploitation. But it is not only for amassing more and more wealth that it does so: for the vital nature of man has other and often more powerful urges than merely seeking for wealth. In every sphere of life,—domestic, religious, racial, cultural,—the vital nature of man has exhibited its aggressive and expansionist propensities resulting in injustice, oppression, tyranny and often inhuman cruelty. Surely, it is superior power that enables the vital ego to exploit and oppress others, but to say that it is only wealth that gives superior power, as Marx does, is to betray a very poor knowledge of the psychology of human nature.

Since Marx believes that in equal distribution of property in the capitalist system is the sole cause of all injustice and oppression in modern society, he is fully convinced that after the overthrow of capitalism, when the classless socialist society arrives in which there will be an equal distribution of wealth abolishing all distinctions between the rich and the poor, all exploitation, oppression, domination, antagonism and injustice will automatically disappear from every sphere of life, and peace, harmony and the spirit of brotherhood will perpetually prevail. But, as I have just explained, this is a naive assumption, for even in a classless socialist society, if by an artificial state compulsion the exploitation of the poor by the rich is suppressed, the vital-egoistic nature of man will manifest its exploitative tendencies in other equally and probably more unjust and injurious forms. To say that in a socialist society no State will be necessary,—for, according to Marx, the political State is only an instrument in the hands of the capitalist class to exploit the working class,—because economic equality will remove all conflict and disharmony from it, is an extremely facile assumption betraying an utter ignorance of human nature. It is strange that Marx, though he is undoubtedly a great philosopher, is so blind in his understanding of the root causes of human conduct. He assumes that a mere change of the economic system from the capitalist to the socialist

is by itself sufficient to elevate the moral nature of man, for then he will cease to be egoistic and live in peace and harmony with his fellow-men in a spirit of love and brotherhood. But the truth, according to Sri Aurobindo, is the other way round. For it is not a change in external (economic or other) conditions of life that will change the nature of man; rather it is only a radical change of man's nature that can change the external conditions of his life. An increasing number of Marx's own followers now more and more admit this view from their own experience in the socialist movement. I quote here a statement from his greatest follower, Lenin, for it is so revealing of his definitive dismissal of Marx's view that the perfect society will arrive simply by a change in the economic system. Lenin said: "The great socialists in foreseeing the arrival of the classless society, presupposed a person not like the present man in the street." This statement clearly reveals that his experience of the Russian revolution, of which he was the chief architect, and the subsequent events in Russia, had convinced him that the masses of men must change their nature first before they can become fit for a classless society. To assert the opposite view, as Marx does, is to put the cart before the horse and turn the true law of human evolution upside down. The eminent Belgian socialist, Hendrik de Mann, to whom I have already referred, also rejects Marx's idea. I quote here a statement of his view by F. W. Cocker, for it comes close to Sri Aurobindo's standpoint:

"Marxism believes that a mere transformation of economic institutions.... is sufficient in itself to elevate the moral and cultural plane of living for ordinary men. But when the workers raise themselves to a ruling position in society and then use their political power to dispossess existing property-owners, what guarantee is there that they will not administer public property selfishly, the workers of one country ignoring the interest of workers in other parts of the world, or one group in control of government exploiting other groups? There is no change in principle, in passing from private to public ownership or from control by 'labourers' to control by 'owners', unless the change is accompanied by a *transformation in the springs of human conduct*. If socialism is to be something radically different from private

capitalism, it must be revolutionary not in the sense that it pursues disorderly or insurrectionary methods but in the sense that it is a movement towards a society that acts according to moral and psychological principles fundamentally antagonistic to the principles operative in an existing capitalist society.”¹² (Italics ours)

The key-phrase in the above quotation is “a transformation in the springs of human conduct.” But it raises the crucial question as to how such a transformation is to be brought about. H. de Mann and several other thinkers who consider such a change to be essential before socialism can succeed in its aim of creating a perfect society believe that a rational and moral change of human nature would be able to realise this aim. But, according to Sri Aurobindo, the vital-egoistic nature of man which still governs man’s life can never be radically changed by the imperfect light of reason and the inadequate standards of moral conduct. It is only a total dynamic spiritual change of his consciousness that can transform his nature and create a perfect social order. In *The Human Cycle* Sri Aurobindo has discussed this problem at great length, especially in three chapters: “The Reason as Governor of Life” (Chap. 11), “The Office and Limitations of the Reason” (Chap. 12) and “The Necessity of the Spiritual Transformation” (Chap. 22).

This is the point which needs to be most emphasised in our evaluation of Marx’s materialist doctrine in the light of Sri Aurobindo’s view. For Sri Aurobindo maintains that unless man and society rise to a higher level of consciousness where not material (economic) but spiritual values become the central motives governing life, it will be impossible for the human society to reach its perfection. From this stand-point Sri Aurobindo considers socialism to be no better than capitalism because in both the material economic factor remains the governing motive of life: only, in socialism, its control is shifted from capital to labour. In fact, he warns that socialism in which labour will rule instead of capital may degrade human society even more than capitalism because it will be the same economism or materialism on a larger

scale, but not necessarily superior from the viewpoint of the higher evolution of society. A mere change from a social system of economic inequality to another in which there will be an equal distribution of wealth cannot raise up human life to a higher evolutionary level. I quote here a very significant passage from Sri Aurobindo in which he states this point very trenchantly:

“The evolution of a socialist society... must effect great changes and yet they may not realise the larger human hope. Socialism may bring in a greater equality and a closer association into human life, but if it is only a material change, it may miss other needed things and *even aggravate the mechanical burden of humanity and crush more heavily towards the earth its spirit.*”¹³ (Italics ours)

From the point of view of higher human evolution, therefore, Sri Aurobindo does not consider socialism to be superior to capitalism, for it is the same commercialism derived from an economic view of life but in another and larger form. As he says:

“It is noticeable that the bourgeois habit of the predominance of commercialism has been taken up and continued in an even larger scale by the new Socialist societies though on the basis of a labour, instead of a bourgeois economy, and an attempt at a new distribution of its profits or else, more characteristically, a concentration of all in the hands of the state.”¹⁴

Sri Aurobindo makes the same criticism of socialism in another passage:

“It [modern socialism] intends indeed to substitute Labour as the Master instead of Capital; but this only means that all activities will be valued by the labour contributed and work produced rather than by the wealth contribution and production. It will be a change from one side of economism to the other, but not a change from economism to the domination of some other and higher motive of human life.”¹⁵

To find this higher motive man and society have to evolve from the lower vital-egoistic consciousness,—which the reason of man has

failed and will always fail to change or control,— to the higher spiritual consciousness which alone can master and transform it. This transformation will not reject the economic-material side of life but make it an instrument of the spirit's expression in life. Wealth in its origin is a power of the Divine, a means for its manifestation in life for its richness and fullness. But pursued for its own sake, as an end in itself, as in the modern age, it debases human life instead of elevating it to a higher level. This is Sri Aurobindo's evaluation of modern European view of life which he has termed "commercialism" and which he characterises as a form of "vital barbarism" in *The Human Cycle*.¹⁶ Socialism of Marx adheres to the same commercialism though in a different manner and on a larger scale. So, in Sri Aurobindo's view, Marx's conviction that by dethroning capitalism by a violent revolution and enthroning socialism in its place the new millennium will arrive in human history is a vain delusion, however much Marx may try to substantiate it by his so-called scientific doctrine of historical materialism. Both capitalism and Marxist socialism are the products of modern materialism which can only drive humanity to its decline and debasement. Marx had the fond hope (though he turned it into a scientific doctrine) that socialism will carry human evolution to its perfection but it is the same materialism in another guise. It is only by a decisive spiritual change, that will make the right use of material resources as its instrument for the enrichment of life, that humanity can find its upward orientation and reach its

destined evolutionary perfection. Marx wants to reverse this evolutionary ascent and yet claims to lift man and society to their highest goal. It is necessary therefore to realise the fallacy of Marx's doctrine for those who aspire for and are engaged in the creative endeavour for the higher evolution of man and society.

‘Social Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo
and the New Age’

References:

1. In *The Human Cycle* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 15), while explaining the significance of the fourfold order of society in the Vedic age, Sri Aurobindo observes that it was not "the result of an economic evolution complicated by political causes", as it is usually understood, but had a "religious or psychological significance." See pp. 4-5.
2. *The Human Cycle* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 15), p. 147.
3. *Theory and Practice of Communism*, Part I, p. 43.
4. *The Synthesis of Yoga* (Cent. Ed. Vol. 20), p. 184.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
6. Quoted by J. P. Suda, *A History of Political Thought*, Part III, p 337.
7. Stated by F. W. Coker, *Recent Political Thought* (1957), pp. 136-37.
8. *Recent Political Thought* (1957), p. 136.
9. *The Psychology of Socialism*, Preface, Eng. Translation (1929)
10. *The Ideal of Human Unity* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 15), pp. 528-29.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 463-65.
12. F. W. Coker, op. cit., pp. 138.
13. 'After the War', *War and Self-Determination* (Cent. Ed. Vol. 15), p. 651.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 464 fn.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 466.
16. See *The Human Cycle* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 15), pp. 72-73.

The communistic principle of society is intrinsically as superior to the individualistic as is brotherhood to jealousy and mutual slaughter; but all the practical schemes of Socialism invented in Europe are a yoke, a tyranny and a prison.



If communism ever re-establishes itself successfully upon earth, it must be on a foundation of soul's brotherhood and the death of egoism. A forced association and a mechanical comradeship would end in a worldwide fiasco.



"Since liberty has failed," cries the advanced thought of Europe, "Let us try liberty cum equality or, since the two are a little hard to pair, equality instead of liberty. For brotherhood, it is impossible; therefore we will replace it by industrial association." But this time also, I think, God will not be deceived.

Sri Aurobindo
Aphorisms—Karma

The Observer and the Observed

Nolini Kanta Gupta

Science means objectivity, that is to say, elimination of the personal element—truth as pure fact without being distorted or coloured by the feelings and impressions and notions of the observer. It is the very opposite of the philosopher's standpoint who says that a thing exists because (and so long as) it is perceived. The scientist swears that a thing exists whether you perceive it or not, perception is possible because it exists, not the other way. And yet Descartes is considered not only as the father of modern philosophy, but also as the founder of modern mathematical science. But more of that anon. The scientific observer observes as a witness impartial and aloof: he is nothing more than a recording machine, a sort of passive mirror reflecting accurately and faithfully what is presented to it. This is indeed the great revolution brought about by Science in the world of human inquiry and in human consciousness, viz., the isolation of the observer from the observed.

In the old world, before Science was born, sufficient distinction or discrimination was not made between the observer and the observed. The observer mixed himself up or identified himself with what he observed and the result was not a scientific statement but a poetic description. Personal feelings, ideas, judgements entered into the presentation of facts and the whole mass passed as truth, the process often being given the high-sounding name of Intuition, Vision or Revelation but whose real name is fancy. And if there happened to be truth of fact somewhere, it was almost by chance. Once we thought of the eclipse being due to the greed of a demon, and pestilence due to the evil eye of a wicked goddess. The universe was born out of an egg, the cosmos consisted of concentric circles of worlds that were meant to reward the virtuous and punish the sinner in graded degrees. These are some of the very well-known instances of pathetic fallacy, that is to say, introducing the

element of personal sentiment in our appreciation of events and objects. Even today Nazi race history and Soviet Genetics carry that unscientific prescientific tradition.

Science was born the day when the observer cut himself aloof from the observed. Not only so, not only he is to stand aside, outside the field of observation and be a bare recorder, but that he must let the observed record itself, that is, be its own observer. Modern Science means not so much the observer narrating the story of the observed but the observed telling its own story. The first step is well exemplified in the story of Galileo. When hot discussion was going on and people insisted on saying—as Aristotle decided and common sense declared—that heavier bodies most naturally fall quicker from a height, it was this prince of experimenters who straightaway took two different weights, went up the tower of Pisa and let them drop and astounded the people by showing that both travel with equal speed and fall to the ground at the same time.

Science also declared that it is not the observation of one person, however qualified, that determines the truth or otherwise of a fact, but the observation of many persons and the possibility of observations of all persons converging, coinciding, corroborating. It is only when observation has thus been tested and checked that one can be sure that the personal element has been eliminated. Indeed the ideal condition would be if the observer, the scientist himself, could act as part of the machine for observation: at the most he should be a mere assembler of the parts of the machine that would record itself, impersonally, automatically. The rocket instruments that are sent high up in the sky to record the temperature, pressure or other weather condition in the stratosphere or the deep-sea recording machines are ingenious inventions in that line. The wizard Jagadish Chandra Bose

showed his genius precisely in the way he made the plant itself declare its life-story: it is not what the scientist thinks or feels about the plant, but what the plant has to say of its own accord, as it were—its own tale of growth and decay, of suffering, spasm, swoon, suffocation or death under given conditions. This is the second step that Science took in the direction of impersonal and objective inquiry.

It was thought for long a very easy matter—at least not extraordinarily difficult—to eliminate the observer and keep only to the observed. It was always known how the view of the observer, that is to say, his observation changed in respect of the observed fact with his change of position. The sun rises and sets to the observer on earth; to an observer on Mars, for example, the sun would rise and set, no doubt, but earth too along with, in the same way as Mars and sun appear to us now, while to an observer on the sun, the sun would seem fixed while the planets would be seen moving round. Again, we all know the observer in a moving train sees things outside the train moving past and himself at stand-still; the same observer would see another train moving alongside in the same direction and with the same speed as stuck to it and at stand-still, but as moving with double the speed if going in a contrary direction: and so on.

The method proposed for eliminating the observer was observation, more and more observation, and experiment, testing the observation under given conditions. I observe and record a series of facts and when I have found a sufficient number of them I see I am able to put them all together under a general title, a law of the occurrence or pattern of the objects observed. Further it is not I alone who can do it in any peculiar way personal to me, but that everybody else can do the same thing and arrive at the same series of facts leading to the same conclusion. I note, for example, the sun's path from day to day in the sky; soon we find that the curves described by the sun are shifted along the curve of an ellipse (that is to say, their locus is an ellipse). The ecliptic is thus found to be an ellipse which means that the earth moves round the sun in an ellipse.

But in the end a difficulty arose in the operation of observation. It proved to be not a simple process. The scientific observer requires for his observation the yard-stick and the time-piece. Now, we have been pushed to admit a queer phenomenon (partly by observation and partly by a compelling deduction) that these two measuring units are not constant; they change with the change of system, that is to say, according to the velocity of the system. In other words, each observer has his own unit of space and time measure. So the elimination of the personal element of the observer has become a complicated mathematical problem, even if one is sure of it finally.

There is still something more. The matter of calculating and measuring objectively was comparatively easy when the object in view was of medium size, neither too big nor too small. But in the field of the infinite and the infinitesimal, when from the domain of mechanical forces we enter into the region of electric and radiant energy, we find our normal measuring apparatus almost breaks down. Here accurate observation cannot be made because of the very presence of the observer, because of the very fact of observation. The ultimates that are observed are trails of light particles: now when the observer directs his eye (or the beam of light replacing the eye) upon the light particle, its direction and velocity are interfered with: the photon is such a tiny infinitesimal that a ray from the observer's eye is sufficient to deflect and modify its movement. And there is no way of determining or eliminating this element of deflection or interference. The old Science knew certainly that a thermometer dipped in the water whose temperature it is to measure itself changes the initial temperature. But that was something calculable and objective. Here the position of the observer is something like a 'possession', imbedded, ingrained, involved in the observed itself.

The crux of the difficulty is this. We say the observing eye or whatever mechanism is made to function for it, disturbs the process of observation. Now to calculate that degree or measure of disturbance one has to fall back upon another observing eye, and this again has to depend upon

yet another behind. Thus there is an infinite regress and no final solution. So, it has been declared, in the ultimate analysis, scientific calculation gives us only the average result, and it is only average calculations that are possible.

Now we come to the sanctum, the Shekinah, of the problem. For there is a still deeper mystery. And pre-eminently it is an Einsteinian discovery. It is not merely the measuring ray of light, not merely the beam in the eye of the observer that is the cause of interference: the very mind behind the eye is involved in a strange manner. The mind is not a *tabula rasa*, it comes into the field with certain presuppositions—axioms and postulates, as it calls them—due to its angle of vision and perhaps to the influence upon it of immediate sense perception. It takes for granted, for example, that light travels in a straight line, that parallels do not meet, indeed all the theorems and deductions of Euclidean geometry. There is a strong inclination in the mind to view things as arranged according to that pattern. Einstein has suggested that the spherical scheme can serve as well or even better our observations. Riemann's non-Euclidean geometry has assumed momentous importance in contemporary scientific enquiry. It is through that scheme that Einstein proposes to find the equation that will subsume the largest number of actual and possible or potential facts and bring about the reconciliation of such irreconcilables as wave and particle, gravitation and electricity.

In any case, at the end of all our peregrinations we seem to circle back to our original Cartesian-Berkeleyan position: we discover that it is not easy to extricate the observed from the observer: the observer is so deep set in the observed, part and parcel of it that there are scientists who consider it their whole scientific scheme of the world as only a mental set-up, we may replace it very soon by another scheme equally cogent, subjective all the same. The subject has entered into all objects and any definition of the object must necessarily depend upon the particular poise of the subject. That is the cosmic immanence of the Purusha spoken of in the Upanishads—the one Purusha become many and installed in the heart of each and every

object. There is indeed a status of the Subject in which the subject and the object are gathered into or form one reality. The observer and the observed are the two ends, the polarisation of a single entity: and all are reals at that level. But the scientific observer is only the mental purusha and in his observation the absolute objectivisation is not possible. The Einsteinian equations that purport to rule out all local viewpoints can hardly be said to have transcended the co-ordinates of the subject. That is possible only to the consciousness of the cosmic Purusha.

II

It is then to say that science is no longer science, it has now been converted into philosophy, even into idealistic philosophy!

In spite of Russell and Eddington who may be considered in this respect as counsellors of despair, the objective reality of the scientific field stands, it is asserted, although somewhat changed.

Now, there are four positions possible with regard to the world and reality, depending on the relation between the observer and observed, the subject and the object. They are: (1) subjective, (2) objective, (3) subjective objective and (4) objective subjective. The first two are extreme positions, one holding the subject as the sole or absolute reality, the object being a pure fabrication of its will and idea, an illusion, and the other considering the object as the true reality, the subject being an outcome, an epiphenomenon of the object itself, an illusion after all. The first leads to radical or as it is called monistic spirituality the type of which is Mayavada: the second is the highway of materialism, the various avatars of which are Marxism, Pragmatism, Behaviourism etc. In between lie the other two intermediate positions according to the stress or value given to either of the two extremes. The first of the intermediates is the position held generally by the idealists, by many schools of spirituality: it is a major Vedantic position. It says that the outside world, the object, is not an illusion, a mere fabrication of the mind or consciousness of the subject, but that it exists and is as real as the subject: it is dovetailed into the subject

which is a kind of linchpin, holding together and even energising the object. The object can further be considered as an expression or embodiment of the subject. Both the subject and the object are made of the same stuff of consciousness—the ultimate reality being consciousness. The subject is the consciousness turned on itself and the object is consciousness turned outside or going abroad. This is pre-eminently the Upanishadic position. In Europe, Kant holds a key position in this line: and on the whole, idealists from Plato to Bradley and Bosanquet can be said more or less to belong to this category. The second intermediate position views the subject as imbedded into the object, not the object into the subject as in the first one: the subject itself is part of the object something like its self-regarding or self-recording function. In Europe apart possibly from some of the early Greek thinkers (Anaxagoras or Democritus, for example), coming to more recent times, we can say that line runs fairly well-represented from Leibnitz to Bergson. In India the Sankhyas and the Vaisheshikas move towards and approach the position; the Tantriks make a still more near approach.

Once again, to repeat in other terms the distinction which may sometimes appear to carry no difference. First, the subjective objective in which the subject assumes the preponderant position, not denying or minimising the reality of the object. The external world, in this view, is a movement in and of the consciousness of a universal subject. It is subjective in the sense that it is essentially a function of the subject and does not exist apart from it or outside it: it is objective in the sense that it exists really and is not a figment or imaginative construction of any individual consciousness, although it exists in and through the individual consciousness, although it exists in and through the individual consciousness in so far as that consciousness is universalised, is one with the universal consciousness (or the transcendental, the two can be taken together in the present connection). Instead of the Kantian transcendental idealism we can name it transcendental realism.

In the other case the world exists here below in its own reality, outside all apprehending subject;

even the universal subject is in a sense part of it, immanent in it—it embraces the subject in its comprehending consciousness and posits it as part of itself or a function of its apprehension. The many Purushas (conscious beings or subjects) are imbedded in the universal Nature, say the Sankhyas. Kali, Divine Nature, is the manifest omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent reality holding within her the transcendent divine Purusha who supports, sanctions and inspires secretly, yet is dependent on the Mahashakti and without her is nothing, *shunyam*. That is how the Tantriks put it. We may mention here, among European philosophers, the rather interesting conclusion of Leibnitz (to which Russell draws our attention): space is subjective to the view of each monad (subject unit) separately, it is objective when it consists of the assemblage of the view-points of all the monads.

The scientific outlook was a protest against the extreme subjective view: it started with the extreme objective stand-point and that remained the fundamental note till the other day, till the fissure of the nucleus opened new horizons to our somewhat bewildered mentality. We seem to have entered into a region where we still hold to the objective, no doubt, but not absolutely free from an insistent presence of the subjective. It is the second of the intermediate positions we have tried to describe. Science has yet to decide the implications of that position: whether it will try to entrench itself as much as possible on this side of the subjective or whether it can yield further and go over to or link itself with the deeper subjective position.

The distinction between the two may after all be found to be a matter of stress only, involving no fundamental difference, especially as there are sure to be gradations from the one to the other. The most important landmark, however, the most revolutionary step in modern science would be the discovery of the eternal observer or some sign or image of his seated within the observed phenomena of moving things—*purushah prakritistho hi*, as the Gita says.

Collected Works of
Nolini Kanta Gupta Volume I

On the Universe

The Mother

"In the workings of the universe whatever happens is the result of all that has happened before."

Questions and Answers 1929 (26 May)

What do you mean by this?

The universe is in perpetual movement and it is the unfolding of the supreme Consciousness. So all that happens is conditioned by all that preceded it. The universe continues to be what it is because of what it was before. And what it will be will be the consequence of what it is.

Is the unfolding of the universe continuous or does it stop somewhere? What is it that gives us the impression of a beginning, of a decision to begin?

Where does the decision to begin come from? (laughing) From the Supreme probably, I do not know! It may be that one day He decided to have a universe of the type we have and He began to objectify himself in order to have a universe.

Each element of this universe is eternal because the universe is the Eternal. Now, in the Eternal it is difficult to speak of a 'beginning'. Evidently it has always been and it will be always. Only, take for example (this is an image, remember, do not make me say things I do not say), take a sphere which is full of infinitesimal things in an incalculable number. If you change the relation of all these elements, well, the number is so great, the possibilities of relations so many that you may easily speak of an infinite, although from a philosophical point of view it is not an infinite, yet from a descriptive point of view one may say that it is infinite. Each element is eternal. All the combinations are infinite, but the same combination never repeats itself twice. Thus the universe is eternally new and yet it is eternally the same.

According to tradition it is said...

Yes, yes, but it is not a question of tradition. There are people who speak of Pralaya, I know, but that simply means (excuse me, but one must speak a little lightly, otherwise this becomes insufferable) that one day perhaps the Supreme may feel tired, dissatisfied with the kind of universe He has made and may want to create another. Then, as it is He Himself, He takes everything back into Himself and puts it out again! That is what people call 'pralaya', but it changes nothing: all the elements of the universe are eternal and eternally will the combinations be different.

According to science, our physical world of three dimensions is not infinite, it is bent back upon itself in a space of more than three dimensions. This closed universe of three dimensions is continually expanding and all the objects of the universe are running away from each other at a speed increasing with their distance. If one goes back into the past, one reaches a time when the universe was almost condensed at one point and that would give the key to the constitution of Matter of which the ninety-two elements have never been explained, till now. This 'condensed point' or 'primitive atom' goes back three or four billion years. This is what the Indian tradition calls 'the golden egg'. But before that? Nothing is known. Quite recently an American scientist has put forth the theory that this movement of infinite expansion will not continue, that a contrary movement will set in and all will be gathered back again.

A universal respiration.

If one could travel with a ray of light coming from the sun to the earth, the departure and arrival would be simultaneous, for the traveller's 'proper time' would be stopped.

Light seems to me to be too material for this consciousness of simultaneity.

Evidently when one emerges from form and enters the 'frontier' state between form and the Formless, everything is simultaneous, but this is very far from the density of light.

I wonder (it is possible, it is to be seen), but I doubt whether something physical could be capable of giving this simultaneous consciousness of the universe.

Of course, no material object or being can travel at the speed of light, but supposing it to be possible, as the number of light-rays is practically infinite and covers the whole material universe, one would be able to know everything, apprehend everything.

But that would not be a simultaneous integral knowledge of the universe, not even of the earth. For one who remembers the extra-terrestrial light, remembers the movements of the higher light, terrestrial light is slow, as it is dim. But this would already be an expression of something higher.... I don't know.

Light is a very good symbol, but I do not think it to be a total one.

Is light faster than thought?... You cannot make a concrete experiment with thought. Sound is something very, very slow, but thought is already something quicker than light... perhaps not. Thought gives the sensation of the instantaneous. Do you perceive thought in the physical body, for example? Do you perceive thought apart from a material quality? It remains to be seen, doesn't it? Let me explain: if you go out of your body, if you go out of the vital world and enter the mental world, all relations are different from what they are for thought when in the body. Compared with the body, thought seems an immediate thing like light, for example, even more than light. But when you have nothing to do with the physical any longer and you enter the mind itself, there are relations which may be rendered by a certain time and certain space which do not exist for the physical

consciousness but which exist for the mental consciousness. That then would be, if you like, the explanation of what you were saying, that Time changes; for it is evident that in the universal formation there is an infusion of progressive consciousness which is psychologically translated by a relation with new worlds or new 'dimensions'.

For example, it is said that for a certain period the terrestrial world was ruled by 'overmental' forces and that this rule is going to be transcended, that the world will be governed by supramental forces: well, each time new forces descend upon earth, a change is produced and a change of consciousness must have a corresponding change of movement. You say that the movement of expansion becomes more and more swift; this means that the world is filled with a consciousness which makes the movements of the world more and more rapid. This would be altogether the material transcription of the spiritual phenomenon. The earth is being charged more and more with forces coming from ever higher regions (for our consciousness), which means that they come faster and faster, giving more and more the sense of the instantaneous. What has been discovered is a kind of physical symbolism of this phenomenon which would tend to prove scientifically that the universe is in progress.

The other possibility is that it is a matter of a vibratory movement of inhaling and exhaling—this is quite possible; but the phenomenon of concentration would not necessarily mean a retrogression; it is simply a passage from one movement to another.

The stars are receding from one another at a speed that increases with their distance... What does this imply?

These are images, aren't they? You can conceive a universe becoming bigger and bigger, but then what is it that will contain this universe? What would there be beyond this universe?... Immediately our small human mind conceives of something quite empty and a universe occupying more and more place in this void.

which means that there would be a space in this void, which is an absurdity. In fact, one should say, "It is as though", because that is not really what happens, it is only a way of expressing it. To catch hold of a notion ever so little accurate, one must pass from the material to the psychological explanation, and even if you arrive at the psychological, you are still very far from the truth, which is neither psychological nor spatial, but something else which evidently finds it difficult to express itself in our terms. It is a well-known experience: each time one goes into a consciousness beyond our consciousness (I cannot say spatial), our terrestrial consciousness (not even positively terrestrial, but rather individual), each time one has an experience which transcends the individual consciousness, that is to say, transcends the consciousness of the part to enter a consciousness of the whole, when one wants to translate this experience, one finds all words empty of sense, because language has been formed to translate human experience for the human mind. We have all the necessary words, even with many shades and niceties, to express human experience, since language has been made for that, but what language will you use to explain what is outside all language? It is extremely difficult. So you say, "It is like this, it is like that", and while you are speaking you realise that the experience is being so completely distorted that at times you are understood to mean entirely the opposite.

For this reason science is full of paradoxes.

Yes, and all spiritual books which speak of the experiences of another world are always full of paradoxes. They say, "It is like this, it is like that", in an attempt to give you a suppleness which will allow you to understand—but even so you do not understand.

The truth is that these experiences can be communicated only in silence.

And yet, it has been said (and it is a true fact) that these worlds, like the supramental world, are going to express themselves physically. Then what is going to happen? Will they find

new words? New words are found for them... It is difficult, for if new words are found, they have to be explained!

After all, the ancient initiatory systems were good in a way, in the sense that they revealed the knowledge only to those who had reached a stage where they could receive it directly without the help of words. And I'm afraid it may come to the same thing now—perhaps even one who has this supramental knowledge will never be able to make himself understood by people, unless they themselves become capable of entering into this knowledge. And so the logical result is that people will say, as I have heard it said: "Oh! It is just as in ordinary life." Precisely because all that is not of the ordinary life completely escapes our perception, it cannot be transmitted by words.

Take a place like this, which is surcharged with certain forces, certain vibrations; these vibrations do not show themselves in visible and tangible things—they can produce changes, but as these changes occur according to a method (as all physical things do), you pass almost logically from one state to another and this logic prevents you from perceiving that there is something here which does not belong to normal life. Well, those who have no other perception than that of the ordinary mind, who see things working out as they habitually do or seem to do in ordinary life, will tell you, "Oh that, that is quite natural." If they have no other perception than the purely physical perception, if they are not capable of feeling the quality of a vibration (some feel it vaguely, but those who are not even capable of feeling that, who have nothing in them corresponding to that or, if they have something, it is not awakened), they will look at the life here and tell you, "It is like the physical life—you have perhaps some ideas of your own, but there are many who have their own ideas; perhaps you do things in a special way, but there are lots of people who also do things in a special way. After all, it is a life like the one I live." ... And so, it may very well happen that at a given moment the supramental Force manifests, that it is conscious here, that it acts on Matter, but those who do not consciously participate in its

vibration are incapable of perceiving it. People say, "When the supramental force manifests, we shall know it quite well. It will be seen"—not necessarily. They will not feel it any more than those people of little sensitivity who may pass through this place, even live here, without feeling that the atmosphere is different from elsewhere—who among you feels it in such a precise way as to be able to affirm it? You may feel in your heart, in your thought that it is not the same, but it is rather vague, isn't it? But to have this precise perception—listen, as I had when I came from Japan. I was on the boat, at sea, not expecting anything. (I was of course busy with the inner life, but I was living physically on the boat), when all of a sudden, abruptly, about two nautical miles from Pondicherry, the quality, I may even say the physical quality of the atmosphere, of the air, changed so much that I knew we were entering the aura of Sri Aurobindo. It was a physical experience and I guarantee that whoever has a sufficiently awakened consciousness can feel the same thing. I had the contrary experience also, the first time that I went out in a car after many many years here. When I reached a little beyond the lake, I felt all of a sudden that the atmosphere was changing; where there had been plenitude, energy, light and force, all that diminished, diminished, and then nothing. It was not in a mental or vital consciousness, it was in an absolutely physical consciousness. Well, those who are sensitive in their physical consciousness ought to feel that quite concretely. And I can assure you that the area we call the Ashram has a condensation of force which is not at all the same as that of the town, and still less that of the countryside. So I ask you, this kind of condensation of force (which gives you quite a special vibration of consciousness), who is there that is really conscious of it? Many among you feel it vaguely, I know, even people from outside feel it vaguely, they get an impression, they speak of it, but the precise consciousness, the scientific consciousness which could give you the exact measure of it, who has that? I'm not alluding to

anyone in particular, each one can look into himself. And this, this condensation here is only a far-off reflection of the supramental force. So when this supramental force will be installed here definitively, how long will it take for people to perceive that it is there? And that it changes everything, do you understand? And when I say that the mind cannot judge, it is on facts like these that I base myself—the mind is not an instrument of knowledge, it cannot know. A scientist can tell you the proportion of the different components in any particular atmosphere, he analyses it. But as for this proportion here, who can give it? Who can say? There is such a vibration, such a proportion of this, such a proportion of that, such a proportion of the supramental? I put the question to you so that you may ponder over it.

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 (See Rule 8)
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I, Kosha Shah, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Sd/-
 (Kosha Shah)
 Publisher

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