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Aspects of the Constitution of India

Some Aurobindonian Perspectives

On 28-29 November 1998, Sri Aurobindo Research Foundation held a National Seminar on the above topic in collaboration with the Faculty of Social Work, M. S. University of Baroda. There were eminent speakers from different parts of the country and the seminar was inaugurated by Dr. Karan Singh, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha and well-known orator.

The purpose of the Seminar was to give a spiritual focus to the Indian Constitution in particular on the basis of Sri Aurobindo's and Mother's social and political views. It was a humble attempt to understand their relevance in the context of the issues facing the country today. Some of the topics touched upon were Federal vs. Unitary System, Parliamentary vs. Presidential System, Secularism, use of the word 'minority', a national language in a multilingual society like India, Fundamental Rights and Duties, Directive Principles, necessity for a World Union, the need for a constitution in harmony with the Indian social, political, cultural ethos etc.

There is always a certain difficulty in trying to articulate in concrete terms what we may know of in terms of philosophy. And that is the real challenge before us today—how to relate the abstract to the concrete. In all likelihood, we could either go into impracticable abstractions or a pragmatic compromising of the ideal. The world today is not ready for a radical change. But this does not mean that all efforts in that direction must cease. The change is bound to be gradual. The path of the world's spiritual destiny is long and arduous but every step brings us closer to it. If we have begun to believe that the aim of spirituality is not an escape from the world towards the Absolute or a Non-Being or a Heaven, but a progressive terrestrial manifestation of the Divine Will through evolution of the entire range from Matter to Spirit, we have taken our first step. We need to realize that such an evolution is as much at the level of the collective as it is at the level of the individual, that we are portions of a collectivity which can consciously collaborate with this inward and upward movement of humanity. If all religious and spiritual paths could overtly make this their aim on the basis of their own particular truth, it would lead to the coming of the spiritual age.

A broad definition of spirituality does not exclude any aspect of life—not even the Constitution of a country. To seek the truth of a nation and express its reality in the forms of spiritual ideals taking into consideration the social, political and cultural ethos of that nation, is one step towards a collective awareness of the aim of life. For—

“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.”

- Sri Aurobindo

'The Foundations of Indian Culture'

Editor

Prayer

The Mother

Solitude, a harsh, intense solitude, and always this strong impression of having been flung headlong into a hell of darkness! Never at any moment of my life, in any circumstances, have I felt myself living in surroundings so entirely opposite to all that I am conscious of as true, so contrary to all that is the essence of my life. Sometimes when the impression and the contrast grow very intense, I cannot prevent my total submission from taking on a hue of melancholy, and the calm and mute converse with the Master within is transformed for a moment into an invocation that almost supplicates, "O Lord, what have I done that Thou hast thrown me thus into the sombre Night?" But immediately the aspiration rises, still more ardent, "Spare this being all weakness; suffer it to be the docile and clear-eyed instrument of Thy work, whatever that work may be."

For the moment the clear-sightedness is lacking; never was the future more veiled. It is as though we were moving towards a high, impenetrable wall, so far as the destiny of individual men is concerned. As for the destinies of nations and of earth, they appear more distinctly. But of these it is useless to speak: the future will reveal them clearly to all eyes, even of the most blind.

'Prayers and Meditations'

March 3, 1915

Religion as the Law of Life

Sri Aurobindo

Since the infinite, the absolute and transcendent, the universal the One is the secret summit of existence and to reach the spiritual consciousness and the Divine the ultimate goal and aim of our being and therefore of the whole development of the individual and the collectivity in all its parts and all its activities, reason cannot be the last and highest guide; culture, as it is understood ordinarily, cannot be the directing light or find out the regulating and harmonising principle of all our life and action. For reason stops short of the Divine and only compromises with the problems of life, and culture in order to attain the Transcendent and Infinite must become spiritual culture, something much more than an intellectual, aesthetic, ethical and practical training. Where then are we to find the directing light and the regulating and harmonising principle? The first answer which will suggest itself, the answer constantly given by the Asiatic mind, is that we shall find it directly and immediately in religion. And this seems a reasonable and at first sight a satisfying solution; for religion is that instinct, idea, activity, discipline in man which aims directly at the Divine, while all the rest seem to aim at it only indirectly and reach it with difficulty after much wandering and stumbling in the pursuit of the outward and imperfect appearances of things. To make all life religion and to govern all activities by the religious idea would seem to be the right way to the development of the ideal individual and ideal society and the lifting of the whole life of man into the Divine.

A certain pre-eminence of religion, the overshadowing or at least the colouring of life, an overtopping of all the other instincts and fundamental ideas by the religious instinct and the religious idea is, we may note, not peculiar to Asiatic civilisations, but has always been more or less the normal state of the human mind and of human societies, or if not quite that, yet a notable and prominent part of their complex tendencies, except

in certain comparatively brief periods of their history, in one of which we find ourselves today and are half turning indeed to emerge from it but have not yet emerged. We must suppose then that in this leading, this predominant part assigned to religion by the normal human collectivity there is some great need and truth of our natural being to which we must always after however long an infidelity return. On the other hand, we must recognise the fact that in a time of great activity, of high aspiration, of deep sowing of rich fruit-bearing, such as the modern age with all its faults and errors has been, a time especially when humanity got rid of much that was cruel, evil, ignorant, dark, odious, not by the power of religion, but by the power of the awakened intelligence and of human idealism and sympathy, this predominance of religion has been violently attacked and rejected by that portion of humanity which was for that time the standard-bearer of thought and progress, Europe after the Renaissance, modern Europe.

This revolt in its extreme form tried to destroy religion altogether, boasted indeed of having killed the religious instinct in man, - a vain and ignorant boast, as we now see, for the religious instinct in man is most of all the one instinct in him that cannot be killed, it only changes its form. In its more moderate movements the revolt put religion aside into a corner of the soul by itself and banished its intermixture in the intellectual, aesthetic, practical life and even in the ethical; and it did this on the ground that the intermixture of religion in science, thought, politics, society, life in general had been and must be a force for retardation, superstition, oppressive ignorance. The religionist may say that this accusation was an error and an atheistic perversity, or he may say that religious retardation, a pious ignorance, a contented static condition or even an orderly stagnation full of holy thoughts of the Beyond is much better than a continuous endeavour after greater knowledge, greater mastery, more happiness, joy, light upon this transient earth.

But the catholic thinker cannot accept such a plea; he is obliged to see that so long as man has not realised the divine and the ideal in his life, - and it may well be even when he has realised it, since the divine is the infinite, - progress and not unmoving status is the necessary and desirable law of his life, - not indeed any breathless rush after novelties, but a constant motion towards a greater and greater truth of the spirit, the thought and the life not only in the individual, but in the collectivity, in the communal endeavour, in the turn, ideals, temperament, make of the society, in its strivings towards perfection. And he is obliged too to see that the indictment against religion, not in its conclusion, but in its premiss had something, had even much to justify it, - not that religion in itself must be, but that historically and as a matter of fact the accredited religions and their hierarchs and exponents have too often been a force for retardation, have too often thrown their weight on the side of darkness, oppression and ignorance, and that it has needed a denial, a revolt of the oppressed human mind and heart to correct these errors and set religion right. And why should this have been if religion is the true and sufficient guide and regulator of all human activities and the whole of human life?

We need not follow the rationalistic or atheistic mind through all its aggressive indictment of religion. We need not for instance lay a too excessive stress on the superstitions, aberrations, violences, crimes even, which Churches and cults and creeds have favoured, admitted, sanctioned, supported or exploited for their own benefit, the mere hostile enumeration of which might lead one to echo the cry of the atheistic Roman poet, "To such a mass of ills could religion persuade mankind." As well might one cite the crimes and errors which have been committed in the name of liberty or of order as a sufficient condemnation of the ideal of liberty or the ideal of social order. But we have to note the fact that such a thing was possible and to find its explanation. We cannot ignore for instance the bloodstained and fiery track which formal external christianity has left furrowed across the mediaeval history of Europe almost from the days of Constantine, its first hour of secular triumph, down to very recent times, or the sanguinary comment which such an institution as

the Inquisition affords on the claim of religion to be the directing light and regulating power in ethics and society, or religious wars and wide-spread State persecutions on its claim to guide the political life of mankind. But we must observe the root of this evil, which is not in true religion itself, but in its infrarational parts, not in spiritual faith and aspiration, but in our ignorant human confusion of religion with a particular creed, sect, cult, religious society or church. So strong is the human tendency to this error that even the old tolerant Paganism slew Socrates in the name of religion and morality, feebly persecuted non-national faiths like the cult of Isis or the cult of Mithra and more vigorously what it conceived to be the subversive and anti-social religion of the early Christians; and even in still more fundamentally tolerant Hinduism with all its spiritual broadness and enlightenment it led at one time to the milder mutual hatred and occasional though brief-lived persecution of Buddhist, Jain, Shaiva, Vaishnava.

The whole root of the historic insufficiency of religion as a guide and control of human society lies there. Churches and creeds have, for example, stood violently in the way of philosophy and science, burned a Giordano Bruno, imprisoned a Galileo, and so generally misconducted themselves in this matter that philosophy and science had in self-defence to turn upon Religion and rend her to pieces in order to get a free field for their legitimate development; and this because men in the passion and darkness of their vital nature had chosen to think that religion was bound up with certain fixed intellectual conceptions about God and the world which could not stand scrutiny, and therefore scrutiny had to be put down by fire and sword; scientific and philosophical truth had to be denied in order that religious error might survive. We see too that a narrow religious spirit often oppresses and impoverishes the joy and beauty of life, either from an intolerant asceticism or, as the Puritans attempted it, because they could not see that religious austerity is not the whole of religion, though it may be an important side of it, is not the sole ethico-religious approach to God, since love, charity, gentleness, tolerance, kindness are also and even more divine, and they forgot or never knew that God is love and beauty as well as purity. In politics religion has often thrown itself on the

side of power and resisted the coming of larger political ideals, because it was itself, in the form of a Church, supported by power and because it confused religion with the Church, or because it stood for a false theocracy, forgetting that true theocracy is the kingdom of God in man and not the kingdom of a Pope, a priesthood or a sacerdotal class. So too it has often supported a rigid and outworn social system, because it thought its own life bound up with social forms with which it happened to have been associated during a long portion of its own history and erroneously concluded that even a necessary change there would be a violation of religion and a danger to its existence. As if so mighty and inward a power as the religious spirit in man could be destroyed by anything so small as the change of a social form or so outward as a social readjustment! This error in its many shapes has been the great weakness of religion as practised in the past and the opportunity and justification for the revolt of the intelligence, the aesthetic sense, the social and political idealism, even the ethical spirit of human being against what should have been its own highest tendency and law.

Here then lies one secret of the divergence between the ancient and the modern, the Eastern and Western ideal, and here also one clue to their reconciliation. Both rest upon a certain strong justification and their quarrel is due to a misunderstanding. It is true in a sense that religion should be the dominant thing in life, its light and law, but religion as it should be and is in its inner nature, its fundamental law of being, a seeking after God, the cult of spirituality, the opening of the deepest life of the soul to the indwelling Godhead, the eternal Omnipresence. On the other hand, it is true that religion when it identifies itself only with a creed, a cult, a Church, a system of ceremonial forms, may well become a retarding force and there may therefore arise a necessity for the human spirit to reject its control over the varied activities of life. There are two aspects of religion, true religion and religionism. True religion is spiritual religion, that which seeks to live in the spirit, in what is beyond the intellect, beyond the aesthetic and ethical and practical being of man, and to inform and govern these members of our being by the higher light and law of the spirit. Religionism, on the contrary, entrenches itself in some narrow pietistic exaltation

of the lower members or lays exclusive stress on intellectual dogmas, forms and ceremonies, on some fixed and rigid moral code, on some religion-political or religio-social system. Not that these things are altogether negligible or that they must be unworthy or unnecessary or that a spiritual religion need disdains the aid of forms, ceremonies, creeds or systems. On the contrary, they are needed by man because the lower members have to be exalted and raised before they can be fully spiritualised, before they can directly feel the spirit and obey its law. An intellectual formula is often needed by the thinking and reasoning mind, a form or ceremony by the aesthetic temperament or other parts of the infra-rational being, a set moral code by man's vital nature in their turn towards the inner life. But these things are aids and supports, not the essence; precisely because they belong to the rational and infra-rational parts, they can be nothing more and, if too blindly insisted on, may even hamper the suprarational light. Such as they are, they have to be offered to man and used by him, but not to be imposed on him as his sole law by a forced and inflexible domination. In the use of them toleration and free permission of variation is the first rule which should be observed. The spiritual essence of religion is alone the one thing supremely needful, the thing to which we have always to hold and subordinate to it every other element or motive.

But here comes in an ambiguity which brings in a deeper source of divergence. For by spirituality religion seems often to mean something remote from earthly life, different from it, hostile to it. It seems to condemn the pursuit of earthly aims as a trend opposed to the turn to a spiritual life and the hopes of man on earth as an illusion or a vanity incompatible with the hope of man in heaven. The spirit then becomes something aloof which man can only reach by throwing away the life of his lower members. Either he must abandon this nether life after a certain point, when it has served its purpose, or must persistently discourage, mortify and kill it. If that be the true sense of religion, then obviously religion has no positive message for human society in the proper field of social effort, hope and aspiration or for the individual in any of the lower members of his being. For each principle of our nature seeks naturally for perfection in its

own sphere and, if it is to obey a higher power, it must be because that power gives it a greater perfection and a fuller satisfaction even in its own field. But if perfectibility is denied to it and therefore the aspiration to perfection taken away by the spiritual urge, then it must either lose faith in itself and the power to pursue the natural expansion of its energies and activities or it must reject the call of the spirit in order to follow its own bend and law, dharma. This quarrel between earth and heaven, between the spirit and its members becomes still more sterilising if spirituality takes the form of a religion of sorrow and suffering and austere mortification and the gospel of the vanity of things; in its exaggeration it leads to such nightmares of the soul as that terrible gloom and hopelessness of the Middle Ages in their worst moment when the one hope of mankind seemed to be in the approaching and expected end of the world, an inevitable and desirable Pralaya. But even in less pronounced and intolerant forms of this pessimistic attitude with regard to the world, it becomes a force for the discouragement of life and cannot, therefore, be a true law and guide for life. All pessimism is to that extent a denial of the Spirit, of its fullness and power, an impatience with the ways of God in the world, an insufficient faith in the divine Wisdom and Will that created the world and for ever guide it. It admits a wrong notion about that supreme Wisdom and Power and therefore cannot itself be the supreme wisdom and power of the spirit to which the world can look for guidance and for the uplifting of its whole life towards the Divine.

The Western recoil from religion, that minimising of its claim and insistence by which Europe progressed from the mediaeval religious attitude through the Renaissance and the Reformation to the modern rationalistic attitude, that making of the ordinary earthly life our one preoccupation, that labour to fulfil ourselves by the law of the lower members, divorced from all spiritual seeking, was an opposite error, the contrary ignorant extreme, the blind swing of the pendulum from a wrong affirmation to a wrong negation. It is an error because perfection cannot be found in such a limitation and restriction; for it denies the complete law of human existence, its deepest urge, its most secret impulse. Only by the light and power of the highest can the lower be perfectly guided, uplifted

and accomplished. The lower life of man is in form undivine, though in it there is the secret of the divine, and it can only be divinised by finding the higher law and the spiritual illumination. On the other hand, the impatience which condemns or despairs of life or discourages its growth because it is at present undivine and is not in harmony with the spiritual life, is an equal ignorance, andham tamah. The world-shunning monk, the mere ascetic may indeed well find by this turn his own individual and peculiar salvation, the spiritual recompense of his renunciation and Tapasya, as the materialist may find by his own exclusive method the appropriate rewards of his energy and concentrated seeking; but neither can be the true guide of mankind and its law-giver. The monastic attitude implies a fear, an aversion, a distrust of life and its aspirations, and one cannot wisely guide that with which one is entirely out of sympathy, that which one wishes to minimise and discourage. The sheer ascetic spirit, if it directed life and human society, could only prepare it to be a means for denying itself and getting away from its own motives. An ascetic guidance might tolerate the lower activities, but only with a view to persuade them in the end to minimise and finally cease from their own action. But a spirituality which draws back from life to envelop it without being dominated by it does not labour under this disability. The spiritual man who can guide human life towards its perfection is typified in the ancient Indian idea of the Rishi, one who has lived fully the life of man and found the word of the supra-intellectual, supramental, spiritual truth. He has risen above these lower limitations and can view all things from above, but also he is in sympathy with their effort and can view them from within; he has the complete inner knowledge and the higher surpassing knowledge. Therefore he can guide the world humanly as God guides it divinely, because like the Divine he is in the life of the world and yet above it.

In spirituality, then, understood in this sense, we must seek for the directing light and the harmonising law, and in religion only in proportion as it identifies itself with this spirituality. So long as it falls short of this, it is one human activity and power among others, and, even if it be considered the most important and the most powerful, it cannot wholly guide the others. If it seeks always to fix them into the limits of a creed,

an unchangeable law, a particular system, it must be prepared to see them revolting from its control; for although they may accept this impress for a time and greatly profit by it, in the end they must move by the law of their being towards a freer activity and an untrammelled movement. Spirituality respects the freedom of the human soul, because it is itself fulfilled by freedom; and the deepest meaning of freedom is the power to expand and grow towards perfection by the law of one's own nature, dharma. This liberty it will give to all the fundamental parts of our being. It will give that freedom to philosophy and science which ancient Indian religion gave, - freedom even

to deny the spirit, if they will, - as a result of which philosophy and science never felt in ancient India any necessity of divorcing themselves from religion, but grew rather into it and under its light. It will give the same freedom to man's seeking for political and social perfection and to all his other powers and aspirations. Only it will be vigilant to illuminate them so that they may grow into the light and law of the spirit, not by suppression and restriction, but by a self-searching, self-controlled expansion and a many-sided finding of their greatest, highest and deepest potentialities. For all these are potentialities of the spirit.

The Human Cycle

There are two aspects of religion, true religion and religionism. True religion is spiritual religion, that which seeks to live in the spirit, in what is beyond the intellect, beyond the aesthetic and ethical and practical being of man, and to inform and govern these members of our being by the higher light and law of the spirit. Religionism, on the contrary, entrenches itself in some narrow pietistic exaltation of the lower members or lays exclusive stress on intellectual dogmas, forms and ceremonies, on some fixed and rigid moral code, on some religio-political or religio-social system.

Sri Aurobindo
'The Human Cycle'



If we give ... to religion the sense of the following of the spiritual impulse in its fullness and define spirituality as the attempt to know and live in the highest self, the divine, the all-embracing unity and to raise life in all its parts to the divinest possible values, then it is evident that there (has been) not too much of religion, but rather too little of it.

Sri Aurobindo
'The Foundations of Indian Culture'



Religion is beginning to realise, a little dimly and ineffectively as yet, that spirituality is after all its chief business and true aim and that it is also the common element and the common bond of all religions.

Sri Aurobindo
'The Ideal of Human Unity'



All religion begins with the conception of some Power of existence greater and higher than our limited and mortal selves, a thought and act of worship done to that Power, and an obedience offered to its will, its laws and its demands. But Religion in its beginnings, sets an immeasurable gulf between the Power thus conceived, worshipped and obeyed and the worshipper. Yoga in its culmination abolishes the gulf; for Yoga is union.

Sri Aurobindo
'The Synthesis of Yoga'

Critical Evaluation of Marx's Theories of Dialectical and Historical Materialism

Kishor Gandhi

1. Critique Of Marx's Theory Of Dialectical Materialism

While evaluating Marx's philosophic theory of dialectical materialism, the most important point we have to note is that it involves a basic self-contradiction which renders it totally unsound. This self-contradiction is inherent in his very conception of Matter from which his theory of materialism is derived. He endows Matter with an inner, self-conscious, self-directing free-will, acting independently and fulfilling inevitably its purpose by an intelligent process. But an entity endowed with these capacities cannot conform to the materialist's scientific conception of Matter. Scientific materialism is necessarily bound to the conception of Matter as an inert, passive principle having no self-conscious intelligence of its own and therefore it can never act or develop according to its own free-will and purpose. Being passive, inert and unconscious it can act and develop only by a rigidly fixed mechanical process. Any teleological, or consciously purposive movement, would be impossible to it by its very nature. Therefore, in scientific materialism Matter can never be dialectical because the dialectical process necessarily implies self-conscious free-will and purposive intelligent direction. But Marx introduces conscious dialectical process in inert mechanical Matter. Thus at the very heart of Marx's philosophy of dialectical materialism there is a profound contradiction. As I have mentioned before, he has borrowed the dialectical aspect of his materialist theory from Hegel, but Hegel's dialectics is perfectly justified because it is dialectical idealism in which it is the Idea, or universal Reason or Spirit as he sometimes calls it, which acts and fulfils its purpose by its conscious free-will. But dialectical development is logically inconsistent with scientific materialism because Matter being inert and passive cannot possess self-conscious free-will and purpose. As Nicolas Berdyaev¹ trenchantly remarks:

“Matter is endowed by Marxist philosophy with the freedom of spirit, with life, activity, logic,

freedom and the possibility of independent movement. But if we preserve the right terminology of philosophy we see that matter and material processes cannot be active, that free self-directed movement is not inherent in them, that no dialectical development can be theirs. Matter is inert and passive: spirit alone is active; activity presupposes a spiritual principle.”²

This basic contradiction in Marx's philosophic position necessarily affects his socio-economic theory of historical materialism and constantly suffers from the same serious drawback. For example, on the one hand, he speaks of social development as completely determined by material-economic forces; yet, on the other hand, he speaks of it as being shaped by human free-will. The material-economic forces of production which are the determinants of social life and development are said by Marx to be acting inevitably and independently of man's will. This economic determinism makes man merely a passive instrument of material forces. This is a kind of economic fatalism which leaves no room for any free initiative or action on the part of man. Man is governed by inexorable economic necessity from which he cannot escape as he can have no free-will of his own. And yet Marx in his programme of action is constantly asking the proletariat to organise in order to bring about a swift end of capitalism by a deliberately planned revolution. But if man is utterly passive in the hands of economic necessity and inexorably governed by it, how can he act by a free initiative, a consciously planned action needed for revolution? This is the patent inconsistency or contradiction in Marx's historical materialism emanating from the unsoundness of his philosophic theory of dialectical materialism. In fact it is an incongruous mixture of two opposites—materialism and idealism. It is a hybrid creature, a bastard creed; in trying to be both, it remains neither. Marx tries to introduce freedom in necessity which only leads

him into a serious logical contradiction. We may even say that his materialism is nothing else but idealism under a false cover. Marxism, as Nicolas Berdyaev points out, is “continually slipping from dialectic to popular materialism and from that even to the hated mechanism, and it cannot help it, for dialectical materialism is an untenable position where is bred a perpetual conflict between dialectic and materialism.”³

Marx’s famous statement in his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* that “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their social existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness” implies that man is a creature of his social conditions (which themselves are determined, according to him, by economic forces of production) and can do nothing to change them. In the same way in his preface to *The Capital*, he writes of economic “tendencies which work out with an iron necessity towards an inevitable goal”. This view of Marx leaves no room for any free action for man, and yet in one of his later writings he maintains that “Man makes his own history”. This, in fact, is absurd. It amounts to an abandonment of his own central position. If everything is predetermined, how can man be the master of his own destiny? Marx never tries to resolve this contradiction which lies at the heart of his philosophic and social theory; in fact it cannot be resolved because his theory is patently untenable. As C. L. Wayper so clearly points out:

“If man is really master of his destiny, that can only be through the use he makes of his mind. But if mind is only superstructure, it is itself determined by the productive forces of the substructure (the material economic forces), the operation of which is determined by the dialectic. If there is really interaction between them, then the whole thesis falls to the ground since we cannot now be dealing with a purely economic factor but with one which has been in part determined by non-economic factors, and it cannot, accordingly, be said that the economic factor must always be decisive. Marx, in fact, was wedded to two ideas, to the idea that productive forces develop automatically, and to the idea that in some way man’s mind develops them.... If Marx had really attempted to work out

the connection between mind and material forces, he would have had to abandon his theory.”⁴

2. Critique Of Marx's Theory Of Historical Materialism

Like his philosophic theory of dialectical materialism, Marx’s social theory of historical materialism is also rigidly deterministic in its interpretation of history or social development. The main idea of this social theory is succinctly stated in his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* in the following passage which I have already quoted: “The mode of production of the material means of existence conditions the whole process of social, political and intellectual life.”

The central defect of this theory which makes it unsound and even false as an explanation of social and historical development is its extreme one-sided exaggeration of the role of the material or economic factor in man’s social existence. This results in an over-simplification of the complex phenomena of social life and an over-generalisation in their interpretation. Marx takes one factor—the economic—of the total social system and makes it the exclusive cause or the sole and permanent determinant of all social phenomena for all times. This excessive exaggeration is the cardinal defect of his theory which renders all his conclusions derived from it both logically and historically untenable and in practice extremely harmful.

In Sri Aurobindo’s view, man’s social system is a complex whole composed of several organically interdependent and interacting factors. At different stages of its evolutionary development different factors of the system exercise a predominant influence over the whole social life. But the influence of any factor at any particular stage, however predominant, is never sole or exclusive. And no factor can be a permanent determinant of social life and development at all times. Different factors of the social system have a variable influence at different periods of its historical development. To say that a single factor,—the economic or any other,—is the sole permanent cause of all others at all the stages is an unwarranted exaggeration in the extreme which can only be asserted by misreading, twisting or falsifying the facts of history.

This is the bane not only of Marx's theory but of all others—there are several of them—which attempt to interpret history in terms of a single factor of man's social existence. These exclusive, one-sided, deterministic theories do not lead to truth which is a complex whole but only to rigid dogmatism which easily turns into blind fanaticism, as it happened to Marx's theory. As Sri Aurobindo points out, "to read an economic cause, conscious or unconscious, into all phenomena of man's history is part of the Bolshevik gospel born of the fallacy of Karl Marx. Man's nature is not so simple and one-chorded as all that—it has many lines and each line produces a need of his life."⁵

A true statement of the role of the economic factor would be that at certain stages of history it has exerted a predominant (not exclusive) influence on the whole social system. This is a truth which Sri Aurobindo himself recognises, even though his own theory of social development, being psychological and spiritual, is entirely opposed to Marx's materialistic economic theory. For, he admits that though it is the self or spirit that always governs the social evolution, it does not do so overtly at all times; in the earlier stages it remains secret behind the veil and allows other instrumental factors to dominate social development. For this reason at certain stages of social evolution the material or the economic factor becomes predominant and puts its stamp upon the whole social life. For example, at several places in *The Human Cycle*, *The Ideal of Human Unity*, *The Foundations of Indian Culture*, *The Life Divine* and in other works, he has stated that society in the modern rational-scientific age is dominated by the economic view and motive of life—what he calls "commercialism"—and that it has put its all-powerful stamp on the political, cultural, ethical, aesthetic and religious spheres of life. But he has also mentioned that this is true only of the modern period; at other periods in the past, other factors played a dominant role and in the future yet other factors will emerge and dominate social life. I will quote one passage from *The Ideal of Human Unity* in which he has very vividly explained this changing and variable role of the economic factor at different periods of history:

Commercialism is a modern sociological phenomenon; one might almost say, that is the

whole phenomenon of modern society. The economic part of life is always important to an organised community and even fundamental; but in former times it was simply the first need, it was not that which occupied the thoughts of men, gave the whole tone to the social life, stood at the head and was clearly recognised as standing at the root of social principles. Ancient man was in the group primarily a political being, in the Aristotelian sense,—as soon as he ceased to be primarily religious,—and to this preoccupation he added, whenever he was sufficiently at ease, the preoccupation of thought, art and culture. The economic impulses of the group were worked out as a mechanical necessity, a strong desire in the vital being rather than a leading thought in the mind. Nor was the society regarded or studied as an economic organism except in a very superficial aspect. The economic man held an honourable but still a comparatively low position in the society; he was only the third caste or class, the Vaishya. The lead was in the hands of the intellectual and political classes,—the Brahmin, thinker, scholar, philosopher and priest, the Kshatriya, ruler and warrior. It was their thoughts and preoccupations that gave the tone to society, determined its conscious drift and action, coloured most powerfully all its motives...

"Everything now is changed. The phenomenon of modern social development is the decline of the Brahmin and Kshatriya, of the Church, the military aristocracy and the aristocracy of letters and culture, and the rise to power or predominance of the commercial and industrial classes, Vaishya and Shudra, Capital and Labour. Together they have swallowed up or cast out their rivals and are now engaged in a fratricidal conflict for sole possession in which the completion of the downward force of social gravitation, the ultimate triumph of Labour and the remodelling of all social conceptions and institutions with Labour as the first, the most dignified term which will give its value to all others seem to be the visible writing of Fate. At present, however, it is the Vaishya who still predominates and his stamp on the world is commercialism the predominance of the economic man, the universality of the commercial value or the utilitarian and materially efficient and productive value for everything in human life. *Even in the*

outlook on knowledge, thought, science, art, poetry and religion the economic conception of life overrides the others."⁶

How this modern economic view of life has overridden all other values and put its strong influence on every sphere of present-day life has been further described by Sri Aurobindo in the following passage:

"For the modern economic view of life, culture and its products have chiefly a decorative value; they are costly and desirable luxuries, not at all indispensable necessities. Religion is in this view a by-product of the human mind with a very restricted utility—if indeed it is not a waste and a hindrance. Education has a recognised importance but its object and form are no longer so much cultural as scientific, utilitarian and economic, its value the preparation of the efficient individual unit to take his place in the body of the economic organisation. Science is of immense importance not because it discovers the secrets of Nature for the advancement of knowledge, but because it utilises them for the creation of machinery and develops and organises the economic resources of the community. The thought-power of the society, almost its soul-power—if it has any longer so unsubstantial and unproductive a thing as a soul—is not in its religion or its literature, although the former drags on a feeble existence and the latter teems and spawns, but in the daily Press primarily an instrument of commercialism and governed by the political and commercial spirit and not like literature a direct instrument of culture. Politics, government itself are becoming more and more a machinery for the development of an industrialised society, divided between the service of bourgeois capitalism and the office of a half-involuntary channel for the incoming of economic Socialism. Free thought and culture remain on the surface of this great increasing mass of commercialism and influence and modify it, but are themselves more and more influenced, penetrated, coloured, subjugated by the economic, commercial and industrial view of human life."⁷

You will have noticed from these two extracts, that Sri Aurobindo's view of the determining factor of modern society is almost entirely identical with

Marx's view, for like Marx he admits that in modern society the economic value shapes and determines all other values. But you will have also noticed that for Sri Aurobindo this economic determinism is true only of modern society and not, as for Marx, of society at all stages of its development. In the ancient and mediaeval periods non-economic factors dominated social life and in the future also, after the modern age has passed away, man will shape his social life under the influence of higher spiritual values. In this way, though Sri Aurobindo does not deny the powerful influence of the economic factor at a certain stage of history or social development, yet he admits it only as a temporary passing phase; he does not consider it to be the sole determinant of the entire course of human history, as Marx does. The error of Marx is to take a factor of temporary and variable importance in history and make it the sole and permanent cause of all historical phenomena. This excessive over-generalisation makes his theory both logically and historically fallacious.

This fallacy of Marx's theory can be easily proved if we rightly interpret the facts of history. For example, according to this theory, no social change can take place except as a result of a change in the economic factor (by which he means the modes and instruments of production), and also any change in the economic factor must necessarily produce corresponding social changes. How wrong this assumption is can easily be proved by noting the facts of history pointed out by M. Kovalevsky. He says that in England in the period from the sixth to the sixteenth century, the technique of agriculture and the means and the instruments of production remained practically the same. In spite of this, in the field of economic relations, social and political institutions and in the mental and moral life, a series of the most important changes occurred. On the other hand, we have many instances where a modification of technique, or of economic basis is not followed by any noticeable change in the ideologies, ethics, or art of a people.⁸ This clearly shows that a change in economic mode of production is not an indispensably necessary condition for changes in social, political, intellectual, cultural and religious spheres.

Because of this basic error in Marx's economic

theory most of the modern socialists have been compelled to reject its extreme one-sided exaggeration and to adopt a more balanced attitude towards the role of the economic factor in social life. As F. W. Coker observes:

“Although economic conditions have their influence, other factors have profound effects in determining the culture, philosophy, and politics of an age. The great social and political transformations of the past did not arise out of conflicts of material interests alone. Men have fought as violently over differences in religious doctrine as over their conflicting economic claims. Racial, cultural and religious factors have competed with, or transformed, or even overcome, economic factors in determining the alliances and enmities between nations. Economic affiliations and antagonisms cannot explain the opposition between Western and South Ireland, or the rivalries among the Balkan states, or the support accorded by majorities of wage-earners to their several governments in the World War. Much of a man’s political conduct is determined by his nationalist instincts or habits, or by his religious feelings, or by his pride of social position, or by his neighbourhood prejudices, or by his sense of fair play. In all phases of the life of men in society, there is action and reaction: economic conditions produce effects in moral, religious, and political creeds and the forms of social organisation; but these latter act upon, even when they are adapting themselves to the economic conditions.”⁹

This is the position accepted by most contemporary socialists in recent times except, of course, the orthodox followers of Marx who consider any modification of his theory a blasphemous heresy. Like religious fanatics they refuse to budge from their dogmatic stand, however contrary to truth and actual facts it really is. But the more open-minded socialists accept mutual interdependence between the economic and other non-economic social factors and not only the one-sided economic determinism of Marx.

You will be most surprised to know that Marx’s theory of economic determinism is so utterly untenable that even he himself and his collaborator

F. Engels were, in their later writings, obliged to modify and move away from it. This requires to be specially noted because, as so many writers have pointed out, this modification actually amounts to a complete abandonment by Marx and Engels of the very fundamental principle of their theory. In their later writings they admit that the economic factor does not always determine other non-economic social factors but is itself sometimes influenced by them. If this is admitted, then it is no longer one-sided economic determinism but mutual or reciprocal interaction between the economic and the non-economic factors of social life. In fact, this change from exclusive determinism to reciprocal interaction and interdependence amounts to a complete rejection by Marx of his rigidly deterministic theory of historical materialism because it knocks out its basic principle. This is another instance of self-contradiction or inconsistency in Marx’s central theory which he has never reconciled. I will give here an extract from a letter of Engels (in which he speaks both for Marx and himself) written to J. Bloch in 1890 which very clearly proves that they had themselves practically given up their firm adherence to their own economic theory:

“Marx and I are partly responsible for the fact that at times our disciples have laid more weight upon the economic factor than belongs to it. We were compelled to emphasise its central character in opposition to our opponents, who denied it, and there wasn’t always time, place and occasion to do justice to the other factors in the reciprocal interactions of the historical process.”¹⁰

You will have noticed the slyly apologetic tone of this letter, but that was perhaps inevitable considering the totally impossible position in which Marx and Engels had entrenched themselves by their inflexible economic interpretation of history. And yet, in the same letter Engels goes on to say that the economic factor is “in the last instance the determining factor in history”, and that it is “finally decisive”. This, as Wayper points out, “is far from being as satisfactory as Engels found it, since it is so clearly an attempt to have it both ways.... If there is really interaction between them (the economic and the non-economic factors), then the whole thesis falls

to the ground since we cannot now be dealing with a purely economic factor but with one which has been in part determined by non-economic factors, and it cannot, accordingly, be said that the economic factor must always be decisive.”¹⁰

It is thus evident that Marx's economic theory of historical materialism, like his philosophic theory of dialectical materialism, is so untenable that he himself was obliged to modify it, but he tried to do this in a manner so ambiguous that it virtually amounted to a total rejection of his basic standpoint.

Social Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and the New Age'

References:

1. Nicolas Berdyaev, in the earlier period of his life, was an ardent follower of Marx and was actively associated with the extreme left wing of the Russian

socialist movement. He participated in the revolutionary movements which culminated in the establishment of the Soviet regime. But later, he turned away from Marxism and veered increasingly towards Idealism and eventually embraced what he called Neo-Christianity and wrote several important books criticising Marxism.

2. Nicolas Berdyaev, "Christianity and Human Activity", *The Bourgeois Mind and other Essays*, p. 82, quoted by R. V. Anderson in "Berdyaev's Critique of Marxism", *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, July 1962, p. 278.
3. Nicolas Berdyaev, "The General Line of Soviet Philosophy", *The End of our Time*, p. 240, quoted by R. V. Anderson, op. cit., p. 279.
4. C. L. Wayper, *Political Thought* (1958), p. 202.
5. *Letters on Yoga* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 22), p. 208.
6. *The Ideal of Human Unity* (Cent. Ed., Vol. 15), pp. 463-64.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 464-65.
8. M. Kovalevsky, *Sovremennya Sociologi*, pp. 244 ff. See P. Sorokin, *Contemporary Sociological Theories* (New York, 1928), pp. 539-40, f.n.
9. F. W. Coker, *Recent Political Thought* (1957), p. 135.
10. Quoted by C. L. Wayper in *Political Thought* (1958), p. 202.

The modern age has resolved itself into a constant series of radical progressions.

This series seems to follow always a typical course, first a luminous seed-time and a period of enthusiastic effort and battle, next a partial victory and achievement and a brief era of possession, then disillusionment and the birth of a new idea and endeavour. A principle of society is put forward by the thinker, seizes on the general mind and becomes a social gospel; brought immediately or by rapid stages into practice, it dethrones the preceding principle and takes its place as the foundation of the community's social or political life. This victory won, men live for a time in the enthusiasm or, when the enthusiasm sinks, in the habit of their great achievement. After a little they begin to feel less ill at ease with the first results and are moved to adapt, to alter constantly, to develop more or less restlessly the new system,—for it is the very nature of reason to observe, to be open to novel ideas, to respond quickly to new needs and possibilities and not to repose always in the unquestioning acceptance of every habit and old association. Still men do not think yet of questioning their social principle or imagine that it will ever need alteration, but are intent only to perfect its forms and make its application more thorough, its execution more sincere and effective. A time, however, arrives when the reason becomes dissatisfied and sees that it is only erecting a mass of new conventions and that there has been no satisfying change; there has been a shifting of stresses, but the society is not appreciably nearer to perfection. The opposition of the few thinkers who have already, perhaps almost from the first, started to question the sufficiency of the social principle, makes itself felt and is accepted by increasing numbers; there is a movement of revolt and the society starts on the familiar round to a new radical progression, a new revolution, the reign of a more advanced social principle.

Sri Aurobindo
'The Human Cycle'

A Model Framework of Teaching-Learning for the Contemporary Teacher

Kireet Joshi

There is a conceivable and realizable model framework of education, at once flexible and stable, which would meet the varied needs that are imperatively demanded by the contemporary needs.

If we want education for peace and education for development; if we want our students to have not only intellectual development but an integral development of personality; if we want to underline the value of physical education and manual labour as also that of the moral and spiritual austerity and discipline; and if we want each student to discover his own inner law of development and real vocation of life; if we want these things, then we stand in a need to have a framework of education that is quite different from the one that we have at present.

It is not intended to present here a model of the required framework as *the* model, but as a tentative and experimental model that could be utilized, with the necessary modifications, for innovative experiments. The new model will be so flexible that it can accommodate or adjust itself with the various programmes of education of varying durations. In particular, this model will aim at providing the necessary structure and organization so as to permit the art of self-learning and integral development of personality as also various combinations of programmes of agricultural, technical, vocational, artistic and academic education. It will also facilitate the creation of the atmosphere and stimulation needed for dynamic methods. Besides it will also meet the needs of multi-point entry system, non-formal education, part-time education, and of weaving examination system into the learning process itself.

I. Grouping of Students

For each major stage of studies (lower primary, higher primary, etc.) there could normally be sections or groups of about 100 students. The differences of levels of capacities should not very much count in the formation of these large groupings. These

groupings would be valid and useful for those areas of studies which yield easily to cooperative work, mass media or to the means of environmental influence. These would include works of productive labour; large portions of language-learning; as also introductory or panoramic portions of a number of subjects where demonstrations, exhibitions or stimulating and interesting lectures are suitable means of communication. These would also be relevant to what may be regarded as peripheral areas of studies, where the imparting of general information is intended. Areas of general explanations, general knowledge, general instructions are also appropriate to these large groupings.

In the general working of the organization, it is better not to have any fixed time-table for the work of these large groupings. Or, if it is found necessary for some reason to have a regular fixed timing, it is better to have it not for the main work but to confine it to what may be termed 'time for supplementary work.'

In any case, the fixed timings of various programmes of education should be so arranged that the hours of fresh study and labour which can be done by individual self-learning are not affected in any way. (The major portion of the daily work should be available to the students for their individual self-learning.)

For purposes of the individual self-learning, there will be, in a sense, no groupings since each individual will be free to choose his own area of work and pursue it at his own pace.

(A) But each teacher will have a number of students who will come to him more or less regularly for consultation on the subject of his competence. These students would, in a sense, constitute for the teacher in question a kind of a natural group. For, although these students will mostly come individually for consultations, they might also come in the form of a group from time to time.

(B) There will be, however, another kind of grouping or break-up of the large group, depending upon the mode of learning that a given topic imposes or upon the mode of learning chosen by the student. There are topics or areas which need to be pursued regularly, systematically, step by step, with rigour, measure and regulated or accelerated speed. Those who choose such topics or such a mode of learning will form a kind of a group—even though each of them may do his work mostly by himself. There are other areas or topics, which may permit a leisurely and free pursuit. Those who choose such topics or such a mode of learning will form another group. These groupings will not, however, be tight and inflexible. The same student may belong to one group for a few topics and to another group for other topics; or, with regard to the same topic, he may offer to do both these kinds of work appropriate to both these groups. Thus, he will belong to both the groups.

It may be noted that the grouping mentioned above under (A) and (B) will be, more or less, temporary, meant for some specific purpose or project and therefore dissoluble with the purpose in view. These groups will normally tend to be homogeneous from the point of view of capacities, or interests, but there will be no rigidity in this respect. They will often need to have group classes, and sometimes, even a fixed time-table for short or long periods. Normally, time-tables should be fixed for a month or two, renewable for a longer period, if necessary.

Individual consultations with the teachers will also tend in the direction of regular prior fixation of timings in regard to each student. There are some obvious advantages and conveniences in such fixed appointments. But care should be taken to see that the teachers keep always one or two hours daily unfixed so that students may have the opportunity to come to them from time to time without any prior engagement.

One final point about grouping. If we are watchful, we shall find that, from time to time, there emerge spontaneously extremely small groups of students who have common feelings and high aspirations, some common character or common trait of personality, even though they may differ in respect

of capacities. Their homogeneity is by virtue of character or personality rather than capacities. Such groups are very valuable. They should be recognized, and they should be given all the help needed—individually or collectively. Such groups become, if properly encouraged, transmitters of enthusiasm, dedication and devotion to studies, work and ideals.

In regard to the above system of grouping, three obvious advantages can be mentioned:

- (1) There has recently been a strong plea for multi-point entry system, particularly, in relation to the solutions which have been suggested for the implementation of the programme for the universalization of elementary education. It will be noted that this idea of multi-point entry system is extremely valuable, and this system will find a natural setting in the structure that is suggested here. Similarly, this structure will provide a favourable setting for 'unit' studies. And a new system of tests can easily operate in the proposed structure so that tests become a part of the natural rhythm of the process of learning.
- (2) It would be possible in this flexible organization to ensure facilities for individual attention, which is indispensable, particularly, in the field of moral and spiritual education.
- (3) Works of productive labour can flourish in this setting with a naturalness that is so essential to the joy of work. These works need not be given as tasks. But students can be stimulated and encouraged by means of nourishment of interest, environmental needs and influences, as also through the medium of hobbies. In this setting, even specialization of vocational training can be initiated at early stages. General education, diversification of courses and vocationalization—all can blend harmoniously together.

II. Teachers

- (a) The role of teachers in this new organization is crucial. The teachers should have not only competence with regard to their subjects but also the necessary spirit and zeal.

The teacher's main occupation will be to observe

his students, their inclinations and capacities, so as to be able to help them with deep sympathy and understanding.

The teacher will not be a mere lecturer, rather he will be an animator. He will inspire much more than instruct; he will guide by example and influence.

To aid students in awakening inner will to grow and progress—this will be the constant endeavour of the teachers.

To evolve a programme of education for each student in accordance with the needs of his growth; to watch the students with deep sympathy, understanding and patience, ready to intervene and guide when necessary; to stimulate the students with interesting projects and programmes, striking words, ideas, questions and stories—this will be the main work of the teachers.

But to radiate an inner calm and a cheerful dynamism so as to create an atmosphere conducive to the development of the higher faculties of inner knowledge and intuition—that will be regarded as the very heart of the work of the teachers.

(b) In the initial stages, students will need to learn how to organize their freedom; teachers should, therefore, help students in this regard.

(c) For every unit of 100 students, there should be a coordinator or a 'First Teacher' whose functions will be as follows:

- (1) He will be available to students for guidance so as to help them in organizing their work and in learning the art of self-learning as also other ways of learning;
- (2) He may, by personal contact, provide motivation to the students for various works, topics or subjects according to the needs and circumstances;
- (3) He will ensure that all the material needs of students and work are provided for;
- (4) He will keep an overall record of the work of every student in the unit, and he will see that the students get the necessary guidance from

himself or from the other teachers, or else from the environment;

- (5) He will also ensure that the entire organization runs smoothly and harmoniously;
- (6) He will work as a brother among brothers and will consult all concerned before arriving at decisions; and
- (7) He will also give the necessary help in framing time-tables, particularly, in view of the fact that, since there will be no time-tables fixed in advance for the whole year, there will be the need to frame ad hoc time-tables for short or long durations in consultation with students and teachers for various subjects and for various purposes.

(d) In addition to the First Teachers, it seems practicable that, for each major subject, a full-time competent teacher could take charge of about 30-40 students (this number may vary according to the special needs of a given subject and also the age and capacity of the students). These teachers may form themselves into a small committee to help the Coordinator, and maintain a personal contact with the students in the Unit.

(e) Problems of irregularity, indiscipline and misuse of facilities will primarily be dealt with by the Coordinator and his Committee. To this Committee may be nominated some of the best students of the Unit.

(f) All administrative problems should be handled carefully so that all points of view are given their due weight, and decisions emerge out of consultations.

(g) All work should be carried out by utmost goodwill and cooperative action, rather than by any arbitrary authority.

(h) There should be no place for gossip, politics, canvassing, maneuvering, ugliness and untidiness. There should be an atmosphere of self-control and utmost inner discipline.

(i) A full-fledged working of this model will pre-suppose new educational material in the

form of booklets, work-sheets, charts, maps, pictures, albums, tapes, slides, film-strips, magazines, journals, exhibits, tools, and equipment and apparatus. And new curricula and syllabi have to be worked out, particularly, in regard to interdisciplinary studies and interweaving of work and knowledge. In these tasks, teachers will have to make their own contribution.

(j) The very disposition and arrangement of the classes would be such that the students will have facilities to work on their own and to consult the teachers according to the needs of their progress. Teachers, instead of being at the head of the class, will be found at convenient places so that they are readily available to those who need help, guidance and consultation.

III: Organization of the Work

In the proposed organization, a special emphasis will fall upon 'individual work'. Individual work may be pursued in several different ways:

- (a) by individual consultation or interviews with teachers;
- (b) by doing works such as those of carpentry, knitting, embroidery, decoration, etc.;
- (c) by working on work-sheets;
- (d) by studying books or relevant portions of books;
- (e) by quiet reflection or meditation;
- (f) by carrying out experiments;
- (g) by writing compositions; or
- (h) by drawing, designing, painting, etc.

There can be several situations in which a group work is desirable or necessary. There are a number of projects in which there can be a division of labour; there can be educational games of team work; and there can be joint experimentation, joint pursuit of the subject, or collective discussion.

It may, however, be noted that the collective work often tends to become mechanical, and this tendency should be discouraged.

Freedom to choose a work or a subject is a necessary element of the training in the art of self-learning. It is, therefore, necessary that this free choice should be given to the students, but it should be aided by proper guidance of the

teacher so that freedom is not misused. The aim should be that the student's choice should reflect his real and serious quest.

In order to facilitate the freedom of choice, students may be invited to indicate what lines of work or study they would like to undertake. Teachers may present to the students a suggestive but detailed list of suitable works and topics. They may also give a few talks to the students to explain the main outline of the subject in order to stimulate their interest.

Each work or topic selected by the student will constitute a short or a long project, depending upon its nature.

In exploring each project, students will take the help of the teacher, as and when needed.

Teachers, on their part, will endeavour to relate the explanation of the project to the inner needs of the students, and they will be expected to help students widen and intensify the areas of their exploration so as to avoid narrow specialization or a mere idle superficiality.

Each student's programme of studies will be flexible, supple and evolutionary. The student will be encouraged to progress at his own pace; and he will be encouraged also to correlate various topics of study around a given area of productive labour as also to synthesize, more and more progressively, science, fine arts, humanities and technology.

Tests will be given to the students where necessary, and their aim will be to provide to the students occasions for exercise, revision, comprehension, encouragement and self-evaluation.

At the end of every two or three months each student will submit to the Coordinator a report on his work in regard to each topic, subject or work under study. This report will give details of the progress he has made in regard to what he has read or written or the reflections and conclusions he has arrived at. (It is understood that younger students will not be capable of giving this kind of report, and in their case teachers themselves will prepare reports for them.)

The quality of the work will be considered more important than the quantity of the work, although the latter should not be meager, but commensurate with high standards.

IV. Lecture System, Syllabus System and Examination System

In this organisation, the lecture system will no more be given the central place. Lectures will be used mainly for:

- (a) introducing a subject;
- (b) stimulating interest in a subject;
- (c) presenting a panoramic view of the subject;
- (d) explaining general difficulties or hurdles which are commonly met by a large number of students in their work or studies;
- (e) creating a collective atmosphere with regard to certain pervasive ideas; and
- (f) initiating rapid and massive programmes of 'training'.

Similarly, the syllabus system will also undergo a radical change. A syllabus as a general panoramic view in the vision of the teacher and as a guideline for the student has a legitimate function, and this has to be preserved. But in the actual operation of the educational processes, there have to be what may be called 'evolutionary syllabi'. A syllabus should grow according to the needs of the inner growth of the student; and the student should be free to develop and weave the various elements of his work and studies into a complex harmonious whole.

It may be noted that it is in this setting of 'evolutionary syllabi' that we can truly fulfill the needs of multi-point entry system. Again, it may be noted that it is in this setting that we could have flexible programmes of work and studies suitable to different categories of students, and thus we can have a flexible pattern of education in a general framework which can cater to the needs not merely of a small percentage of students who may be ready and fit to reach the higher levels of academic education, but also of a large number of students who may remain in the educational system only for 4 years, 7 years or a little more. The central point is that the educational programme, whatever its duration, should aim at providing to the

students a real base for three things:

- (1) art of self-learning and continuing education,
- (2) art of noble life, and
- (3) art of work.

Finally, in the proposed organization, the examination system will also undergo a radical change. Tests will be used mainly for:

- (a) stimulation,
- (b) providing opportunities to the students to think clearly and to formulate ideas adequately,
- (c) achieving precision, exactness and mastery of details,
- (d) arriving at a global view of the subjects or works in question,
- (e) self-evaluation, and
- (f) gaining self-confidence.

Tests will be woven into the learning process, the central thrust of which will be to develop among the students the noble qualities such as those of truthfulness, sincerity, cheerfulness, benevolence, right judgment, sacrifice, cooperation, and friendship.

Tests for placement in the employment market should be conducted by a National Testing Service, and they should be open to anyone who wants to take them. These tests should be related to specific jobs or employment opportunities or certain specific pursuits of studies and disciplines of knowledge and skill.

V. What will be Expected of Students

To learn the secret of self-education and to work hard so as to remain steadily on the road to self-perfection—this will be the student's constant endeavour.

To study and work widely and intensely, to study and work with joy and application, to study and work to grow and to remain perpetually youthful—this will be the content of his main work.

But to become a fearless hero-warrior in the quest of Truth, Harmony, and Liberty, and to surpass the limitations of his nature by an inner change and transformation—this will be regarded as the very heart of his work.

Science and the New Consciousness

Some Implications for Human Unity

Arya

The Changing Nature of Matter

Ultimately, the entire universe (with all its "particles" including those constituting human beings, their laboratories, observing instruments, etc.) has to be understood as a single undivided whole, in which analysis into separately and independently existent parts has no fundamental status.¹

The scientist in his most essential activity looks at the world with a sense of wonder. He wonders what it is made of, what keeps it together, how did it come to be as it is, will it continue to grow, etc., etc.? You can imagine him, like the poet, philosopher and mystic, gazing into this vast display we call nature and spending a considerable amount of time doing what many term "day dreaming". It is precisely this activity that calls for the bursts of intuition that send him running to his laboratory to design an experiment which will either verify or negate his visions—or do neither! His musing have led him to draw many maps of "reality", many of which he had to abandon. In this regard it is only a few centuries since man believed that the earth was the center of the universe. What became known as the Copernican Revolution dealt a tremendous blow, not only to science but to long established psychological patterns.

Since the turn of this century we are participating with differing degrees of awareness in a paradigm shift that may have far deeper scientific, psychological and spiritual implications than the Copernican Revolution. In the sphere of the physical sciences this has been described as a transition from a mechanistic understanding of the world to one that is essentially holistic. The first construct, which envisioned the universe as a Great Machine, was formulated in the 17th century by Rene Descarte and Isaac Newton. It has remained as the dominant world-view of modern science until the first part of this century. With the "dreams" and experiment of Planck, Einstein, Bohr, De Broglie, Heisenberg, Schrodinger *et al*, a serious challenge to the classical world view was

established. This body of work became known as the "new physics" and received its basic formation between 1900 and 1927. While it is not within the scope of this paper to trace the history and development of these two world views certain essential characteristics of each vision can be grasped by focusing on the respective insights regarding the nature of matter.

Presently we exist between these two world views: one deeply ingrained in our belief system, and imprinted in our subconscious; the other still in process of being born. The Cartesian-Newtonian world view has dominated Western culture for the past three hundred years. It has pervaded not only the scientific world but also the way we view our social relations, nature, economics, politics, medicine and ourselves. Through this filter we perceive "reality" as a myriad of solid objects, existing unto themselves, interrelating via various forces, and residing in empty space. The keynote of this model is *separation*. Descarte created the conceptual framework for the scientific revolution, while Newton developed a complete mathematical formulation of this Cartesian mechanistic view of nature. More specifically, Descarte bequeathed us a picture of the universe as the Great Machine, and Newton formulated the laws by which it runs. Descarte's rational method of perceiving the universe based on his famous *Cogito, ergo sum*—I think, therefore I exist—enthroned the mind in the position of certainty, separate from matter, and more specifically the body. This basic dualism further supported the belief that we can be objective observers of nature, and even our individual bodies. This premise, which lies at the heart of the scientific method, has created a division that defies the very idea of human unity inasmuch as it

... has taught us to be aware of ourselves as isolated egos existing "inside" our bodies; it has led us to set a higher value on mental than manual work; it has enabled huge industries to sell products—especially

to women that would make us owners of the “ideal body”; it has kept doctors from seriously considering the psychological dimensions of illness, and psychotherapists from dealing with their patients’ bodies. In the life sciences, the Cartesian division has led to endless confusion about the relation between mind and brain, and in physics it made it extremely difficult for the founders of quantum theory to interpret their observations of atomic phenomena.²

Descartes’s dream of nature, governed by exact mathematical laws, was fulfilled by Newton. The latter developed a complete mathematical formulation of the Cartesian mechanistic view of nature. The constituents of Newton’s universe were absolute space and time, i.e. independent of physical phenomenon; small, solid indestructible material particles from which all matter is formed; and the force of gravity, accounting for the motion of the particles. According to Newton, both the particles and the force of gravity were created by God. This atomistic model of matter was first formulated by the Greek atomist Democritus, in his attempt to understand the world. Newton, however, went beyond the Democritean model, by offering a precise mathematical description of the force of gravity acting between particles—resulting in the Newtonian laws of motion. Although the Newtonian conception of matter has been radically altered by ongoing investigations into the nature of atoms, the quest for the ultimate particle (or building block of the universe) persists. This is true even among modern-day physicists whose explanations have revealed hundreds of sub-atomic particles. It is at this very juncture that the nature of matter becomes questionable—for in the new physics the energy field in which these “particles” have only a tendency to exist, predominates. We shall see that through these deeper explanations into subatomic realms the concept of “isolated particles” emerges more as a creation of the mind that asks particular questions than as a reflection of the nature of reality.

At its core, the Newtonian world view is deterministic, and begins with the assumption of separate parts. The work of classical physics focuses on the discovery of the relationship between these pre-existing parts. It is indeed, the “Great Machine” envisioned by Descartes:

In the Newtonian view God created in the beginning the material particles, the forces between them, and the fundamental laws of motion. In this way, the whole universe was set in motion, and it has continued to run ever since, like a machine, governed by immutable laws.³

The rise of “new physics”, formulated as quantum and relativity theories, sounded the death knell to such notions as absolute space and time, elementary solid particles, fundamental material substance, the causal nature of physical phenomenon, and the objective description of nature. These modes of thinking (about the world’s structure and the laws governing it) require, for their transformation, nothing less than a psychological revolution.

The inner exploration of matter at the atomic level revealed that atoms are not hard, solid particles, but, rather, vast regions of space over which smaller “particles” such as the electron, travel. Over one hundred of these subatomic “particles” have been discovered but none of them resemble in any way the solid objects of classical physics. They are neither hard nor indestructible as both Democritus and Newton envisioned them. The experiments of quantum physics have shown these miniscule units of matter to possess a dual nature, similar to that of light. Sometime they appear as particles and sometimes as waves, i.e. either as an entity confined to extremely small volumes—a point—or diametrically, encompassing a region of space. This is one of the fundamental paradoxes in quantum theory. Thus we can only speak of “particles” that have *tendencies* to be particles and at the same time to have *tendencies* to be waves. The clear distinction between empty space and material object in classical physics has evaporated. In fact Einstein expresses the radical intimacy or oneness of “matter” and energy field as:

We may... regard matter as being constituted by the regions of space in which the field is extremely intense... There is no place in this new kind of physics both for the field and matter, for the field is the only reality.⁴

If we ask what anything is made of we will be led, beyond immediate answers such as wood, flesh or iron, to a level where “substance”—as we

ordinarily experience it—does not exist! Upon increased magnification all forms of matter, regardless of what we name them, are actually patterns of cells, molecules, atoms, and subatomic particles. A growing community of physicists are intuiting that the search for the “ultimate stuff” of the universe will end with the discovery that there isn't any! So ... what is at the foundation of this apparently solid world?

If there is any ultimate stuff ... it is pure energy; but subatomic particles are not “made of energy”, they *are* energy ... Subatomic interactions ... are interactions of energy with energy. At the subatomic level, there is no longer a clear distinction between what is and what happens, between the actor and action. At the subatomic level the dancer and the dance are one.⁵

One begins to see by journeying into the subtle realms of matter a wholeness, a unity, a oneness that we may actually experience as a *material foundation* for human unity. Beneath the apparent solidity of our Newtonian world there lies a realm where the nature of matter is radically different. Here the laws of Newtonian physics do not apply, and our mind is forced to surrender its reliance on hard edges, on “things”, on separate objects. When we move from scientific to yogic experiments we will see a similar parallel between the “gross matter” of our senses and the “subtle matter” or “true matter” of the inner realms.

While it is quite clear at this stage of evolution that the findings of the new physics are not meant to constitute a proof for a consciousness universe, mysticism or spiritual experience, there are many discoveries that indicate a future convergence. First the work of Werner Heisenberg has radically called into question the idea that there can be an independent observer of nature, a premise upon which the scientific method is based. This opens the door to illuminating the radical limitation of a subject-object mode of knowing and the powerful influence of mind on the structure of matter. Put in the simplest terms Heisenberg's finding is: You cannot observe something without changing it. The apparent dual nature of matter and light was given precise mathematical form by him, and is known as the “uncertainty principle”.

Heisenberg's experiments with electrons concluded that you cannot determine simultaneously the position and momentum of the moving particle. If you use light with a sufficient short wave length to see the electron, the energy of the light changes the momentum of the electron; and if you use light of lower energy, or larger energy wave length, then you cannot see the electron. The classical view of the material world is undercut in two radical ways: firstly, that solid, isolated, enduring particles or objects do not exist at the subatomic level; secondly, that we do not see this reality as it really is, but in the way we can choose to see it. According to Heisenberg: “What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning.”⁶ If one continues this line of investigation do physics and psychology eventually share a common work? Does consciousness have the power to shape, to pattern the material world? Already there are physicists who see this possibility:

The fact that all the properties of particles are determined by principles closely related to the methods of observation would mean that the basic structure of the material world are determined, ultimately, by the way we look at this world; that the observed patterns of matter are reflections of patterns of mind.⁷

The second indication from the explorers of the subatomic level of reality that we are dealing with a universe of interconnectedness or unbroken wholeness is Bell's theorem. Some physicists proclaim that it may be the most important discovery in the history of science. One of the implications of this theorem is that what appears as “separate parts” of the universe are connected in an intimate and immediate way. The experiments that have been performed to verify this are based on events happening in two areas, A and B, which are very far apart. Conditions for what physicists call a “space-like separation” are established if area A and B are so far apart that there is insufficient time for a light signal to connect an event that happens in area A with an event that happens in area B. It has been confirmed that information is, in fact, communicated at *superluminal*, i.e. faster than light, speeds which are contrary to the accepted ideas of physicists. Even more important, Bell's theorem shows that our

common sense about the world is inadequate not only in the realm of the subatomic but also in the macroscopic world.

Another way to talk about Bell's theorem is that the principle of *local causes* fails. This principle assumes that what happens in one area does not depend on variables subject to the control of an experimenter in a distant space-like separated area. This assumption further assumes a world of *separate parts* which are autonomous. But what if there are no separate parts? What are the implications for free will, humanity, telepathy, etc.?

This leads us to the work of David Bohm, one of the most famous theoretical physicists who provides yet a third indication of convergence between modern sciences and the experience of oneness. For Bohm quantum physics is based on the perception of a new order: "We must turn physics around. Instead of starting with parts and showing how they work together (the Cartesian order) we start with the whole."⁸ In continuity with Bell's theorem at the most fundamental level, reality is an unbroken wholeness which he calls "that-which-is". All forms manifest from this implicate order into what we ordinarily perceive—the explicate order or display of nature. He notes that quantum mechanics "says there is an implicate order and there is an infinite sea of energy, and that this unfolds to form space, time and matter."⁹ One of the key points of interest in Bohm's vision is whether this implicate order, in which all apparently separate forms of the explicate order are in a dynamic process of unfolding and enfolding, is a conscious process. In this regard Bohm calls for a new instrument of thought which could experience the unbroken wholeness of implicate and explicate order.

Regarding human unity Bohm is urging us to "remember" the implicate order—that without it the explicate order is an abstraction:

You see, if we accept the idea of the explicate order of everything outside of everything else, everything manifest, then it becomes absurd to think of human beings all becoming one ... The universe as one whole ... that earlier view ... (i.e. the explicate order as the ultimate or whole of reality) ... was

really very coarse, gross, and that by following science itself we have been led to a view which is compatible with the wholeness of mankind, or its holiness ... Mankind has now splintered and fragmented into countless bits, not only nations and religions and groups, but each individual in families, isolated from each other, and within, each individual is in many fragments, and this tremendous fragmentation gives rise to chaos, violence, destruction and very little hope of any real order coming about. And now that is supported by the general view of everything ... that the basic reality consists of little bits, all outside of each other.¹⁰

How do we gain access to this implicate order of Bohm's so as to re-discover the broken wholeness? Both consciousness and matter are for him within the implicate order and both manifest to varying degrees in the explicate order. Thought he sees as a tiny manifestation of some deeper mind, but it forms a world of its own in which it is everything. There must be a cessation of thought to experience the implicate order. Similarly, matter is of the implicate order in its non-manifest state, it is subtle matter which moves gross matter or matter in its manifest state. Bohm gives to the subtle dimension the power to change the gross manifestations. It is *insight*, "an intelligence beyond any of these energies ...", that can effect this change in both thought and matter.¹¹

... This insight acts directly on brain matter either at the subtle non-manifest level or possibly at the manifest, or it may more likely act in the subtle-manifest which then changes the manifest. Thus the brain matter itself can change and be made orderly through insight. And thought itself changes ... not by thinking, not by reasoning, but rather a direct change takes place in thought.¹²

Bohm's *insight* is a supreme intelligence which has the power to remove directly the old conditioned message imprinted on the brain cells. It is beyond the manifest and the non-manifest in the realm of the "holy" which for him means wholeness, order, truth. We must remind ourselves that this is a physicist telling us that the true state of affairs in the *material world* is a wholeness and that we must bear the responsibility for the present state of fragmentation. The work of cleaning the pollution from the material cells must begin with

the individual who is in total contact with the implicate order. He is part of mankind but also beyond it—he is a focus for the universal.

In terms of the work of human unity Bohm believes that a very high intensity of energy and supreme intelligencies is required to burn up the pollution of the ages. For this reason one individual cannot accomplish the task.

What I propose is that it is possible now for a number of individuals who are in close relation and who have gone through this and can trust each other to establish a one-mind of that whole set of individuals ... that consciousness is one, acting as one. If you had as many as ten people or a hundred people who could really be that way...¹³

Because the consciousness deep down is one, any part of mankind may establish this one-ness and this becomes an energy, a fire which will spread to the whole. In this context of unbroken wholeness there is no individual salvation since the consciousness is one and not truly divisible.

In summary Bohm intuits the necessity to build a bridge between the implicate and explicate orders which will ultimately remove the division between “consciousness” and “matter”.

In the non-manifest order, all is one ... there is no separation in space and in time. In ordinary matter this is so and it's equally so or even more so for this subtle matter which is consciousness. Therefore, if we are separate it is because we are sticking largely to the manifest world as the basic reality ... in the non-manifest reality it's all interpenetrating, interconnected in one. So we say deep down the consciousness of mankind is one. This we say, is a virtual certainty because even matter is one in the vacuum ...¹⁴

Conscious Matter

It is impossible for any change to take place, even in a single element or in a single point of the earth consciousness, without involving the entire earth in this change, it's inevitable. Everything is tightly interwoven. And a vibration in one place necessarily has worldwide—I am not saying universal, I am saying worldwide—consequences.¹⁵

From the laboratories of scientific experimentation we move to those of yogic exploration. While the object of both endeavors is to plumb the depths of reality, the yogi employs neither the vast array of instrumentation to amplify his senses or such functions of the rational mind as inference or deduction. His aim is a direct experience of or union with reality. If we ask what bearing yogic experience has on human unity one would be disposed to say very little, for the practice of yoga is usually associated with individual liberation. This would mean using the mind, emotions and physical body as transient vehicles to escape into a realm beyond this world, wherein lies the true unity. Indeed it is a firm belief among the majority of human beings that “you can't change human nature”. You can smooth the rough edges; you can package it in a variety of ways; you can erect certain individual, social or cultural controls.

However, the idea of changing the *nature* of these beings, whom we call “human” has been neglected as strongly by religion and spirituality as by depth psychology. It is one of the most deeply ingrained mental formations in the individual and collective consciousness. And yet for us to entertain the possibility of human unity it is precisely this “human nature” that must change—on a mental, on an emotional and yes, even on a physical level.

We have seen that there is a strong affirmation among a number of physicists that not only at a fundamental level is consciousness one, but also matter is one. Particularly David Bohm has indicated that to experience this basic unity one must take up the work of burning the “pollution” in the mind-brain. This pollution—greed, envy, anger, violence, etc.—is the result of a kind of mental and emotional conditioning paralleling the development of humanity. The consciousness needed for this task lies beyond thinking—what he terms “insight” or a supreme intelligence. Because the nature of reality is an “unbroken wholeness” individual salvation or escape will not solve the problem—it is both an individual and collective work. This is in line with the general quest to heal the consciousness/matter or mind/body split—in medicine, ecology, psychology, etc. Participants in this work embrace a multitude of perspectives, with varying degrees of vision. However, the warp

and woof of this multi-colored fabric is *interrelated oneness*. This theme recurs more frequently, and is becoming more dominant, because it is as authentic in the realms of atomic research as it is in certain philosophical, religious, or spiritual spheres.

Simultaneously with the rise of the new physics there was emerging through the work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother the vision and practice of an evolutionary spirituality whose key note is: "Man is a transitional being. He is not final."¹⁶ Just as simple and complex forms of life evolved from apparently inorganic matter and mind, in the form of human beings evolved from its precursors, so too another species, possessing a higher consciousness than mind, will manifest. Whereas other spiritual disciplines, or yogas, had as their goal an exit from this world and the human body, leaving them essentially unchanged, the aim of this yoga is an integral transformation of the mind, the life force (vital) and the physical body.

This transformed being was described by Sri Aurobindo as a "supramental" or "gnostic" being, with a consciousness that *possessed* truth rather than ignorantly sought after it. The primary characteristic of mental knowledge is separativity: a subject-object knowing. The key note of supramental knowledge is identification: the subject becomes the object. This evolutionary work of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother does not follow the traditional Eastern guru-disciple framework; the focus is not on the liberation of individuals. The goal here is the manifestation of a higher consciousness on earth which will, because of the interrelatedness of all form, effect a change on all levels of consciousness. It does not encompass few individuals; it encompasses the entire earth.

After Sri Aurobindo's decision to leave his individual physical body in 1950, Mother embarked on what she called the "yoga of the cells," an exploration of cellular consciousness providing passage to the next species. In this work

"Sri Aurobindo and Mother are neither philosophers nor sages nor saints: they are the pioneers or experimenters of the next species."¹⁷

In the context of human unity we will examine some of Mother's experiences as they shed light on the deeper nature of matter (body), consciousness and their interrelationship. While her experiences parallel many of the discoveries of quantum physics concerning the nature of matter, her explorations reveal possibilities beyond the ken of modern science, i.e. the power of consciousness to transform matter (body). Her adventure in the cellular consciousness of matter is reminiscent of the conclusions of quantum physics that matter, at atomic and subatomic levels, exhibits both a wave and a particle nature which manifests in the macroscopic world of the human body. Mother's *direct* experience of the body reveals a wave nature, as well as the familiar "particle" nature as perceived by our egoic consciousness. One of the great tasks in this passage to a new or transformed body, was to abandon the *ego*, that great vehicle of separation, yet still retain a *form*.¹⁸

Mother refers to this process as a "melting" of the material substance. Traditionally in most systems of yoga annihilation of the ego necessitated an abandonment of the body. This "melting" is a passage between the "particle" (body as our mind now perceives it) and the "wave" (body beyond the body as we are conditioned to perceive it). Mother was constantly passing back and forth between these two states:

When the body leaves "that" (the ego or particle state), it feels that it is going to dissolve ... For a long time one has the feeling that if the ego disappears, the being and form disappear also, but it isn't true! ... It's as if the cells, the organisation making up ... a human body and holding everything together, had to learn that they can continue to exist without the sense of a separate individuality, although for thousands of years they have been accustomed to that separate existence on account of the ego.¹⁹

It is clear that this ego must go for lasting human unity to be established—it is the instrument of the "pollution" of which Bohm speaks. This egoic consciousness which has cast its spell of the very cells of the body has also created the so-called "laws" of their organisation. These laws are founded, however, on a world of separation which distinguishes "me" from the "others" rather than on a world of oneness and unity.

Mother's description of her experiences of the body beyond the mind's conception of it, reads like a description of subatomic physics:

...The consciousness (body consciousness) is a sort of consciousness without limits, which feels like waves, but not individual waves: it's a movement of waves; a movement of material, or corporeal waves ... as vast as the earth ... something that feels very infinite but is undulatory at the same time. And this undulation is the movement of life.²⁰

It is clear that Mother has stepped beyond the hard, isolated, gross matter of the Cartesian-Newtonian variety into a more plastic, subtle matter of modern physics. It is this more subtle variety of matter that both moves and unifies the gross material world. Everything in this realm is experienced as waves. She demonstrates the paradox that a *particular* human body is also a wave (the entire fabric of matter, i.e. atoms, earth or galaxies). This movement of waves has neither beginning nor end—"... it contracts and concentrates, then expands and spreads out."²¹ In our more conditioned consciousness we are only aware of the concentrated state—we are unconscious of the expansive state which unites all "particles".

This experience of interconnectedness of atoms and cells necessitates a clarification of Mother's use of the word "body". Her identification with the wave aspect of matter allows her to be in no particular location, but, rather, at many points at the same time:

I began to realise that my body is everywhere! You see, it is not a matter of just these cells; they are cells in, who knows how many, perhaps, hundreds of thousands of people ... It is THE body! ... This particular one is no more mine than other bodies.²²

Mother has taken us to an astounding experience—that there is a *material foundation* for human unity—not just in the mind or the emotional being but in matter. But what is it that has so dislocated or cut up matter? What has changed interrelated oneness into a world of isolated egos—separated from nature, from each other and from one's own self?

Mother discovers the culprit to be what she terms the "physical mind". The body is enmeshed in a four-fold

web or layers of mind. The first is *intellectual mind*, encompassing "great ideas", of science, philosophy, religion, etc. The second is *emotional mind*, encompassing ideas intertwined with our emotional being—ideas we are particularly attached to, positively or negatively. The third is *sensory mind*, encompassing sensations of fatigue, sleep, fear, pleasure, pain, like and dislike, etc. And the fourth is *physical mind*, the final mesh which separates us from the body proper. This last is the layer we are least conscious of, yet which we take most for granted.

The physical mind provides the background music of our existence as isolated egos. As a result, we do not have a direct experience of matter, or the body, but rather of our *ideas* of matter. Seemingly insignificant, it is the basic cause of the shipwreck of our great ideas and high emotions. Transition to the next species necessitates conquest of this layer of mind.

This physical or material mind which has "mentalized" all of the cells of the body has recorded all of the difficulties of evolution. Whatever the project, this computer drones on: Don't play so hard, you'll get sick. Don't walk through the puddle, you'll get cold. The depression has lifted, but how long can it stay away? I can't begin that at this age. At this age the body starts to break down. Don't go too fast, you will trip. This is the time of the year for flu. It is inevitable that we will have a nuclear war." It doubts each step; remembers each mistake and calamity and therefore is filled with fear because of its greatest possibility—death.

This physical mind has erected a colossal superstructure of physical laws dominating matter. These laws are true because we believe them to be according to the model of the world our mind constructs (Cartesian-Newtonian, quantum physics, etc.). This present master of the cells of our bodies is the *foundational cause* of illness, accidents and perhaps even death. Since the mind's primary role is to measure reality, to make forms, of an infinity of energy fields, we become prisoners of our own mental formations. The forms manifest in dream and fantasy, in cherished ideas and norms, and in ideas in the realms of religion, philosophy, politics, economics, etc.—ideas for which men are ready to die. Mother's work is to see if there is a consciousness, a reality

beyond this mentalised one. While the central focus of this evolutionary adventure is to educate the cells of the body to a new consciousness it entails a battle for: "We could call our world a world of bad habits".²³ For the transition to a new species, living in oneness, to take place, each cell must surrender to a greater consciousness, must give up its habit of reacting in numerous ways. And as she progressively did this work she discovered this new consciousness within each cell. This she called "mind of the cell"—the consciousness of the body without the physical mind. Here she finds a new kind of freedom not imposed from without, but arising from the cells:

There are all kinds of freedom: mental freedom, vital freedom, spiritual freedom which are the results of successive stages of mastery. But there is also a totally new kind of freedom: that of the body. For instance, during the flu epidemic, I was living everyday among people carrying the germs ... And one day I clearly felt that the body had decided that it wouldn't catch the flu. And it wasn't "higher will power" making the decision ... It was the body itself deciding ... The body has DIRECT control, without any outside interventions. It isn't higher consciousness imposing itself on the body; it is the body itself awakening to freedom in its cells, it's a cellular freedom.²⁴

So there is an exit which leads out of this prison of the physical mind with its personal version of reality. It is a passage from false matter to matter as it really is—a body of oneness. Both the new physics and Mother's evolutionary experiments point in the same direction as regards a solution to the problem of human unity. We

must explore the inner spheres beyond thinking and the world of separation it has created. There is a parallel between what matter calls the *physical mind* and David Bohm calls *pollution*—an alchemical process is called for to transmute this dross—it is a new consciousness the foundation of which is oneness.

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16. Sri Aurobindo, "Man a Transitional Being" in *The Hour Of God*, (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1972), p. 7.
17. Satprem, *Op. Cit.*, p. 88.
18. In this context Mother is referring specifically to the ego of the physical body. The mental and vital ego had already been abandoned much earlier.
19. Satprem, *Op. Cit.*, p. 37.
20. *Ibid.* p. 22.
21. *Ibid.* p. 23.
22. *Ibid.* p. 52.
23. *Ibid.* p. 74.
24. *Ibid.* p. 134.

There are many conditions and tendencies in human life at present which are favourable to the progress of the internationalist idea. The strongest of these favourable forces is the constant drawing closer of the knots of international life, the multiplication of points of contact and threads of communication and an increasing community in thought, in science and in knowledge. Science especially has been a great force in this direction; for science is a thing common to all men in its conclusions, open to all in its methods, available to all in its results: it is international in its very nature; there can be no such thing as a national science, but only the nations' contributions to the work and growth of science which are the inheritance of all humanity. Therefore it is easier for men of science or those strongly influenced by science to grow into the international spirit and all the world is now beginning to feel the scientific influence and to live in it. Science also has created that closer contact of every part of the world with every other part, out of which some sort of international mind is growing.

Sri Aurobindo,
'The Ideal of Human Unity'

Psychic and Spiritual Education

The Mother

U'ntil now we have dealt with the education which can be given to all children born upon earth; it is concerned with purely human faculties. But one need not stop there. Every human being carries hidden within him the possibility of a greater consciousness beyond the frame of his normal life through which he can participate in a higher and vaster life. Indeed, in all exceptional beings it is always this consciousness that governs their life, and organises both the circumstances of their life and their individual reaction to these circumstances. What the human mind does not know and cannot do, this consciousness knows and does. It is like a light that shines at the center of the being radiating through the thick coverings of the external consciousness. Some have a vague perception of its presence; a good many children are under its influence which shows itself very distinctly at times in their spontaneous actions and even in their words. Unfortunately parents most often do not know what it is and do not understand what is happening in their children; therefore their reaction with regard to these phenomena is not happy and all their education consists in making the child as unconscious as possible in this domain to concentrate all its attention upon external things, thus forming the habit of looking upon those alone as important. It is true that this concentration upon external things is very useful; provided it is done in the proper way. The three lines of education—physical, vital and mental—deal with that which may be defined as the means of building up the personality, raising the individual out of the amorphous subconscious mass, making it a well-defined self-conscious entity. With psychic education we come to the problem of the true motive of life, the reason of our existence upon earth, the discovery to which life must lead and the result of that discovery: the consecration of the individual to his eternal principle. This discovery very generally is associated with a mystic feeling, a religious life, because it is religions particularly that have been occupied with this aspect of life. But it need not be necessarily so: the mystic notion of

God may be replaced by the more philosophical notion of truth and still the discovery will remain essentially the same, only the road leading to it may be taken even by the most intransigent positivist. For mental notions and ideas possess a very secondary importance in preparing one for the psychic life. The important thing is to live the experience: for it carries its own reality and force apart from any theory that may precede or accompany or follow it, because most often theories are mere explanations that are given to oneself in order to have more or less the illusion of knowledge. Man clothes the ideal or the absolute he seeks to attain with different names according to the environment in which he is born and the education he has received. The experience is essentially the same, if it is sincere; it is only the words and phrases in which it is formulated that differ according to the belief and the mental education of the one who has the experience. All formulation is only an approximation that should be progressive and grow in precision as the experience itself becomes more and more precise and coordinated. Still, if we are to give a general outline of psychic education, we must have an idea, however relative it may be, of what we mean by the psychic being. Thus one can say, for example, that the creation of an individual being is the result of the projection, in time and space, of one of the countless possibilities latent in the Supreme Origin of all manifestation which, through the one and universal consciousness, is concretised in the law or the truth of an individual and so becomes by a progressive growth its soul or psychic being.

I stress the point that what I have said here in brief does not profess to be a complete exposition of the reality and does not exhaust the subject—far from it. It is just a summary explanation for a practical purpose so that it can serve as a basis for the education with which we are concerned.

It is through the psychic presence that the truth of an individual being comes into contact with him and the

circumstances of his life. In most cases this presence acts, so to say, from behind the veil, unrecognised and unknown; but in some, it is perceptible and its action recognisable; even, in a few among these, the presence becomes tangible and its action quite effective. These go forward in their life with an assurance and a certitude all their own, they are masters of their destiny. It is precisely with a view to obtain this mastery and become conscious of the psychic presence that psychic education has to be pursued. But for that there is need of a special factor, the personal will. For till now, the discovery of the psychic being, the identification with it, has not been among the recognised subjects of education. It is true one can find in special treatises useful and practical hints on the subject, and also there are persons fortunate enough to meet someone capable of showing the path and giving the necessary help to follow it. More often, however, the attempt is left to one's own personal initiative: the discovery is a personal matter and a great resolution, a strong will and an untiring perseverance are indispensable to reach the goal. Each one must, so to say, chalk out his own path through his own difficulties. The goal is known to some extent; for, most of those who have reached it have described it more or less clearly. But the supreme value of the discovery lies in its spontaneity, its genuineness: that escapes all ordinary mental laws. And this is why anyone wanting to take up the adventure, usually seeks at first some person who has gone through it successfully and is able to sustain him and show him the way. Yet there are some solitary travellers and for them a few general indications may be useful.

The starting-point is to seek in yourself that which is independent of the body and the circumstances of life, which is not born of the mental formation that you have been given, the language you speak, the habits and customs of the environment in which you live, the country where you are born or the age to which you belong. You must find, in the depths of your being, that which carries in it the sense of universality, limitless expansion, termless continuity. Then you decentralise, spread out, enlarge yourself; you begin to live in everything and in all beings; the barriers separating individuals from each other break down. You think in their thoughts, vibrate in their sensations, you feel in their feelings, you live in the life of all. What seemed inert suddenly becomes full of life, stones quicken, plants feel and will and suffer, animals speak in a language more or less inarticulate,

but clear and expressive; everything is animated with a marvellous consciousness without time and limit. And this is only one aspect of the psychic realisation. There are many others. All combine in pulling you out of the barriers of your egoism, the walls of your external personality, the impotence of your reactions and the incapacity of your will.

But, as I have already said, the paths to come to that realisation is long and difficult, strewn with traps and problems, and to face them demands a determination that must be equal to all test and trial. It is like the explorer's journey through virgin forest, in quest of an unknown land, towards great discovery. The psychic being is also a great discovery to be made requiring at least as much fortitude and endurance as the discovery of new continents. A few words of advice may be useful to one resolved to undertake it:

The first and perhaps the most important point is that the mind is incapable of judging spiritual things. All those who have written on Yogic discipline have said so; but very few are those who have put it into practice and yet, in order to proceed on the path, it is absolutely indispensable to abstain from all mental opinion and reaction.

Give up all personal seeking for comfort, satisfaction, enjoyment or happiness. Be only a burning fire for progress, take whatever comes to you as a help for progress and make at once the progress required.

Try to take pleasure in all you do, but never do anything for the sake of pleasure.

Never get excited, nervous or agitated. Remain perfectly quiet in the face of all circumstances. And yet be always awake to find out the progress you have still to make and lose no time in making it.

Never take physical happenings at their face value. They are always a clumsy attempt to express something else, the true thing which escapes your superficial understanding.

Never complain of the behaviour of anyone, unless you have the power to change in his nature what makes him act thus; and if you have the power, change him instead of complaining.

Whatever you do, never forget the goal which you have set before you. There is nothing small or big in this enterprise of a great discovery; all things are equally important and can either hasten or delay its success. Thus before you eat, concentrate a few seconds in the aspiration that the food you will take brings to your body the substance necessary to serve as a solid basis for your effort towards the great discovery, and gives it the energy of persistence and perseverance in the effort.

Before you go to bed, concentrate a few seconds in the aspiration that the sleep may restore your fatigued nerves, bring to your brain calmness and quietness, that on waking up you may, with renewed vigour, begin again your journey on the path of the great discovery.

Before you act, concentrate in the will that your action may help, at least not hinder in any way, your march forward towards the great discovery.

When you speak, before the words come out of your mouth, concentrate awhile just long enough to check your words and allow those alone that are absolutely necessary and are not in any way harmful to your progress on the path of the great discovery.

In brief, never forget the purpose and the goal of your life. The will for the great discovery should be always there soaring over you, above what you do and what you are, like a huge bird of light dominating all the movements of your being.

Therefore the untiring persistence of your effort, an inner door will open suddenly and you will come out into a dazzling splendour that will bring to you the certitude of immortality, the concrete experience that you have lived always and always shall live, that the external forms alone perish and that these forms are, in relation to what you are in reality, like clothes that are thrown away when worn out. Then you will stand erect freed from all chains and instead of advancing with difficulty under the load of circumstances imposed upon you by nature, borne and suffered by you, if you do not want to be crushed under them, you can walk on straight and firm, conscious of your destiny, master of your life.

And yet this release from all slavery to the flesh, this liberation from all personal attachment is not the supreme fulfillment. There are other steps to climb before you reach the summit. And

even these steps can and should be followed by others which will open the gates of the future. It is these later steps that will be the subject-matter of what I call spiritual education.

But before we enter this new stage and deal with the question in detail, an explanation is necessary. Why is there a distinction made between the psychic education of which we have just spoken and the spiritual education of which we are going to speak presently? Because the two are usually mixed up under the generic name "yogic discipline", although the goal they aim at is very different in each case: for one, it is a higher realisation upon earth, for the other, an escape from all earthly manifestation, even away from the whole universe, a return to the unmanifest.

So one can say that the psychic life is the life immortal, endless time, limitless space, ever-progressive change, unbroken continuity in the world of forms. The spiritual consciousness, on the other hand, means to live the infinite and eternal, to throw oneself outside all creation, beyond time and space. To become fully aware of your psychic being and to live a psychic life you must abolish in you all selfishness; but to live a spiritual life you must be selfless.

Here also in spiritual education, the goal you set before you will assume, in the mind's formulation of it, different names according to the environment in which you have grown, the path you have followed and the affinities of your temperament. If you have a religious tendency you will call it God and your spiritual effort will be towards identification with the transcendent God beyond all forms, in opposition to the Immanent God dwelling in each form. Others will call it the Absolute, the Supreme Origin, others again, Nirvana; yet others who view the world as an unreal illusion will name it the Only Reality and to those who regard all manifestation as falsehood it will be the Sole Truth. And every one of these definitions contains an element of truth, but all are incomplete, expressing only one aspect of what is. Here also the mental formulation has no great importance and once you cross the intermediate stages, it is always the same experience. In any case, the most effective starting-point, the swiftest method is total self-surrender. Besides, no joy is more perfect than that of a total self-surrender to the highest point your conception can reach: for some

it is the notion of God, for others that of Perfection. If this surrender is made with persistence and ardour, a moment comes when you go beyond the concept and arrive at an experience that escapes all description, but which is almost always identical in its effects. As your surrender becomes more and more perfect and integral, it will carry with it the aspiration for identification, a total fusion with That to which you have given yourself, and little by little this aspiration will overcome all differences and all resistances, especially if the aspiration has, added to it, an intense and spontaneous love for then nothing can stand in the way of its victorious onset.

There is an essential difference between this identification and the one with the psychic being. The latter can be made more and more durable and, in certain cases, it becomes permanent and never leaves the person who has realised it, whatever may be his outer activities. In other words, the identification is no more realised only in meditation and concentration, but its effect can be felt at every moment of one's life, in sleep as well as in waking.

On the contrary, liberation from all form and identification with that which is beyond form cannot last in an absolute manner; for it would automatically bring about the dissolution of the material form. Certain traditions say that this dissolution happens inevitably within twenty days of the total identification. Yet it is not necessarily so; and even if the experience is only momentary, it produces in the consciousness results that are never obliterated and have repercussions on all the levels of the being, both internal and external. Moreover, once the identification has been realised, it can be renewed at will, provided you know how to put yourself in the same conditions.

This merging into the formless is the supreme liberation sought by those who want to escape from existence which has no attraction for them any more. It is nothing surprising that they are not satisfied with the world in its present form. But a liberation that leaves the world as it is and does in no way affect the conditions of life from which others suffer, cannot satisfy those who refuse to live in a felicity which they alone enjoy, and who dream of a world more worthy of the splendours that hide behind its apparent disorder and general misery. They dream of making others profit by the wonders they have discovered in their inner exploration. And the

means to do so is within their reach, now that they have arrived at the summit of their ascent.

From beyond the frontiers of form, a new force can be evoked, a power of consciousness which has not yet manifested and which, by its emergence, will be able to change the course of things and bring to birth a new world. For the true solution of the problem of suffering, ignorance and death is not the individual escape by self-annihilation from earthly miseries into the non-manifest, nor a problematical collective flight from universal suffering by an integral and final return of the creation to its creator, thus curing the universe by abolishing it, but a transformation, a total transfiguration of matter brought about by the logical continuation of Nature's ascending march in her progress towards perfection, by the creation of a species that will be in relation to man what man is in relation to the animal and that will manifest upon earth a new force, a new consciousness and a new power. Then will begin also a new education which can be called the supramental education; it will, by its all-powerful action, work not only upon the consciousness of individual beings, but upon the very substance of which they are built and upon the environment in which they live.

Contrary to the type of education we have spoken of hitherto that progresses from below upward through an ascending movement of the different parts of the being, the supramental education will progress from above downward, its influence spreading from one state of being to another till the final state, the physical, is reached. This last transformation will happen in a visible manner only when the inner states of being have already been considerably transformed. It is therefore quite unreasonable to try to judge the presence of the supramental through physical appearances. The physical is the last to change and the supramental force can be at work in a being long before something of it becomes perceptible in the life of the body.

In brief, one can say that the supramental education will result not merely in a progressively developing formation of the human nature, an increasing growth of its latent faculties, but a transformation of the nature itself, a transfiguration of the being in its entirety, a new ascent of the species above and beyond man towards superman, leading in the end to the appearance of a divine race upon earth.

'Bulletin of Physical Education'

God
Sri Aurobindo

Thou who pervadest all the worlds below,
Yet sitst above,
Master of all who work and rule and know,
Servant of Love!

Thou who disdainest not the worm to be
Nor even the clod,
Therefore we know by that humility
That thou art God.

Collected Poems