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# RITĀGNI

a flame of aspiration for dynamic truth

सत्यमेव जयते

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# Nationalism and Internationalism

Generally, a nation is perceived as the State, a political entity with a geographical boundary. This objective conceptualisation is often stronger when a new nation is born subsequent to its liberation from other nations or empires ruling it. It is only gradually that a more subjective perspective is developed which sees the land as only the shell of the body, though an important one. The real body of a nation-unit is then begun to be perceived more as the people who compose it. And then it is realised that even the physical being of a society is a subjective power. The next step is seeing it as a corporate soul with all the possibilities of a soul-life.

The parallels between the soul of an individual and a nation or a group-soul are many. Like the individual, the primal law and purpose of a nation or society or community is to seek its own self-fulfilment. It strives to become aware of the law and power of its own being, and to realise its potentialities. It also has a body, an organic life, a moral and aesthetic temperament, a developing mind and a soul behind all these.

“One may see even that, like the individual, it essentially is a soul rather than has one; it is a group-soul that, once having attained to a separate distinctness, must become more and more self-conscious and find itself more and more fully as it develops its corporate action and mentality and its organic self-expressive life.... There is only this difference that the group-soul is much more complex because it has a great number of partly self-conscious mental individuals for the constituents of its physical being instead of an association of merely vital subconscious cells. At first, for this very reason, it seems more crude, primitive and artificial in the forms it takes; for it has a more difficult task before it, it needs a longer time to find itself, it is more fluid and less easily organic.”

-Sri Aurobindo

*'The Human Cycle'*. (pp. 29-30)

So if such is a nation-soul, then the truth of a nation is psychological which is subjective rather than objective. There remains always the possibility of the error of mistaking the national ego as the national soul, just as with an individual. The desire "to be oneself" can become distorted and the identification would be with the body, life and mind. But the soul is much more than that, more subtle and more divine. It is this that there should be a search for, this inner truth of the nation. And it is this search which will lead us eventually to a truer world unity!

“For it is necessary, if the subjective age of humanity is to produce its best fruits, that the nations should become conscious not only of their own but of each other's souls, learn to respect, to help and to profit, not only economically and intellectually but subjectively and spiritually by each other.”

- Sri Aurobindo  
*'The Human Cycle' ( pg. 34)*

This would lead us to the definition of internationalism. Is internationalism then the obliterating of the nation-souls and the truth of a nation to achieve a uniform existence? Or would it be, in the ultimate analysis, the coming together of nations as their true selves, a sort of symphony? And what would be the basis of a world union? Certainly not a unity based on a uniformity, but a living unity which accepts and celebrates diversity, which respects truths other than one's own also without any self-effacement.

Science has contributed greatly to the idea of internationalism, there is no national science. It has also created the "global village" where the world has been brought closer not only in terms of communications but also knowledge and culture. The exclusiveness of the old nationalistic sentiment is far less than before. This has brought forth the possibility of a psychological unity to a greater extent than was possible in the past. More often than not, the coming closer takes place at the level of trade and commerce or the coming into existence of a political and economic unity like that of the European Union. But while this cannot be the basis of a true and lasting unity, it can pave the way towards this possibility so long as people are aware that true unity has a psychological basis and these are but external frameworks.

“If the present unsatisfactory condition of international relations should lead to a series of cataclysms, either large and world-embracing like the present war or, though each more limited in scope, yet in their sum world-pervading and necessarily, by the growing interrelation of interests, affecting even those who do not fall directly under their touch, then mankind will finally be forced in self-defence to a new, closer and more stringently unified order of things. Its choice will be between that and a lingering suicide. If the human reason cannot find out the way, Nature herself is sure to shape these upheavals in such a way as to bring about her end. Therefore,—whether soon or in the long run, whether brought about by its own growing sentiment of unity, stimulated by common interests and convenience, or by the evolutionary pressure of circumstances,— we may take it that an eventual unification or at least some formal organisation of human life on earth is, the incalculable being always allowed for, practically inevitable.”

*Sri Aurobindo*  
*'The Ideal of Human Unity' (pp. 550-551)*

- Editor

# **The Inconscient**

*Sri Aurobindo*

Out of a seeming void and dark-winged sleep

Of dim inconscient infinity

A Power arose from the insentient deep,

A flame-whirl of magician Energy.

Some huge somnambulist Intelligence

Devising without thought process and plan

Arrayed the burning stars' magnificence,

The living bodies of beasts and the brain of man.

What stark Necessity or ordered Chance

Became alive to know the cosmic whole ?

What magic of numbers, what mechanic dance

Developed consciousness, assumed a soul?

The darkness was the Omnipotent's abode,

Hood of omniscience, a blind mask of God.

*'Collected Poems'.*

# Self-Determination

*Sri Aurobindo*

A new phrase has recently been cast out from the bloodstained yeast of war into the shifty language of politics,—that strange language full of Maya and falsities of self-illusion and deliberate delusion of others, which almost immediately turns all true and vivid phrases into a jargon, so that men may fight in a cloud of words without any clear sense of the thing they are battling for,—it is the luminous description of liberty as the just power, the freely exercised right of self-determination. The word is in itself a happy discovery, a thought-sign of real usefulness. For it helps to make definite and manageable what was apt till now to be splendidly vague and nebulous. Its invention is a sign at once of a growing clarity of conception about this great good which man has been striving to achieve for himself through the centuries, as yet without any satisfying success to boast of anywhere, and of the increasing subjectivity of our ideas about life. This clarity and this subjectivity must indeed go together; for he can only get good hold of the right end of the great ideas which should govern our ways of living when we begin to understand that their healthful process is from within outward, and that the opposite method, the mechanical, ends always by turning living realities into formal conventions. No doubt to man the animal, the mechanical alone seems to be real, only that is true which he can feel as a truth within him and feel without as his external self-expression. All else is a deceptive charlatanry, an acceptance of shows for truths, of external appearances for realities, which are so many devices to keep him in bondage.

Liberty in one shape or another ranks among the most ancient and certainly among the most difficult aspirations of our race: it arises from a radical instinct of our being and is yet opposed to all our circumstances; it is our eternal good and our condition of perfection, but our temporal being has failed to find its key. That perhaps is because true freedom is only possible if we live in the infinite,

live, as the Vedanta bids us, in and from our self-existent being; but our natural and temporal energies seek for it at first not in ourselves, but in our external conditions. This great indefinable thing, liberty, is in its highest and ultimate sense a state of being; it is self living in itself and determining by its own energy what it shall be inwardly and, eventually, by the growth of a divine spiritual power within determining too what it shall make of its external circumstances and environment; that is the largest and freest sense of self-determination. But when we start from the natural and temporal life, what we practically come to mean by liberty is a convenient elbow-room for our natural energies to satisfy them without being too much impinged upon by the self-assertiveness of others. And that is a difficult problem to solve, because the liberty of one, immediately it begins to act, knocks up fatally against the liberty of another; the free running of many in the same field means a free chaos of collisions. That was at one time glorified under the name of the competitive system and dissatisfaction with its results has led to the opposite idea of State socialism which supposes that the negation of individual liberty in the collective being of the State can be made to amount by some mechanical process to a positive sum of liberty nicely distributable to all in a carefully guarded equality. The individual gives up his freedom of action and possession to the State which in return doles out to him a regulated liberty, let us say, a sufficient elbow-room so parcelled out that he shall not at all butt into the ribs of his neighbour. It is admirable in theory, logically quite unexceptionable, but in practice, one suspects, it would amount to a very oppressive, because a very mechanical slavery of the individual to the community, or rather to something indefinite that calls itself the community.

Experience has so far shown us that the human attempt to arrive at a mechanical freedom has only resulted in a very relative liberty and even that has

been enjoyed for the most part by some at the expense of others. It has amounted usually to the rule of the majority by a minority, and many strange things have been done in its name. Ancient liberty and democracy meant in Greece the self-rule variegated by periodical orgies of mutual throat-cutting—of a smaller number of free men of all ranks who lived by the labour of a great mass of slaves. In recent times liberty and democracy have been, and still are, a cant assertion which veils under a skilfully moderated plutocratic system the rule of an organised successful bourgeoisie over a proletariat at first submissive, afterwards increasingly dissatisfied and combined for recalcitrant self-assertion. The earliest use of liberty and democracy by the emancipated proletariat has been the crude forceful tyranny of an ill-organised labour oligarchy over a quite disorganised peasantry and an impotently recalcitrant bourgeoisie. And just as the glorious possession of liberty by the community has been held to be consistent with oppression of four-fifths or three-fifths of the population by the remaining fraction, so it has till lately been held to be quite consistent with the complete subjection of one half of mankind, the woman half, to the physically stronger male. The series continues through a whole volume of anomalies, including of course the gloriously beneficent and profitable exploitation of subject peoples by emancipated nations who, it seems, are entitled to that domination by their priesthood of the sacred cult of freedom. They mean no doubt to extend it to the exploited at some distant date, but take care meanwhile to pay themselves the full price of their holy office before they deliver the article. Even the best machinery of this mechanical freedom yet discovered amounts to the unmodified will of a bare majority, or rather to its selection of a body of rulers who coerce in its name all minorities and lead it to issues of which it has itself no clear perception.

These anomalies,—anomalies of many kinds are inseparable from the mechanical method,—are a sign that the real meaning of liberty has not yet been understood. Nevertheless the aspiration and the effort itself towards the realisation of a great idea cannot fail to bear some fruit, and modern liberty and democracy, however imperfect and relative, have had this result that for the

communities which have followed them, they have removed the pressure of the more obvious, outward and aggressive forms of oppression and domination which were inherent in the systems of the past. They have made life a little more tolerable for the mass, and if they have not yet made life free, they have at least given more liberty to thought and to the effort to embody a freer thought in a more adequate form of life. This larger space for the thought in man and its workings was the necessary condition for a growing clarity which must enlighten in the end the crude conceptions with which the race has started and refine the crude methods and forms in which it has embodied them. The attempt to govern life by an increasing light of thought rather than allow the rough and imperfect actualities of life to govern and to limit the mind is a distinct sign of advance in human progress. But the true turning-point will come with the farther step which initiates the attempt to govern life by that of which thought itself is only a sign and an instrument, the soul, the inner being, and to make our ways of living a freer opportunity for the growing height and breadth of its need of self-fulfilment. That is the real, the profounder sense which we shall have to learn to attach to the idea of self-determination as the effective principle of liberty.

The principle of self-determination really means this that within every living human creature, man, woman and child, and equally within every distinct human collectivity growing or grown, half developed or adult there is a self, a being, which has the right to grow in its own way, to find itself, to make its life a full and a satisfied instrument and image of its being. This is the first principle which must contain and overtop all others; the rest is a question of conditions, means, expedients, accommodations, opportunities, capacities, limitations, none of which must be allowed to abrogate the sovereignty of the first essential principle. But it can only prevail if it is understood with a right idea of this Self and its needs and claims. The first danger to the principle of self-determination, as to all others, is that it may be interpreted, like most of the ideals of our human existence in the past, in the light of the ego, its interests and its will towards self-satisfaction. So

interpreted it will carry us no farther than before; we shall arrive at a point where our principle is brought up short, fails us, turns into a false or a half-true assertion of the mind and a convention of form which covers realities that are quite the opposite of itself.

For the ego has inalienably the instinct of a double self-assertion, its self-assertion against other egos and its self-assertion by means of other egos; in all its expansion is it impelled to subordinate their need to its own, to use them for its own purpose and for that purpose to establish some kind of control or domination or property in what it uses, whether by force or by dexterity, openly or covertly, by absorption or by some skilful turn of exploitation. Human lives cannot run upon free parallels; for they are compelled by Nature continually to meet, impinge on each other, intermix, and in the ego-life that means always a clash. The first idea of our reason suggests that our human relations may be subjected to a mechanical accommodation of interests which will get rid of the clash and the strife; but this can only be done up to a certain point: at best we diminish some of the violence and crude obviousness of the clashing and the friction and give them a more subtle and less grossly perceptible form. Within that subtler form the principle of strife and exploitation continues; for always the egoistic instinct must be to use the accommodations to which it is obliged or induced to assent, as far as possible for its own advantage, and it is only limited in this impulse by the limits of its strength and capacity, by the sense of expediency and consequence, by the perception of some necessity for respecting other egoisms in order that its own egoism too may be respected. But these considerations can only tone down or hedge in the desire of a gross or a subtle domination and exploitation of others; they do not abrogate it.

The human mind has resorted to ethics as a corrective; but the first laws of ethical conduct also succeed at best in checking only the egoistic rule of life and do not overcome it. Therefore the ethical idea has pushed itself forward into the other and opposite principle of altruism. The main general results have been a clearer perception of collective egoisms and their claim on the individual egoism

and, secondly, a quite uncertain and undefinable mixture, strife and balancing of egoistic and altruistic motives in our conduct. Often enough altruism is there chiefly in profession or at best a quiet superficial will which does not belong to the center of our action; it becomes then either a deliberate or else a half-conscious camouflage by which egoism masks itself and gets at its object without being suspected. But even a sincere altruism hides within itself the ego, and to be able to discover the amount of it hidden up in our most benevolent or even self-sacrificing actions is the acid test of sincere self-introspection, nor can anyone really quite know himself who has not made ruthlessly this often painful analysis. It could not be otherwise; for the law of life cannot be self-immolation; self-sacrifice can only be a step in self-fulfilment. Nor can life be in its nature a one-sided self-giving; all giving must contain in itself some measure of receiving to have any fruitful value or significance. Altruism itself is more important even by the good it does to ourselves than by the good it does to others; for the latter is often problematical, but the former is certain, and its good consists in the growth of self, in an inner self-heightening and self-expansion. Not then any general law of altruism, but rather a self-recognition based upon mutual recognition must be the broad rule of our human relations. Life is self-fulfilment, which moves upon a ground of mutuality; it involves a mutual use of one by the other, in the end of all by all. The whole question is whether this shall be done on the lower basis of the ego attended by strife, friction and collision with whatever checks and controls, or whether it cannot be done by a higher law of our being which shall discover a means of reconciliation, free reciprocity and unity.

A right idea of the rule of self-determination may help to set us on the way to the discovery of this higher law. For we may note that this phrase, self-determination, reconciles and brings together in one complex notion the idea of liberty and the idea of law. These two powers of being tend in our first conceptions, as in the first appearances of life itself, to be opposed to each other as rivals or enemies; we find therefore ranged against each other the champions of law and order and the defenders of liberty. There is the ideal which sets order first and liberty either



nowhere or in an inferior category, because it is willing to accept any coercion of liberty which will maintain the mechanical stability of order; and there is the ideal which on the contrary sets liberty first and regards law either as a hostile compression or a temporarily necessary evil or at best a means of securing liberty by guarding against any violent and aggressive interference with it as between man and man. This use of law as a means of liberty may be advocated only in a minimum reducible to the just quantity necessary for its purpose, the individualistic idea of the matter, or raised to a maximum as in the socialistic idea that the largest sum of regulation will total up to or at least lead up to or secure the larger sum of freedom. We have continually too the most curious mixing up of the two ideas, as in the old-time claim of the capitalist to prevent the freedom of labour to organise so that the liberty of contract might be preserved, or in the singular sophistical contention of the Indian defenders of orthodox caste rigidity on its economical side that coercion of a man to follow his ancestral profession in disregard not only of his inclinations, but of his natural tendencies and aptitudes is a securing to the individual of his natural right, his freedom to follow his hereditary nature. We see a similar confusion of ideas in the claim of European statesmen to train Asiatic or African peoples to liberty, which means in fact to teach them in the beginning liberty in the school of subjection and afterwards to compel them at each stage in the progress of a mechanical self-government to satisfy the tests and notions imposed on them by an alien being and consciousness instead of developing freely a type and law of their own. The right idea of self-determination makes a clean sweep of these confusions. It makes it clear that liberty should proceed by the development of the law of one's own being determined from within, evolving out of oneself and not determined from outside by the idea and will of another. There remains the problem of relations of the individual and the collective self-determination and of the interaction of the self-determination of one on the self-determination of another. That cannot be finally settled by any mechanical solution, but only by the discovery of some meeting-place of the law of our self-determination with the

common law of mutuality, where they begin to become one. It signifies in fact the discovery of an inner and larger self other than the mere ego, in which our individual self-fulfilment no longer separates us from others but at each step of our growth calls for an increasing unity.

But it is from the self-determination of the free individual within the free collectivity in which he lives that we have to start, because so only can we be sure of a healthy growth of freedom and because too the unity to be arrived at is that of individuals growing freely towards perfection and not of human machines working in regulated unison or of souls suppressed, mutilated and cut into one or more fixed geometrical patterns. The moment we sincerely accept this idea, we have to travel altogether away from the old notion of the right of property of man in man which still lurks in the human mind where it does not possess it. The trail of this notion is all over our past, the right of property of the father over the child, of the man over the woman, of the ruler or the ruling class or power over the ruled, of the State over the individual. The child was in the ancient patriarchal idea the live property of the father; he was his creation, his production, his own reproduction of himself; the father, rather than God or the universal Life in place of God, stood as the author of the child's being; and the creator has every right over his creation, the producer over his manufacture. He had the right to make of him what he willed, and not what the being of the child really was within, to train and shape and cut him according to the parental ideas and not rear him according to his own nature's deepest needs, to bind him to the paternal career or the career chosen by the parent and not that to which his nature and capacity and inclination pointed, to fix for him all the critical turning-points of his life even after he had reached maturity. In education the child was regarded not as a soul meant to grow, but as brute psychological stuff to be shaped into a fixed mould by the teacher. We have traveled to another conception of the child as a soul with a being, a nature and capacities of his own who must be helped to find them, to find himself, to grow into their maturity, into a fullness of physical and vital energy and the utmost breadth, depth, and height of his emotional, his intellectual and his spiritual being. So too the subjection of

woman, the property of the man over the woman, was once an axiom of social life and has only in recent times been effectively challenged. So strong was or had become the instinct of this domination in the male animal man, that even religion and philosophy have had to sanction it, very much in that formula in which Milton expresses the height of masculine egoism, "He for God only, she for God in him",—if not actually indeed for him in the place of God. This idea too is crumbling into the dust, though its remnants still cling to life by many strong tentacles of old legislation, continued instinct, persistence of traditional ideas; the fiat has gone out against it in the claim of woman to be regarded, she too, as a free individual being. The right of property of the rulers in the ruled has perished by the advance of liberty and democracy; in the form of national imperialism it still indeed persists, though more now by commercial greed than by the instinct of political domination; intellectually this form too of possessional egoism has received its death blow, vitally it still endures. The right of property of the State in the individual which threatened to take the place of all these, has now had its real spiritual consequence thrown into relief by the lurid light of the war, and we may hope that its menace to human liberty will be diminished by this clearer knowledge. We are at least advancing to a point at which it may be possible to make the principle of self-determination a present and pressing, if not yet an altogether dominant force in the whole shaping of human life.

Self-determination viewed from this subjective standpoint carries us back at once towards the old spiritual idea of the Being within, whose action, once known and self-revealed, is not an obedience to external and mechanical impulses, but proceeds in each from the powers of the soul, an action self-determined by the essential quality and principle of which all our becoming is the apparent movement, *svabhāvaniyatam karma*. But it is only as we rise higher and higher in ourselves and find out our true self and its true powers that we can get at the full truth of this Swabhava. Our present existence is at the most a growth towards it and therefore an imperfection, and its chief imperfection is the individual's egoistic idea of self which reappears enlarged in the collective egoism. Therefore an egoistic self-determination or a

modified individualism, is not the true solution; if that were all, we could never get beyond a balance and, in progress, a zigzag of conflict and accommodation. The ego is not the true circle of the self; the law of mutuality which meets it at every turn and which it misuses, arises from the truth that there is a secret unity between our self and the self of others and therefore between our own lives and the lives of others. The law of our self-determination has to wed itself to the self-determination of others and to find the way to enact a real union through its mutuality. But its basis can only be found within and not through any mechanical adjustment. It lies in the discovery within by the being in the course of its self-expansion and self-fulfilment that these things at every turn depend on the self-expansion and self-fulfilment of those around us, because we are secretly one being with them and one life. It is in philosophical language the recognition of the one self in all who fulfils himself variously in each; it is the finding of the law of the divine being in each unifying itself with the law of the divine being in all. At once the key of the problem is shifted from without to within, from the visible externalities of social and political adjustment to the spiritual life and truth which can alone provide its key.

Not that the outer life has to be neglected; on the contrary the pursual of the principle in one field or on one level, provided we do not limit or fix ourselves in it, helps its disclosure in other fields and upon other levels. Still if we have not the unity within, it is in vain that we shall try to enforce it from without by law and compulsion or by any assertion in outward forms. Intellectual assertion too, like the mechanical, is insufficient; only the spiritual can give it, because it alone has the secure power of realisation. The ancient truth of the self is the eternal truth; we have to go back upon it in order to carry it out in newer and fuller ways for which a past humanity was not ready. The recognition and fulfilment of the divine being in oneself and in man, the kingdom of God within and in the race is the basis on which man must come in the end to the possession of himself as a free self-determining being and of mankind too in a mutually possessing self-expansion as a harmoniously self-determining united existence.

'War and Self-Determination.'

# The Contemporary Teacher and Dynamic Methods of Teaching-Learning.

*Kireet Joshi*

The contemporary teacher will not be in a position to fulfill his role adequately unless educational methodology and contents of education begin to improve. And the more these improve, the subtler will become our demands on the teacher. The use of technologies might in due course reduce in certain respects some burden of routine instructional work. But it will open up the possibilities of individualized learning-teaching processes. The teacher will begin to be judged not only by the substance of what he will communicate and his power of stimulation, but also by what he is in his inner self, particularly whether he is capable of higher levels of reflection, whether he is impartial in his judgments, and whether he is wide enough to know his subject from the standpoint of a wider spectrum of knowledge.

A stagnant system of education cannot tolerate a dynamic teacher; an irrelevant system of education cannot permit a teacher to make his teaching relevant to the needs of the learner or the society; and a book-oriented, subject-oriented and examination-oriented system of education cannot provide the requisite opportunities to the teacher who wants to promote the objectives of peace, cooperation and integral personality.

Sooner, rather than later, the intricate problems of teaching-learning process must come to receive central attention, and we shall then see that an important role of the teacher at the present juncture will be that of an innovator or inventor of dynamic methods.

A principal method of teaching is lecturing, and the main function of the teacher is that of a lecturer. Now there are merits and demerits of teaching by lecturing. Basically, the lecture system induces passivity among students. It is group-oriented and it does not easily yield to the needs of individual-oriented dynamic learning process. Moreover, lecture system imposes a certain pattern of time-

tables, which reduces the possibilities for teachers and students for individual-oriented learning. It may also be observed that the lecture system is suited only to one or two varieties of group-oriented learning process. It is, for instance, not very relevant when a group is engaged in a joint enterprise or result-oriented activity. Project system is here more relevant.

In the new design of education, lecture system is not likely to play a pivotal role. Actually, it is now being increasingly realized that the student is best helped when he is allowed free initiative not only in regard to the choice of subjects or topics but also in regard to the pace of his progress. It is for this reason that self-learning is being advocated more and more insistently.

There are, indeed, a number of problems connected with self-learning. We may note, first, that self-learning needs to be supplemented by frequent or occasional help from teachers. It also needs to be supplemented by various kinds of group-activities. Again, while the process of self-learning does not yield easily to prefixed time-tables, the need of help from teachers and the need of group-activities are more easily fulfilled by resorting to prefixed time-tables. Our perplexities are further accentuated when we consider the question of syllabus and its relationship with examinations.

A possible solution that has been suggested by some educationists is to emphasize consultation system. In this system, lectures would play a subordinate role, and students would be expected to learn by themselves up to a maximum degree possible. But they would be allowed to consult teachers as and when needed, partly by prior engagement and partly by ready access. In this system, students would come to their classes not to listen to lectures but to do their own work. It is not difficult to arrange the facility of consultation with teachers in a dynamic situation where class



room itself is organized not as a lecture room but as a workshop, where learning is conceived as a multi-dimensional process designed to promote concentrated study, skill-oriented activity, and creative imagination and expression.

The present system of education utilizes tests as a means of securing students motivation to learn. Tests are also often used as a threat or punishment. The fact that even a silly and mechanical mind can pass tests and that, too, with honours is sufficient to pass a verdict against the present system of tests. Again, the fact that the most important aspects of culture lie beyond the scope of the present system of tests is sufficient to show what a marginal place tests should occupy in our total scheme of education.

There are what may be called 'romantic' periods of study, and they occur to different students at different stages of development. These are periods of general expansion, of a passion for a given pre-occupation, of falling in love with education. These periods are unsuitable for tests. On the other hand, there are periods when students need to clarify their vague ideas and systematize their thoughts. These are the periods when oral or written tests appropriate to these needs can be very useful. There are, again, periods when there is dullness, indifference and inertia. Here tests for stimulation can be quite relevant. There are, besides, periods of assimilation at the end of which there is a need to review in a coordinated manner different elements of study or work. Here tests for an extensive exposition would be quite relevant. There are also periods when there is a will, on the part of the student, to undergo a rigorous programme of training. During such periods, even a series of difficult and strenuous tests would be perfectly justified.

Thus, it is clear that tests have to be of a varied nature, and if the education system is suitably redesigned, it would be possible for teachers to give tests to their students as and when necessary. Tests can thus be inter-woven with a dynamic process of learning, and we can conceive of such a flexibility that each individual would be free to take a test according to his needs of progress.

The tests to which we have referred so far can all be brought under a class of tests that can be viewed as a part of the process of the formation of personality; and these should be distinguished from

those meant for certification. The latter should be public in character and should be so designed as to enable the examiner to assess as objectively and comprehensively as possible the comparative attainments of individuals so as to determine their suitability for work and responsibility.

These reflections show that the contemporary teacher is called upon to demand a radical change in the system of teaching-learning so that he can employ dynamic methods.

It is being increasingly recognized that one of the best methods of teaching is not to instruct the learner, but to present to him materials and environment in which the learner can be stimulated to discover for himself what is intended to be learnt. In a model of the exploration project, teachers stimulate the learners to make direct contact with the environment after defining the objectives of intended exploration. Learners determine the procedure, and the execution of the exploration is followed by an appraisal with reference to the objectives and the personal processes of learning. A number of action projects which are closely coupled with self-regulated practical action which demands the learner competency of knowledge and skill. In these projects, a special emphasis is laid on the achievement of a certain result that practical action is intended to entail. The learning experience is closely connected with the creation of learning situations and result-oriented practical action.

The individualized programmed instruction follows an instructional model which is designed to bring about an effective communication on precisely defined goals of learning. This model makes extensive use of programmed teaching and learning materials, and these materials are used for communicating cognitive stores of knowledge, particularly in spheres of learning in which linear sequences of steps of learning appear meaningful. At one stage it was felt that this model of instruction is relevant only to a certain section of students, but some experiments have shown its direct relevance to multi-level single teacher institutions, and although this model has its own limitations, it can be used in many situations, particularly, where the pace of progress requires to be varied according to the needs of different categories of students and where the active participation of the individual in the learning process needs to be emphasized.

In a slightly modified form of programmed learning, a great use is made of work-sheets. A work-sheet is a part of a learning module, in which the contents of learning are presented in such a way that the learner is required to interact by way of filling in the blanks or correlating certain presented data or replying to some questions. Answers are often concealed in the data or in the questions themselves. Work-sheets can be of various types, depending upon the kind of learning experience that is intended to be evoked or gained. The most important among them are what are called 'heuristic work-sheets'. These work-sheets are intended to stimulate learning by discovering. The work-sheet system facilitates to a great extent multi-level teaching by a single teacher. It also facilitates 'unit' studies and unit testing. The learner is also helped in pursuing his studies at his own pace and to vary the syllabus to suit his own special interests.

In a more sophisticated approach, learners are enabled to make an adjustment between their interests in learning and their style of learning. They are also enabled to relate these again to the learning environment. In the first phase, the learner has to decide on what he is interested in learning within a given framework and on the kind of cognitive approach to it. The second phase is governed principally by reading activities. In the third phase, the central feature is the appraisal of the knowledge acquired and, above all, the judgment of its significance. The area of applicability of this approach, which is sometimes called 'info-bank' approach, is defined by the necessary abilities of the learner to work on his own and by the possibility of separating the categories of knowledge and processing them more intensively.

There are still several other trends of innovations in the teaching-learning process which the contemporary teacher can adopt. In a significant experimental model, the teacher constructs an educative environment, and learners receive an orientation over the possibilities of action and learning following which they enter into mutual relations with the environment for a fairly long period. In the final phase, they actualize the possibilities of a further development and moulding of this environment. This model has been employed both in the fields of elementary education and in that of higher education.

Learning by teaching is another model, which is based on the principle of transferring to the learner all or some of the functions of a teacher, whereby to a certain extent he acquires qualifications auto-instructionally. This model of 'pupils learning from pupils' is often found in operation in elementary and secondary schools, and good teachers everywhere have employed this model in varied contexts.

In a yet another instructional model, a number of locally dispersed learners learn from one another because they inform and consult one another mutually and unselfishly from time to time about individual problems relating to an area in which they have an interest. In this model, which is often known as the 'network', every learner, who joins this learning experience voluntarily, is under an obligation to operate the network through consultation experimental testing and reporting back. This model is particularly relevant to the needs of non-formal learning.

In models called 'serious game' and 'simulation game', the learner takes over the roles of those responsible for the action and decision in simulated environments. Whilst in the serious game, the problems to be solved are frequently more complex and make the acquisitions of external information necessary, the simulation game is largely restricted to information supplied in advance. These models are particularly suitable to those branches of learning in which the ability to act and to decide is to be taught.

It will be seen that the dynamic methods of teaching are learner-oriented, and special emphasis is laid on the learner's needs and his pace of progress. The old ideas where the learner was regarded as a plastic material to be moulded according to the teacher's or parent's design are fast disappearing, and we are moving into a new age of education where students and teachers will increasingly share their roles. The present moment is a difficult moment of transition, where the teacher is called upon to discard the obsolete and invent the new. It is here that he needs a framework in which he can experiment with dynamic methods and evolve a progressive system of teaching-learning.

*'A Philosophy of the Role  
of the Contemporary Teacher'.*

# Drugs, Values and the Time-Spirit

*Dr. Soumitra Basu*

*Abstract: This paper discusses two aspects of drugs abuse: (a) its consideration as part of a global crisis of human values; and (b) its relation to the psychological stages of social development (a Lamprechtian concept elaborated by Sri Aurobindo). Faced with an erosion of cherished ideals, the youthful protest of the 1960's overthrew conventional values to foster the inter-related emergence of the hippy movement, drug culture, neo-political romanticism and quasi-spiritual adventures; but could not find an illumined replacement by a new set of values. The subsequent fluid state resulted in a shift from the colourful LSD to the dull heroin, from political romanticism to narco-terrorism, from internationalism to internecine conflicts. The effects of such devaluation have climaxed in countries where the age of Individualism (following the age of Conventionalism) has reached its zenith and the Time-Spirit presses 'the human cycle' to move through the age of True Subjectivism towards a Spiritual age.*

## **Introduction**

One of the current global crises plaguing humanity is the formidable problem of drug addiction. Drug abuse per se is not a new phenomenon and may even have antedated the medicinal use of drugs. Perhaps primitive human groups who used to indulge in rituals to attain states of ecstasy had found that certain substances could enhance excitement. It is presumable that these substances gradually acquired a wider acceptance, came to be used for a variety of other reasons and could have been misused for their mood-altering effects.

There is ample historical evidence to show that people who abuse drugs were present in human societies in ancient times. That traditional legacy is still borne, albeit with socio-cultural and temporal variations. It might be speculated that even if certain drugs had cultural acceptance, their abuse by some individuals in excess of

contemporaneous social norms could be due to personal or biological factors. However the sudden massive upsurge of a global drug culture that has assumed epidemic proportions can neither be accounted for by personality or biological factors alone nor by the traditional cultural patterns.

It is also noteworthy that both the major strategies aimed to fight addiction have failed. The first strategy was to fight the drug-menace at the organisational level. One of the more outwardly apparent reasons for its failure is ostensibly due to the difficulty in coping with the multifarious factors of operating simultaneously at multiple levels of the hierarchy behind the show. The drug-trade is tax-proof and recession-proof and the profits suffice to perpetuate the game. The second strategy that yielded inconsistent results was action at the individual level to reduce consumer demands. However motivation by moralistic sermons seems to have outlived its utility.

## **A Bankruptcy of Human Values**

There is a subtle and a deeper psychological aspect of the crisis that has not received much attention. The current spate in addictive behavior is not an isolated phenomenon but one of the consequences of the present crisis of humanity, a crisis wherein all the cherished values of man have been overthrown leaving a subjective vacuum because man has created what Sri Aurobindo describes as a

“Civilization which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilise and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites.”<sup>1</sup>

Faced by a bankruptcy of age-old values, man is desperately in search for an ideal that can give a meaning to life and can enrich and harmonise both the individual and the collectivity. It is now being felt that the lights which had so far guided humanity



are fading and neither a religious or a political change, nor a new scientific paradigm can alone or in combination provide radical remedies. Religion has become a conventional lip-service with spirituality being equated with philanthropy which can help the poor without eradicating poverty; the great French ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity have been reduced to mockery by political bigotry while Science has replaced Truth by Utility as its objective.

It is ironical that while scientists believed that a civilization of gadgets would give man more time to pursue constructive activities at leisure (viz. the cultivation of Arts), what has actually happened is a more aggressive and pervasive thrust towards satisfying selfish desires.

### *The Reaction*

It was natural therefore that some day or the other man would react. A radical change in the life-style of the young generation occurred in the Western world during the 1960s as part of a youthful protest against social conventions, religion, unilluminating materialism and the existing polity. The simultaneous and inter-related emergence of the hippy movement, pop music, cult figures, neo-political romanticism, quasi-spiritual adventures and the global drug culture bear testimony to that phenomenon. What happened essentially was that the frustrated youth, unable to find any inspiration for progress from the past, decided to sever all links with conventional values and ideals. Pavitra emphasises that a phenomenon of such a magnitude had never occurred before. Even during the Renaissance, inspiration was drawn from the pristine past.<sup>2</sup> However, once conventional values and ideals are overthrown, man and society must embody a new set of values and ideals. If these are not forthcoming, a state of chaos can prevail. This is exactly what happened to our modern youth. They have forsaken their age-old support systems without being able to substitute something new. Such a fluid phase in the history of society can favour an unbridled rise in deviant activities. The present spurt in drug addiction throughout the world too must be viewed from this perspective.

### *The Consequences*

What would happen if man did not acquire a new

set of values and ideals to replace the discarded ones? Sri Aurobindo warned that the first danger was a resurgence of the primitive barbarism in a civilized form. Or else, there would be a cessation of the urge to progress, a stagnation into a mechanised life without ideals.

It is interesting to observe how the drug-taking pattern of the modern youth illustrates the Master's warning. During the 1960s, when the drug culture was being initiated as a protest against stifling values of society and ethical codes of conduct, the eulogised drug of abuse was LSD. LSD (Lysergic Acid Diethylamide, nicknamed Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds) changed perceptions, made things colourful, allowed one 'trips' across the space-time continuum, built up 'transcendental climaxes' and 'psychedelic Nirvanas'. Despite these novelties, the adventure in drugs could not provide the inner light for progress. After all, as Satprem points out,

“The experience of drugs depends on outer means and is thus more of anomaly or a bondage whereas the real value of an experience should be judged by its capacity to transform life or else it is a vain dream.”<sup>3</sup>

Not surprisingly, within two decades, LSD was replaced by Heroin 'the drug of the 1980s par excellence'. Heroin neither distorts perceptions nor brings 'Nirvana experiences' but creates a euphoric detachment that reconciles one with the misery of modern life. Such a negative identification with the help of a drug alleviates the pain of a life otherwise unbearable in banality. Thus, the illusory attempt for newness through drugs together with the transition in the drug-taking behaviour from the expanding colourfulness of LSD to the constricted dullness of Heroin, from the 'drug of romance' to the 'drug of depression' was a consequence of a misadventure doomed to be a failure—it is perfectly illustrative of Sri Aurobindo's warning that a cessation of the urge to progress can produce a crystallisation into a life without ideals.

Pari passu with this development, the political romanticism of the 1960s that upheld such values as Internationalism, has been replaced to a large extent by narco-terrorism whereby divisive terrorist

groups have resorted to drug-trafficking to build up their arsenals, often backed by governments whose professed drug policies clash with selfish foreign policies. This phenomenon is reminiscent of Sri Aurobindo's anticipation of the resurgence of barbarism in modern man which

“Is bound to come if there is no high and strenuous mental and moral ideal controlling and uplifting the vital and physical man in us and no spiritual ideal liberating him from himself into his inner being.”<sup>4</sup>

The present huge global upsurge in drug addiction is only one of the surface phenomena representative of the deep world crisis of human values that now threatens mankind. The ripples of that crisis can also be felt in the contemporary rise in fanaticism; in the increase in suicide and murders by teenagers; in the involvement of youth in political juggernaut or Demi-Guru frenzy and in the growing number of internecine conflicts.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the plethora of Perestroika, the crumbling down of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the greatest obstacle to progress continues to be the apparent unchangeableness of human nature. It seems that man has exhausted his assets that include Reason and Faith in his pursuit for a holistic and integral fulfillment in life. The way out is a mutant transformation of human nature that can raise man to a higher stratum of consciousness where the hitherto latent potentialities of the individual and the society can be progressively manifested and harmonised.

### *The Phase of Transition*

The nature of the present crisis has a direct relation with the psychological stage of social development, a concept first mooted by Lamprecht and fully developed and elaborated by Sri Aurobindo. Society moves through different phases and the age of individualism comes in when the negative aspects of the age of conventionalism reaches a crescendo. A time comes when the human cycle must also outgrow the individualistic age based on Reason and Intellect and move towards a subjective age. At the present moment, different countries are at different points along the dimension of individualism. Goswami observes that while

individualism has hardly arrived in some countries, it has reached a saturation point in some others. He points out that the modern American society is at the zenith of the age of individualism.<sup>6</sup>

It is not surprising that the erosion of human values represented in modern crises like drug addiction has also reached its climax in countries where the saturation of individualism has made its negative aspects ostensible. The chasm between Knowledge and Will was never so wide before. When experts in the field abjectly express their helplessness in tackling the problem of addiction, they are expressing a greater truth—Reason and Intellect have their limitations. Time presses the human cycle to move forward through an age of subjectivism that surpasses the limitations of Reason towards a spiritual age.

It has been pointed out that man would not indulge in eroding himself if he had access to creativity. But in practice, many people who cultivate Arts and Aesthetics have also been known to be in the vanguard of perversion. Sri Aurobindo warns that it would be calamitous if we do not discriminate between true and false subjectivism. Creativity enshrined in true subjectivity can yet be the saviour of a devalued humanity.<sup>7</sup>

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# Sri Aurobindo and the Concept of the Unconscious in Psychology

A.S. Dalal

*"We are not only what we know of ourselves but an immense more which we do not know; our momentary personality is only a bubble on the ocean of our existence."*<sup>1</sup>

Sri Aurobindo

*"Our mind and ego are like the crown and dome of a temple jutting out from the waves while the great body of the building is submerged under the surface of the water."*<sup>2</sup>

Sri Aurobindo

As a metaphysical concept, the unconscious had been spoken of by several European thinkers, including the eminent philosophers Leibnitz and Kant. The first elaborate metaphysical theory of the unconscious was developed by Eduard Von Hartmann in '*Philosophie des Unbewussten*' (Philosophy of the Unconscious) published in 1869, according to which there is an intelligent, purposive, unconscious will which directs the universe. However, as a psychological construct used for the understanding of human behaviour, the concept of the unconscious is associated with two of the foremost personality theorists, namely, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung.

Freud, who announced his discovery of the unconscious in 1885, described it as a domain of the mind containing desires, feelings, memories and images which have been repressed because they are too anxiety-provoking to be admitted into consciousness. Though these repressed contents of the unconscious are not accessible to conscious awareness, they play a powerful dynamic role in human behaviour, especially in its psychopathological or abnormal manifestations. To express the enormity of the unconscious as compared to the conscious mind, Freud used the well known metaphor which depicts the mind as an iceberg, nine-tenths of which—the unconscious—lie hidden beneath the surface of the waters. William James hailed this discovery in

1901 as "the most important step forward that has occurred in psychology since I have been a student of that science."<sup>3</sup> Though the influence of Freud's theory of the human personality has considerably waned since its heyday, his concept of the unconscious still continues to permeate psychological thought to a wide extent. As a present-day psychologist, John Welwood, observes:

"The unconscious is perhaps the most powerful concept in all of modern psychology. The significance of a broad range of human behaviour and experience that had been difficult to explain before Freud, such as dreams, neurotic symptoms, symbolic visions, selective forgetting, slips of the tongue, is now widely recognized, thanks to the explanatory power of the concept of the unconscious."<sup>4</sup>

## *Sigmund Freud*

Freud arrived at the twin concepts of the unconscious and repression as a result of his early experience in treating patients with the "cathartic" method—consisting in the revival of painful repressed memories while in a state of hypnosis—which his older colleague, Joseph Breuer, had been using successfully with hysterical patients. Freud observed that among the painful forgotten memories, those of unacceptable wishes were predominant. He attributed such forgetting to the process of repression by which, according to him, the painful memories are pushed into the depths of the unconscious. Such forgetting through repression is distinguished from ordinary forgetting in that the former makes the forgotten material inaccessible to the conscious mind, whereas things which are forgotten ordinarily can be recalled as they lie in abeyance in what Freud called the preconscious layer of the mind. Thus Freud formulated his topographical theory which divided the mind into three layers—the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious.



Subsequently, Freud developed his structural theory of personality which conceives of the mental apparatus as made up of three components—the id, consisting of the primitive instinctual energies; the ego, constituted by the thinking part of the mind which exercises cognitive functions such as perception, memory, problem-solving, etc.; and the superego which acts as a conscience for the ego in censoring the instinctual demands of the id. In relating the concepts of the earlier topographical theory to his later structural view of personality, Freud stated that whereas the id is the true unconscious, "it is certain that much of the ego is itself unconscious",<sup>5</sup> and the superego too is largely unconscious. Thus, according to Freud, all the three components of what in psychology is vaguely termed mind or psyche form part of the unconscious in varying degrees.

### **Carl G. Jung**

In 1912, Jung presented a more complex view of the unconscious in his work entitled *Psychology of the Unconscious*. He distinguished between the personal unconscious—which, he said was what Freud spoke about—and the collective unconscious which was Jung's own great discovery. The personal unconscious according to Jung, is made up not only of repressed painful memories—as Freud originally believed—but also of long forgotten events, of subliminal perceptions which are below the sensory threshold, and of "everything psychic that has not reached the threshold of consciousness or whose energy charge is not sufficient to maintain it in consciousness or that will reach consciousness only in future."<sup>6</sup> Thus with regard to forgotten events he states: "When a thing is forgotten...it simply means that the memory has become subliminal. Its energy has sunk so low that it can no longer appear in consciousness."<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the collective unconscious, said Jung, consists of basic universal human urges or instincts, and is also the "deposit of ancestral experiences accumulated over millions of years"<sup>8</sup> which have established certain deep psychic predispositions in mankind as a whole. These inherited unconscious predispositions find conscious representation in various potent primordial images called archetypes. According to Jung, archetypes can be found in myths and fairy tales all over the world, and emerge in dreams,

fantasies and even in the delusions of the psychotic. Some of the chief archetypes are those of the Mother, Father, Child, Woman, Man, the Great Mother, the Earth Mother, Mother Nature, God, Demon, the Old Wise Man, Birth, Death, Rebirth, Magic, Unity, the Self and the Circle. Thus, according to Jung, instincts and archetypes are the two chief types of contents which constitute the unconscious. Instincts which are for the preservation and propagation of life, are likened to a stream of psychic energy, the archetypes being the permanent course through which the stream flows. Both instincts and archetypes are of unconscious origin, but operate in the conscious mind—the former as impulses of self-preservation and self-procreation, the latter as universal ideas.

Besides the difference in the nature of their contents, the personal unconscious differs from the collective unconscious in two chief respects. First, the former differs from person to person in the nature of its contents; the latter is the same in all individuals the world over. Secondly, the personal unconscious comes into existence subsequent to the formation of the conscious mind, whereas the collective unconscious antecedes the appearance of the conscious mind.

### **Freud and Jung Comparison**

There are some similarities as well as differences between Freud's and Jung's views of the unconscious. Chiefly, these consist in the following:

- (a) In his earlier topographical theory, Freud looked upon the unconscious as the outcome of repression. Thus he at first held that the unconscious was made up of repressed materials only. Jung on the other hand, maintained that besides repressions, the personal unconscious contains also long-forgotten memories and subliminal impressions.
- (b) In his later structural theory, Freud spoke of id as the primary stuff out of which the other two structural components of personality—ego and superego—subsequently develop. Since the id is wholly unconscious and consists of instinctual drives, Freud's later concept of the unconscious concurred with Jung's in regarding the unconscious as consisting of instincts as well as what is repressed. However, Jung attributed the repressed memories to the personal unconscious, and regarded the instinct as belonging to the collective unconscious.

(c) The major difference between Freud and Jung regarding the unconscious lies in the distinction made by Jung between the personal and the collective unconscious, and the far greater importance given to the latter.

(d) Freud and Jung differed also in their emphasis on the role of the unconscious in human life. According to Freud's theory, the unconscious plays two main roles. In the first place, being a storehouse of instinctual drives, the unconscious provides the biological energies which motivate all behaviour. Secondly, due to its contents of what has been repressed, it causes various types and degrees of disturbances, ranging from "the psychopathology of everyday life," such as slips of the tongue and selective forgetting, to psychiatric disorders of the various psychoneuroses and psychoses. It is this latter role of the unconscious, related to abnormal and negative aspect of behaviour, that looms large in Freud's theory. All the constructive and creative aspects of behavior were attributed by Freud to the sublimating activities of the conscious ego. On the other hand, Jung, while recognising the role of the unconscious—both personal and collective—in psychopathological behaviour, maintained also that the unconscious is the source of creative ideas and that "archetypal images are among the highest values of the human psyche".<sup>9</sup>

(e) A well-known difference between Freud and Jung pertains to their concepts regarding the nature of the instinctual energies of the unconscious. According to Freud's earlier views, the instinctual energies of the id, which he termed the libido, are essentially sexual. Subsequently, Freud re-formulated the concept of instincts and spoke of two classes of instincts—Eros or the life-preservative instincts, including the sexual instinct, and Thanatos or the death instinct. In this later formulation, libido came to be regarded as the energies of Eros, and aggression, turning away from pleasure, etc. as the expression of Thanatos. This subsequent modification of Freud's concept of the instinctual energies never dominated psychoanalytic thinking; the id and its libido have tended to retain their exclusively sexual connotations. On the other hand, Jung, who did not place much emphasis on the role of sexual impulse, regarded the libido as a general psychic energy which expresses itself in numerous

forms, including the sexual urge (Freud), the urge for power (Adler), etc.

### *Sri Aurobindo*

From the viewpoint of Sri Aurobindo, the fundamental limitation of modern psychology in delineating the nature of what it calls the unconscious stems from the mistake of describing the whole of a vast and complex reality in terms of a miniscule part, very much like the groping blind men of the well-known parable who, having each grasped a particular part of an elephant, depicted the whole elephant in terms of the particular part of the elephant's body which he happened to grasp and palpate. Sri Aurobindo has pointed out this error on more than one occasion.<sup>10</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's remark that "you must know the whole before you can know the part"<sup>11</sup> finds elucidation in his description of the various parts of the being given below.

Broadly speaking, Sri Aurobindo distinguishes four elements which make up the totality of man's being: the surface or outer being, the subconscient, the subliminal and the superconscient. In order to understand the nature of this fourfold constitution of the being, certain fundamental views of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy need to be grasped. First, man's being is part of the being of the universe, man being a microcosm of the macrocosm; therefore the psychological nature of man is intimately related to the metaphysical nature of the universe. Secondly, all of the universe is a manifestation of consciousness which has been evolving from the nethermost level—the Inconscient—towards the highest levels of the Superconscient; thus "the emergence and growth of consciousness is the central motive of the evolution and the key to its secret purpose."<sup>12</sup> Thirdly, the evolution of consciousness is preceded by its involution; therefore the Inconscient is a concealed consciousness and "an inverse reproduction of the supreme superconscience"<sup>13</sup> evolution thus is a process of the return of Inconscience to the supreme Consciousness. Implicit in these fundamental propositions is the view that nothing is truly unconscious or totally devoid of consciousness; therefore the unconscious spoken of in psychology is a misnomer; what is

called the unconscious is simply that which lies outside the surface conscious awareness and of which the mind in its ordinary state is not conscious.

In the evolutionary process, the first emergence from the Inconscient is Matter from which the human body is evolved. Regarding the workings of the Inconscient in Matter and the body, Sri Aurobindo states:

“The body... is a creation of the Inconscient and itself inconscient or at least subconscious in parts of itself and much of its hidden action; but what we call the Inconscient is an appearance, a dwelling place, an instrument of a secret Consciousness or a Superconscient which has created the miracle we call the universe. Matter is the field and the creation of the inconscient and the perfection of the operations of Inconscient Matter, their perfect adaptation of means to an aim and end, the wonders they perform and the marvels of beauty they create, testify, in spite of all the ignorant denial we can oppose, to the presence and power of consciousness of this Superconscience in every part and movement of the material universe. It is there in the body, has made it and its emergence in our consciousness, is the secret aim of evolution and the key to the mystery of our existence.”<sup>14</sup>

From the seemingly inconscient Matter emerge successively Life and Mind. Explaining the nature and function of Life as a middle term between Mind and Matter, Sri Aurobindo writes:

“Life then reveals itself as essentially the same everywhere from the atom to man, the atom containing the subconscious stuff and movement of being which are released in consciousness in the animal, with plant life as midway stage in the evolution. Life is really a universal operation of Conscious-Force acting subconsciously on and in Matter; it is the operation that creates, maintains, destroys and re-creates forms or bodies and attempts by play of nerve-force, that is to say, by currents of interchange of stimulating energy to awake conscious sensation in those bodies. In this operation there are three stages; the lowest is that in which the vibration is still in the sleep of Matter, entirely subconscious so as to seem wholly mechanical; the middle stage is that in which it

becomes capable of a response still submental but on the verge of what we know as consciousness; the highest is that in which life develops conscious mentality in the form of a mentally perceptible sensation which in this transition becomes the basis for the development of sense-mind and intelligence. It is in the middle stage that we catch the idea of Life as distinguished from Matter and Mind, but in reality it is the same in all the stages and always a middle term between Mind and Matter, constituent of the latter and instinct with the former.”<sup>15</sup>

### *The Surface Being*

To return to Sri Aurobindo's fourfold classification of the human constitution, man's surface consciousness, derived from the three universal principles just mentioned, is composed of mind, life (generally referred to by Sri Aurobindo as the vital) and body-consciousness. Sri Aurobindo states that the term "mind" which has been used indiscriminately to cover the whole surface consciousness, connotes in the language of his yoga that part of the being which is related to cognitive elements and functions, such as ideas and thoughts, intelligence, thinking and reasoning. He distinguishes mind from the other two elements of the surface nature, namely, the vital and the body consciousness, which are mixed up with mind on the surface. The vital is the Life-Nature made up of sensations, energies of action, instincts, impulses, desires, feelings and emotions. The body, says Sri Aurobindo, “is not mere unconscious matter: it is a structure of a secretly conscious Energy that has taken form in it. Itself occultly conscious, it is, at the same time, the vehicle of expression of an overt Consciousness that has emerged and is self-aware in our physical energy-substance.”<sup>16</sup> Regarding the confounding of the vital and the body-consciousness with mind, Sri Aurobindo explains:

“Mind identifies itself to a certain extent with the movements proper to physical life and body and annexes them to its mentality, so that all consciousness seems to us to be mental. But if we draw back, if we separate the mind as witness from these parts of us, we can discover that life and body,—even the most physical parts of life,—have a consciousness of their own, a consciousness proper to an obscurer vital and to a bodily being, even such an elemental awareness as primitive animal forms

may have, but in us partly taken up by the mind and to that extent mentalised. Yet it has not, in its independent motion, the mental awareness which we enjoy; if there is mind in it, it is mind involved and implicit in the body and in the physical life: there is no organised self-consciousness, but only a sense of action and reaction, movement, impulse and desire, need, necessary activities imposed by Nature, hunger, instinct, pain, insensibility and pleasure. Although thus inferior, it has this awareness obscure, limited and automatic;... when we stand back from it, when we can separate our mind from its sensations, we perceive that this is a nervous and sensational and automatically dynamic mode of consciousness, a gradation of awareness different from the mind: it has its own separate reactions to contacts and is sensitive to them in its own power of feeling; it does not depend for that on the mind's perception and response."<sup>17</sup>

### *The Subconscious*

Sri Aurobindo defines the subconscious as follows:

"The subconscious in us is the extreme border of our secret inner existence where it meets the Inconscient, it is a degree of our being in which the Inconscient struggles into a half-consciousness;... Or, from another viewpoint, this nether part of us may be described as the antechamber of the Inconscient."<sup>18</sup>

An important distinction to be made for understanding in the nature of the subconscious is between the submental and the subconscious. The former refers to that which, from the evolutionary point of view, is lower than or inferior to mind. The physical consciousness of the body and that of the vital are in this sense submental, but they are not entirely subconscious, for in them consciousness has already evolved a certain degree of its formulation and expression, though for the most part the operations of consciousness in the physical and vital parts of our being are subconscious to the mind and would therefore be regarded in modern psychology as parts of the unconscious. "The true subconscious," says Sri Aurobindo, "is other than this vital or physical substratum; it is the Inconscient vibrating on the borders of consciousness. ..."<sup>19</sup> In other words, whereas the submental is that which is below mind,

the subconscious is what lies below even the physical and body-consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo elaborates the description of the subconscious in the following extracts which reiterate some of its basic characteristics:

"In our yoga we mean by the subconscious that quite submerged part of our being in which there is no wakeningly conscious and coherent thought, will or feeling or organized reaction, but which yet receives obscurely the impressions of all things and stores them up in itself and from it too all sorts of stimuli, of persistent habitual movements, crudely repeated or disguised in strange forms can surge up into dream or into the waking nature. For if these impressions rise up most in dream in an incoherent and disorganized manner, they can also and do rise up into our waking consciousness as a mechanical repetition of old thoughts, old mental, vital and physical habits or an obscure stimulus to sensations, actions, emotions which do not originate in or from our conscious thought or will and are even often opposed to its perceptions, choice or dictates. In the subconscious there is an obscure mind full of obstinate Sanskaras, impressions, associations, fixed notions, habitual reactions formed by our past, an obscure vital full of seeds of habitual desires, sensations and nervous reactions, a most obscure material which governs much that has to do with the condition of the body. It is largely responsible for our illness; chronic or repeated illnesses are indeed mainly due to the subconscious and its obstinate memory and habit of repetition of whatever has impressed itself upon the body-consciousness."<sup>20</sup>

"It is a known psychological law that whatever is suppressed in the conscious mind remains in the subconscious being and recurs either in the waking state when the control is removed or else in sleep. Mental control by itself cannot eradicate anything entirely out of the being. The subconscious in the ordinary man includes the larger part of the vital being and the physical mind and also the secret body-consciousness."<sup>21</sup>

"When something is thrown out of the vital or physical, it very usually goes down into the subconscious and remains there as if in seed and comes up again when it can. That is the reason

why it is so difficult to get rid of habitual vital movements or to change the character; for, supported or refreshed from the source, preserved in this matrix your vital movements, even when suppressed or repressed, surge up again and recur.”<sup>22</sup>

“That part of us which we can strictly call subconscious because it is below the level of mind and conscious life, inferior and obscure, covers the purely physical and vital elements of our constitution of bodily being, unmentalised, unobserved by the mind, uncontrolled by it in their action. It can be held to include the dumb occult consciousness, dynamic but not sensed by us, which operates in the cells and nerves and all the corporeal stuff and adjusts their life process and automatic responses. It covers also those lowest functionings of submerged sense-mind which are more operative in the animal and in plant life.”<sup>23</sup>

It is interesting to note that some of Freud's basic views regarding the unconscious strikingly reflect the description of the subconscious as given above. The following are among the chief of such Freudian views of the unconscious which are corroborated by Sri Aurobindo in describing the nature of the subconscious:

- (a) The unconscious is far more extensive than the conscious.
- (b) What is repressed or driven out of conscious awareness becomes part of the unconscious.
- (c) The contents of the unconscious powerfully affect the workings of the conscious mind.
- (d) What lies in the unconscious emerges in dreams. (Dreams, said Freud, are the royal road to the unconscious.)
- (e) Certain experiences rooted in the unconscious tend to be re-enacted repeatedly in a compulsive way—what Freud termed "repetition compulsion".

However, according to Sri Aurobindo, “the lower vital subconscious which is all that this psycho-analysis of Freud seems to know,—and even of that it knows only a few ill-lit corners,—is no more than a restricted and very inferior portion of the subliminal whole.”<sup>24</sup>

### *The Subliminal*

The term "subliminal" literally means below the

threshold, and in its current usage is generally employed with reference to sensory stimuli which are below the detection threshold, that is, are less than the minimum intensity of duration required to excite a sensory neuron and be perceived. In 1886, F. W. H. Myers, to whom the discovery of the subliminal is ascribed, used the terms to describe certain psychological processes which take place below the level of awareness. Subsequently, in the writings of Jung and others, the term was used at times as a synonym for the unconscious (or the subconscious as it has sometimes been called). Referring to this last-mentioned usage of the term as co-extensive with what in modern psychology has been called the unconscious or the subconscious, Sri Aurobindo states:

“Subliminal is a general term used for all parts of the being which are not on the waking surface. Subconscious is very often used in the same sense by European psychologists because they do not know the difference. But when I used the word, I mean always what is below the ordinary physical consciousness, not what is behind it.”<sup>25</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has occasionally used "subliminal" as a general term to denote all parts of the being which are not on the waking surface consciousness, "so conceiving it as to include in it our lower subconscious and upper superconscious ends."<sup>26</sup> However, for the most part he distinguishes three parts of the being which are outside the surface consciousness: that which lies below (the subconscious), that which lies behind (the subliminal), and that which is high above (the superconscious). Regarding the distinction between the subconscious and the subliminal, Sri Aurobindo states:

“... When we say subconscious, we think readily of an obscure unconsciousness or half-consciousness or else a submerged consciousness below and in a way inferior to and less than our organised waking awareness or, at least, less in possession of itself. But we find, when we go within, that somewhere in our subliminal part,—though not co-extensive with it since it has also obscure and ignorant regions,—there is a consciousness much wider, more luminous, more in possession of itself and things than that which wakes upon our surface and is the percipient of our daily hours; that is our inner being, and



it is this which we must regard as our subliminal self and set apart the subconscious as an inferior, a lowest occult province of our nature."<sup>27</sup>

Sri Aurobindo states further the nature of the subliminal self as follows:

"There is a "subliminal" self behind our superficial waking mind, not inconscient but conscient, greater than the waking mind, endowed with surprising faculties and capable of a much surer action and experience, conscient of the superficial mind, though of it the superficial mind is inconscient."<sup>28</sup>

"Our subliminal self is not, like our surface physical being, an outcome of the energy of the Inconscient; it is a meeting-place of the consciousness that emerges from below by evolution and the consciousness that has descended from above for involution. There is in it an inner mind, an inner vital being of ourselves, an inner or subtle-physical being larger than our outer being and nature.... There is here a consciousness which has a power of direct contact with the universal unlike the mostly indirect contacts which our surface being maintains with the universe through the sense-mind and the senses. There are here inner senses, a subliminal sight, touch, hearing; but these subtle senses are rather channels of the inner being's direct consciousness of things than its informants: the subliminal is not dependent on its senses for its knowledge, they only give a form to its direct experience of objects; they do not, so much as in waking mind, convey forms of objects for the mind's documentation or as the starting point or basis for an indirect constructive experience. The subliminal has the right of entry into the mental and vital and subtle-physical planes of the universal consciousness, it is not confined to the material plane and the physical world; it possesses means of communication with the worlds of being which the descent towards involution created in its passage and with all corresponding planes or worlds that may have arisen or been constructed to serve the purpose of the re-ascent from Inconscience to Superconscience. It is into this large realm of interior existence that our mind and vital being retire when they withdraw from the surface

activities whether by sleep or inward-drawn concentration or by the inner plunge of trance."<sup>29</sup>

Sri Aurobindo has called the subliminal self the inner being as distinguished from the outer or surface being. Thus he states:

"There are, we might say, two beings in us, one on the surface, our ordinary exterior mind, life, body consciousness, another behind the veil, an inner mind, an inner life, an inner physical consciousness constituting another or inner self."<sup>30</sup>

The outer being is connected with the subliminal and, though unaware of it, receives from the subliminal its inspirations, intuitions, etc. As Sri Aurobindo states:

"It (the subliminal) is, according to our psychology, connected with the small outer personality by certain centres of consciousness of which we become aware by yoga. Only a little of the inner being escapes through these centres into the outer life, but that little is the best part of ourselves and responsible for our art, poetry, philosophy, ideals, religious aspirations, efforts at knowledge and perfection."<sup>31</sup>

Thus though the surface being of the average individual is largely influenced by the subconscious it is also influenced to a significant extent by the subliminal.

Jung's concept of the collective unconscious contains, besides other elements, some aspects of what Sri Aurobindo describes as the subliminal. For example, in the subliminal, as stated above, are inner senses of sight, touch, hearing, etc. the subliminal is therefore "the seer of inner things and supraphysical experiences."<sup>32</sup> Jung, who reports having had frequent supraphysical experiences such as visions or what he called "extremely vivid hypnagogic images,"<sup>33</sup> ascribed such experiences to the collective unconscious. Another striking resemblance between Sri Aurobindo's description of the subliminal and Jung's view of the collective unconscious lies in tracing the source of predictive, veridical and deeply symbolic dreams. According to Sri Aurobindo such dreams, which Jung ascribed to collective unconscious, come from the

subliminal, which he described as "a greater dream builder"<sup>34</sup> than the subconscious. Yet another similarity between the subliminal and the collective unconscious is that just as Sri Aurobindo ascribes the best part of ourselves—our art, poetry, philosophy, etc.—to the influences emanating from the subliminal, so does Jung, as stated earlier, look upon the archetypal images of the collective unconscious as some of the highest values of the human psyche. However, the most significant resemblance between the concepts of the subliminal and the collective unconscious lies in that both are regarded as extending beyond the individual consciousness, though the subliminal has also its separate formation for each individual.

### *The Superconscious*

As stated previously, the superconscious is the starting point of the involution of consciousness and the ultimate goal of its evolution. Regarding the superconscious, Sri Aurobindo writes:

"If the subliminal and subconscious may be compared to a sea which throws up the waves of our surface mental existence, the superconscience may be compared to an ether which constitutes, contains, over-roofs, inhabits and determines the movements of the sea and its waves. It is there in this higher ether that we are inherently and intrinsically conscious of our self and spirit, not as here below by a reflection in silent mind or by acquisition of the knowledge of a hidden Being within us; it is through it, through that ether of superconscience, that we can pass to a supreme status, knowledge, experience. Of this superconscious existence through which we can arrive at the highest status of our real, our supreme Self, we are normally even more ignorant than of the rest of our being; yet is it into the knowledge of it that our being emerging out of the involution in Inconscience is struggling to evolve."

"In the superconscience beyond our present level of awareness are included the higher planes of mental being as well as the native heights of supramental and pure spiritual being."<sup>35</sup>

Among the higher planes of mental being, Sri Aurobindo distinguishes various distinct levels which he terms Higher Mind, Illumined Mind,

Intuitive Mind and Overmind, culminating in what Sri Aurobindo calls Supermind or the Truth-Consciousness which secretly supports all the universe and leads all towards itself through the evolutionary process.

### *Knowing the Uncounting*

In the last chapter ("Late Thoughts") of his *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung points out the inability of the mind to know the unconscious. He writes:

"Science employs the term "the unconscious", thus admitting that it knows nothing about it, for it can know nothing about the substance of the psyche when the sole means of knowing anything is the psyche."<sup>37</sup>

Sri Aurobindo goes a step further and points out that the mind, because of its inherent limitations, is incapable of knowing anything in its essential nature. As he states:

"Mind in its essence is a consciousness which measures, limits, cuts out forms of things from the indivisible whole and contains them as if each were a separate integer."<sup>38</sup>

"Mind is an instrument of analysis and synthesis, but not of essential knowledge. Its function is to cut out something vaguely from the unknown thing in itself and call this measurement or delimitation of it the whole, and again to analyse the whole into its parts which it regards as separate mental objects."<sup>39</sup>

Because of the intrinsic limitations of the mind as stated above, the method employed for understanding the unconscious, consisting in a mental analysis of what are believed to be the products of the unconscious, namely, dreams, free-associations, etc., has yielded only fragmentary and relatively superficial insights into the so-called unconscious. From these limited insights the mind has sought to construct the total reality of that which lies below, behind and beyond mind. As a result, the whole has either been reduced and explained in terms of a fragment, as in Freud's concept of unconscious, or subsumed under a nebulous and conglomerate concept such as Jung's collective unconscious. The

latest major school of psychological thought Transpersonal Psychology has come to recognise a wider range of phenomena, experiences and states of consciousness which have hitherto been regarded by most psychologists as belonging to a "fringe" area, such as extrasensory perception, telepathy, precognition, telekinesis, clairvoyance and clairaudience, "peak" experiences, altered states of consciousness, etc. which are now classed under the ill-defined concept of "transpersonal consciousness," the heterogeneous nature of which may be seen from the following statement:

"Transpersonal content includes any experiences in which an individual transcends the limitations of identifying exclusively with the ego or personality. Transpersonal content also includes the mythical, archetypal, and symbolic realms of inner experience that can come into awareness through imagery and dreams."<sup>40</sup>

According to Sri Aurobindo, in order to know what lies outside mental awareness and be able to distinguish among the subconscious, the subliminal and the superconscious, it is necessary to break the walls that separate the surface consciousness from what lies behind and beyond it so as to emerge into the subliminal and the superconscious. As he states:

"A descent into the subconscious would not help us to explore this region, for it would plunge us into incoherence or into sleep or a dull trance or a comatose torpor. A mental scrutiny or insight can give us some indirect and constructive idea of these hidden activities; but it is only by drawing back into the subliminal or by ascending into the superconscious and from there looking down or extending ourselves into these obscure depths that we can become directly and totally aware and in control of the secrets of our subconscious physical, vital and mental nature."<sup>41</sup>

"... Though large parts of it (the subliminal) can be thus known by a penetration and looking within or a freer communication, it is only by going inward behind the veil of superficial mind and living within, in an inner mind, an inner life, an inmost soul of our being that we can be fully self-aware,—by this and by rising to a higher plane of mind than that which our waking consciousness inhabits. An enlargement

and completion of our present evolutionary status, now still so hampered and truncated, would be the result of such an inward living; but an evolution beyond it can come only by our becoming conscious in what is now superconscious to us, by an ascension to the native heights of the spirit."<sup>42</sup>

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# Mental Education

## *The Mother*

Of all education, that of the mind is the best known and the most in use; yet except in a few rare cases, there are lacunae which make of it something very incomplete and, in the end, quite insufficient.

Generally speaking, education is taken to mean the required mental education. And when a child has been made to undergo, for a number of years, a course of severe training, which is more like stuffing the brain than educating it, it is considered that whatever is necessary for his mental growth has been done. But in reality nothing of the kind has been done. Even when the training is given with due measure and discrimination and does not impair the brain, it cannot impart to the human mind the faculties it needs to make a good and useful instrument. The education that is usually given can, at the most, serve as a gymnastic exercise to increase the suppleness of the brain. From this standpoint, each branch of human learning represents a special and well-defined language.

A true education of the mind, that which will prepare man for a higher life, has five principal phases. Normally these phases come one after another, but in exceptional individuals they may come alternately or even simultaneously. The five phases, in brief, are:

- (1) Development of the power of concentration, the capacity of attention.
- (2) Development of the capacities of expansion, wideness, complexity and richness.
- (3) Organisation of ideas around a central idea or a higher ideal or a supremely luminous idea that will serve as a guide in life.
- (4) Thought control, rejection of undesirable thoughts, so that one may, in the end, think only what one wants and when one wants it.
- (5) Development of mental silence, perfect calm and a more and more total receptivity to inspirations coming from the higher region of the being.

It is not possible to give here all the details concerning the methods to be employed in the application of these phases of education to different individuals. Still some explanatory indications can be given.

It cannot be gainsaid that what most impedes mental progress in the child is the constant dispersion of his thoughts. His thought flutters hither and thither like a butterfly and a great effort is required on his part to fix it. Yet the capacity is latent in him for when you succeed in making him interested, he is capable of a good deal of attention. It is therefore the skill of the educator that will gradually make the child capable of a sustained effort of attention and a faculty of more and more complete absorption in the work while it is being done. All means are good that can develop this faculty of attention: they can all be utilised according to need and circumstances, from games up to rewards. But it is the psychological action that is most important and the sovereign means is to rouse in the child interest in the thing that one wishes to teach, the taste for work, the will to progress. To love to learn is the most precious gift that one can make to a child: to love to learn always and everywhere. Let all circumstances, all happenings in life be occasions, constantly renewed, for learning more and ever more.

For that, to attention and concentration should be added observation, precision of recording and faithfulness of memory. This faculty of observation can be developed by various and spontaneous exercises, making use of all opportunities that help to keep the child's thought wakeful, alert, quick. The growth of the understanding much more than that of memory should be insisted upon. One knows only what one understands. Things learnt by heart, mechanically, get blurred little by little and finally fade away: you never forget what you understand. Moreover, you must never refuse to explain to a child the how and the why of things. If you cannot do it

yourself, you must direct the child to those qualified to answer him or to books dealing with the question. It is in this way that you will progressively awake in the child the taste for real study and the habit of a persistent effort to know.

This will take us naturally to the second phase of growth in which the mind has to be enlarged and enriched.

As the child progresses you will show him how everything can become an interesting subject for study, provided the question is approached in the right manner. The life of every day, of every moment is the best of all schools, varied, complex, rich in unforeseen experiences, in problems awaiting solution, in clear and striking examples and in evident consequences. It is so easy to rouse healthy curiosity in children, if you answer with intelligence and clarity the numberless questions they put. An interesting reply brings in its train others and the child, his attention attracted, learns without effort much more than what he usually does on the school bench. A careful and intelligent selection should also give him a taste for healthy reading which is at once instructive and attractive. Fear nothing that awakes and satisfies his imagination; that develops the creative mental faculty and it is through that study becomes a living thing and the mind grows in joy.

In order to increase the suppleness and comprehensiveness of his mind, one should not only look to the number and variety of subjects for study, but particularly to the diverse approaches to the same subject; by this means the child will be made to understand in a practical way that there are many ways of facing the same intellectual problem, dealing with it and solving it. The brain will thus be free from all rigidity and, at the same time, thought will gain in richness and suppleness and be made ready for a more complex and comprehensive synthesis. In this way also the child will be imbued with the sense of the extreme relativity of mental knowledge and, little by little, an aspiration will be awakened in him for a truer source of knowledge.

Indeed, as the child progresses in his studies and grows in age, his mind too ripens and is more and more capable of general ideas; and along with this,

there always comes the need for certitude, for a knowledge stable enough to be made the basis of a mental construction which will permit all diverse and scattered and often contradictory ideas accumulated in the brain to be organised and put in order. This ordering is indeed very necessary if one is to avoid chaos in one's thoughts. All contradictories can be transformed into complementaries, but for that one must discover a higher idea that will be able to harmonise them. It is good to consider all problems from all possible standpoints to avoid partiality and exclusiveness, but if the thought is to be active and creative it must, in each case, be the natural and logical synthesis of all the points of view taken in. And if you are to make of the totality of your thoughts a dynamic and constructive force, you must take great care as to the choice of the central idea of your mental synthesis; for upon that will depend the value of your synthesis. The higher and larger the central idea and the more universal it is, rising above time and space, the more numerous and the more complex will be the ideas, notions and thoughts which it will be able to organise and harmonise.

It goes without saying that the work of organisation cannot be done all at once. The mind, if it is to keep its vigour and youth, must progress constantly, revise its notions in the light of all new knowledge, enlarge its frame to include fresh notions and constantly reclassify and reorganise its thoughts, so that each one of them may find its proper place in relation to others and the whole thus stand harmonious and orderly.

All that has just been said, however, concerns the speculative mind, the mind that learns. But learning is only one aspect of mental activity; the other, at least as important, is the constructive faculty, the capacity to give form and therefore prepare for action. This part of mental activity, although very important, has rarely been the subject of any special study and discipline. Only those who want, for some reason, to exercise a strict control over their mental activities think of observing and disciplining this faculty of formation; even so, as soon as they try it, they find themselves faced with such great difficulties that they appear almost insurmountable.

And yet control over this formative activity of the mind is one of the most important aspects of self-



education: one can say that without it no mental mastery is possible. On the side of study, all ideas are acceptable and should be included in the synthesis whose very function is to become more and more rich and complex; but, on the side of action, it is quite the contrary. A strict control should be put on ideas that are accepted for translation into action and only those that agree with the general trend of the central idea forming the basis of the mental synthesis should be permitted to express themselves in action. This means that every thought entering the mental consciousness should be placed before the central idea; if it finds a right place among the thoughts already grouped, it will be admitted into the synthesis; if not, it will be thrown out, so that it cannot have any influence upon the action. This work of mental purification should be done very regularly to secure a complete control over one's actions.

For that purpose, it is good to set apart every day some time when one can quietly go over one's thoughts and put order into one's synthesis. Once the habit is acquired, you can maintain your control over thoughts even during work and action and you will be able not to let any come to the fore that is not useful to the thing undertaken. Particularly if the power of concentration and attention is continuously cultivated, the active external consciousness will allow only those thoughts that are needed and then they become all the more dynamic and effective. And if, in the intensity of concentration, it is necessary not to think at all, mental vibration can be stopped and an almost total silence secured. In

this silence one can open gradually to the higher mental regions and learn to record the inspirations that come from there.

But even before arriving at this point, silence in itself is supremely useful because in most people who have a somewhat developed and active mind, the mind is never at rest. During the day, its activity is put under a certain control, but at night, during the sleep of the body, the control of the waking state is almost completely removed and the mind indulges in excessive and often incoherent activities. This creates a great tension ending in fatigue and diminution of mental faculties.

The fact is that, like all the other parts of the human being, the mind too needs rest and this rest it will not have unless we know how to give it. The art of giving rest to one's mind is a thing to be acquired. Changing mental activity is a way of rest; but the greatest possible rest lies in silence. And in the case of mental faculties, a few minutes passed in the calm of silence mean a more effective rest than hours of sleep.

When one will have learnt to silence the mind at will and concentrate it in the receptive silence, then there will be no problem that one cannot solve, no mental difficulty to which a solution will not be found. Thought, while in agitation, becomes confused and impotent; in an attentive tranquillity, the light can manifest itself and open new horizons to man's capacity.

*' Bulletin of Physical Education '*

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*The usual practice is to train the logical reason by teaching the science of Logic. This is an instance of the prevalent error by which book-knowledge of a thing is made the object of the study instead of the thing itself. The experience of reasoning and its errors should be given to the mind and it should be taught to observe how these work for itself; it should proceed from the example to the rule and from the accumulating harmony of rules to the formal science of the subject, not from the formal science to the rule, and from the rule to the example.*

*The first step is to make the young mind interest itself in drawing inferences from the facts tracing cause and effect. It should then be led on to notice its successes and its failures and the reasons of the success and of the failure: the incorrectness of the fact started from, the haste in drawing conclusions from insufficient facts, the carelessness in accepting a conclusion which is improbable, little supported by the data or open to doubt, the indolence or prejudice which does not wish to consider other possible explanations or conclusions. In this way the mind can be trained to reason as correctly as the fallibility of human logic will allow, minimising the chances of error. The study of formal logic should be postponed to a later time when it can easily be mastered in a very brief period, since it will be only the systematising of an art perfectly well known to the student.*

**Sri Aurobindo**

*'A System of National Education'*

**A Tree**  
***Sri Aurobindo***

A tree beside the sandy river-beach  
Holds up its topmost boughs  
Like fingers towards the skies they cannot reach,  
Earth-bound, heaver-amorous.

This is the soul of man. Body and brain  
Hungry for earth our heavenly flight detain.

*'Collected Poems'.*