

# अनिल

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

BRITANNIA

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for dynamic truth

# रितीगुनी

RITĀGNI

RNI. 65354/96.

Volume IV Issue 2

JANUARY 2000

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LAYOUT & DESIGN

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PUBLISHED & PRINTED BY

KOSHASHAH

for

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PRINTED AT

GEETAMUDRANALAYA

Geeta Mandir,

Pratapnagar Road, Baroda-390 004. India.

Phone: (0265) 463694

## Subscription

### India

1 Year (4 Issues): Rs. 140

2 Years (8 Issues): Rs. 280

(Please add Rs. 25 for outstation cheques)

### Foreign Airmail

1 Year (4 Issues): US \$ 20 / £ 12

2 Years (8 Issues): US \$ 40 / £ 24

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## CONTENTS

- 2 Liberation—In Life or Beyond? ----- Editor
- 3 Prayer ----- The Mother
- 4 The Divine Body ----- Sri Aurobindo
- 17 The Spiritual Genius  
of India ----- Nolini Kanta Gupta
- 22 Spirituality and Social Change ----- Kosha Shah
- 27 On Money ----- The Mother
- 32 Evolution (poem). ----- Sri Aurobindo

## Liberation -In Life or Beyond?

In many, if not most religious traditions, the aim of life is to go from a limited, imperfect physical world to a limitless freedom of either Nirvana or some perfect Heaven. The physical body is seen as a cage of the soul and spiritual teaching would consist of how best to prepare to set the soul free from the tyranny of matter into the bliss beyond. While such spiritual practice may ensure salvation of the individual soul, earth itself and all those on it not consciously seeking liberation are left bereft of any hope for change. This theory of the world which is pessimistic towards earthly life affirms that since ignorance is at the root of both matter and mind, to seek satisfaction of the spirit upon earth is a vanity and delusion; only in a heaven of the Spirit and not in the world, or only in the Spirit's true quietude and not in its phenomenal activities, can we reunite existence and consciousness.

But perhaps the Infinite need not reject its attempt to find itself in the finite as an error. There are subtler states even of matter itself and there is the possibility of the material being transforming itself by accepting a law higher than its own because it is latent within itself. Liberation and transcendence can, then, need not mean a sheer dissolving out from the manifestation. Instead it could prepare a liberation into action of the highest Knowledge and an intensity of Power that can transform the world and fulfil the evolutionary urge.

"It is only by rising toward a higher consciousness beyond the mental line and therefore superconscious now to him that he can emerge from his inability and his ignorance. His full liberation and enlightenment will come when he crosses the line into the light of a new superconscious existence. That is the transcendence which was the object of aspiration of the mystics and the spiritual seekers.

"But in itself this would change nothing in the creation here, the evasion of a liberated soul from the world makes to that world no difference. But this crossing of the line if turned not only to an ascending but to a descending purpose would mean the transformation of the line from what it now is, a lid, a barrier, into a passage for the higher powers of consciousness of the Being now above it. It would mean a new creation on earth, a bringing in of the ultimate powers which would reverse the conditions here, in as much as that would produce a creation raised into the full flood of spiritual and supramental light in place of one emerging into a half-light of mind out of a darkness of material inconscience."

*Sri Aurobindo, 'Letters on Yoga' Vol. I, pp. 31-32*

Such is the possibility being offered beyond the traditional concept of liberation which brings with it a similar change in the notion of the body and matter itself. Another path of evolution is presented to the spiritual seeker wherein he can participate consciously towards transformation of collective life on earth as an option to individual salvation alone. Ultimately, it is up to each one of us to take the decision for our own lives, as a conscious choice of our souls.

*Editor*

# Prayer

*The Mother*

O My Lord, my sweet Master, for the accomplishment of Thy work I have sunk down into the unfathomable depths of Matter, I have touched with my finger the horror of the falsehood and the inconscience, I have reached the seat of oblivion and a supreme obscurity. But in my heart was the Remembrance, from my heart there leaped the call which could arrive to Thee: "Lord, Lord, everywhere Thy enemies appear triumphant; falsehood is the monarch of the world; life without Thee is a death, a perpetual hell; doubt has usurped the place of Hope and revolt has pushed out Submission; Faith is spent, Gratitude is not born; blind passions and murderous instincts and a guilty weakness have covered and stifled Thy sweet law of love. Lord, wilt Thou permit Thy enemies to prevail, falsehood and ugliness and suffering to triumph? Lord, give the command to conquer and victory will be there. I know we are unworthy, I know the world is not yet ready. But I cry to Thee with an absolute faith in Thy Grace and I know that Thy Grace will save."

Thus, my prayer rushed up towards Thee; and, from the depths of the abyss, I beheld Thee in Thy radiant splendour; Thou didst appear and Thou saidst to me: "Lose not courage, be firm, be confident,—I COME."

*November 24, 1931*

*'Prayers and Meditations'*

# The Divine Body

*Sri Aurobindo*

A divine life in a divine body is the formula of the ideal that we envisage. But what will be the divine body? What will be the nature of this body, its structure, the principle of its activity, the perfection that distinguishes it from the limited and imperfect physicality within which we are now bound? What will be the conditions and operations of its life still physical in its base upon the earth by which it can be known as divine?

If it is to be the product of an evolution, and it is so that we must envisage it, an evolution out of our human imperfection and ignorance into a greater truth of spirit and nature, by what process or stages can it grow into manifestation or rapidly arrive? The process of the evolution upon earth has been slow and tardy—what principle must intervene if there is to be a transformation, a progressive or sudden change?

It is indeed as a result of our evolution that we arrive at the possibility of this transformation. As Nature has evolved beyond Matter and manifested Life, beyond Life and manifested Mind, so she must evolve beyond Mind and manifest a consciousness and power of our existence free from the imperfection and limitation of our mental existence, a supramental or truth-consciousness and able to develop the power and perfection of the spirit. Here a slow and tardy change need no longer be the law or manner of our evolution; it will be only so to a greater or less extent so long as a mental ignorance clings and hampers our ascent; but once we have grown into the truth-consciousness its power of spiritual truth of being will determine all. Into that truth we

shall be freed and it will transform mind and life and body. Light and bliss and beauty and a perfection of the spontaneous right action of all the being are there as native powers of the supramental truth-consciousness and these will in their very nature transform mind and life and body even here upon earth into a manifestation of the truth-conscious spirit. The obscurations of earth will not prevail against the supramental truth-consciousness, for even into the earth it can bring enough of the omniscient light and omnipotent force of the spirit to conquer. All may not open to the fullness of its light and power, but whatever does open must to that extent undergo the change. That will be the principle of transformation.

It might be that a psychological change, a mastery of the nature by the soul, a transformation of the mind into a principle of light, of the life-force into power and purity would be the first approach, the first attempt to solve the problem, to escape beyond the merely human formula and establish something that could be called a divine life upon earth, a first sketch of supermanhood, of a supramental living in the circumstances of the earth-nature. But this could not be the complete and radical change needed; it would not be the total transformation, the fullness of a divine life in a divine body. There would be a body still human and indeed animal in its origin and fundamental character and this would impose its own inevitable limitations on the higher parts of the embodied being. As limitation by ignorance and error is the fundamental defect of an untransformed mind, as limitation by the imperfect impulses and strainings and wants of desire are the defects of an untransformed

life-force, so also imperfection of the potentialities of the physical action, an imperfection, a limitation in the response of its half-consciousness to the demands made upon it and the grossness and stains of its original animality would be the defects of an untransformed or an imperfectly transformed body. These could not but hamper and even pull down towards themselves the action of the higher parts of the nature. A transformation of the body must be the condition for a total transformation of the nature.

It might be also that the transformation might take place by stages; there are powers of the nature still belonging to the mental region which are yet potentialities of a growing gnosis lifted beyond our human mentality and partaking of the light and power of the Divine and an ascent through these planes, a descent of them into the mental being might seem to be the natural evolutionary course. But in practice it might be found that these intermediate levels would not be sufficient for the total transformation since, being themselves illumined potentialities of mental being not yet supramental in the full sense of the word, they could bring down to the mind only a partial divinity or raise the mind towards that but not effectuate its elevation into the complete supramentality of the truth-consciousness. Still these levels might become stages of the ascent which some would reach and pause there while others went higher and could reach and live on superior strata of a semi-divine existence. It is not to be supposed that all humanity would rise in a block into the supermind; at first those only might attain to the highest or some intermediate height of the ascent whose inner evolution has fitted them for so great a change or who are raised by the direct touch of the Divine into its perfect light and power and bliss. The large mass of human beings might still remain for long content with a normal or only a partially illumined and uplifted human nature. But this would be itself a sufficiently radical change and initial

transformation of earth-life; for the way would be open to all who have the will to rise, the supramental influence of the truth-consciousness would touch the earth-life and influence even its untransformed mass and a hope would be there and a promise eventually available to all which now only the few can share in or realise.

In any case these would be beginnings only and could not constitute the fullness of the divine life upon earth; it would be a new orientation of the earthly life but not the consummation of its change. For that there must be the sovereign reign of a supramental truth-consciousness to which all other forms of life would be subordinate and depend upon it as the master principle and supreme power to which they could look up as the goal, profit by its influences, be moved and upraised by something of its illumination and penetrating force. Especially, as the human body had to come into existence with its modification of the previous animal form and its erect figure of a new power of life and its expressive movements and activities serviceable and necessary to the principle of mind and the life of a mental being, so too a body must be developed with new powers, activities or degrees of a divine action expressive of a truth-conscious being and proper to a supramental consciousness and manifesting a conscious spirit. While the capacity for taking up and sublimating all the activities of the earth-life capable of being spiritualised must be there, a transcendence of the original animality and the actions incurably tainted by it or at least some saving transformation of them, some spiritualising or psychicising of the consciousness and motives animating them and the shedding of whatever could not be so transformed, even a change of what might be called its instrumental structure, its functioning and organisation, a complete and hitherto unprecedented control of these things must be the consequence or incidental to this total

change. These things have been already to some extent illustrated in the lives of many who have become possessed of spiritual powers but as something exceptional and occasional, the casual or incomplete manifestation of an acquired capacity rather than the organisation of a new consciousness, a new life and a new nature. How far can such physical transformation be carried, what are the limits within which it must remain to be consistent with life upon earth and without carrying that life beyond the earthly sphere or pushing it towards the supraterrrestrial existence? The supramental consciousness is not a fixed quantity but a power which passes to higher and higher levels of possibility until it reaches supreme consummations of spiritual existence fulfilling supermind and supermind fulfils the ranges of spiritual consciousness that are pushing towards it from the human or mental level. In this progression the body also may reach a more perfect form and a higher range of its expressive powers, become a more and more perfect vessel of divinity.

This destiny of the body has rarely in the past been envisaged or else not for the body here upon earth; such forms would rather be imagined or visioned as the privilege of celestial beings and not possible as the physical residence of a soul still bound to terrestrial nature. The Vaishnavas have spoken of a spiritualised conscious body, *chinmaya deha*; there has been the conception of a radiant or luminous body, which might be the Vedic *dyotirmaya deha*. A light has been seen by some radiating from the bodies of highly developed spiritual persons, even extending to the emission of an enveloping aura and there has been recorded an initial phenomenon of this kind in the life of so great a spiritual personality as Ramakrishna. But these things have been either conceptual only or rare and occasional and for the most part the body has not been regarded as possessed of spiritual

possibility or capable of transformation. It has been spoken of as the means of effectuation of the *dharma* and *dharma* here includes all high purposes, achievements and ideals of life not excluding the spiritual change: but it is an instrument that must be dropped when its work is done and though there may be and must be spiritual realisation while yet in the body, it can only come to its full fruition after the abandonment of the physical frame. More ordinarily in the spiritual tradition the body has been regarded as an obstacle, incapable of spiritualisation or transmutation and a heavy weight holding the soul to earthly nature and preventing its ascent either to spiritual fulfilment in the Supreme or to the dissolution of its individual being in the Supreme. But while this conception of the role of the body in our destiny is suitable enough for a *sādhana* that sees earth only as a field of the ignorance and earth-life as a preparation for a saving withdrawal from life which is the indispensable condition for spiritual liberation, it is insufficient for a *sādhana* which conceives of a divine life upon earth and liberation of earth-nature itself as part of a total purpose of the embodiment of the spirit here. If a total transformation of the being is our aim, a transformation of the body must be an indispensable part of it; without that no full divine life on earth is possible.

It is the past evolution of the body and especially its animal nature and animal history which seems to stand in the way of this consummation. The body, as we have seen, is an offspring and creation of the Inconscient, itself inconscient or only half-conscious; it began as a form of unconscious Matter, developed life and from a material object became a living growth, developed mind and from the subconsciousness of the plant and the initial rudimentary mind or incomplete intelligence of the animal developed the intellectual mind and more complete intelligence of man and now serves as the

physical base, container and instrumental means of our total spiritual endeavour. Its animal character and its gross limitations stand indeed as an obstacle to our spiritual perfection; but the fact that it has developed a soul and is capable of serving it as a means may indicate that it is capable of further development and may become a shrine and expression of the spirit, reveal a secret spirituality of Matter, become entirely and not only half-conscious, reach a certain oneness with the spirit. This much it must do, so far at least it must transcend its original earth-nature, if it is to be the complete instrument of the divine life and no longer an obstacle.

Still the inconveniences of the animal body and its animal nature and impulses and limitations of the human body at its best are there in the beginning and persist always so long as there is not the full and fundamental liberation and its inconscience or half-conscience and its binding of the soul and mind and life-force to Matter, to materiality of all kinds, to the call of the unregenerated earth-nature are there and constantly oppose the call of the spirit and circumscribe the climb to higher things. To the physical being it brings a bondage to the material instruments, to the brain and heart and senses, wed to materiality and materialism of all kinds, to the bodily mechanism and its needs and obligations, to the imperative need of food and the preoccupation with the means of getting it and storing it as one of the besetting interests of life, to fatigue and sleep, to the satisfaction of bodily desire. The life-force in man also is tied down to these small things; it has to limit the scope of its larger ambitions and longings, its drive to rise beyond the pull of earth and follow the heavenlier intuitions of its psychic parts, the heart's ideal and the soul's yearnings. On the mind the body imposes the boundaries of the physical being and physical life and the sense of the sole complete reality of physical

things with the rest as a sort of brilliant fireworks of the imagination, of lights and glories that can only have their full play in heavens beyond, on higher planes of existence, but not here; it afflicts the idea and aspiration with the burden of doubt, the evidence of the subtle senses and the intuition with uncertainty and the vast field of supraphysical consciousness and experience with the imputation of unreality and clamps down to its earth-roots the growth of the spirit from its original limiting humanity into the supramental truth and the divine nature. These obstacles can be overcome, the denials and resistance of the body surmounted, its transformation is possible. Even the inconscient and animal part of us can be illumined and made capable of manifesting the god-nature even as our mental humanity can be made to manifest the superhumanity of the supramental truth-consciousness and divinity of what is now superconscious to us and the total transformation made a reality here. But for this the obligatory and compulsions of its animality must cease to be obligatory and a purification of its materiality effected by which that very materiality can be turned into a material solidity of the manifestation of the divine nature. For nothing essential must be left out in the totality of the earth-change; Matter itself can be turned into a means of revelation of the spiritual reality, the Divine.

The difficulty is dual, psychological and corporeal: the first is the effect of the unregenerated animality upon the life especially by the insistence of the body's gross instincts, impulses, desires; the second is the outcome of our corporeal structure and organic instrumentation imposing its restrictions on the dynamism of the higher divine nature. The first of these two difficulties is easier to deal with and conquer; for here the will can intervene and impose on the body the power of the higher nature. Certain of these impulses and instincts of the body have been found



especially harmful by the spiritual aspirant and weighed considerably in favour of an ascetic rejection of the body. Sex and sexuality and all that springs from sex and testifies to its existence had to be banned and discarded from the spiritual life, and this, though difficult, is not at all impossible and can be made a cardinal condition for the spiritual seeker. This is natural and unescapable in all ascetic practice and the satisfaction of this condition, though not easy at first to fulfil, becomes after a time quite feasible; the overcoming of the sex-instinct and impulse is indeed binding on all who would attain to self-mastery and lead the spiritual life. A total mastery over it is essential for all spiritual seekers, the eradication of it for the complete ascetic. This much has to be recognised and not diminished in its obligatory importance and its principle.

But all recognition of the sex principle, as apart from the gross physical indulgence of the sex-impulse, could not be excluded from a divine life upon earth; it is there in life, plays a large part and has to be dealt with, it cannot simply be ignored, merely suppressed or held down or put away out of sight. In the first place, it is in one of its aspects a cosmic and even a divine principle: it takes the spiritual form of the Ishwara and the Shakti and without it there could be no world-creation or manifestation of the world-principle of Purusha and Prakriti which are both necessary for the creation, necessary too in their association and interchange for the play of its psychological working and in their manifestation as soul and Nature fundamental to the whole process of the Lila. In the divine life itself an incarnation or at least in some form a presence of the two powers or their initiating influence through their embodiments or representatives would be indispensable for making the new creation possible. In its human action of the mental and vital level sex is not altogether an undivine principle; it has its nobler aspects and idealities and it has to be seen in what way and to what

extent these can be admitted into the new and larger life. All gross animal indulgence of sex desire and impulse would have to be eliminated; it could only continue among those who are not ready for the higher life or not yet ready for a complete spiritual living. In all who aspired to it but could not yet take it up in its fullness sex will have to be refined, submit to the spiritual or psychic impulse and a control by the higher mind and the higher vital and shed all its lighter, frivolous or degraded forms and feel the touch of the purity of the ideal. Love would remain, all forms of the pure truth of love in higher and higher steps till it realised its highest nature, widened into universal love, merged into the love of the Divine. The love of man and woman would also undergo that elevation and consummation; for all that can feel a touch of the ideal and the spiritual must follow the way of ascent till it reaches the divine Reality. The body and its activities must be accepted as part of the divine life and pass under this law; but, as in the other evolutionary transitions, what cannot accept the law of the divine life cannot be accepted and must fall away from the ascending nature.

Another difficulty that the transformation of the body has to face is its dependence for its very existence upon food and here too are involved the gross physical instincts, impulses, desires that are associated with this difficult factor, the essential cravings of the palate, the greed of food and animal gluttony of the belly, the coarsening of the mind when it grovels in the mud of sense, obeys a servitude to its mere animal part and hugs its bondage to Matter. The higher human in us seeks refuge in a temperate moderation, in abstemiousness and abstinence or in carelessness about the body and its wants and in an absorption in higher things. The spiritual seeker often, like the Jain ascetics, seeks refuge in long and frequent fasts which lift him temporarily at least out of the clutch of the body's demands and help him to feel in himself a pure vacancy of the wide

rooms of the spirit. But all this is not liberation and the question may be raised whether, not only at first but always, the divine life also must submit to this necessity. But it could only deliver itself from it altogether if it could find out the way so to draw upon the universal energy that the energy would sustain not only the vital parts of our physicality but its constituent matter with no need of aid for sustenance from any outside substance of Matter. It is indeed possible even while fasting for very long periods to maintain the full energies and activities of the soul and mind and life, even those of the body, to remain wakeful but concentrated in Yoga all the time, or to think deeply and write day and night, to dispense with sleep, to walk eight hours a day, maintaining all these activities separately or together and not feel any loss of strength, any fatigue, any kind of failure or decadence. At the end of the fast one can even resume at once taking the normal or even a greater than the normal amount of nourishment without any transition or precaution such as medical science enjoins, as if both the complete fasting and the feasting were natural conditions, alternating by an immediate and easy passage from one to the other, of a body already trained by a sort of initial transformation to be an instrument of the powers and activities of Yoga. But one thing one does not escape that is the wasting of the material tissues of the body, its flesh and substance. Conceivably, if a practicable way and means could only be found, this last invincible obstacle too might be overcome and the body maintained by an interchange of its forces with the forces of material Nature, giving to her need from the individual and taking from her directly the sustaining energies of her universal existence. Conceivably, one might rediscover and re-establish at the summit of the evolution of life the phenomenon we see at its base, the power to draw from all around it the means of sustenance and self-renewal. Or else the evolved being might acquire the greater power

to draw down those means from above rather than draw them up or pull them in from the environment around, all about it and below it. But until something like this is achieved or made possible we have to go back to food and the established material forces of Nature.

In fact we do, however unconsciously, draw constantly upon the universal energy, the force in Matter to replenish our material existence and the mental, vital and other potencies in the body: we do it directly in the invisible processes of interchange constantly kept up by Nature and by special means devised by her; breathing is one of these, sleep also and repose. But as her basic means for maintaining and renewing the gross physical body and its workings and inner potencies Nature has selected the taking in of outside matter in the shape of food, its digestion, assimilation of what is assimilable and elimination of what cannot or ought not to be assimilated, this by itself is sufficient for mere maintenance, but for assuring health and strength in the body so maintained it has added the impulse towards physical exercise and play of many kinds, ways for the expenditure and renewal of energy, the choice or the necessity of manifold action and labour. In the new life, in its beginnings at least, it would not be necessary or advisable to make any call for an extreme or precipitate rejection of the need of food or the established natural method for the maintenance of the still imperfectly transformed body. If or when these things have to be transcended it must come as a result of the awakened will of the spirit, a will also in Matter itself, an imperative evolutionary urge, an act of the creative transmutations of Time or a descent from the transcendence. Meanwhile the drawing in of the universal energy by a conscious action of the higher powers of the being from around or from above, by a call to what is still to us a transcending consciousness or by an invasion or descent from the Transcendence itself may well become an occasional, a frequent or a constant

phenomenon and even reduce the part played by food and its need to an incidence no longer preoccupying, a necessity minor and less and less imperative. Meanwhile food and the ordinary process of Nature can be accepted although its use has to be liberated from attachment and desire and the grosser indiscriminating appetites and clutch at the pleasures of the flesh which is the way of the Ignorance; the physical processes have to be subtilised and grossest may have to be eliminated and new processes found or new instrumentalities emerge. So long as it is accepted a refined pleasure in it may be permitted and even a desireless *ānanda* of taste take the place of the physical relish and the human selection by likings and dislikings which is our present imperfect response to what is offered to us by Nature. It must be remembered that for the divine life on earth, earth and Matter have not to be and cannot be rejected but have only to be sublimated and to reveal in themselves the possibilities of the spirit, serve the spirit's highest uses and be transformed into instruments of a greater living.

The divine life must always be actuated by the push towards perfection; a perfection of the joy of life is part and an essential part of it, the body's delight in things and the body's joy of life are not excluded from it; they too have to be made perfect. A large totality is the very nature of this new and growing way of existence, a fullness of the possibilities of the mind transmuted into a thing of light, of the life converted into a force of spiritual power and joy, of the body transformed into an instrument of a divine action, divine knowledge, divine bliss. All can be taken into its scope that is capable of transforming itself, all that can be an instrument, a vessel, an opportunity for the expression of this totality of the self-manifesting Spirit.

There is one problem raised by sex for those who would reject *in toto* the obligations

imposed by the animality of the body and put forward by it as an insistent opposition in the way of the aspirant to a higher life: it is the necessity of the prolongation of the race for which the sex activity is the only means already provided by Nature for living beings and inevitably imposed upon the race. It is not indeed necessary for the individual seeker after a divine life to take up this problem or even for a group who do not seek after it for themselves alone but desire a wide acceptance of it by mankind as at least an ideal. There will always be the multitude who do not concern themselves with it or are not ready for its complete practice and to these can be left the care for the prolongation of the race. The number of those who lead the divine life can be maintained and increased as the ideal extends itself, by the voluntary adhesion of those who are touched by the aspiration and there need be no resort to physical means for this purpose, no deviation from the rule of a strict sexual abstinence. But yet there may be circumstances in which from another standpoint, a voluntary creation of bodies for souls that seek to enter the earth-life to help in the creation and extension of the divine life upon earth might be found to be desirable. Then the necessity of a physical procreation for this purpose could only be avoided if new means of a supraphysical kind were evolved and made available. A development of this kind must necessarily belong to what is now considered as the sphere of the occult and the use of concealed powers of action or creation not known or possessed by the common mind of the race. Occultism means rightly the use of the higher powers of our nature, soul, mind, life-forces and the faculties of the subtle physical consciousness to bring about results on their own or on the material plane by some pressure of their own secret law and its potentialities, for manifestation and result in human or earthly mind and life and body or in objects and events in the world of Matter. A discovery or an extension of these little known

or yet undeveloped powers is now envisaged by some well-known thinkers as a next step to be taken by mankind in its immediate evolution; the kind of creation spoken of has not been included among these developments, but it could well be considered as one of the new possibilities. Even physical science is trying to find physical means for passing beyond the ordinary instrumentation or procedure of Nature in this matter of propagation or the renewal of the physical life-force in human or animal beings; but the resort to occult means and the intervention of subtle physical processes, if it could be made possible, would be a greater way which could avoid the limitations, degradations, incompleteness and heavy imperfection of the means and results solely available to the law of material force. In India there has been always from the earliest times a widely spread belief in the possibility and reality of the use of these powers by men with an advanced knowledge of these secret things or with a developed spiritual knowledge and experience and dynamic force and even, in the Tantras, an organised system of their method and practice. The intervention of the Yogi in bringing about a desired birth of offspring is also generally believed in and often appealed to and the bestowal on the child so obtained of a spiritual attainment or destiny by his will or his blessing is sometimes asked for and such a result is recorded not only in the tradition of the past but maintained by the witness of the present. But there is here still the necessity of a resort to the normal means of propagation and the gross method of physical Nature. A purely occult method, a resort to supraphysical processes acting by supraphysical means for a physical result would have to be possible if we are to avoid this necessity: the resort to the sex impulse and its animal process could not be transcended otherwise. If there is some reality in the phenomenon of materialisation and dematerialisation claimed to be possible by occultists and evidenced by occurrences many

of us have witnessed, a method of this kind would not be out of the range of possibility. For in the theory of the occultists and in the gradation of the ranges and planes of our being which Yoga-knowledge outlines for us there is not only a subtle physical force but a subtle physical Matter intervening between life and gross Matter and to create in this subtle physical substance and precipitate the forms thus made into our grosser materiality is feasible. It should be possible and it is believed to be possible for an object formed in this subtle physical substance to make a transit from its subtlety into the state of gross Matter directly by the intervention of an occult force and process whether with or even without the assistance or intervention of some gross material procedure. A soul wishing to enter into a body or form for itself a body and take part in a divine life upon earth might be assisted to do so or even provided with such a form by this method of direct transmutation without passing through birth by the sex process or undergoing any degradation or any of the heavy limitations in the growth and development of its mind and material body inevitable to our present way of existence. It might then assume at once the structure and greater powers and functionings of the truly divine material body which must one day emerge in a progressive evolution to a totally transformed existence both of the life and form in a divinised earth-nature.

But what would be the internal or external form and structure and what the instrumentation of this divine body? The material history of the development of the animal and human body has left it bound to a minutely constructed and elaborated system of organs and a precarious order of their functioning which can easily become a disorder, open to a general or local disorganisation, dependent on an easily disturbed nervous system and commanded by a brain whose vibrations are supposed to be mechanical and automatic and not under our

conscious control. According to the materialist all this is a functioning of Matter alone whose fundamental reality is chemical. We have to suppose that the body is constructed by the agency of chemical elements building up atoms and molecules and cells and these again are the agents and only conductors at the basis of a complicated physical structure and instrumentation which is the sole mechanical cause of all our actions, thoughts, feelings, the soul a fiction and mind and life only a material and mechanical manifestation and appearance of this machine which is worked out and automatically driven with a figment of consciousness in it by the forces inherent in inconscient Matter. If that were the truth it is obvious that any divinisation or divine transformation of the body or of anything else would be nothing but an illusion, an imagination, a senseless and impossible chimera. But even if we suppose a soul, a conscious will at work in this body it could not arrive at a divine transformation if there were no radical change in the bodily instrument itself and in the organisation of its material working. The transforming agent will be bound and stopped in its work by the physical organism's unalterable limitations and held up by the unmodified or imperfectly modified original animal in us. The possibility of the disorders, derangements, maladies native to these physical arrangements would still be there and could only be shut out by a constant vigilance or perpetual control obligatory on the corporeal instrument's spiritual inhabitant and master. This could not be called a truly divine body; for in a divine body an inherent freedom from all these things would be natural and perpetual; this freedom would be a normal and native truth of its being and therefore inevitable and unalterable. A radical transformation of the functioning and, it may well be, of the structure and certainly of the too mechanical and material impulse and driving forces of the bodily system would be imperative. What agency could we find which we could make the means of this

all-important liberation and change? Something there is in us or something has to be developed, perhaps a central and still occult part of our being containing forces whose powers in our actual and present make-up are only a fraction of what could be, but if they became complete and dominant would be truly able to bring about with the help of the light and force of the soul and the supramental truth-consciousness the necessary physical transformation and its consequences. This might be found in the system of Chakras revealed by Tantric knowledge and accepted in the systems of Yoga, conscious centres and sources of all the dynamic powers of our being organising their action through the plexuses and arranged in an ascending series from the lowest physical to the highest mind centre and spiritual centre called the thousand petalled lotus where ascending Nature, the Serpent Power of the Tantrics, meets the Brahman and is liberated into the Divine Being. These centres are closed or half closed within us and have to be opened before their full potentiality can be manifested in our physical nature: but once they are opened and completely active, no limit can easily be set to the development of their potencies and the total transformation to be possible.

But what would be the result of the emergence of these forces and their liberated and diviner action on the body itself, what their dynamic connection with it and their transforming operation on the still existing animal nature and its animal impulses and gross material procedure? It might be held that the first necessary change would be the liberation of the mind, the life-force, the subtle physical agencies and the physical consciousness into a freer and a diviner activity, a many-dimensional and unlimited operation of their consciousness, a large outbreak of higher powers and sublimation of the bodily consciousness itself, of its instrumentation, capacity, capability for the manifestation of the soul in the world of Matter. The subtle senses

now concealed in us might come forward into a free action and the material senses themselves become means or channels for the vision of what is now invisible to us or the discovery of things surrounding us but at present unseizable and held back from our knowledge. A firm check might be put on the impulses of the animal nature or they might be purified and subtilised so as to become assets and not liabilities and so transformed as to be parts and processes of a diviner life. But even these changes would still leave a residue of material processes keeping the old way and not amenable to the higher control and, if this could not be changed, the rest of the transformation might itself be checked and incomplete. A total transformation of the body would demand a sufficient change of the most material part of the organism, its constitution, its processes and its set-up of nature.

Again, it might be thought that a full control would be sufficient, a knowledge and a vision of this organism and its unseen action and an effective control determining its operations according to the conscious will; this possibility has been affirmed as something already achieved and a part of the development of the inner powers in some. The cessation of the breathing while still the life of the body remained stable, the hermetic sealing up at will not only of the breath but of all the vital manifestation for long periods, the stoppage of the heart similarly at will while thought and speech and other mental workings continued unabated, these and other phenomena of the power of the will over the body are known and well-attested examples of this kind of mastery. But these are occasional or sporadic successes and do not amount to transformation; a total control is necessary and an established and customary and, indeed, a natural mastery. Even with that achieved something more fundamental might have to be demanded for the complete liberation and change into a divine body.

Again, it might be urged that the organic structure of the body no less than its basic outer form would have to be retained as a necessary material foundation for the retention of the earth-nature, the connection of the divine life with the life of earth and a continuance of the evolutionary process so as to prevent a breaking upward out of and away from it into a state of being which would properly belong to a higher plane and not to a terrestrial divine fulfilment. The prolonged existence of the animal itself in our nature, if sufficiently transformed to be an instrument of manifestation and not an obstacle, would be necessary to preserve the continuity, the evolutionary total; it would be needed as the living vehicle, *vāhana*, of the emergent god in the material world where he would have to act and achieve the works and wonders of the new life. It is certain that a form of body making this connection and a bodily action containing the earth-dynamism and its fundamental activities must be there, but the connection should not be a bond or a confining limitation or a contradiction of the totality of the change. The maintenance of the present organism without any transformation of it would not but act as such a bond and confinement within the old nature. There would be a material base but it would be of the earth earthy, an old and not a new earth with a diviner psychological structure; for with that structure the old system would be out of harmony and it would be unable to serve its further evolution or even to uphold it as a base in Matter. It would bind part of the being, a lower part to an untransformed humanity and unchanged animal functioning and prevent its liberation into the superhumanity of the supramental nature. A change is then necessary here too, a necessary part of the total bodily transformation, which would divinise the whole man, at least in the ultimate result and not leave his evolution incomplete.

This aim, it must be said, would be sufficiently

served if the instrumentation of the centres and their forces reigned over all the activities of the nature with an entire domination of the body and made it both in its structural form and its organic workings a free channel and means of communication and a plastic instrument of cognition and dynamic action for all that they had to do in the material life, in the world of Matter. There would have to be a change in the operative processes of the material organs themselves and, it may well be, in their very constitution and their importance; they could not be allowed to impose their limitations imperatively on the new physical life. To begin with, they might become more clearly outer ends of the channels of communication and action, more serviceable for the psychological purposes of the inhabitant, less blindly material in their responses, more conscious of the act and aim of the inner movements and powers which use them and which they are wrongly supposed by the material man in us to generate and to use. The brain would be a channel of communication of the form of the thoughts and a battery of their insistence on the body and the outside world where they could then become effective directly, communicating themselves without physical means from mind to mind, producing with a similar directness effects on the thoughts, actions and lives of others or even upon material things. The heart would equally be a direct communicant and medium of interchange for the feelings and emotions thrown outward upon the world by the forces of the psychic center. Heart could reply directly to heart, the life-force come to the help of other lives and answer their call in spite of strangeness and distance, many beings without any external communication thrill with the message and meet in the secret light from one divine centre. The will might control the organs that deal with food, safeguard automatically the health, eliminate greed and desire, substitute subtler processes or draw in strength and substance from the universal life-

forces so that the body could maintain for a long time its own strength and substance without loss or waste, remaining thus with no need of sustenance by material aliments, and yet continue a strenuous action with no fatigue or pause for sleep or repose. The soul's will or the mind's could act from higher sources upon the sex-centre and the sex organs so as to check firmly or even banish the grosser sexual impulse or stimulus and instead of serving an animal excitation or crude drive or desire turn their use to the storing, production and direction towards brain and heart and life-force of the essential energy, *ojas*, of which this region is the factory so as to support the works of the mind and soul and spirit and the higher life-powers and limit the expenditure of the energy on lower things. The soul, the psychic being, could more easily fill all with the light and turn the very matter of the body to higher uses for its own greater purpose.

This would be a first potent change, but not by any means all that is possible or desirable. For it may well be that the evolutionary urge would proceed to a change of the organs themselves in their instrumentation and even of their existence. The centres in the subtle body, *sukshma sharira*, of which one would become conscious and aware of all going on in it would pour their energies into material nerve and plexus and tissue and radiate them through the whole material body; all the physical life and its necessary activities in this new existence could be maintained and operated by these higher agencies in a freer and ampler way and by a less burdensome and restricting method. This might go so far that these organs might cease to be indispensable and even be felt as too obstructive: the central force might use them less and less and finally throw aside their use altogether. If that happened they might waste by atrophy, be reduced to an insignificant minimum or even disappear. The central force might substitute for them subtle organs of a

very different character or, if anything material was needed, instruments that would be forms of dynamism or plastic transmitters rather than what we know as organs. This might well be part of a supreme total transformation of the body, though this too might not be final. To envisage such changes is to look far ahead and minds attached to the present form of things may be unable to give credence to their possibility. No such limits and no such impossibility of any necessary change can be imposed on the evolutionary urge. All has not to be fundamentally changed: on the contrary, all has to be preserved that is still needed in the totality, but all has to be perfected. Whatever is necessary for the evolutionary purpose for the increasing, enlarging, heightening of the consciousness, which seems to be its central will and aim here, or the progression of its enabling means and preserving environment has to be kept and furthered; but what has to be over passed, whatever has no longer a use or is degraded, what has become unhelpful or retarding, can be discarded and dropped on the way. That has been evident in the history of the evolution of the body from its beginning in elementary forms to its most developed type, the human, there is no reason why this process should not intervene in the transition from the human into the divine body. For the manifestation or building of a divine body on earth, there must be an initial transformation, the appearance of a new, a greater and more developed type, and not a continuance with little modifications of the present physical form and its limited possibilities. What has to be preserved must indeed be preserved and that means whatever is necessary or thoroughly serviceable for the uses of the new life on earth; whatever is still needed and will serve its purpose but imperfect, will have to be retained but developed and perfected; whatever is no longer of use for new aims or is a disability must be thrown aside. The necessary forms and instrumentation's of Matter must remain since

it is in a world of Matter that the divine life has to manifest, but their materiality must be refined, uplifted, ennobled, illumined, since Matter and the world of Matter have increasingly to manifest the indwelling Spirit.

The new type, the divine body, must continue the already developed evolutionary form; there must be a continuation from the type Nature has all along been developing, a continuity from the human to the divine body, no breaking away to something unrecognisable but a high sequel to what has already been achieved and in part perfected. The human body has in its parts and instruments that have been sufficiently evolved to serve the divine life; these have to survive in their form, though they must be still further perfected, their limitations of range and use removed, their liability to defect and malady and impairment eliminated, their capacities of cognition and dynamic action carried beyond the present limits. New powers have to be acquired by the body which our present humanity could not hope to realise, could not even dream of or could only imagine. Much that can now only be known, worked out or created by the use of invented tools and machinery might be achieved by the new body in its own power or by the inhabitant spirit through its own direct spiritual force. The body itself might acquire new means and ranges of communication with other bodies, new processes of acquiring knowledge, a new aesthesis, new potencies of manipulation of itself and objects. It might not be impossible for it to possess or disclose means native to its own constitution, substance or natural instrumentation for making the far near and annulling distance, cognising what is now beyond the body's cognisance, acting where action is now out of its reach or its domain, developing subtleties and plasticities which could not be permitted under present conditions to the needed fixity of a material frame. These and other numerous potentialities might appear and the body becomes an instrument immeasurably superior to what we can now imagine as possible. There could be an



evolution from a first apprehending truth-consciousness to the utmost heights of the ascending ranges of supermind and it may pass the borders of the supermind proper itself where it begins to shadow out, develop, delineate expressive forms of life touched by a supreme pure existence, consciousness and bliss which constitute the worlds of a highest truth of existence, dynamism of Tapas, glory and

sweetness of bliss, the absolute essence and pitch of the all-creating Ananda. The transformation of the physical being might follow this incessant line of progression and the divine body reflect or reproduce here in a divine life on the earth something of this highest greatness and glory of the self-manifesting Spirit.

*'The Supramental Manifestation on Earth  
and Other Writings.'*

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

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

*There are always people with a wholly external view of things who say, "Workers, for example, who have to do hard physical labour and who are compelled by their work to learn to carry heavy weights—they too build up their muscles, and instead of spending their time like aristocrats doing exercises with no useful outward results, they at least produce something." This is ignorance. Because there is an essential difference between the muscles developed through specialised, local and limited use and muscles which have been cultivated deliberately and harmoniously according to an integral programme which leaves no part of the body without work or exercise.*

*People like workers and peasants, who have specialised occupation and develop only certain muscles, always end up with occupational deformities. And this in no way helps their psychic progress because, although the whole of life necessarily contributes to the psychic development, it does so in such an unconsciousness way and so slowly that the poor psychic being must come back again and again and again, indefinitely, to achieve its purpose. Therefore we can say without fear of being mistaken that physical culture is the sadhana of the body and that all sadhana necessarily helps to hasten the achievement of the goal. The more consciously you do it, the quicker and more general the result, but even if you do it blindly, if you can see no further than the tips of your fingers or your feet or your nose, you help the overall development. Finally, one can say that any discipline that is followed rigorously, sincerely, deliberately, is a considerable help, for it enables life on earth to attain its goal more rapidly and prepares it to receive the new life and the contact with the supramental reality.*

*As it is, the physical body is truly nothing but a very disfigured shadow of the eternal life of the Self. But this physical body is capable of progressive development; through each individual formation, the physical substance progresses, and one day it will be capable of building a bridge between physical life as we know it and the supramental life which is to manifest.*

*The Mother  
'On Thoughts and Aphorisms—Jnana II'*

# The Spiritual Genius of India

Nolini Kanta Gupta

What is it that we precisely mean when we say that *India is spiritual*? For, that is how we are accustomed to express India's special genius—her backbone, as Vivekananda puts it—the fundamental note of her culture and nature, which distinguishes her from the rest of the world. What then are the distinguishing marks of spirituality? How does a spiritual collectivity live and move—*kim âsita vrajeta kim*? And do we find its characteristic gait and feature exclusively or even chiefly in India?

Was not Europe also in her theocratic and mediaeval ages as largely spiritual and as fundamentally religious as India? Churches and cathedrals and monasteries grew like mushrooms in every nook and corner, in all the countries of Europe; it was the clergy who, with their almost unbounded influence and power, moulded and guided the life and aspiration of the people; devotion to God and love of prayer and pilgrimage were as much in the nature of the average European of those times as they are in any Indian of today; every family considered it a duty and an honour to rear up one child at least to be consecrated to the service of God and the Church. The internal as well as the external life of the men of mediaeval Europe was steeped through and through in a religious atmosphere.

The whole world, in fact, was more or less religious in the early stages of its evolution; for it is characteristic of the primitive nature of man to be god-fearing and addicted to religious rite and ceremony. And Europe too, when she entered on a new cycle of life and began to reconstruct herself after the ruin of the Graeco-Latin culture, started with the

religion of the Christ and experimented with it during a long period of time. But that is what was—*Troja fuit*. Europe has outgrown her nonage and for a century and a half, since the mighty upheaval of the French Revolution, she has been rapidly shaking off the last vestiges of her mediaevalism. Today she stands clean shorn of all superstition, which she only euphemistically calls religion or spirituality. Not Theology but Science, not Revelation but Reason, not Magic but Logic, not Fiction but Fact, governs her thoughts and guides her activities. Only India, in part under the stress of her own conservative nature, in part under compelling circumstances, still clings to her things of the past, darknesses that have been discarded by the modern illumination. Indian spirituality is nothing but consolidated mediaevalism; it has its companion shibboleth in the cry, "Back to the village" or "Back to the bullock-cart"! One of the main reasons, if not the one reason why India has today no place in the comity of nations, why she is not in the vanguard of civilisation, is precisely this obstinate atavism, this persistent survival of a spirit subversive of all that is modern and progressive.

It is not my purpose here to take up the cause of spirituality and defend it against materialism. Taking it for granted that real spirituality embodies a truth and power by far higher and mightier than anything materialism can offer, and that man's supreme ideal lies there, let us throw a comparing glance on the two types of spirituality,—the one that India knows and the other that Europe knew in the Middle Ages.

To say that Europe was once as religious and

spiritual as India herself is not precisely incorrect, but it is to view the matter from too general a stand-point, almost, we may say, *grosso modo*. In order to arrive at an accurate and precise estimation, and to find out the most significant truths, we have to look a little more closely, observe differences in shade and stress, make certain distinctions. For the things that the ordinary mind indiscriminately designates as religion, spirituality and the like, do not always fall in the same category. These names are often applied to distinct realities, each with its particular *dharma*, norm and form, wide apart from each other, although to the common eye they may appear to be of the same mould and substance.

Thus Religion and Spirituality, two fundamental categories that form one realm when held up in opposition to Materialism, are, when considered by themselves, really very different things and may be even contradictory to and destructive of each other. What then is Religion? And what, on the other hand, is Spirituality? Religion starts from and usually ends with a mental and emotional approach to realities beyond the mind; Spirituality goes straight forward to direct vision and communion with the Beyond. Religion labours to experience and express the world of Spirit in and through a turn, often a twist, given by the mental being—*manu*—in man; it bases itself upon the demands of the mental, the vital and the physical complex—the triple nexus that forms the ordinary human personality and seeks to satisfy them under a holier garb. Spirituality knows the demands of the Spirit alone; it lives in a realm where the body, the life and the mind stand uplifted and transmuted into their utter realities. Religion is the human way of approaching and enjoying the Divine; Spirituality is the divine way of meeting the Divine. Religion, as it is usually practised, is a special art, one—the highest it may be, still only one—among many other pursuits that man looks to for his enjoyment and fulfillment; but

spirituality is nothing if it does not swallow up the entire man, take in his each and every pre-occupation and new-create it into an inevitable expression of its own master truth. Religion gives us a moral discipline for the internal consciousness, and for the external life, a code of conduct based upon a system of rules and rites and ceremonies; Spirituality aims at a revolution in the consciousness and in the being.

Keeping this difference in view, we may at once point out that Europe, when she is non-materialist, is primarily religious and only secondarily spiritual, but India is always primarily spiritual and only secondarily religious. The vein of real spirituality in European culture runs underground and follows narrow and circuitous by-paths; rarely does it appear on the top in sudden and momentary flashes and even then only to dive back again into its subterranean hiding-place; upon the collective life and culture it acts more as an indirect influence, an auxiliary leaven than as a direct and dynamic Force. In India there is an abundance, a superfluity even of religious paraphernalia, but it is the note of spirituality that rings clear and high above all lesser tones and wields a power vivid and manifest. We could say in terms of modern Biology that spirituality tends to be a *recessive* character in European culture, while in India, it is *dominant*.

But when we say that India is spiritual, we do not mean that all or most Indians, or even a very large minority among them, are adepts in spirituality, or that the attachment to life, the passion for earthly possessions, the sway of the six *ripus* are in any way less prevalent in the Indian character. On the contrary, it may well seem to the casual onlooker whose eyes are occupied with the surface actualities of the situation, that the Indian nature, as it is today, shut out from this world's larger spaces, cut off from its deeper channels and movements

of greater magnitude, has been given over more and more to petty worldlinesses that hardly fill the same space even in the life of peoples who are notorious for their worldly and unspiritual temperament.

It is not so much a question of concrete realisation, of attainment and achievement arrived at by the Indian people in their work-a-day life, but primarily and above all a question of ultimate valuation, of what they hold as the supreme ideal, of what they cherish in their heart of hearts, and of the extent to which that standard has obtained general currency among them. It is not a *fact* with which we are concerned, but the *force* behind the fact, and the special nature and purpose of that force. It is the power that we discover in the general atmosphere, or that emerges in the stress and rhythm of the cultural life of the people, in the level of its inner consciousness, in the expression of its highest and most wide-spread aspirations, in the particular stamp of its soul.

The psychological atmosphere in India is of a luminous tenuity. Here, it appears the veil between this world and the other has so thinned away that the two meet and interpenetrate easily and freely; immersed in one, you can at the same time bathe in the other. Owing to the cumulative effect of the *sādhanā* of her saints and sages who appeared in countless number down countless ages, or, perhaps, owing to the grace of a descent into her consciousness, or some immanence there, of the breath and light of a Superior World, India has developed and possesses, already prepared, a magnetic field, a luminous zone of spiritual consciousness; and to enter into it the Indian has only to turn aside, to go round a corner, to take one step forward. However thick and hard the crust of the Ignorance may lie upon the Indian soul, once that soul awakes and is upon the path, it finds itself on a familiar ground; it is in a domain which it has the impression of having frequented often and anon and for long.

But in Europe the division between this world and the other, in the inner consciousness of the people, is more rigorous, a thick wall divides the two and to pass from the one to the other demands a violent break, a total revolution; and even when the Rubicon is crossed, one feels oneself in unfamiliar surroundings, moving in a shadowy world, and with the uncertain and faltering steps of a child.

The average European has a strong basis of the earth-nature in him; he is heavily enclosed in his physical sheath and firmly placed upon the material world. Therefore he keeps a very stable terrestrial equilibrium and is not easily ousted from his earthly footing; his is not a nature easily upset from its poise, or disturbed by the currents and forces that play about him. But the Indian, both physically and psychically, has a more delicate frame and his footing upon earth is less secure. The balance in his consciousness between the different forces—especially between those of this world and the other—is delicately held; and the adjustment that obtains at a given moment is liable to be disturbed by the least change, either in the inner consciousness, or in the outer conditions.

In other words, when we speak of the spirituality of the Indian people, it is to the *disposition* of their psychic elements that we refer, to the tone and temper of the soul they possess and to a constant nearness of latent spiritual possibilities, that may at any time materialise, and the consequent possibilities of a spiritual impulse, that may at any time awaken.

Other peoples have other and more concrete virtues to be proud of; but the Indian has his soul as his most characteristic possession.

That is not to say that other peoples of the

world are soulless, and that India alone may claim to possess the treasure. But no other people has lived so much in and from the soul, none other has sacrificed so much for the sake of this one thing needful. The soul-consciousness in other nations lies veiled behind the more pressing activities and immediate occupations of the external nature; at the most, what is characteristic in them is the soul, not in its pure and fundamental *being*, but expressed, and therefore encased and limited, within some particular mode of becoming. In India, on the other hand, the external activities and operations have never altogether swamped or clouded this soul-consciousness; they have been either subjugated to it as minor auxiliaries or totally sacrificed as obstacles. The Indian's soul is not imbedded in some far-off region of his unconscious nature; he has succeeded in raising it up and bringing it forward to the level of his waking consciousness,—as the gold-tusked Divine Boar lifted the Earth out of the dark depths of the primeval deluge to the light of the Day.

The French, for example, have developed as a people a special characteristic and mental turn that has set its pervading impress upon their culture and civilisation, upon their creations and activities; that which distinguishes them is a fine, clear and subtle, rational, logical, artistic and literary mind. France, it has often been said, is the head of modern Europe. The Indians are not in the same way a predominantly intellectual race, in spite of the mighty giants of intellect India has always produced, and still produces. Nor are they a literary race, although a rich and grandiose literature, unrivalled in its own great qualities, is their patrimony. It was the few, a small minority, almost a closed circle, that formed in India the *elite* whose interest and achievement lay in this field; the characteristic power, the main life-current of the nation, did not flow this way, but followed a different

channel. Among the ancients the Greeks, and among the moderns the French alone, can rightfully claim as their special genius, as the hallmark of their corporate life, a high intellectual and literary culture. It is to this treasure,—a serene and yet vigorous and organized rational mind, coupled with a wonderful felicity of expression in speech,—that one turns when one thinks of the special gift that modern France and ancient Greece have brought to the heritage of mankind.

Again, the Japanese, as a people, have developed to a consummate degree the sense of beauty, especially as applied to life and living. No other people, not even the old-world Greeks, possessed almost to a man, as do these children of the Rising Sun, so fine and infallible an aesthetic sensibility,—not static or abstract, but of the dynamic kind,—uniformly successful in making out of their work-a-day life, even to its smallest accessories, a flawless object of art. It is a wonder to see in Japan how, even an unlettered peasant, away in his rustic environment, chooses with unerring taste the site of his house, builds it to the best advantage, arranges everything about it in a faultless rhythm. The whole motion of the life of Japanese is almost Art incarnate.

Or take again the example of the British people. The practical, successful life instinct, one might even call it the business instinct, of the Anglo-Saxon races is, in its general diffusion, something that borders on the miraculous. Even their Shakespeare is reputed to have been very largely endowed with this national virtue. It is a faculty which has very little to do with calculation, or with much or close thinking, or with any laborious or subtle mental operation,—a quick or active mind is perhaps the last thing with which the British people can be accredited; this instinct of theirs is something spontaneous, almost aboriginal, moving with the sureness, the ruthlessness of nature's

unconscious movements,—it is a *tact*, native to the force that is life. It is this attribute which the Englishman draws from the collective genius of his race that marks him out from among all others; this is his *forte*, it is this which has created his nation and made it great and strong.

All other nations have this one, or that other, line of self-expression, special to each; but it is India's characteristic not to have had any such single and definite *modus vivendi*—what was single and definite in her case was a mode not of *living* but of being. India looked above all to the very self in things, and in all her life-expression it was the soul *per se* which mattered to her,—even as the great Yajnavalkya said to his wife Maitreyi, *ātmanastu kāmāyā sarvām priyam bhavati*. The expressions of the self had no intrinsic value of their own and mattered only so far as they symbolised or embodied or pointed to the secret reality of the Atman. And perhaps it was on this account that India's creative activities, even in external life, were once upon a time so rich and varied, so stupendous and full of marvel. Because she was attached and limited to no one dominating power of life, she could create infinite forms, so many channels of power for the soul whose realisation was her end and aim.

There was no department of life or culture in which it could be said of India that she was not great, or even, in a way, supreme. From hard practical politics touching our earth, to the nebulous regions of abstract metaphysics, everywhere India expressed the power of her genius equally well. And yet none of these, neither severally nor collectively, constituted her specific genius; none showed the full height to which she could raise herself, none compassed the veritable amplitude of her innermost reality. It is when we come to the domain of the

Spirit, of God-realisation that we find the real nature and stature and genius of the Indian people; it is here that India lives and moves as in her own home of Truth. The greatest and the most popular names in Indian history are not names of warriors or statesmen, nor of poets who were only poets, nor of mere intellectual philosophers, however great they might be, but of Rishis, who saw and lived the Truth and communed with the gods, of Avatars who brought down and incarnated here below something of the supreme realities beyond.

The most significant fact in the history of India is the unbroken continuity of the line of her spiritual masters who never ceased to appear even in the midst of her most dark and distressing ages. Even in a decadent and fast disintegrating India, when the whole of her external life was a mass of ruins, when her political and economical and even her cultural life was brought to stagnation and very near to decomposition, this undying Fire in her secret heart was ever alight and called in the inevitable rebirth and rejuvenation. Ramakrishna, with Vivekananda as his emanation in life dynamic and material, symbolises this great secret of India's evolution. The promise that the Divine held out in the *Gita* to Bharata's descendant finds a ready fulfilment in India, in Bharata's land, more perhaps than anywhere else in the world; for in India has the Divine taken birth over and over again to save the pure in heart, to destroy the evil-doer and to establish the Right Law of life.

Other peoples may be the arms and the feet and the head of Humanity, but India is its heart, its soul—for she cherishes always within her the Truth that lives for ever, the flaming God-head, the Immortal awake in mortality, as say the Vedas, *amrto martyeshu rtāvā*.

Collected Works of  
Nolini Kanta Gupta - Volume I

# Spirituality and Social Change

Kosha Shah

... Today, we are at a critical juncture where outer development and progress have taken central place in the consciousness of humanity but a spiritual perspective is not yet of consequence. How important really is a spiritual perspective for the evolution of consciousness? Indispensable, I would say and, I think, so would you. But how many mainstream thinkers in the world today would agree? During the course of my work—which is developing and applying the social and political philosophy of Sri Aurobindo to the problems of today—I have come across many who have been skeptical about the connection between spirituality and socio-political change, including those who have chosen the spiritual path. But just because an obvious connection between these two opposite poles does not exist today, is not reason enough that it should not exist for all times to come.

I shall give a brief introduction to Sri Aurobindo here for those who are not familiar. Sri Aurobindo was a leading spiritual and political figure in early 20th century India. Both he and his spiritual collaborator, Mirra Alfassa known as “the Mother” have charted out the path of Integral Yoga, which is so called because it contains in it the essence of all yogic paths and because it takes up and transforms all the elements of the self. He also spoke of evolution towards a species beyond humanity. Up to now, evolution has brought forth Matter, Life and Mind. The principle of Supermind exists in its own right, beyond mind, but has not manifested on earth before. The Supermind is spiritual in essence and a source of knowledge unlike the mind. The mind is an instrument of analysis and, even at its highest, is not capable of grasping the whole truth of existence, nor of making the truth effective in action. The essence of Supermind is unity with existence, and because

of this it carries with it an immediate effectiveness in action. Consequently, with the advent of the Supermind, Matter, Life and Mind would be transformed to express a higher truth as yet unknown to humanity.

In the present period of evolution, the laws of Nature rule within matter and those species where life and no more than a elementary level of mind have evolved. In humanity, mind has become self-conscious and sees itself as not entirely subject to nature. Humanity frequently desires to master nature and even go against it. Since humanity does not yet perceive the deepest spiritual truth of existence, it fumbles and in its delusion, presumes that it is the center of the universe and that all else is meant to serve it. The foundation of humanity’s ignorance causes human beings to see themselves and their needs often as set apart from and in conflict with nature, each other and the entire universe. Wars, political maneuverings, ethical problems, greed, anger and hatred can all be traced to humanity’s deluded perception of its separativity. Human aspiration to move beyond ignorance and to experience spiritual truth is a first step towards the needed collective awakening into this new and higher consciousness on earth.

Both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have written much on the understanding of social and political issues in the context of the development of a spiritualized society. I would like to clarify here that spirituality is not a term which can be interchanged with religion, morality or ethics. All of these have different connotations. I quote here Sri Aurobindo from ‘*The Life Divine*’:

“... Spirituality is not a high intellectuality, not idealism, not an ethical turn of mind or moral purity and austerity, not religiosity or an ardent and exalted

emotional fervour, not even a compound of all these excellent things; a mental belief, creed or faith, an emotional aspiration, a regulation of conduct according to a religious or ethical formula are not spiritual achievement and experience. These things are of considerable value to mind and life; they are of value to the spiritual evolution itself as preparatory movements disciplining, purifying or giving a suitable form to the nature; but they still belong to the mental evolution,—the beginning of a spiritual ... change is not there. Spirituality is in its essence an awakening to the inner reality of our being, to a spirit, self, soul which is other than our mind, life and body, an inner aspiration to know, to feel, to be that, ... to be in communion with It and union with It, and ... a transformation of our whole being as a result of the aspiration, ... a growth or waking into a new becoming or new being, a new self, a new nature.”

[Pg. 857]

So this is spirituality. Morality, on the other hand, sometimes helps people to become more conscious but it is essentially something artificial and arbitrary which always changes with the times and the society one lives in. At times, it even checks the true spiritual effort by a sort of moral satisfaction. One becomes so self-satisfied by doing one's duty that there is no more any progress. What needs to be found instead is the spiritual law which expresses the individual truth of each being. It is not an identical law for everyone. Each one has to make for oneself a certain number of rules which should not be too rigid and fixed, but yet should be precise enough to prevent one from going completely out of the right path or making irreparable mistakes. These rules must be in conformity with each person's nature. If a social, collective rule is adopted, one becomes a slave to it and that can actually prevent one from making an effort for further progress.

Now to define religion—it is the first attempt by humanity to go beyond itself and beyond the obvious and material facts of existence. But again it tends to lay an exclusive stress on intellectual dogmas, forms and ceremonies, on some fixed

and rigid moral code, on some religio-political or religio-social system. The true thing would be for each person to find their own religion which expresses spontaneously and individually their special relation with the Divine. That would be the ideal condition. True spirituality would then mean to become divine in consciousness and act and to live inwardly and outwardly the divine life. For that, one must seek to live in the spirit, in what is beyond the intellect, beyond the aesthetic and ethical and practical being, and to govern these parts of our being by the law of the spirit.

To come back to the subject of spirituality and social change—if we take ancient Indian society, some examples of a social order with an underlying psycho-spiritual basis are striking. There were four Ashramas or stages in a person's life: the student, the householder, the forest-dweller and the free super-social person. The student trained in arts, sciences, ethical culture and spiritual knowledge. The householder satisfied the natural being, paid debt to society and its demands and prepared for the next stage. The forest-dweller went into seclusion to work at the truth of the spirit and later could become a spiritual teacher and share his knowledge with the seeker. The last stage which very few reached was that of the wandering recluse who was spiritually detached from social life, making the soul ready for eternity. More important than this circle was the fact that it was not obligatory but the conceived cycle gave a scheme keeping in view the full course of the human spirit. It developed the external nature and drew it into the inner self and enriched life to raise it into the spirit. But as civilisation grew in richness and complexity, simplicity was lost. The intellect widened but intuition waned. And finally, degeneration set in when spiritual liberation was pursued in hostility to life, not as the result and crowning of it. What we see today is the dichotomy between life and spirit. What we also see today in most religions is this very same pursuit of liberation at the cost of perfection of life on earth.

The ancient Indian civilisation was also founded



upon four human interests: first, 'kāma', that is, desire and enjoyment; next, 'artha', material, economic and other aims and needs of the mind and body; thirdly, 'dharma', that is ethical conduct and the right law of the individual and social life; and, lastly, 'moksha', spiritual liberation. The business of culture and social organisation was to satisfy these interests of the human being and to build some harmony of the forms and motives. Except in very rare cases, the satisfaction of the three mundane objects must run before the other; FULLNESS OF LIFE MUST PRECEDE THE SURPASSING OF LIFE. The debt to the family, community and the gods had to be paid and there was no preaching which advocated a rush to the hermitage. Life on earth was as important as the life of the spirit. And that too had to be perfected. This emphasis of life on earth reduced gradually and the after life assumed a greater importance in some later spiritual philosophies. But the belief in a gradual soul evolution with a final perfection or divine transcendence and human life as its first direct means and often repeated opportunity, was and remains the pivot of the Indian conception of existence.

Another unique example was that of Chaturvarnya—the four fold order—which later degenerated into the meaningless caste system. The ancient Indian idea was that human nature is of four types. The first and highest was the person of learning, thought and knowledge called the Brahmin. Next came the Kshatriya who was the person of power and action, ruler and warrior. The third in the scale was the Vaishya, the economic person, the producer and wealth-getter. Last came the relatively less developed human type, the Shudra, who was mainly fit for unskilled labour and menial service. The original idea fixed the status of the person in this order not by birth but by the capacities and inner nature of that person—this is very important to note. But this rule was not strictly observed and the basis of the social order did not remain psychological but gradually took its stand on birth, the evils of which are apparent even today. But the real greatness of this system lay in its inner content which started with the idea that the intellectual, ethical and spiritual

growth of the individual is the central need of the race. Society itself is only the necessary framework for this growth; it is a system of relations which provides it with its needed field and conditions and with a nexus of helpful influences. While birth was accepted in practice as the first gross natural indicator, it was not the sole basis of the social order. The individual was carefully trained in the science of the thing he had to do, the best way to succeed in it and to attain to recognised perfection of its activities. Even the most despised pursuits had their education, their law, their ambition of success, the sense of honour in their discharge and scruple of well-doing. Thus even the least attractive pursuit could be to a certain degree, a means of self-finding and ordered self-satisfaction. After the debt to society had been paid, there still remained the greatest thing of all—the soul, one in its essence with the Eternal. Each order had its highest ideal and by directing life and nature towards that perfection, one could grow towards that ideal and enter into harmony with universal nature and come into contact with a greater nature of divinity. So the whole system of society was made a means for the elevation and progress of the soul, mind and life from the natural pursuit of interest and desire, first to the perfection of the law of our being and at the end to a highest spiritual freedom. As we have already seen, the framework of the four Ashramas was provided so that this difficult growth was not left only to the individual's inner initiative but was structured as a part of society.

Thus we can conclude that the human being was perceived not only as a social, political and economic being but also as a spiritual being potentially divine. All of life was directed towards the bringing forth of this inner and outer perfection. This integrality of approach to life disappeared gradually. But it is this very integral approach that we need to re-establish in society today. Not by a returning to the old order—not at all—but by a returning to the spirit of the relationship between the individual and society. It is the recognition of society as a supportive framework for the total progress of the individual based on his nature and

capacities which will alter the direction of the methods employed for social change. The focus needs to be shifted from economic well-being to spiritual growth which does not at all exclude material pursuits and perfection. We need to find means to develop the external nature and draw it into the inner self and to enrich life to raise it into the spirit.

We also see that in the history of great cultures, there are three periods. In the first, there is a large and loose formation whether of religion or society or the arts based on intuitive knowledge. The second stage fixes the forms, moulds and rhythms. The third stage is that of decay and degeneration which is the supreme crisis of a civilisation. If it is unable to transform itself, it enters into a slow lingering decline or collapses under the impact of stronger powers or formations. The question is—how can a civilisation transform itself? This is a question of paramount importance today for all cultures the world over and we need to give deep thought to this.

I would like to give here an example of the work we have undertaken through Sri Aurobindo Research Foundation. The thrust of the Foundation is to develop and apply the social and political philosophy of Sri Aurobindo and find its relevance to the issues faced by humanity today. In November 1998, we had held a National Seminar on 'Aspects of the Constitution of India—Some Aurobindonian Perspectives'. The question raised there was how to address the spiritual aspect of humanity in the context of a nation. If the human being is in essence a spiritual being, not merely a social, political and economic being, how can an environment be created in society which would allow that spiritual aspect to come forth and develop? The Constitution of a country is a mundane framework, not esoteric at all. So the challenge was how to bring in the spiritual perspective without directly incorporating any religion or religious context. The issues addressed were central to the Indian context—the definition of Secularism, a decentralised system of government indigenous to the Indian way of life,

the concept of integral education in the national context and so on. I cannot say to what extent we succeeded in shifting the focus to spirituality during the short time of the Seminar but at least the attempt was made and the first step taken in that direction. It is a formidable task to bring in a spiritual perspective to the mundane issues of life but that should not daunt us. I may mention here that this Seminar on the Constitution has been offered as a gift to the 1999 Parliament of World's Religions under the section of fostering Creative Engagement with the government. It has been included in the book and I hope it will inspire some people to take up something similar in their own respective spheres in their own country, with their own spiritual path whose interpretation would be wider than any particular religion.

I repeat here again that spirituality is not synonymous with religion but goes beyond it. The task of spirituality is to mediate between the Eternal and Infinite on one hand and the transient yet persistent finite on the other, between God and humanity, between the luminous Truth-Consciousness not yet expressed and the mind's ignorance. Spiritual knowledge perceives that our real being is not the intellect, aesthetic, ethical or thinking mind but the divinity within, the Spirit, and these other things are only its instruments.

In certain religions, a spiritual exclusiveness revolts from outer existence rather than transforming it. A wider spiritual culture must aim to draw all human beings upward, and not just a few to inaccessible heights; to spiritualise life and in the end to divinise human nature, not only as an individual but also as a collective existence. In the past, the full attainment of spiritual life was left as a supreme aim to the effort of the individual. But in the future, we must establish the collective being of humanity on the realisation of the deeper spiritual truth and to reconcile life and spirit. As we have seen through some examples of ancient India, the life of the society was seen not as an aim in itself in spite of the specialisation of the parts of its systems, but in all its parts and the whole as a great framework and training

ground for the education of the human mind and its soul and its development from the natural to the spiritual existence.

The basis of the Indian mind is its spiritual and inward turn, its tendency to seek things of the spirit and inner being first and all else secondary or dependent upon it; to create first on the inner plane and afterwards in its outer aspects. Therefore first a spiritual and cultural oneness was sought to be created. The unity could not have begun with political unification. A unity based on spirit and culture is the only enduring unity and it is by a persistent mind and spirit much more than by an enduring physical body and outward organisation that the soul of a people survives. This is an aspect which is worth emulating. I quote Sri Aurobindo again—

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

*‘Foundations of Indian Culture’, Pg.430*

I call upon all of us here to reflect on this statement and see how it can be applied to the collective situation which we are in, however small it may seem. For this reflection will lead inevitably to action, if not immediately, then over a period of time. We need to have infinite patience and infinite courage to start reversing the current trends in the world. But if there are some of us who believe firmly in this—even if far flung, even if from different spiritual paths—we can come together and collaborate, forming a network of spiritual seekers who are aiming

to conquer life by the spirit. I shall conclude with a prayer by the Mother—

“‘Face the danger!’” Thou saidst to me, “why dost thou wish to turn away thy gaze or flee far away from action, flee from the battle, into the deep contemplation of Truth? It is its integral manifestation which must be realised, its victory over all the obstacles of blind ignorance and dark hostility. Look the danger straight in the face and it will vanish before the Power.”

‘O Lord, I understood the weakness of this most external nature which is always ready to surrender material things and escape, as a compensation, into a supreme intellectual and spiritual independence. But Thou expectest action from us, and action does not allow such an attitude. It is not enough to triumph in the inner worlds, we must triumph right down to the most material worlds. We must not flee from the difficulty or obstacle, because we have the power to do so by taking refuge in the consciousness where there are no obstacles... We must look danger straight in the face with faith in Thy Omnipotence, and Thy Omnipotence will triumph.’

‘Give me integrally the heart of the fighter, O Lord, and Thy victory is sure.’

“‘Conquer at any price’” should be the present motto. Not because one is attached to the work and its results, not because one needs such an action, not because one is incapable of escaping from all contingencies.

‘But because Thou hast commanded action from us. But because the hour of Thy triumph upon earth has come. But because Thou willest the integral victory.’

‘And in an infinite love for the world... let us fight!’

*‘Prayers and Meditations’, September 5, 1914.*

*1999 Parliament of World’s Religions  
2 December 1999—Cape Town, South Africa*

# On Money

*The Mother*

*“Money is the visible sign of a universal force, and this force in its manifestation on earth works on the vital and physical planes and is indispensable to the fullness of the outer life. In its origin and its true action it belongs to the Divine. But like other powers of the Divine it is delegated here and in the ignorance of the lower Nature can be usurped for the uses of the ego or held by Asuric influences and perverted to their purpose. This is indeed one of the three forces—power, wealth, sex—that have the strongest attraction for the human ego and the Asura and are most generally misheld and misused by those who retain them.... For this reason most spiritual disciplines... proclaim poverty and bareness of life as the only spiritual condition. But this is an error; it leaves the power in the hands of the hostile forces. To reconquer it for the Divine to whom it belongs and use it divinely for the divine life is the supramental way for the sadhaka.”*

Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*, pp. 11-12

*How can one know if one's way of using money is in accordance with the divine Will?*

One must first know what the divine Will is. But there is a surer way—to surrender money for the divine work, if one is not sure oneself. ‘Divinely’ means at the service of the Divine—it means not to use money for one’s own satisfaction but to place it at the Divine’s service.

*Sri Aurobindo speaks of “a weak*

*bondage to the habits that the possession of riches creates.”*

When you are rich and have a lot money to spend, generally you spend it on things you find pleasant, and you become habituated to these things, attached to these things, and if one day the money is gone, you miss it, you are unhappy, you are miserable and feel all lost because you no longer have what you were in the habit of having. It is a bondage, a weak attachment. He who is quite detached, when he lives in the midst of these things, it is well with him; when these things are gone, it is well also; he is totally indifferent to both. That is the right attitude: when it is there he uses it, when it is not he does without it. And for his inner consciousness this makes no difference. That surprises you, but it is like that.

*If one has the power to acquire a lot of money, does this mean that one has a certain control over terrestrial forces?*

This depends upon how one acquires it. If you get it by foul ways, that does not mean that you have a control. But if someone, scrupulously doing his duty, sees that money comes to him, it is evidently because he exercises a control over these forces. There are people who have the power of attracting money and they haven’t the least need to practise dishonesty to get it. Others, even to get a few pennies, must make all sorts of contrivances, more or less clean. So one cannot say.... We see a rich man and think he must be exercising a control over the forces of money—no, not necessarily. But

if a man remains perfectly honest and does what he thinks is his duty without caring to acquire money, and yet money comes to him, evidently he has a certain affinity with those forces.

*It is said, "One cannot make a heap without making a hole", one cannot enrich oneself without impoverishing someone else. Is this true?*

This is not quite correct. If one produces something, instead of an impoverishment it is an enrichment; simply one puts into circulation in the world something else having a value equivalent to that of money. But to say that one cannot make a heap without making a hole is all right for those who speculate, who do business on the Stock Exchange or in finance—there it is true. It is impossible to have a financial success in affairs of pure speculation without its being detrimental to another. But it is limited to this. Otherwise a producer does not make a hole if he heaps up money in exchange for what he produces. Surely there is the question of the value of the production, but if the production is truly an acquisition for the general human wealth, it does not make a hole, it increases this wealth. And in another way, not only in the material field, the same thing holds for art, for literature or science, for any production at all.

*When I was doing business (Export-Import), I always had the feeling of robbing my neighbour.*

This is living at the expense of others, because one multiplies the middlemen. Naturally, it is perhaps convenient, practical, but from the general point of view, and above all in the way it is practised, it is living at the expense of the producer and the consumers. One becomes an agent, not at all with the idea of rendering service (because there is

not one in a million who has this idea), but because it is an easy way of earning money without making any effort. But of course, among the ways of making money without any effort, there are others much worse than that! They are countless.

*Friends from outside have often asked me this question: "When one is compelled to earn his living, should one just conform to the common code of honesty or should one be still more strict?"*

This depends upon the attitude your friend has taken in life. If he wants to be a sadhak, it is indispensable that rules of ordinary morality do not have any value for him. Now, if he is an ordinary man living the ordinary life, it is a purely practical question, isn't it? He must conform to the laws of the country in which he lives to avoid all trouble! But all these things which in ordinary life have a very relative value and can be looked upon with a certain indulgence, change totally the minute one decides to do yoga and enter the divine life. Then, all values change completely: what is honest in ordinary life, is no longer at all honest for you. Besides, there is such a reversal of values that one can no longer use the same ordinary language. If one wants to consecrate oneself to the divine life, one must do it truly, that is, give oneself entirely, no longer do anything for one's own interest, depend exclusively upon the divine Power to which one abandons oneself. Everything changes completely, doesn't it?—everything, everything, it is a reversal. What I have just read from this book applies solely to those who want to do yoga; for others it has no meaning, it is a language which makes no sense, but for those who want to do yoga it is imperative. It is always the same thing in all that we have recently read: one

must be careful not to have one foot on one side and the other foot on the other, not to bestride two different boats each following its own course. This is what Sri Aurobindo said: one must not lead a 'double life'. One must give up one thing or the other—one can't follow both.

This does not mean, however, that one is obliged to get out of the conditions of one's life: it is the inner attitude which must be totally changed. One may do what one is in the habit of doing, but do it with quite a different attitude. I don't say it is necessary to give up everything in life and go away into solitude, to an ashram necessarily, to do yoga. Now, it is true that if one does yoga in the world and in worldly circumstances, it is more difficult, but it is also more complete. Because, every minute one must face problems which do not present themselves to someone who has left everything and gone into solitude; for such a one these problems are reduced to a minimum—while in life one meets all sorts of difficulties, beginning with the incomprehension of those around you with whom you have to deal; one must be ready for that, be armed with patience, and a great indifference. But in yoga, one should no longer care for what people think or say; it is an absolutely indispensable starting-point. You must be absolutely immune to what the world may say or think of you and to the way it treats you. People's understanding must be something quite immaterial to you and should not even slightly touch you. That is why it is generally much more difficult to remain in one's usual surroundings and do yoga than to leave everything and go into solitude; it is much more difficult, but we are not here to do easy things—easy things we leave to those who do not think of transformation.

*If someone has acquired a lot of money by dishonest means, could some of it be asked for the Divine?*

Sri Aurobindo has answered this question. He says that money in itself is an impersonal force: the way in which you acquire money concerns you alone personally. It may do you great harm, it may harm others also, but it does not in any way change the nature of the money which is an altogether impersonal force: money has no colour, no taste, no psychological consciousness. It is a force. It is like saying that the air breathed out by a scoundrel is more tainted than that breathed out by an honest man—I don't think so. I think the result is the same. One may for reasons of a practical nature refuse money which has been stolen, but that is for altogether practical reasons, it is not because of divine reasons. This is a purely human idea. One may from a practical point of view say, "Ah! No, the way in which you have acquired this money is disgusting and so I don't want to offer it to the Divine", because one has a human consciousness. But if you take someone (let us suppose the worst) who has killed and acquired money by the murder; if all of a sudden he is seized by terrible scruples and remorse and tells himself, "I have only one thing to do with this money, give it where it can be utilised for the best, in the most impersonal way", it seems to me that this movement is preferable to utilising it for one's own satisfaction. I said that the reasons which could prevent one from receiving ill-gotten money may be reasons of a purely practical kind, but there may also be more profound reasons, of a (I do not want to say moral but) spiritual nature, from the point of view of tapasya; one may tell somebody, "No, you cannot truly acquire merit with this fortune which you have obtained in such a terrible way; what you can do is to restore it", one may feel that a

restitution, for instance, will help to make more progress than simply passing the money on to any work whatever. One may see things in this way—one can't make rules. This is what I never stop telling you: it is impossible to make a rule. In every case it is different. But you must not think that the money is affected; money as a terrestrial force is not affected by the way in which it is obtained, that can in no way affect it. Money remains the same, your note remains the same, your piece of gold remains the same, and as it carries its force, its force remains there. It harms only the person who has done wrong, that is evident. Then the question remains: in what state of mind and for what reason does your dishonest man want to pass on his money to a work he considers divine? Is it as a measure of safety, through prudence or to lay his heart at rest? Evidently this is not a very good motive and it cannot be encouraged, but if he feels a kind of repentance and regret for what he has done and the feeling that there is but one thing to do and that is precisely to deprive himself of what he has wrongly acquired and utilise it for the general good as much as possible, then there is nothing to say against that. One cannot decide in a general way—it depends upon the instance. Only, if I understand well what you mean, if one knows that a man has acquired money by the most unnamable means, obviously, it would not be good to go and ask him for money for some divine work, because that would be like 'rehabilitating' his way of gaining money. One cannot ask, that is not possible. If, spontaneously for some reason, he gives it, there is no reason to refuse it. But it is quite impossible to go and ask him for it, because it is as though one legitimised his manner of acquiring money. That makes a great difference.

And generally, in these cases, those who go and ask money from rascals use means of

intimidation: they frighten them, not physically but about their future life, about what may happen to them, they give them a fright. It is not very nice. These are procedures one ought not to use.

*Besides money, what are the other divine powers 'delegated' here on earth?*

All. All the divine powers are manifested here and deformed here—light, life, love, force—all—harmony, ananda—all, all there is nothing which is not divine in its origin and which does not exist here under a completely distorted, travestied form. The other day we had spoken at length about the way in which divine Love is deformed in its manifestation here, it is the same thing.

*How can money be reconquered for the Mother?*

Ah!... There is a hint here. Three things are interdependent (Sri Aurobindo says here): power, money and sex. I believe the three are interdependent and that all three have to be conquered to be sure of having any one—when you want to conquer one you must have the other two. Unless one has mastered these three things, desire for power, desire for money and desire for sex, one cannot truly possess any of them firmly and surely. What gives so great an importance to money in the world as it is today is not so much money itself, for apart from a few fools who heap up money and are happy because they can heap it up and count it, generally money is desired and acquired for the satisfactions it brings. And this is almost reciprocal: each of these three things not only has its own value in the world of desires, but leans upon the other two. I have related to you that vision, that big black serpent which kept watch over the riches of the world, terrestrial wealth—he demanded the mastery of the sex-impulse.

Because, according to certain theories, the very need of power has its end in this satisfaction, and if one mastered that, if one abolished that from human consciousness, much of the need for power and desire for money would disappear automatically. Evidently, these are the three great obstacles in the terrestrial human life and, unless they are conquered, there is scarcely a chance for humanity to change.

*Does an individual mastery over desire suffice or is a general, collective mastery necessary?*

Ah! There we are.... Is it possible to attain a total personal transformation without there being at least a correspondence in the collectivity?... This does not seem possible to me. There is such an interdependence between the individual and the collectivity that, unless one does what the ascetics have preached, that is, escapes from the world, goes out of it completely, leaves it where it is and runs away selfishly leaving all the work to others, unless one does that... And even so I have my doubts. Is it possible to accomplish a total transformation of one's being so long as the collectivity has not reached at least a certain degree of transformation? I don't think so. Human nature remains what it is—one can attain a great change of consciousness, that yes, one can purify one's consciousness, but the total conquest, the material transformation depends definitely to a large extent, on a certain degree of progress in the collectivity. Buddha said with reason that as long as you have in you a vibration of desire, this vibration will spread in the world and all those who are ready to receive it will receive it. In the same way, if you have in you the least receptivity to a vibration of desire, you will be open to all the vibrations of desire which circulate constantly in the world. And that is why he concluded: Get out of this illusion,

withdraw entirely and you will be free. I find this relatively very selfish, but after all, that was the only way he had foreseen. There is another: to identify oneself so well with the divine Power as to be able to act constantly and consciously upon all vibrations circulating through the world. Then the undesirable vibrations no longer have any effect upon you, but you have an effect upon them, that is, instead of an undesirable vibration entering into you without being perceived and doing its work there, it is perceived and immediately on its arrival you act upon it to transform it, and it goes back into the world transformed, to do its beneficent work and prepare others for the same realisation. This is exactly what Sri Aurobindo proposes to do and, more clearly, what he asks you to do, what he intends us to do:

Instead of running away, to bring into oneself the power which can conquer.

Note that things are arranged in such a way that if the tiniest atom of ambition remained and one wanted this Power for one's personal satisfaction, one could never have it, that Power would never come. Its deformed limitations, of the kind seen in the vital and physical world, those yes, one may have them, and there are many people who have them, but the true Power, the Power Sri Aurobindo calls 'supramental', unless one is absolutely free from all egoism under all its forms, one will never be able to manifest. So there is no danger of its being misused. It will not manifest except through a being who has attained the perfection of a complete inner detachment. I have told you, this is what Sri Aurobindo expects us to do—you may tell me it is difficult, but I repeat that we are not here to do easy things, we are here to do difficult ones.

3 May 1951

*Questions and Answers  
1950-51*



# Evolution

*Sri Aurobindo*

All is not finished in the Unseen's decree!  
A mind beyond our mind demands our ken;  
A life of unimagined harmony  
Awaits, concealed, the grasp of unborn men.

The crude beginnings of the lifeless earth  
And mindless stirrings of the plant and tree  
Prepared our thought; thought for a godlike birth  
Broadens the mould of our mortality.

A might no human will or force could gain,  
A knowledge seated in eternity,  
A joy beyond our struggle and our pain  
Is this earth-hampered creature's destiny.

O Thou who climbedst to mind from the dull stone,  
Turn to the miracled summits yet unwon.

*'Collected Poems'*