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New Race

Blessings



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From the editor's desk...

Dear Readers,

Darshan greetings to all!

The Mother once advised to the students and teachers of Sri Aurobindo International Centre for Education: "Read Sri Aurobindo's books and look carefully within yourself as deeply as you can" (CWM, Vol. 12, p. 204). This is the primary teaching methodology we use at SACAR when working with learners in any of our courses based on Sri Aurobindo's thought. We encourage our learners to reflect deeply on what they are reading and in fact use the reading of the text as a means to look within. The written assignments like essays, learning journals etc. also facilitate introspection and deep reflection. We encourage learners to express their understandings and reflections in the light of their authentic and sincere comprehension of the particular topic or ideas at hand.

In this issue we present a collection of such works submitted by some of our learners studying different aspects of Sri Aurobindo's thought. The opening essay by Biswajit Banerjee was written as part of his coursework on Foundations of Indian Culture. The next two essays by Chandra Pitchal and Menaka Deorah were submitted for their course on Psychological Approach to Bhagwad-Gita. Last year we introduced a new course titled, Vision of the Future, and we are happy to include two essays submitted by learners Sanjay Shirwalkar and Gauri Bahuguna as part of their study and reflection in that course. The last three essays represent learners' reflections on Sri Aurobindo's ideal of spiritualized society. While the essay by Deepali Gupta presents a more general reflection on this topic based on a close reading of the text, the other two essays by Todd Wilson and Terry Porter reflect a more applied understanding of this ideal more specifically grounded in the American social-political-cultural context.

All of us at SACAR feel enriched in our understanding through such diverse and yet sincere readings and reflections by our learners. And we are happy to share a small selection of our learners' writings with our readers of New Race. As always, we welcome comments and suggestions from our readers.

Till next time....

Beloo

THE MOTHER'S ADVICE TO STUDENTS, YOUNG AND OLD



There are, in the history of the earth, moments of transition when things that have existed for thousands of years must give way to those that are about to manifest. A special concentration of the world consciousness, one might almost say, an intensification of its effort, occurs at such times, varying according to the kind of progress to be made, the quality of the transformation to be realised. We are at precisely such a turning-point in the world's history. Just as Nature has already created upon earth a mental being, man, so too there is now a concentrated activity in this mentality to bring forth a supramental consciousness and individuality...

...Consequently, we are not here to repeat what others have done, but to prepare ourselves for the blossoming of a new consciousness and a new life. That is why I address myself to you, the students, that is, to all who wish to learn, to learn always more and always better, so that one day you may be capable of opening yourselves to the new force and of giving it the possibility of manifesting on the physical plane. For that is our programme and we must not forget it. To understand the true reason why you are here, you must remember that we want to become instruments that are as perfect as possible, instruments that express the divine will in the world. And if the instruments are to be perfect, they must be cultivated, educated, trained. They must not be left like fallow land or a formless piece of stone. A diamond reveals all its beauty only when it is artistically cut. It is the same for you. If you want your physical being to be a perfect instrument for the manifestation of the supramental consciousness, you must cultivate it, sharpen it, refine it, give it what it lacks, perfect what it already possesses.

THE MOTHER, CWM, Volume 12, pp. 72-73

ESSENCE OF INDIAN SPIRITUALITY

Biswajit Banerjee



Spiritual Significance : Aspiration
(Photo Credit : www.blossomlikeaflower.com)

Deliberations on Indian spirituality could effectively start with thoughts on Indian conception of life. Indian seers saw life as emanating from an inner core of existence. Although the externalities of life are not to be ignored but they shouldn't be thought of as the quintessence of being. To an Indian seer, life in the material plane is imperfect and its very objective is the seeking of perfection. Existence, therefore, is not confined to the interplay of externalities but has its roots in the essence of the spirit or the true self. The basis of existence is more psychological and spiritual than physical.

It is not enough to merely deem the self as greater than the mind and body. Spirit force or self must be realized, I repeat realized, as the precursor and cause of the mind and body. Externalities, in other words, are effects of internalities. The self within the human body, however, is not an end in itself. It is an intrinsic part of the Supreme Self or what may be called as God or the Supreme Brahman. The material universe is just an infinitesimal part of the sport of the Supreme Brahman.

Man should thus not be thought of as a package of life and mind emerging from evolving matter, who is governed largely by the requisites of physical nature. He is rather a spirit that has life and mind at its disposal. Man's objective in life is to use these tools to their fullest potentials so as to be one with the Divine. That is the central idea of Indian spirituality.

The idea of reaching out to the Divine is the most fundamental prescription of Indian religion. The Divine or the God or the Supreme Brahman transcends the apparent mental and physical realities of earthly existence. Sri Aurobindo's description of this truth mesmerises us – *"Beyond mind, life and body there is a Spirit and Self containing all that is finite and infinite, surpassing all that is relative, a supreme Absolute, originating and supporting all that is transient, a one Eternal. A one transcendent, universal, original and sempiternal Divinity or divine Essence, Consciousness, Force and Bliss is the fount and continent and inhabitant of things. Soul, nature, life are only a manifestation or partial phenomenon of this self-aware Eternity and this conscious Eternal"* (Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 20, p.182).

It is essential to note that Indian spirituality is not a result of human cogitations. It is not a mere documentation of the thoughts on God of Indian seers. To think of Indian spirituality as a collection of intellectual observations by philosophers of all ages would be a gross bypassing of its spirit. No matter how strange it may sound to an occidental critic to whom anything unperceivable is as good as non-existent, or to an oriental critic with a strong bias against anything strictly Indian and more particularly Hindu in nature, Indian spirituality is an expression of true spiritual experiences. The spiritualists put down in words the experiences they had of the Divine. Many a critic would find fault with this idea on the ground that if Indian spirituality is verbalization of ethereal experiences then how is it that there are so many ideas surrounding the so-called Divine; after all the Divine is one Supreme Brahman, how can then the seers have different experiences of the same Supreme Brahman? The answer is pretty simple and I am surely not the first to advance an answer to this mindless doubt—the different experiences of the Supreme Brahman are clearly different ways of reaching Him. There is but one Supreme Brahman but the ways to reach him are countless. This idea also makes Indian spirituality all-accommodative in nature. Indian spirituality does not impress its views on you, it encourages you to experience your own experiences. If your experience suggests that neither the Supreme Brahman nor the atomic soul exists, even that idea would be welcome and not against Indian spirituality as long as it is a corollary of a sincere spiritual exercise. Buddhism, for example, is agnostic in nature and many of its schools suggest that nothing is known or likely to be known about God, the only truth being the cycle of births and deaths in which the spirit is entangled and its only escape from the same is by way of Nirvana. One of the foremost steps to Nirvana is the renunciation of one's desires. Jainism, similarly, is an agnostic faith and also stresses on the release of the soul from the cycle of births and deaths rather than on the presence of one Supreme Reality or Supreme Brahman. And yet, Buddhism and Jainism are considered to be perfectly fitting into the mould of Indian spirituality as they are spiritual realizations and not just intellectual constructions. But the idea of Supreme Brahman, for certain, is extremely strong in Indian spirituality. It is, in fact, domineering enough to stand alone as the sole representative of Indian spirituality without diluting the core of this spirituality even by an

iota. Sri Aurobindo writes, “It (Indian Spirituality) was a living spiritual Truth, an Entity, a Power, a Presence that could be sought by all according to their degree of capacity and seized in a thousand ways through life and beyond life. This Truth was to be lived and even to be made the governing idea of thought and life and action. This recognition and pursuit of something or someone Supreme is behind all forms the one universal credo of Indian religion, and if it has taken hundred shapes, it was precisely because it was so much alive. The infinite alone justifies the existence of the finite and the finite by itself has no entirely separate value or independent existence. Life, if it is not an illusion, is a divine Play, a manifestation of the glory of the Infinite. Or is it a means by which the soul growing in Nature through countless forms and many lives can approach, touch, feel and unite itself through love and knowledge and faith and adoration and a Godward will in works with this transcendent Being and this infinite Existence. This Self or this self-existent Being is the one supreme reality, and all things else are either only appearances or only true by dependence upon it. It follows that self-realization and God-realization are the great business of the living and thinking human being. All life and thought are in the end a means of progress towards self-realization and God-realization.” (Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol.20, pp.182-3).

The form of Supreme Truth, if it at all has a form, the intellectual or theological conceptions of the Supreme Truth and the path of seeking the Supreme Truth never assumed prime importance in Indian spirituality. What is of prime importance is the seeking of the Supreme Truth through harmonization of inner elements of one’s being. Realization of the Supreme Truth is not the climax of one’s spiritual journey...one is required to live in it in consciousness.

The multitude of spiritual ideas to accomplish oneness with the Supreme Brahman, as has been mentioned earlier, are different paths to the same True Consciousness. They enliven the Indian spiritual culture rather than bring to forth its contradictions. Doesn’t matter what your spiritual conviction is – ‘atomic soul is part and parcel of the Ultimate Divine’, ‘the self or atomic soul differ from the Ultimate Divine and the former is a grossly diminutive version of the latter’, ‘God-consciousness and self-consciousness are essentially the same and yet different, the former and the latter are inter-complimentary’... in the ultimate analysis the objective of Yoga or Indian spirituality is the attainment of the Supreme Consciousness. God is omnipotent and omniscient. If you separate God from existence, existence will lose its meaning and thus cease to be.

I close with these beautiful words of Sri Aurobindo that succinctly describe the essence of Indian spirituality – “The Spirit, universal Nature (whether called *Maya Prakriti* or *Shakti*) and the soul in living beings, *Jiva*, are the three truths which are universally admitted by all the many religious sects and conflicting religious philosophies of India. Universal also is the admission that the discovery of the inner spiritual self in man, the divine soul in him, and some kind of living and uniting contact or absolute unity of the soul in man with God or supreme Self or eternal Brahman is

the condition of spiritual perfection. It is open to us to conceive and have experience of the Divine as an impersonal Absolute and Infinite or to approach and know and feel Him as a transcendent sempiternal Person: but whatever be our way of reaching him, the one important truth of spiritual experience is that he is in the heart and centre of all existence and all existence is in him and to find him is the great self-finding. Differences of credal belief are to the Indian mind nothing more than various ways of seeing the one Self and Godhead in all. Self-realisation is the one thing needful; to open to the inner Spirit, to live in the Infinite, to seek after and discover the Eternal, to be in union with God, that is the common idea and aim of religion, that is the sense of spiritual salvation, that is the living Truth that fulfils and releases. This dynamic following after the highest spiritual truth and the highest spiritual aim are the uniting bond of Indian religion and, behind all its thousand forms, its one common essence.” (Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 20, p.184).

India's central conception is that of the Eternal, the Spirit here incased in matter, involved and immanent in it and evolving on the material plane by rebirth of the individual up the scale of being till in mental man it enters the world of ideas and realm of conscious morality, dharma. This achievement, this victory over unconscious matter develops its lines, enlarges its scope, elevates its levels until the increasing manifestation of the sattwic or spiritual portion of the vehicle of mind enables the individual mental being in man to identify himself with the pure spiritual consciousness beyond Mind. India's social system is built upon this conception; her philosophy formulates it; her religion is an aspiration to the spiritual consciousness and its fruits; her art and literature have the same upward look; her whole dharma or law of being is founded upon it. Progress she admits, but this spiritual progress, not the externally self-unfolding process of an always more and more prosperous and efficient material civilisation. It is her founding of life upon this exalted conception and her urge towards the spiritual and the eternal that constitute the distinct value of her civilisation. And it is her fidelity, with whatever human shortcomings, to this highest ideal that has made her people a nation apart in the human world.

SRI AUROBINDO, CWSA, Vol. 20, pp. 56-57

ACTION AND WORSHIP

Chandra Pitchal



Spiritual Significance : Work
(Photo Credit : www.blossomlikeaflower.com)

If action covers the totality of our life, it is not so for worship. Worship is consciously relegated to some moments of life that we hold sacred, whilst action happens even despite us, all the time, from the moment we are born up to the moment of death. It is much like breathing, which by the way is also an action. We cannot stop it and we are not masters of it. Breathing keeps happening and action keeps happening. It drives us and still we seem to believe and our language reflects that unquestioned premise, that there is a subject who acts, a doer of the action and very naturally, "I" am that doer. It would be difficult for us, in the course of the day, to think that "I" am not doing the action, that it is Nature that is driving me through it, for, the movement that is action, keeps unfolding through my mind and through my body, and I am led to feel that I am the owner of the action, that I am its possessor, and therefore that I must be responsible for it. And from the moment we own responsibility for action, we start thinking about its good and bad, its right and wrong, its consequences for ourselves and for others, and how to do better something that is seen by ourselves and through the other's eye as emanating from us. We do feel that the action is not limited to the time in which it emerged, it seems to have effects or reactions after it is done and has ceased to be. Action does not even seem limited to the space in which it took place, for it seems to trigger other actions at other places, sometimes far removed. Again it seems to escape us while still engaging our identity into other times and other places, sometimes outside our limited world. We sense the action as stretching into other spheres too, carrying its consequences over to other realms, those of after-death, towards some heaven or hell, and even thereafter into other lifetimes. And we also come

with a baggage that compels us to action in this birth. We seem to be in the middle of a chain of actions, of actions and reactions, causing and effecting endlessly, clouding our perception about determination, destiny and free will.

Thus action is a movement that is everywhere. It seems to pursue us even outside the time and space in which it commenced and ended. It is ours, consciously or unconsciously, and affects us at every level, engaging us with ourselves and with the world. It defines our identity, externally and internally as it questions our motives, relating itself to a moral conscience, to a sense of "I" and to the ego. How then can action be compared to worship, aside from the fact that worship is an action? How can action that is everywhere and in every form, be in any way related to the very closed and defined domain of worship? And what sort of action is worship? Can action be shaped like worship? And what would that do? Would it change the nature of the action? How would such an action affect its doer? How would it affect the relationship of the subject to the world? And would such action bring greater mastery over itself and its consequences, and all things that seem to escape the doer? These are some of the problems that action throws at us and that we would like to touch upon as we explore the act and the nature of worship in the first part and go on to understand action as worship in the second part.

Worship through its many forms has necessarily three elements in it: the worshipper, the worshipped and the action of worshipping, which forms the link between the first two terms. By becoming the worshipper, I place myself beneath the worshipped that I revere as the higher instance or Person, invoking that influence into my life. Worship is the act by which I call, I offer whatever I have and that I consider worthy to the divine Person. The traditional ritual is meant to make us remember God and offer to Him. We call Him, we invite His presence in our midst, we place a seat for Him, offer water, flowers, and fruits as a welcome. We laud Him and wave incense, light and other insignia. We declare our intentions to Him, ask for His blessings, His grace, we invoke His protection, His guidance, and in the intimacy of this relationship, pronounce our secret prayers.

Through the traditional ritual, whether done by oneself in the home or executed on our behalf by a priest in a temple, there is a raising of the consciousness in worship, we try to come nearer to the divine, and thus we are lifted out of the mundane flatness of our lives into a sacred, divine, space. In this privileged moment, the two divine instances meet, the inner divine and the transcendent God. The world of worship makes us conscious of both as the peaceful intimacy of God makes the inner divine come to the fore. So when we invite the Lord into our lives, our true being is also called upon to participate more completely in our lives. As devotion wells up in the heart and turns into adoration, we become alive and awake to the presence of the Lord around us, and to the symbols of His presence in the different things of our life, the things of beauty, harmony, peace and love. There is here an instance of remembering

and of offering. When we offer, when we give to the Lord, flowers, or any object, it is but a substitute and an aid to the real giving, that is the self-giving, and repeated self-giving in adoration is a practice of the surrender that we would like to reach. For worship and self-giving are also an exercise in the fading of the ego. It is not only through consecration of our energies, our thoughts and feelings, our very life, but also by becoming more subtle and aware of the divine within. *Shivam bhutva shivam yajet* is the effort wherein we have to become like the Lord to be able to worship Him, and become conscious that it is impelled by Him, by His desire and His grace that we are able to be in worship before Him, which means: "You are the doer, not me". And when at the end of the ritual, we take the steps of the *pradakshina*, the circumambulation around the Lord, around the sanctum in the temple, or around ourselves (as in the *grihapuja*) for the Lord seated within, we imprint our being with this truth of our life: "You are the centre, not me".

Thus in worship, by serving the Lord and waiting on Him, we learn to affirm in symbolic forms the vibrant truths of *Sadhana* that lead us to intimacy with the Divine. Remembering, offering, giving, self-giving, making the divine the centre of ourselves and of our action, reducing the predominance of ego in order to let the inner being come forward, asserting that true identity and concentrated consecration of ourselves and of our life are the highlights of this effort, as is the elevation in consciousness towards becoming like the Lord in order to worship Him, and be like Him. These are all secrets of *Sadhana* and *Tapasya* very much in tune with the teachings of the Gita. The motive, the intention, the awareness involved in the veneration lifts the consciousness out of its habitual grooves, purifies it, and prepares us to spread that attitude into other areas of our life. Slowly, gradually, by constant practice, the attitude of worship can shape all action. But how would such a thing be possible? All action is absorbing. The mind and senses are wholly involved in the act and oblivious of anything else. In worship the action is very obviously directed towards the Lord, so there is no conflict in the aim of action and the efficacy of action, as both are outstretched towards the same, the Lord. But what of daily action, what of the action that absorbs your attention only into the doing it? How can such an action be worship? And how do we include the presence of the Lord into this continuous flow of one action leading to the other? How to remember Him, how offer? How can we bridge the gap between a sacred action called worship and any action, the kind that makes up most of life?

Can all action be worship? Are there negative and positive actions? To this the Gita replies that the action has to be in tune with the *Swabhava*, the inner divine nature. Actions that go against the *Swabhava* stifle the soul, killing it. Being anti-divine, against the immanent divine, they cannot be in the form of worship to the Lord. Here it is not the action per se that is in question, but rather the action in relation to the worshipper. Action by itself has no quality; it is the attitude and the intention behind it that qualifies it. Just as in the case of worship, action that is worship needs to welcome the Lord, it should take the

worshipper Godward, that is how it can become an expression of the *Swadharmā* and be *dharmic* in nature. Only the right action is worthy of the offering, but since the three *Gunas* in interaction perform all action, the *Gita* enjoins us to cultivate the *Sattvic* tendencies that have a refining influence on human nature. The action should be uplifted to the most *Sattvic* type, thus governed by the harmonising light of *Sattva* it will keep the worshipper on the Godward path. Action has that power on the doer as it shapes him. When properly understood, all action is in the form of *Yajna*, *Tapasya*, or *Dana*, these are its motivations. If we are conscious of this, and try to lift the type of that action and motivation to the *Sattvic* level, then action and work become a great worship, a means of self-purification and self-perfection for the worshipper. Being conscious of *Yajna*, *Tapasya* and *Dana* in their *Sattvic* mode is the *Gita*'s solution to action as worship, and here the Divine is remembered and action flows towards Him. *Kartavyam karma*, is a way of saying that all work and thus action comes to us from the Divine and has to be offered to Him. It also means for the aspirant and worshipper that he does not choose the work and the action, it is the Divine who chooses and he accepts the divine bidding, accepts whatever work comes his way and does it with dedication, paving the way for a fading of the ego and of the claims of desire, in the purifying process.

Therefore action as worship cannot be dissociated from the movement of remembering the Divine and offering to the Divine. In view of this constant remembrance, a certain purification of the mind, or rather *Buddhi*, the intelligent will, is very needed, in order to foster clarity of understanding, preparing the mind to receive the spiritual truths. Once the *Buddhi* is cleared of the confusions, of the many-branching dissipative tendencies it becomes more homogeneous, calm and fixed on the aim, and once opened to the spiritual light, it can be in the remembrance of the Lord and stay with that remembrance. That purified *Buddhi* is very important, since action is totally absorbing and the will too has to be serenely fixed on the Lord. In the beginning, we need to make an effort to shift part of the focus, cultivate the inner withdrawal. The worshipper has to practice, at repeated intervals, a willed stepping back from action, a faint and delicate awareness forms that does not disturb the concentration and absorption in the action, wherein one remembers the Divine with love. Gradually it develops into a stream of consciousness that is parallel to the one absorbed in action, something indrawn and giving. This helps the worshipper to keep dedicating the flow of actions to the Lord. Sri Krishna asks us to dedicate all action to Him, so that action loses its binding edge. We can be free from the chain of causality that action keeps forming. The doer-ship will eventually be transferred to Him in this continual inner giving up. In this way action, just as worship, relies deeply on devotion and adoration. Devotion is the puissant aid in making what for a long time seems like a laborious effort. Slowly, the presence of the Lord is felt in the world, in the vibrant symbols of light, harmony, love, peace, beauty and delight. That is the movement of adoration for the Lord. When we can be in perpetual adoration, the dedication

and self-giving go with it, and ego diminishes. Love is the culminating point of this movement of devotion. Nothing resists love, not even the ego and the claiming and expecting desires; they melt in the power of love. Then self-giving is tuned towards surrender, worshipper and worshipped can both be experienced as one and the same God. Thus for the Gita, the solution is in being like the Purushottma, who is always untouched, apart, and yet deeply engaged in all manifestation. The human being can also be like the Lord; he can live absorbed in the intimacy of the Lord and still endeavour in the field of action, as an instrument of God.

The acme of the experience of action as worship is the unified consciousness that is experienced by the liberated human being. The Gita describes the experience in the imagery of a vast sacrifice. In Sri Aurobindo's words: "The universal energy into which the action is poured is the Divine; the consecrated energy of the giving is the Divine; whatever is offered is only some form of the Divine; the giver of the offering is the Divine himself in man; the action, the work, the sacrifice is itself the Divine in movement, in activity; the goal to be reached by sacrifice is the Divine", (CWSA, volume 19, page 120). There is an experienced pervasiveness of the Divine, which transforms the nature of life and action. The action has no personal sense or motivation; it is performed without attachment and done for the sake of the world. That is called Lokasangraha, the Lord is served in the world. The nature and the understanding of life are certainly very different for the liberated human being. Even reading about it thrills us. From all the above, we can see that action as worship is possible. The attitude, the faith, the devotion, the spirit in which this practice is undertaken are key to such a change, constituting the action of the mind while the body is carrying out the external action. More exactly, something in us is inactive, still, while the outer being is active. That is the skill, *kaushalam*, of doing work without forging the bondage that comes from action and *Karma*.

We started out with trying to understand the phenomenon that is action, and the fact that it is quite the opposite of the time and space, and nature of worship. It seemed like action and worship were difficult to bring together. To go deeper into the question, we first analysed worship and could see how the act of worship contains all the elements of the *Sadhana* of the Gita. Thereafter we discovered how and in what conditions, the elements of worship, specialised and sacred though they are, could be applied to all action that happens in the course of a day, or of a lifetime, because the Gita has bridged that gap between worship and ordinary action with a series of practical guidelines. Finally, just as in worship, all action can be a link between the human and the Divine, the divine in man as well as the Supreme person. This changes the nature of our actions, our relationship with the world and with Nature, and takes us closer to God. We would like to be in adoration, diminish the ego, work for the highest good, and all that is provided us by action and life when they become a means of purification and perfection. The good action is the one that takes us Godward

and the bad action is one that takes us away, or holds us back from God, slows our progress towards Him, because the real meaning of our life, its aim and its utility is the upward growth of the soul in the path of the highest good. When we can be in a state of free offering of life without a personal sense, motive, or claim, then we live more and more in the delight of Godward existence.

THE DIVINE WORKER

*I face earth's happenings with an equal soul;
In all are heard Thy steps: Thy unseen feet
Tread Destiny's pathways in my front. Life's whole
Tremendous theorem is Thou complete.*

*No danger can perturb my spirit's calm:
My acts are Thine; I do Thy works and pass;
Failure is cradled on Thy deathless arm,
Victory is Thy passage mirrored in Fortune's glass.*

*In this rude combat with the fate of man
Thy smile within my heart makes all my strength;
Thy Force in me labours at its grandiose plan,
Indifferent to the Time-snake's crawling length.*

*No power can slay my soul; it lives in Thee.
Thy presence is my immortality.*

SRI AUROBINDO, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 612

THE SECRET OF ACTION ACCORDING TO THE GITA

Menaka Deorah



Spiritual Significance : Perfect Surrender
(Photo Credit : www.blossomlikeaflower.com)

Problem reviewed

Life on earth is a life of action: its entire means and stuff is constituted by action. Action of thought, action of emotion and action of the body itself; action of the individual and action of the collective; action too of the many universal forces. Action is movement, the first fundamental of life. Therefore every action determines the kind of life we will have. But why is action accompanied by pain? Why is life not perfect? Why is it so hard to act rightly? Why is it so difficult to decide what to do? The Gita holds action at the centre of everything and affirms in no dubious terms, that although the problem of action seems an impossible one, it is possible to have perfect action.

Action as we know it is governed by three forces, says the Gita: *sattwa*, the law of the ideal of mind, *rajas*, the law of the ideal of life, and *tamas*, the law of matter, inertia and nescience. Even though we seem to act in liberty and make our own choices, the truth is that we are no more than puppets in the crafty hands of the three gunas! The gunas control everything in the universe, and operate in the individual through his separative ego sense.

Tamas slows us down, resists change, languishes in imperfection and opposes any kind of light and forward movement. It is the element of inertia and obscurity. *Rajas* is the source of kinesis, energy and will. It creates passion, desire, craving and attachment. Its action usually results in excitement, pleasure, anxiety, insecurity, disappointment, stress, want and dissatisfaction.

Sattwa is the highest of the three gunas and is responsible for order, restraint, intellectual activity, idealism, seeking after knowledge, truth, light, balance and the right order of things. We are under the incessant and compulsive influence of the three gunas, each trying to get the upper hand on our actions. A varying combination of the gunas is the motive force behind all our decisions. Action is nothing but the verdict of the debate of the gunas.

Today, *rajas* has assumed enormous and unhealthy proportions. We are governed by this extravagant will to be, possess, overpower and overthrow. *Sattwa* and *tamas* strive to subdue *rajas* but to no lasting effect. The result is that either mind stifles life and makes of it an unreal tower-house or *rajas* rules supreme to make of life a filthy show of power, stress and destruction. The rich grow miserable and the wise ineffective. A balanced *sattwic* life hardly exists. Because the individual is in a state of high discord the group is also in strife. As a race, we fall out of the evolutionary harmony.

The gunas, says the Gita, are only a means for a higher end. We have allowed them to be the end itself. They are not to be the initiators of action but the executors of action. There is an inherent ignorance in us of this critical fact. The Gita is here to dispel this ignorance and enthrone the real knowledge. The problem of action is not only the severity and complexity of the tyranny of the gunas but also equally our ignorance of the true place of the gunas and the true master of the gunas and the whole game plan.

It is not surprising then that most of our actions are semi-effective if not wholly futile! Our object is hardly ever met with success and even when we do succeed the consequences of our acts overcast the results with grim unwanted effect. The object of our action too is a vehement and compulsive need of one of our gunas! Neither the goal nor the means stem from the right source, nor the right understanding of the relation and order of things. The Gita sets this right. It affirms that action can be perfect if we station ourselves above the gunas, *traigunatita*. And it is our glorious destiny to carry out that perfect action where mind and life coexist in effective harmony.

But how does one remain in a life of action, which is driven by the gunas, and yet be above the gunas? It seems impossible.

A hopeless dejection overcomes and a quivering voice betrays me, "In all this fury of the gunas, where is my will? Where is the 'me'? Is there a 'me' at all? I am too crippled by my limitations; I have no desire to rise. I cannot master myself, how shall I conquer my world? What hope is there for me? Am I only this writhing creature? Who am I?"

Self redefined

We are not, reveals the Gita, this mass of confused gunas alone. There is in us another reality. There is a Presence within that wears the garb of our

personality. The Gita calls this presence the *purushottama*, the lord of our being, an individualisation of the lord of the worlds. This deeper presence is our true identity but it is hidden from us. It is the part that is free from all bondage and capable of the perfection we envisage. It is time now to recover this knowledge and live by the new Self. Behind the law of the *gunas* we have our very own law of being and law of action, our *swabhava* and our *swadharma*, our true luminous nature. This is the secret of our freedom and perfection. Our first business is to find this out. All our education and upbringing must aid this discovery. With a conscious increase of *sattwa* and a growing self-surrender we can uncover and activate this sacred law.

In other words, the field of operation is the *gunas* but the centre of operation is above the *gunas*. To be *traigunatita*, stationed beyond the *gunas*, through a gradual dissociation with our current sense of 'me' and a parallel identification with the true sense of 'me' is the beginning of perfect action. It is to be noted that since this is the real constitution of our being we need not struggle to make it happen, we need only to unveil that reality through a shift of focus. This unveiling is a triple process of god-knowledge, god-adoration, and god-action, held together by a faith and longing for the master of our being. This inherent seeking is present in each of us in different forms and degrees. It has only to be revived, rekindled and remembered. This revision of our customary self adds up to the critical process of de-personalising. It is only when we have learnt to live in the non-personal mode that we can hope for any real and lasting change. This individual enlightenment becomes the crucial pivot around which a new future shall be built.

Thus, the Gita, in one stroke of heroic vision, deconstructs the impossible condition of our action into one single proposition. It proposes a grand shift. A shift of the onus of action from the shaky means of our personal will to the solid wisdom of the Godhead within. We can now look upon ourselves as a larger reality with a larger purpose and a larger hope.

God restored

The God of the Gita is within, not in far off beatitudes. He is personal, intimate, friend and guide, eager to help and love and empower. He is here and now. We need not struggle to please him to receive his boons. God is our very own self and not something other than us, though in the beginning it may appear so. All we need to realize this fact of facts is the faith and intent, the *shraddha*, as the Gita would call it.

In moments of intuition and inspiration, we often catch a glimpse of this greater power presiding over our days, working out things for us or intimating us from behind the veil of things forgotten. This quiet presence is the fount of extraordinariness in us. This inner being, which awaits entry into our active life, is the portion of the omnipotence that guides the world. It is the very

substance of this world and the hidden goal towards which everything moves in its unending cycles. All is That and That is all.

Therefore it is fascinating to find that everything, without exception, is a derivation, dilution or diminution of that Godliness. Anger, for example, has its source in divine power, greed and desire have their source in divine oneness, *tamas* is a lesser representation of divine peace, and pleasure a distortion of divine delight. The trick is to be able to trace everything back to its divine source for that is the only truth behind everything. God is no more the hound of heaven waiting to bind us in chains and make of us his sullen slaves but our comrade who waits to embrace us and carry us at every step. He is seated in our very heart as our very own self.

The gap between god and man is gone. The chasm between heaven and earth is bridged. Man and God stand united in the Gita's divine warrior.

Life revisited

Mind and life are reconciled in the spirit. Gradually in all our nature there emerges a growing surrender, efficacy and purity to receive and carry out the will of the inner being. Life becomes a field for working out the higher will and not the ego will. The thrust of life is shifted from outside to inside. The movement of life is now a *nivritti*, not a *pravritti*. The *gunas*, content and pacified in manifesting the *swadharma*, no more play havoc with us. The perception of the senses is made larger and complete so that nothing is viewed in fragments but in its entire reality. Each element and each individual, having found its true calling, makes life a rich symphony of melodies.

Action replayed

When Sri Krishna opens out his arms to us and in a world embrace calls out to us to abandon all notions of right and wrong, all standards of good and bad and submit our whole self to Him, there is in us an upsurge of overriding love, surrender, emptiness, relief, redemption, an utter dissolution of our effort and struggle, a remoulding of our old self into a new splendour. Each time we hear this call from the maker of the worlds we are recast into a fuller image of Himself. Everytime we concede to the Godhead we establish a new high and collaborate with the evolutionary Intent. The Gita foretells us that the glory we receive, as fruit of this submission, is far more ecstatic, both in quantum and quality, than any human pleasure we now know.

Action, says the Gita, is a synthesis of knowledge and devotion. It is rendered perfect when performed with the right knowledge and a corresponding adoration and yearning for the divine. Only then can we act without expectation of the fruit of our action. Only then can we consecrate every act to the master of our being. Then the Godhead steps up and takes charge. More than the act itself

it is the spirit of surrender that determines the result of the act. We can be doing anything at all as long as it is done with the right consciousness. Even if we fail miserably in the act, it does not matter as long as it was consecrated to the Lord.

Action is *kartaavyam karma, sahajam karma, niyatam karma*. Action must be performed without preference and expectation, as a duty towards the Godhead within. That action is best for us which is born within us as the right law of our being, with the right force and rhythm, with the right objective. The Gita puts forth a tremendous positivity and ease in the ideal of action. It makes action a happy and powerful means of our progress. Action evolves from an egoistic personal action to a rightful ethical action and finally assumes fullness in a spiritually free and perfect action.

Secret restated

The Gita is not a sermon, nor even a scripture; it is a direct spiritual action from the profoundest source accessible to man. Therefore it is a thing to be practiced, experienced and lived. The secret of action according to the Gita is a multiple shift: A shift of the station of God from distant heavens to the intimacy of the heart; a shift of the onus of action from our personal effort to the wisdom of the godhead within; a shift from ego-subjection to soul-submission; a shift of the object of action from the guna-gratifying result to a god-fulfilling outcome; a shift of the sense mind's gaze from a restless out-flowing tendency to a settled inward direction; a shift of the very condition of action from an ignorant unconscious personal one to a consecrated, enlightened and impersonal one; a shift from the impossible complexity of our personality to the simple luminosity of divine nature; a shift from the feverish way of self enjoyment to a consecrated way of god enjoyment; a shift in the perception of failure from an unwanted personal stigma to an occasion for growing into godliness; a shift in the understanding of success from ego value to soul value; and finally, a shift from being the personal doer of action to being an impersonal channel of divine will.

One shift leads to the other, spontaneously, for it is the natural direction of our being. The shift is not an abandoning of all that is dear to us but a marvelous heightening, an unthinkable intensifying, a glorious multiplying of all our ecstasies. The Gita's path is of a grand action and growth and achievement, not one of puny passions and meager meanderings.

The result of such a shift is a huge unburdening and a magnificent optimism and security. Man emerges free, empowered and enthusiastic about life, ready to take on the immediate everyday action as a fiery means to unite with the godhead he feels within himself and all around. It adds much value to his tasks and rids him of the weight of ethical failure and moral pleasure. He finds himself to be the instrument of the Lord, working on his very own assignment. He grows in true self-worth and finds that there is dignity and

honour in whatever he does. When he is thus overcome and consumed by divine energy of right action he fits better into his collectivity and serves better the world welfare, *lokasangraha*. He then becomes a centre for the furtherance of this divine way of life. The fire catches on to those who are open and the secret of action perpetuates.

Practical and real-time, the Gita's way of action is meant for all. It is a master act that we can take on right away, as we are and where we are. A shift of interest is all it asks, "Lay your interest in Me alone, feel Me in your passions, offer Me all your thought, hope and desire; see Me in everything, call Me when in difficulty, sense Me in all sensations, bring to Me all failings and all success, open to Me the doors of your being; watch Me fly in the bird and see Me move in the worm, ask Me why and how, show Me your travails, take Me on your journeys, come to Me when you advance, allow Me to caress when you fall and hurt; I am waiting to receive you for I am you from time immemorial. You shall come to Me whenever you are ready, for you are already in Me. Fear not. Take refuge in Me alone and I will do all for you."

This is the only promise of the Gita.

All the problems of human life arise from the complexity of our existence, the obscurity of its essential principle and the secrecy of the inmost power that makes out its determinations and governs its purpose and its processes. If our existence were of one piece, solely material-vital or solely mental or solely spiritual, or even if the others were entirely or mainly involved in one of these or were quite latent in our subconscious or our superconscious parts, there would be nothing to perplex us; the material and vital law would be imperative or the mental would be clear to its own pure and unobstructed principle or the spiritual self-existent and self-sufficient to spirit. The animals are aware of no problems; a mental god in a world of pure mentality would admit none or would solve them all by the purity of a mental rule or the satisfaction of a rational harmony; a pure spirit would be above them and self-content in the infinite. But the existence of man is a triple web, a thing mysteriously physical, vital, mental and spiritual at once, and he knows not what are the true relations of these things, which the real reality of his life and his nature, whither the attraction of his destiny and where the sphere of his perfection.

SRI AUROBINDO, CWSA, Vol. 19, pp. 564-565

REALIZATION OF PSYCHIC BEING: GATEWAY OF TRIPLE TRANSFORMATION

Sanjay Shirwalkar



Spiritual Significance : Organisation of the Being around the Psychic
(Photo Credit : www.blossomlikeaflower.com)

*A being no bigger than the thumb of man
To face the pang and to forget the bliss,
To share the suffering and endure earth's wounds
And labour mid the labour of the stars.
This in us laughs and weeps, suffers the stroke,
Exults in victory, struggles for the crown;
Identified with the mind and body and life,
It takes on itself their anguish and defeat,
Bleeds with Fate's whips and hangs upon the cross,
Yet is the unwounded and immortal self
Supporting the actor in the human scene.*

Savitri, Book VII, Canto V, pp. 526-7

This is the description of the psychic being in Savitri. Sri Aurobindo has built Integral Yoga on three important pillars of realizations: realization of the psychic being, realization of the Self or spiritual being and the realization of the Supermind. Along with ascending movement there is also an important parallel movement with descent of Supermind into the lower consciousness.

The foremost and one of the most important steps is the realization of the psychic being that results in the total transformation of the lower being towards the Divine. It may come earlier, later or simultaneous to the realization of Self depending upon the preparation of the being. In this essay I briefly describe the psychic being and the transformation due to the influence of the psychic being.

The Divine through his lila or play or for his own reasons has consented to become the stark opposite of his Divine omnipotent, omniscient, all-knowing and eternal nature, created Space and Time and plunged into Ignorance to such the extent that he has "Divine amnesia", forgets himself completely and becomes matter. However a trace of past memory lingers and the darkness of matter starts admitting the first rays of light and slowly through millennia something starts coming out from the trance. Even in matter there is the spark of the Divine, concealed and wrapped tightly in cloaks of darkness. This spark provides the urge for apparently extremely slow evolutionary movement with the final aim of union with its true Divine Self. The emergence of life or first living cell out of unconscious matter was a singular event in the history of evolution that further evolved into complex multi-cellular organisms, plant and animal kingdom. The mind also came into existence in some sensory form at a particular stage that evolved into sensory organs and became firmer with development of instinct for each type typical for its survival and propagation. Though there was some advancement of brain in animals proper unfolding of mind power happened only with the emergence of man on the scene. The Divine spark grows from life to life but is hid deep within and evolves into psychic entity that further develops into psychic being.

The psychic being is the true soul of the evolving human being. The general composition of human being consists of outer sheaths of mind, vital and physical with corresponding subliminal sheaths of inner mind, inner vital and inner physical. The inner sheaths are deeper inside and not readily apparent. There beyond the subliminal into a deep recess behind the heart lies the psychic entity, the true soul of man that is forever in direct contact with the Divine. The atman or Self is above but the psychic being is within, the atman is a portion of the Divine put out in manifestation as the para prakriti, it does not participate in evolution, it is aloof from it and only watches from above and witnesses the existence silently. The realization of the Self gives one a firm entry into spirituality. The psychic entity is also Divine but an evolving portion of Self or atman in the manifestation; it experiences the world through the mind, vital and physical senses and grows by experience into psychic being. Its lies in deep secrecy and works by sending occult influences or suggestions that may be accepted or rejected by the mind or vital. The person does not realize the origin of true psychic intimations which inspire him to respond to love, causeless joy, beauty, goodness and truth and impels him to turn to the Divine. It is our true inner compass that shows the direction to attain Divine.

A stage reaches in our lives when the psychic being has to come forward to take the charge of our lives. This is easier said than done in actual practice. The sadhak has to be sincere, firm and not allow his passions or preferences to deviate him from the path to the Divine. Sri Aurobindo's book "The Mother" is an insightful and practical guide for the sadhak of Integral Yoga. There has to be a sincere call from below and the mind, life and body should be so attuned and disciplined so as to remain open only to the influence of the Divine. This is the only way to coax the psychic being to come out of hiding and hand over the reins of our lives to it. The whole effort of the being is to come in some way in direct contact with Reality—it may be through bhakti, emotion, mental understanding, through Truth, Good and Beauty. It is only then that real spiritual transformation of mind, life and body gets effected. Psychic or spiritual experiences may become common and have to be treated dispassionately, observing them from outside and not get affected by them in any way. The ego has to be thinned and all sincere efforts should be done to remove the ego.

One sure approach to the psychic realization is to open oneself to only the influence of the Mother as it is the only power that can guide the sadhak to realize the true psychic being.

LILA

*In us is the thousandfold Spirit who is one,
An eternal thinker calm and great and wise,
A seer whose eye is an all-regarding sun,
A poet of the cosmic mysteries.*

*A critic Witness pieces everything
And binds the fragments in his brilliant sheaf;
A World-adventurer borne on Destiny's wing
Gambles with death and triumph, joy and grief.*

*A king of greatness and a slave of love,
Host of the stars and guest in Nature's inn,
A high spectator spirit throned above,
A pawn of passion in the game divine,
One who has made in sport the suns and seas
Mirrors in our being his immense caprice.*

SRI AUROBINDO, CWSA, Vol 2, p. 611

THE JOURNEY OF ASCENSION

Gauri Bahuguna



Spiritual Significance : Ascension
 (Photo Credit : www.blossomlikeaflower.com)

The appearance of man on the face of the planet is a wondrous phenomenon no matter how banal we treat our existence. This appearance has been replete with high glories and also shameful, catastrophic lows and darkness – there is much confusion, much obscurity in our knowledge of ourselves and more often than not we have either considered ourselves a living dust of materiality or a soul in captive yearning to escape the earthly mould. But in between these two polarities, there exists a vast universe of existences, worlds and planes that interpenetrate man's existence and are in waiting for him to discover them and become their reigning master. In this essay we will look at these planes of existence, the inner reality of the being of man, the full scope of his knowledge, his ascension through these planes, the realisation of his highest potentialities and his final merging into his true supreme nature.

Existence is the play of the Supreme Reality, Sachchidananda – existence, consciousness and bliss, which involves itself first into a multiplicity with unity as its background, then into further differentiation between the multiple centres of consciousness and further still into more separate and lower grades of its own being until the nethermost inconscient depths. The first few involved levels of being, the spiritual planes, constitute the higher regions and the more

differentiated planes starting from mind up to matter and the subconscious constitute the lower hemisphere. This involution, in turn, creates an upward pressure within the lowest grade of consciousness, namely matter, and makes it evolve into a higher expression of itself, first life and then mind. The evolutionary force in nature exists within every level of nature and propels it to manifest a higher level of substance. Thus, it exists within the being of man as well, within his mind, and exerts an upward pressure to rise beyond itself into a supramental existence and further onwards from there. The highest reality – Sachchidanada – is the also Ishwara, the supreme Purusha, the force of his being is Shakti, who in her lower grades of involutory and evolutionary force is Prakriti. All of existence then is a variety of poises or relations between Purusha and Prakriti.

In the lower hemisphere, the soul of man is identified with the three lower principles of matter, life and mind and in each of these it is connected with the worlds associated with each one. The materialised soul identifies completely with matter and sees the universe as a meaningless play of inert energy – this soul's conception of itself is dark, inert and obscure and is characterised by the quality of *tamas*. Next, the soul is identified with the life force animating its physical being, it is in touch with the universal life force and is driven by desire, passions, possession and activity and is characterised by *rajas*. On the level of the mind, the soul identified with mental activity and takes its poise on the thinking, rationalising faculty – the ability to know things, to study things, comprehend their different facets through analysis and to put them together through synthesis. The mentalised soul is gifted with clarity of perception and a certain happiness that comes from being raised above life and body. But it is also limited in its knowledge as its basis of knowing is in division and the separation between things, so it can only know a thing in its parts and arrives only at half-truths; the characteristic quality at this level is *sattwa*. Though the Purusha within each of these three levels is identified with the different grades of Prakriti and is dominated by her, it can still raise itself a little higher than her action and realise its independent nature. So, the materialised Purusha can concentrate on the mental and vital heavens and arrive at a relatively still centre within. But in doing so, it still cannot liberate the dynamic bliss force of the supreme Purusha within him. This dynamism of blissful action gets released in the vital being but it expresses itself in an uncontrolled manner. The vital Purusha can step back from the unceasing activities of the life force and take poise in the mental space, which can then control the otherwise unregulated life force and its indulgences. The mental Purusha in its higher action gives rise to wisdom in a man as opposed to a mere derivative and surface knowledge. It is also in the poise of the mental Purusha that a true detachment from the lower nature of man is possible. Even in their more refined states, the three lower Purushas are under the influence and command of Prakriti and remain clouded under Ignorance. It is only in the higher plane of the knowledge Purusha, or the gnostic soul, that this relation is reversed and there is true knowledge and blissful action.

The knowledge soul is not commonly found among men for it resides in the causal body and this body is not commonly formed in ordinary men. It takes a very refined triple lower Purusha for a human being to ascend into or even make temporary contacts with the higher hemisphere of Truth knowledge. This hemisphere or this spiritual plane exists beyond the mind and is characterised by unity and knowledge through identity. The knowledge soul in man can help him bestow its light on the three lower Purushas and lift them into their higher nature. The gnosis is different from the reason, intellect and even intuition, which are all refined powers but still only different rays of the true knowledge force that gnosis is. Gnosis is the power of knowledge through identity where the object of knowledge, the knower and the act of knowing are all one. Gnosis, essentially, is the light and force of the great Ishwara, which he pours on the individual soul so that it may attain to its true nature and power. It is the plane of the Real Idea, which is the true creatrix of the universe, a plane where knowledge, will and bliss are inseparable unlike imagination in the lower human existence where the three are divided and do not imbue each other with their powers. In the gnostic creation, every particle of existence emanates from joy and lives in self-joy. There are a few conditions to the attainment of the gnosis – firstly, one has to rise above the lower physical, vital and mental nature and expand the boundaries of one's ego self such that the sense of separation from others disappears; this should further lead towards a universality of being and experience where the multitude is held within one's bosom as part of oneself; the centre of focus in one's consciousness should cease to be one's limited egocentric identity but should become an individualised expression of the one universal being. The gnosis takes up all of our lower being and its faculties and transforms them into their higher potential.

Even though the ascent to the gnosis is itself a momentous feat and imbued with an infinity of knowledge, will and bliss, there is still a single most plane of ascension left for the true completion of man's being – that is the plane of Ananda or bliss, the infinite freedom and ecstasy of the Supreme. Ananda is the ultimate experience of oneness and has no individualising centre within it. Here the supreme Purusha and Shakti are one and indivisible, even beyond their biune aspect where they play complementary roles.

This journey of ascension from the mundane existence to the highest truth and bliss is a journey of the transformation of an ordinary, fragmented, discursive knowledge into a divine, whole, unitary self-knowledge, which expresses the true inner nature and potentiality of man. All of the branches of knowledge in the present world, whether history, philosophy, psychology, science, aesthetics or ethics are from the spiritual point of view a lower knowledge – knowledge pertaining to the body, life and mind plane. On the other hand, the knowledge of man's true spiritual nature and self, the knowledge about the true substance and essence of the universe and all that it constitutes, the knowledge of the one absolute Being underlying it all – this, is the higher knowledge pertaining to the supramental planes in existence. Ordinary Yoga

rejects the lower knowledge and seeks a higher knowledge, but is rendered incomplete because it accepts only one aspect of reality and rejects another. It is in Integral Yoga that we find that both these forms of knowledge are accepted as an indivisible whole and expressions of the same supreme Reality. Thus, we see that all forms of worldly knowledge, if looked at from within, into its core, lead us into a spiritual enquiry and concomitant spiritual insights about the evolution of the Divine essence in world nature; the worldly disciplines also refine our being and prepare the foundation for a more evolved seeking and attainment. Indeed, the method of Yoga is different from the method of the lower knowledge in that it seeks meaning and knowledge by going within rather than by sensory inputs or mental reasoning; it employs the threefold discipline of concentration, purification and identification in order to make one's being a clean mirror in which the true inner divinity is revealed, known and then possessed.

My personal sense of this journey of ascension is that it is after lifetimes of foundational refinement of our ordinary being – the physical, vital and mental, that we experience a strong aspiration for the experience of the Divine and through that experience an aspiration for an overall ascension into the divine nature. Once that aspiration has formed in us, it naturally pulls our outer being inwards and propels us towards an inner concentration and purification. As this inner focus deepens and becomes more intense in us, we begin to perceive, feel and become intimately aware of our soul nature, our being above and independent of the body, prana and even our mental processes. There are moments of higher intelligence flashing through our mind and awareness, and sometimes even moments of unexplained bliss and peace. As we get a taste of these sublime states, our yearning for their undiluted form and presence guides us further on to the path of identification. Identification is not a one-time event and may sediment itself over a long period of being in contact with and bringing down the light and force from the higher reality. But no matter how long the process is, the fruits of the journey are strewn all over its length – for the seeking for oneness with the Divine bestows its grace upon all our life, thus, our worldly existence is transformed into a deeply meaningful endeavour of expressing our inmost truths and becomes a beacon of purity and light for those around us as well.

To love God, excluding the world, is to give Him an intense but imperfect adoration.

SRI AUROBINDO, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 486

EVOLVING FROM A CIVILISED TO A SPIRITUALIZED SOCIETY

Deepali Gupta



Spiritual Significance : Beauty of Tomorrow manifesting the Divine
(Photo Credit : www.blossomlikeaflower.com)

*The frontiers of the Ignorance shall recede,
More and more souls shall enter into light,
Minds lit, inspired, the occult summoner hear
And lives balze with a sudden inner flame
And hearts grow enamoured of divine delight
And human wills tune to the divine will,
These separate selves the Spirit's oneness feel,
These senses of heavenly sense grow capable,
The flesh and nerves of a strange ethereal joy
And mortal bodies of immortality.*

Savitri, CWSA, Vol.34, p.710

Introduction

The present day humanity identifies man primarily as a mental being and in that capacity attempts to organize life, to perfect the society and to harness the environment for its benefit. The mind attempts to guide and instruct the lower members, viz. the vital and the physical to form what we know as a civilized society. A civilized order is aimed for society through proper governance with provision for a safe, happy and comfortable life. Man as a mental being has devised certain well intentioned social, political and economic systems, yet

the grossly transient nature of his accomplishments often puts him at unease and calls for seeking a deeper meaning of life and 'that' which governs it. It has started becoming apparent to humanity that the knowledge of the physical world is not the whole of knowledge and one will need to take an inward turn to find the true meaning and purpose of life. Society has very much been neglectful of the spiritual element - the true being in each individual, and this defect has significantly contributed to the imperfect nature of its achievements. The outer life is full of dualities, contradictions and presents a distorted and dim view of some inner reality which is the true, the good and the beautiful - the 'soul', which is not 'material' but also not 'immaterial' to human existence. Once we are able to realize the consciousness in our inner being it will be possible for us to illumine the inferior nature of our mental pursuits, vital instincts and the physical capabilities. The current individualistic trend will take a subjective turn through an inward turning to know the self in relation to the entire humanity and the Divine. A spiritualized society will be one in which each individual has fathomed the subjective secret of his soul and has discovered the Oneness in the entire creation. They will have realized a spiritual consciousness whose light will govern all individual and group thought, will and action.

Need for Spiritualizing the Self

Man has attained excellent results in his mental pursuits but perfection is what he needs for a lasting and meaningful survival of humanity. He is striving to attain that perfection through the mind which itself is an instrument that needs to become conscious of the Divine hand operating it, rather than mistake itself to be the sole doer. The discerning and reasoning mind needs to take some time off from a habitual persistent thinking to allow into itself, the influence of the all knowing and all comprehending soul power. It is when the mind opens up like a sunflower to the influence of rays coming from the soul that it will be able to lend spontaneity, beauty and rhythm to the outer life; else everything will remain only deftly created mechanization and manipulation which recursively calls for more of the same. Sri Aurobindo observes, "*This erring race of human beings dreams always of perfecting their environment by the machinery of government and society; but it is only by the perfection of the soul within that the outer environment can be perfected. What thou art within, that outside thee thou shalt enjoy; no machinery can rescue thee from the law of thy being.*"² Any rational social system devised in the best interest of the society has not really been able to solve its problems. At best it only fixes them and after a while has to devise a new system and make society adapt to it. We may thus go on creating rules upon rules; a rule to ensure that a particular rule is followed, another rule to ensure that the rule which ensures the following of that particular rule is followed and so on but a single negligence is enough to shatter the whole system. Reasoning grounded in the intellect cannot control and put things in order without a strict enforcement. Again, enforcement means making one comply with a system not by one's own reasoning but per force.

Sooner or later the individual will have to cast off the egoism which keeps it away from venturing into discovering the law of its own being and will someday realize that its body and form is in its deeper meaning an entity to express the divinity which is preparing to emerge in the process of evolution. Sri Aurobindo maintains that the human society, now rooted to the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment, must move in the 'subjective' direction and uphold 'the spiritual aim in life' which he explains - considers man 'as a social being incarnated for a divine fulfillment upon earth'. According to him, the two conditions necessary for the coming of a subjective age are that there must be aspiring individuals and there must be communities and 'group-souls', both united in a common spiritual endeavour.

The Coming of a Spiritualized Society

Man holds witness to the fact that the stress of the current state of affairs and the seeping in of a new thought with a promise of greater possibility have always been instrumental in bringing about revolutionary changes in society. Even with all sciences and technology put together there is a huge contradiction between the eternal human aspirations of "*God, Light, Freedom, Immortality*"³ and the usual common place life which experiences an egoistic consciousness, the darkness of ignorance, a routine see-sawing between pleasure and pain; happiness and sadness; success and failure and the predicament of sentence to death. The contradiction is so much that the aspired ideals stand attainable either by a determined revolutionary effort at the individual level or a gradual evolutionary progression. The level of aspiration among the individuals or groups will determine which course is taken by them. Sri Aurobindo writes, "*The world knows three kinds of revolution. The material has strong results, the moral and intellectual are infinitely larger in their scope and richer in their fruits, but the spiritual are the great sowings.*"⁴ The stage of man ruling man must pass and give way to a new principle of living where subjection implies freedom; a self-willed surrender to the Divine by turning inwards into the spirit to look for something far deeper than the individual or collective ego and beyond the little accomplishments of the material. It is to try and find the true self and to see how the individual and the collectivity are participating in the One, pervading Self of the Divine, which is the same and yet seemingly different in all.

Materialistic Society versus Spiritual society

The dimly lit path, on which humanity is unconsciously traversing as a materialistic society, can be illumined by Sri Aurobindo's deep and wide vision of the fundamental reality of existence, both individual and collective, and the principles governing their formation and evolution. The greatest spiritual-metaphysical truths that Sri Aurobindo realized through his spiritual vision and experience are applicable to the individual and collective life of

man. The supernal wisdom on the progression of the individual and the society is available to mankind in Sri Aurobindo's writings as he has made it communicable in the intellectual form, which makes a strong appeal to the reasoning mind of man who otherwise generally does not even find sense in thinking beyond the material aims of life. A spiritual society will be based on a new universal order with an inherent oneness in it. The mind will be the first to undergo transformation, followed by the vital and only in the last the body will undergo the nature of transformation suited to hold the new spiritual consciousness. Freedom and perfection will be the laws recognized by one and all, which in our present society are considered to be idealistic aims, far divorced from reality. Sri Aurobindo gives us the hope and the way to reconcile our idealism with realism, "*Man's true freedom and perfection will come when the spirit within bursts through the forms of mind and life and, winging above to its own gnostic fiery height of ether, turns upon them from that light and flame to seize them and transform into its own image.*"⁵ All the true, the good and the beautiful that we dream of for our present society will be inherent in the spiritualized society alongside its focus towards its newer aspirations. We will be one with the source of all our aspirations and will be able to connect with the One who is now veiled from us. The relations among the members of the society will be based not on fulfillment of needs and desires but on psychic love. A spiritual society would function towards extending their consciousness to other aspirants of the Divine Grace.

There will be truly compassionate and empathetic concern for others' requirements and it will not matter if one is doing something for oneself or for the other. People will have no reason to fear or doubt the intentions of one another. Money and power will not have any lure in a society which has attained the splendours of the utmost knowledge, freedom and bliss. If the concept of money is at all there to remain, it will be accepted and expended as a sacred trust with the true security and joy of selfless generosity and committed sharing. Solidarity will find its firm basis in the concept of all souls emanating from the Universal soul, coming together for a Divine task to form group souls and sub-souls. All work will be accomplished for the joy of doing and necessitated by love. There will be no need to curtail the freedom of people as they will hold their responsibility to be equally dear as their freedom is to them. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "*A large liberty will be the law of a spiritual society and the increase of freedom a sign of the growth of human society towards the possibility of true spiritualization.*"⁶ Religion will only be a bridge for the masses to step into the realm of a spiritual consciousness and will have no bindings. All that which in the present day is known to us as education, culture, ethics, art and esthetics will find their foundations in the true self and will be guided by intuition. People will not be prone to diseases as they will possess the necessary consciousness to prevent them. The concept of joy and pleasure will drastically shift from the idea of material success or of having a temporary pleasure or entertainment value to

an eternal bliss perennially supplemented by endless love flowing through the entire Being and the Becoming. Sri Aurobindo views man, society and humanity; individually and collectively progressing towards their grand spiritual destiny with all the social dynamics we witness in life leading to this singular aim.

Conditions for a Spiritualized Society

Sri Aurobindo sees two conditions which should be simultaneously satisfied as necessary for the change from a mental and vital to the spiritual order of life. There must be individual or individuals who are able to develop themselves in the image of the Spirit and to communicate both their idea and its power to the mass. There must also be a mass able to receive, follow and assimilate without stopping or falling back to accustomed ways. A closer look reveals to us that science and technology by creating an ease and rapidity of communication have enabled people across geographical boundaries to come together to form groups on the basis of similar thought and aim. We may be able to appreciate this preparation for the flowering of such cohesive groups who first take up the charge to enlighten the selves in the Spirit and extend the idea and the light to others who have prepared themselves at least in receptivity and possess the will to follow a new path undeterred.

There must be signals of a subjective turn in the human pursuits. The new thought based on light from the Spirit would express itself in philosophy and psychology and the beauty of the Spirit be revealed through the creative art forms like poetry, music, painting, dance and sculpture. The fine and the subtle ideas will percolate into the more utilitarian fields of politics, economics only later with some difficulty. With new realms and vistas opening up before mankind the new trend would be towards discoveries that bridge soul and matter. All achievements in the material would be subjected to inspection by the psychological and the psychic.

Conclusion

A spiritual basis is the only solution to a harmonized society and no outward machinery can ever be able to effectuate this; an inner change is indispensable. The significance of studying Sri Aurobindo's social philosophy lies in the fact that humanity in context of the social life of a community, nation or the world needs to grow aware of the aim that it is moving towards the overall plan for the Universe. This aim is at present quite obscure to it in spite of making huge strides in development of the various fields of knowledge. It is imperative for man to realize that he is yet not perfect in his nature and should willingly participate in Nature's yoga to surpass his present state to arrive at one which though seems abnormal to him is the normal state in his spiritual destiny. Though he is the

highest species in the process of evolution he should not mistake himself to be the creator and controller of this world which is rather a field given to him to work towards exceeding himself and aiding similar beings in the process. He has to work towards realizing his reality as a spiritual being so that the lower nature may be further perfected in its light. Man has the potential to bring down heaven upon earth but only in accordance with the divine principle and certainly not by some self-devised rules and mechanisms. Sri Aurobindo gives us a glimpse of our real spiritual self to which we are oblivious in the present human frame and should aspire to discover, "*Infinite, we are free from death; for life then becomes a play of our immortal existence. We are free from weakness; for we are the whole sea enjoying the myriad shock of its waves. We are free from grief and pain; for we learn how to harmonise our being with all that touches it and to find in all things action and reaction of the delight of existence. We are free from limitation; for the body becomes a plaything of the infinite mind and learns to obey the will of the immortal soul. We are free from the fever of the nervous mind and the heart, yet are not bound to immobility.*"⁷

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1. Sri Aurobindo, *Essays Divine and Human* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1997), Vol. 12 of Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, p.468
2. Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine* (Pondicherry:Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 2005), Vol. 21 and 22 of Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, p.4
3. Sri Aurobindo, *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1998), Vol. 13 of Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, p.210
4. Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1997), Vol. 25 of Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, p.244
5. Ibid, p.228
6. Sri Aurobindo, *Essays in Philosophy and Yoga* (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram Trust, 1998), Vol. 13 of Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, p.206

The individual cannot be perfect until he has surrendered all he now calls himself to the divine Being. So also, until mankind gives all it has to God, never shall there be a perfected society.

SRI AUROBINDO, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 466

REFLECTIONS ON SPIRITUALIZED SOCIETY - I

Todd Wilson



Spiritual Significance : Aspiration for Spirituality
(Photo Credit : www.blossomlikeaflower.com)

Note to Readers: Upon being charged with the creation of a reflective essay, crafted from sitting with the wisdom of chapters 21-24 in Sri Aurobindo's 'The Human Cycle', I found the inspiration to draft a segment of a larger fictional work. For nearly two years, I have been crafting a work of fiction that concludes with characters living in oneness with Spirit. The speech below by one of the characters is a leap beyond my ability to craft with clarity and light an exegesis (of sorts) that expresses the human pioneers towards a Divine Life. Even so, I realized after meditating on the essay that this genre and segment was to be my reflection on Sri Aurobindo's treatise. Although it sits below far from finished or even in a state of pale polish, I am appreciative for this course assignment and direction, as it has stretched my vision beyond what I knew before; I can gratefully claim the same of the course.

Excerpt from a speech by June Reyna, delivered atop Haleakala on Maui, Hawaii, December 21, 2030

...and then there was a mountain. This aged and resting volcano, the Hawaiian "House of the Sun" has been our home now for over half a century and all who listen today have been scaling like summits in the vastness of their being.

The paths you have opened have guided us all in an earnest attempt to stand here today in spiritual comradeship. The center of our evolving society here in Hawaii, now a center for global soul work, these sacred volcanoes, sea cliffs and coasts that have heard many declarations and concords and transformations are an affinity for us. This day is one of unity and one of presence and as you know voices encircling the globe have spoken of a shifting and opening beyond the subjective age for humanity. These evolutionary markings come at the end of a decade of the multitudes in society, more and more, moving within and heeding the calls for equalization, a harmonization of the strife and perversions at the ending of the last millennium. The turning one by one of individuals from the collective to their own work towards Truth has unfettered many, coalescing with our work. Many have heard the chronicles that I have already shared or will share; these accounts recall the years prior to the now wondrous potential for a society on Earth, united through Divine freedom. In 1978, I read each day with a small group, mostly native Hawaiians, large swathes from *The Life Divine*, speaking with them of the individual transformations that are necessary for creative human evolution. With bare feet and honest words, we sketched and mediated the initial work of equality in all aspects of one's inner life, leaping forth from the heights that Sri Aurobindo made possible to all who sat at his feet. The equality was compared to a still ocean, an oceanic expanse in one's heart that was not stirred by desire or fear. This was the beginning of true strength and vigor, worthy of the light and intuitive vision that would come from above, just as the rains return to the ocean. This light and vision was the truthful way to progress and find our way. The then current exaltation of reason and mechanized progress was on the edge or larger and larger catastrophes, of limitations to freedoms that humans needed to gain an understanding and creative vision of their minds and bodies and souls. We recognized the limits of a rational society and a society that hungered for progressive gains, stealing more and more from the future without awareness, without heeding the studies or the insights of theorists, environmentalists, and visionaries. Without condemnation and with awareness of the same drives and forces within our own minds and hearts, we sat along the ocean in the sands of Makena and looked upon the wounded shell of Kahoolawe, the "Sacred Island." For over two decades the U.S. Navy sent every known warhead into the red cinder of the volcanic dome. The maneuvers bombarded the island, shelling it with the innovations of the war department and each projectile having more and more power to destroy, each man or woman more and more precise in the art of destruction and false power. It is not difficult to feel like that Sacred Island, for we emerge from the sea and then are bombarded by the forces of human society. We protect ourselves at the cost of our freedom and at the cost of our future unity. With our eyes full of destruction of the Sacred and our flesh wearied by the constant bombardment of capitalism's spearheads in the name of progress and material power, we turned within our hearts from the idea of heaven, the dream of away. Lulled and without thought, we sat as

one and enclosed each other, wrapping around the distant island and spiraling up beyond what is known and believed but not real. The reality of our words and plans conditioned through an egoic source were soon separate—a cloth that could be removed. With the slap of the wave's arrival, we awoke as one.

By 1988, nearly 3,000 of us lived on Kahoolawe and the first agreements, although simple were lived by all. Each man or woman would have the freedom to discover the inner oneness through his or her personal path towards equality, and each man and woman would contribute daily to the collective soul of not only the island but to the collective soul of the Earth Island. These agreements were without an exact order or allegiance; there was no constitution or pact. Many were aware that the agreements were beyond their current ability and thus the order that we knew would surface was a collection of elders; soul elders stood up and spoke from deep experience and the others recognized their evolved sense of consciousness. The elders were consulted, and they continued their own earnest expansion. Sooner than any planned, the collective of humans on Kahoolawe became a synergistic organization that provided with and for the two agreements. At no time, as many of you remember, was the island an attempt to prove anything to the world or to secure a rock of sanity in the tumultuous 80's. We were a mountain on the horizon of Spirit and an ocean of *sattva* in the collective heart. That was enough.

Very quickly, the world noticed, felt us in the middle of the Pacific and came calling with questions. The governor had agreed to our cleansing and of the island and returning it to its sacred appellation. When she returned a few months after we signed a land use agreement with the State of Hawaii, a press conference was held and our first international statements to the world's nations were articulated. All of our initial statements are not important today, as most have emanated beyond the words of that day and have guided multitudes of humans to take up the daily work realizing Freedom, Unity & God. One is worth restating as the others have carried a divine message, abetting many democratic nations through transformations beyond rationalistic or romantic ideals.

Clearly the answer that was incredible at the time, the one that rocketed through the media, was our response to why. The questioners were not interested in the fact that we were seeking to change society, for as you all remember, the U.S. had entered a decline that became evident to the world's nations around 1976. Even the skeptics had resolved themselves by the late 80's and therefore the attempt to secede or reform a democratic society, one able to ascend beyond the crushing and stagnant corruption of capitalism and its inability to transcend greed was not completely novel. What was, was our declaration that we lived by an agreement to transcend the national ideals destroying nature, life, humanity, through an inner government and ultimately an inner freedom, an affinity that results in unity, one to perfuse & imbue individuals with an origination from the Divine source. And therefore why?

The sweating reporters asked again. We, as many of you remember, simply quoted the great elder, Sri Aurobindo:

“The solution lies not in the reason, but in the soul of man, in its spiritual tendencies. It is a spiritual, an inner freedom that can alone create a perfect human order. It is a spiritual, a greater than the rational enlightenment that can alone illumine the vital nature of man and impose harmony on its self-seeking, antagonisms and discords. A deeper brotherhood, a yet unfound law of love will not proceed by the vital instincts or the reason where there are plenty of other passions to combat it. It is in the soul that it must find its roots; the love which is founded upon a deeper truth of our being, the brotherhood or, let us say,—for this is another feeling than any vital or mental sense of brotherhood, a calmer more durable motive-force,—the spiritual comradeship which is the expression of an inner realization of oneness.”

Upon the reverberation of the final phrase, silence settled within the gathering transfigured with awe. An egret winged overhead to the west and the cameras and microphones were impotent to hold or capture all that evinced and proclaimed what has since been lauded as miraculous but was simply the seminal shifting of the subjective to the spiritual. For as many of you remember, Thaddeus and I stood before the members of State, humans who were suddenly without meaning and who for all and evermore represented the once established regimes and ideologies of reason and power and science. To this grand audience who once thought that the mind could merely manipulate Nature’s elements to make the most seductive images of power or the vilest defacements of human life, and carried this thought to edgy destruction time after time, the utterance of Truth, the transliteration of Light in the words that had become mantra and method to us for years, echoed. The façade of media and progress and force dissipated, crumbled within the gossamer rain that the wind carried from this volcanic peak to the humble island of Kahoolawe, and we rendered the soul again upon the Earth.

Two days later we began the process to secede from the United States and to unify the entire archipelago without war or State, and without an idea or ideal, we spoke only an inner freedom and the spiritual comradeship that would express “an inner realization of oneness.”

This is a miracle that men can love God, yet fail to love humanity. With whom are they in love then?

SRI AUROBINDO, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 429

REFLECTIONS ON SPIRITUALIZED SOCIETY - II

Terry Porter



Spiritual Significance : The Future
(Photo Credit : www.blossomlikeaflower.com)

*Yet I know that good is coming to me, that good is always coming;
though few have at all times the simplicity and courage to believe it.*

– GEORGE MACDONALD

We live in a world that is longing for deep transformation, a world seemingly on the verge of both destruction and salvation. We are at a tipping point in human civilization and those of us who are awake to our current circumstances feel the balance of society shifting, but we are unsure if we will fall into turmoil and despair or if we will take flight and ascend to a new evolution of humanity. As for which way we will go, I am unsure. Perhaps we will have to fall in order to rise. Is it possible that our ultimate salvation as a human race will be as a fully-realized phoenix rising from the chaotic ashes of our former history? Or will we continue on a cycle of evolution that will lead to the realization of the individual and collective soul, empowering us to create a world of freedom, solidarity, and justice? I do not know what, if any, path we will take to our redemption, but I have hope. I have hope that we as individuals and as society will become our destinies: our true selves and our collective one true self. I have hope that through this self-realization we will create a society that is free of the oppression of greed and self-serving power, that is actively compassionate, and that seeks to love and be loved as the soul-beings that we truly are.

As I reflect on what this society would look like, how it would materialize, and what conditions would be needed to give birth to such a just, loving world, I am forced to look at our collective history. To the naked eye, humanity is a

confusing race; one that is capable of amazing accomplishments, from both a technological and a humanitarian aspect, but also capable of acts of depravity and cruelty only imaginable because they have actually occurred throughout history. Even in our modern world, we see examples of this diametrically-opposed behavior daily. We witness acts of compassion committed in the midst of horrifying wars. We see the opulent wealth of a concentrated few put before the needs of the multitudes in a world where there truly is “enough to go around”. Yet as we continue on in this confusing, destructive cycle of behavior, many of us know or at least feel there is something more, something that can quench the deep thirst of our weary souls. We know that there is a true nature, a deep and profound individual and societal being, which is yet to be fully realized. The great acts of justice and compassion that we have witnessed and continue to witness in society are but mere glimpses of this true self. Conversely, I believe the moments (despite seeming more common) that humanity has acted in malice and brutality, are a denial of our true nature, a denial committed in fear and ignorance of who we are supposed to become, who we truly are meant to be. These acts do not define our true humanity; rather they distract us from it. In my reflection on our modern society; on what it is and what it could be, I am reminded of a Martin Luther King quote regarding the arc of the moral universe being long but tending towards justice. As much as I admire and I am inspired by Dr. King, I feel the need to add to this most insightful statement. Though, at times, I am overwhelmed with despair and anguish over the future of our society, I do believe that the arc of humanity bends not only towards justice, but also towards compassion and love. While I know many would disagree, I believe that the seeking of justice, compassion, and love are the true natures of the human race. It is the realization of these true natures that define the act of becoming, the act of evolving into our individual and collective soul. It is in this ultimate evolution of humanity that I find the definition and meaning of the spiritualized society.

Walk out like someone suddenly born into color. Do it now. – RUMI

In order to give birth to a spiritualized society, we must acknowledge and begin to live in our spiritual nature, our true life. As a collective society we have traveled through ages of spirit, to ages of vitality to ages of reason. Throughout time there have been societies that truly understood the inextricable role of the spirit in the quest for finding their whole self. The spirit was not an essential part of this quest; it was *the* essential part of the quest to become whole. The indigenous peoples of many countries knew this to be true; they knew that while humans lived in and worked out of four quadrants: the physical, mental, emotional, and the spiritual, these quadrants were not equal, but rather the real self was in the spiritual quadrant, the soul. Yet, as we “progressed” (especially in western culture), we lost sight of our soul-beings, we became creatures of mere reason, vitality and emotions. Our spiritual nature was put on a leash to be let out on occasion by the socialized and, often bastardized, organized

religions of the day. Religions that often took relevant, profound teachings and twisted them to become tools of control and power. I feel we see no better example of this than in the usurping of the Christian faith by the right-wing of American Politics. We have substituted the life-changing teachings of Christ for the life-condemning judgments of a hegemonic power structure that seeks to control through fear and manipulation of faith. We have seen as a society where the denial of our spiritual nature has taken us. Our complete evolution can only take place if we acknowledge and begin to live in our soul being.

I only ask what way my journey lies – WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

Yet before this collective transition to a spiritualized society can take place, we must as individuals begin the attempt to live into our own spiritual nature, to discover and nurture our individual souls. As I reflect on my study of the teachings of Sri Aurobindo, this is perhaps my most deep and resonant “learning moment”. The work I have done, currently do, and hope to do at a more powerful level is in the field of social transformation. My definition of a spiritualized society being one where the individual and the collective work to create and live in justice, compassion, and love, is not an abstract concept to me; rather the creation of this society is my *raison d’etre*, it is my purpose. However, in my efforts and desire to help the world “find its soul”, I neglected my own. My most painful and profound moment in this course was when I had this realization. I found myself weeping and asking “where is my soul? Where did I lose it? Where is my soul”? I have often believed that as I “help to make whole, I am made whole”. I still believe this idea, the notion that as we heal each other, we ourselves are healed. Yet, I know now that in order for the spiritualized society to occur, we must begin within our own life, we must begin to manifest our soul-being before we can begin to manifest the collective soul. Therefore, the journey to create a spiritualized society begins with the birth of the spiritualized self, the attempt to reach the Divine within.

*When compassion becomes our spirituality,
God’s waiting and God’s pain ceases.
God’s compassion, which waits for people to show compassion,
is now let loose – MATTHEW FOX*

As we begin to live in our divine nature, we will not only begin to create the conditions needed for the spiritual society to materialize, but we will also begin to give birth to this new society. Yet we first must seek this divine nature within ourselves and then begin to live it communally. The soul is both a precious flower and an unshakeable Oak tree. It must be given nourishing soil, sun, and rain to grow and blossom its beautiful, unique pedals, yet it also must be given the “room to grow” strong and tall. The soil is the act and art of both individual and collective contemplation and reflection, the sun is God, and the rain is the challenges of life that test and try our will to become our

true self. With these ingredients, our soul becomes the unique flower that adds its beauty and fragrance to the world. We give the soul “room to grow” into its full strength through the freedom to grow as an individual, both apart from and as a part of the collective. A true sign of a spiritualized society is one that is not threatened by individuality and individual freedom, rather a spiritualized society thrives on and encourages the unique offerings of the individual souls of which it is comprised. It is then, through the active and shared realization of the individual soul, the divine within us all, that we begin to collectively manifest the Kingdom of God in our world.

But when I wake at last into that life which, as a mother her child, carries this life in its bosom, I shall know that I wake, and shall doubt know more – GEORGE MACDONALD

When we as individuals and as a society begin to wake to and embrace our spiritual nature, then we will at last understand who we are meant to be, both to ourselves and to each other. Our reasoning, art, music, politics will reflect this awakening. We will see the soul as both the guide and the vehicle to individual and social transformation rather than as a passenger who is relegated to the backseat by our vital, emotional, and mental capacities. Yet we must reach a tipping point for this transition, this transcendence to begin.

I began this exploration into my views of what a spiritualized society means and how it will manifest with an uncertainty of whether or not we as a human race will achieve this blissful, society-saving state. I end it, as I end this course, with three certainties. I know that the only way to save ourselves, our children, and our earth is through the journey of the soul, the birth and active engagement of our individual and collective spirit. I know (whether we will or not) that we can achieve a spiritualized society. And, finally, I know that I will dedicate my life to the discovery and nurturing of my soul-being so that I may live into myself, my true self, and give this true self to society so that I might help to create a world of justice, love, and compassion.

Governments, societies, kings, police, judges, institutions, churches, laws, customs, armies are temporary necessities imposed on us for a few groups of centuries because God has concealed His face from us. When it appears to us again in its truth and beauty, then in that light they will vanish.

SRI AUROBINDO, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 465