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New Race

Blessings

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Dear Readers,

I was in Chandernagore in November for some talks at Sri Ramakrishna Sri Aurobindo Niloy, Barasat. In that centre of the great Spiritual Masters, I chanced upon a very old publication of Motilal Roy's book: *My Life's Partner*. Knowing the relation between Sri Aurobindo and Motilal Roy, I turned the pages to see if the author has written anything on Sri Aurobindo. And I found a treasure trove of memories: Motilal recounting his first encounter with Sri Aurobindo on the night of his arrival at Chandernagore.

I was amazed to read the details of Sri Aurobindo's first days in hiding at Chandernagore. We can see already the future Sri Aurobindo of late Pondicherry days in the early 1910: the true Gita-yogin who had achieved by then the *samata* of the Gita. He was unaffected by the extreme physical discomforts of the narrow room in the house of Motilal Roy; he was calm and deeply inwards even in the most adverse and critical conditions which threatened his stay in the town.

The farewell description given by Motilal Roy is indeed very touching:

"I eagerly bowed to his feet. He held me to his breast as on the day of his last farewell. The one was a meeting that established me into his grace; the other, to end in eternal separation. The impression of his touch, however, indicated no difference to me in either case. "I must get going. We shall meet again."

His eyes were suffused with tears, as far as I could see. He laid his hand on my head and said, "You will be fulfilled. Stick to your sadhana do not worry. You have gone a step up, and will go further."

...Ah, why did the four eyes unite in an un-wavering gaze that day! The sight was painful for both; the haze of intervening half-light grew denser and denser. I turned my face homeward with a sigh. ... I sank upon my bed in tears and perhaps fell asleep under the affectionate sweeps of a guiltless hand down my body. In the morning I got up to see a new sun."

And I could not resist borrowing the whole chapter (though with some deletions to suit *New Race*) and publish it in this volume of our journal for the benefit of our readers.

Of course, there are other articles by other authors who have tried to reflect to the best of their capacity the light of the Master.

Do read the comment by the Mother on Rabindranath Tagore—it reveals the spiritual level of Tagore's consciousness—which, as we realize after reading his poems, gets reflected in all his poetry.

Wish you a happy reading...and may be a bit tearful too as was the case with our proofreader on reading the first article!

Ananda Reddy

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SRI AUROBINDO



Here are the facts of that departure. I was in the Karmayogin Office when I received the word, on information given by a high-placed police official, that the Office would be searched the next day and myself arrested. (The Office was in fact searched but no warrant was produced against me; I heard nothing more of it till the case was started against the paper later on, but by then I had already left Chandernagore for Pondicherry.) While I was listening to animated comments from those around on the approaching event, I suddenly received a command from above, in a Voice well known to me, in three words: "Go to Chandernagore." In ten minutes or so I was in the boat for Chandernagore. Ramachandra Majumdar guided me to the Ghat and hailed a boat and I entered into it at once along with my relative Biren Ghose and Moni (Suresh Chandra Chakravarti) who accompanied me to Chandernagore, not turning aside to Bagbazar or anywhere else. We reached our destination while it was still dark: they returned in the morning to Calcutta. I remained in secret entirely engaged in Sadhana and my active connection with the two newspapers ceased from that time. Afterwards, under the same "sailing orders" I left Chandernagore and reached Pondicherry on April 4, 1910. (SABCL, Vol.26, pp.57-8)

Sri Aurobindo

“AUROBINDO BABU HAS MADE HIS ENTRY INTO CHANDERNAGORE!”

(Excerpts from Motilal Roy's book : *My Life's Partner*)

Motilal Roy

One morning, probably towards the close of the month of Magh, as I was starting for my place of business after breakfast, a friend called aside and said, “Have you heard of the sensational occurrence?” I looked up in surprise. Sensational occurrence meant at this time, some political event of gruesome nature. Over and above, a high police official, named Samsul Huda, had recently been murdered in the High Court of Calcutta. I anxiously waited to hear if there were some more events. My friend added. “Aurobindo Babu has made his entry into Chandernagore. He may even have gone by now. What a pity the matter should end so discredibly!”

I could not catch his meaning and thought that he might have come on some errand. What was wrong in it if he had left, I reflected. But what the friend said in one breath made me apprehend that Aurobindo Babu had run away from Calcutta to Chandernagore and that the gentleman whose shelter he had sought, having refused it, he had probably to go back.

I further heard that Sri Aurobindo had informed his old friend at four o'clock in the morning. It was nearly six o'clock now. I had no acquaintance with him, but I had heard of him and seen him, too, in the Provincial Conference at Hoogly. I used to take an interest in any talk about him, and read about him in connection with the Alipore Bomb Case. He was a contributor to the “Vandemataram”, which for this reason, I loved to read. Sri Aurobindo's self-sacrifice and asceticism had become well-known. After his release from the Alipore Central Jail, his lectures had struck a new note in the political field. His voice had rung out the inmost wishes of India, as it were. My heart had been particularly moistened with the nectarine flow of patriotism displayed in his letters to his wife, Mrinalini Devi, and brought to light in the cross-examination of the law-suit. No one had seemed to love his country so well. I had a firm conviction that freedom would come as a sequel to this great man's *tapasya*. That is a long story to tell I shall have more to say on this topic later. For the present, I leave aside my panegyrics and characterization of him.

I said, “I do not think he is still here. In any case, how did he come?” I ascertained that he had come by boat and intimated his arrival through a youngman. My friend used to go out for his morning tea; he had heard the news casually.

I sprinted off at lightning-speed and came to the bank of the Ganges. Winter mist had just begun to clear up at the first touch of Spring's feet. The sluggish

river danced a rolling step in the morning breeze. The sun had not risen, shot through the cloud-range of the eastern sky. Under the arch of the peepul and banyan trees I wended my way southward.

The early bathers looked agape at me. Where was I hurrying away, was perhaps the one question that agitated the minds of many of my old acquaintances. I was, however, unmindful of them all as if a great magnetic force kept me dancing towards it.

The Strand stretched itself away from the Rani Ghat, where a *pansi*, brought from Calcutta, bobbed up and down in the ripples. The wind played with a portion of the gathered sail, which gave the impression of a decorative flag. On the top of the boat sat a youngman. Fixing the boat with my questioning eyes, I advanced some distance. He did not speak; I, too, could not muster enough courage to speak either, and withdrew a few paces. I turned my face towards him and advanced a few steps again in expectation of being accosted. He, too, was staring at me, I saw. I faced him this time and asked with some diffidence, "Do you hail from Calcutta.?"

"Yes, why do you ask?" the youth replied. I summoned up courage to say, "Is Aurobindo Babu in this boat?"

The youngman called me near and said, "Get into the boat please."

I jumped in and was escorted inside, where I directly came upon an ascetic figure, the very same that I had seen at the Chinsura Provincial Conference, incumbent on the bed with his head supported on another youngman's lap. On seeing me he asked, "Where did you get this news about me?"

I related what I had heard. "What can you do for me? Would it be convenient for you to shelter me?"

Pride tingled through my breast. I was amazed. What convenient to shelter you? I would not hold back my life if it were wanted. My heart was swayed by a riot of emotion—it was an auspicious day perhaps! Let that be. I enthusiastically said, "Indeed, I have come to receive you." Sri Aurobindo intently looked into my face and said smiling, "How far is your residence?"

"A little way up. Do not trouble yourself, I will personally do the arrangement."

I asked the boatman to weigh anchor. The wind blew from the south, and we, too, made for the north. Nevertheless, we came up rowing and berthed in at a place which is at present our Ashram Ghat. To avoid the bathers, I made him disembark at a place not meant for landing. It was the burning-ground. It was here where 'she' had shed tears over her dead daughter and we later commemorated the name of Murarjibhai Patel, designating the place as "Murari Tirtha." Sri Aurobindo tracked me close by the Ashram- site up into our house, drawing little notice or none. I was relieved to have him seated in an easy chair in our parlour.

The two escorts, who had accompanied Sri Aurobindo, took their leave. One of them must have been Nalinikanto or Vijoy; the other was Suresh alias Moni. I picked up acquaintance with them subsequently. I had no notion that they would leave the whole care of Aurobindo Babu, in ray hand. Perhaps circumstances forced them to rely on an utter stranger like me and to entrust the foremost leader of the country to my charge. Anyhow, that was an unalterable decree of God. This event changed the whole face of my future. Had it been otherwise, what other fate might have befallen me is much difficult a question now to answer. Be that as it may. Even though the occurrence is not a figment, it perhaps shows how fatefully God's dispensation comes into operation.

He kept his eyes fixed upon my face. His sympathetic look ranging out of a pair of conspicuous eyes soothed my mind and body. I was getting lost in the inscrutable intricacies of worldly affairs. Sri Aurobindo's unexpected advent opened the southern gates, as it were, and admitted whiffs of vernal breeze, which thrilled my inside and out. In fact, on Nature's bosom too, the first flutter of Spring's feet was noticeable. In my heart's bower, drooping mango twigs put forth new leaves, and I was maddened by the cooings of a thousand cuckoos. I was emotional by nature; my head reeled as if by an over-dose of it. I, too, placed my eyes on his and remained absorbed; I have not lost that memory yet. This exchange of looks fused a bond of close affinity between us, which, I wonder, neither imagined, could ever be falsified. Is it by such tricks that the wily nature hypnotizes men? I have come half-way across my life's ocean; my truth-seeing eyes of to-day, reaching back into the past, cannot call it an illusive sight— it is such a strange life I have!

Sri Aurobindo desired that he intended to live in concealment and that his arrival was to remain a secret. Every precaution was taken. It was a novel task. I could not consider it safe to keep him sitting in the parlour. He was by no means different from many other gentlemen, who used to come, talk and depart in a few days. This simple course could have been adopted without a hitch. But emotional men are by nature restless; they cannot do a thing without an ado. I led him across our unused rooms to a dark apartment on the first floor, set apart as a store-room for chairs. He followed me on tip-toe like a thief. Inside the house could be heard the noise of utensils being scrubbed, women's confused voices and the whizzing of loud-breathing cows in the pen. We signalled by an exchange of glance : "No one could discover this place. Is not it so?"

A thick layer of dust lay settled on the floor. Bats, cockroaches and spiders reigned undisturbed about the beams; I did not dare stir them up in fear of interfering with his rest, I swept the dust away from a part of the floor and laid a carpet, which was covered over by a sheet He sat down noiselessly like a marionette. "I will be back in a moment," I conveyed by a sign; "there will be trouble, if someone enquires for me."

I was constantly haunted by a feeling as if I were being suspected. My wife stared at me as soon as I came down to the compound, I thought: "We are undone, my wife has probably found us out." She smiled feebly. I looked at her in surprise and reasoned: "At the worst if she has got the scent, let me warn her to prevent the news being bruited about." On the other hand, I presumed that men probably pried about just in the same way in the course of their movements; I was, however, constantly troubled to think my secret out. When she drew near, her affectionate hand flitted about my head. She remarked, "Work, work, and all work! You slipped into the godown immediately you were up from bed, I suppose. What a mess you have made! The spiders have laid their webs on your head, I see!" My heart was thumping loudly. I heaved a sigh of relief. Cobwebs and sooty filaments had stuck all over my head; she flicked them off.

A dish of refreshment arrived before me. "I shall have it in the drawing-room," I pretended. She mouthed in her customary way, "Why, can you not sit calmly for a while, a nice hasty fellow that you are!" She, too, was busy; particularly to tidy up the rooms was a hobby with her, as they said. She was not satisfied unless the floor was enough clean to reflect the face. Every article in the house was dusted with a flap and wiped with her scarf to finish it up. Then the thing was blown upon just to make sure that it was now really clean, and was then replaced. Not one article, out of many in the house, went without her daily purifying touch. Every piece of cloth was grasped between her extended hands, shaken from end to end, one side after another, to remove dust, folded up and put back in its place. Standing on a long wooden stool, she mopped cobwebs, accumulated dirt and excreta of vermin between the ribs of the ceiling, I used to laugh and she would retort, "You people love to wallow in dirt; I cannot set my eyes on it."

I would jest: "If you are so very busy with the outside, the inside will remain unclean."

She would cock up her head to say, "I am not forgetful of that either. He who is clean is clean inside and outside. And he who allows refuse to accumulate in the house, cannot be clean within, however much he may brag of it. Only when a man is just the same outwardly and inwardly, he is indeed pure."

I knew she was sincere. I used to argue simply to put her a little off her mettle. But I was chary of time and thought that the gentleman would have been saved this trouble, had the store been in her charge.

I went back to the drawing-room and peeped out just to see if I were being watched. I was particularly in a fix about my wife; she kept an eye on me in her movements in the house. This had become a habit with her in consequence of our joint life. But when she engaged herself in any work, she became absorbed in it; after completing the job, she looked around to find out what I was doing. Thus, I had not been out of her sight for a long period. Does that watchful eye shower similar kindness even to-day without my knowledge, in order to lighten my life's heavy burden?

I stole into the godown very cautiously across the verandah, and went to the second-storey room without making any noise. Opening my eyes wide, I observed that Sri Aurobindo was sitting silently with his eyes fixed in an upward stare. What a complacent and divine look! He had come to my house in an ecstatic state. He had utterly resigned himself to God. When he talked, words came out of his mouth as if someone else made him speak. If his hand moved, it was controlled as it were, by a third agency. I held the refreshment dish before him; he glanced at me innocently. I said, "My wife could not be taken into confidence. It is my own refreshment; please accept it." There was no necessity of making so much fuss about it. Every source of comfort was stopped for him in view of the gravity of keeping him concealed. He partook of some food mechanically.

At noon after everybody had had his or her dinner, I brought him down to our parlour outside and closed the door of the passage between this room and the inner apartments. The outside gate, too, was shut. Two bucketfuls of water were surreptitiously fetched from the well and he was bathed, seated on the floor. It is curious that he raised no objection in any matter. The shiver of winter had not passed yet. His body showed no disposition under the icy-cold water poured down on his head; his hair stood on end, of course. He was feeling cold, I inferred; but he had determined to be firm. I could not scrape up a mid-day meal for him anyhow, as there was no plausible excuse to carry over my plate to our outer room.' In that case, people would know someone had come. He was given some "sweetmeats bought from a stall, with which he filled his belly, I still remember how indifferently he munched the *bazar sweets*, cooked with impure ghee! After his meal, we had a lengthy talk together. It was all about religion. Words can hardly describe his eagerness to give me an inkling of the total resignation with which one has to put oneself into the hand of God.

To arrange for his exit for a call of nature at noon brought things to a pretty pass. It would have presented no difficulty had things been in to-day's condition. Anyhow, that was a happier state perhaps; otherwise there would have been no occasion to make much of a trifle.

The latrine was outside the house and had to be approached through a lane. If he came out, he might be noticed; to make sure, I went inside and took a look at things there. The next thing I did was to make a brief survey of the lane from one end to the other and was reassured that no one was likely to stir out at that time. God perhaps prepared me for a more mysterious way of life through this cautious procedure that I adopted for his ablution in safety.

I was in a further dilemma in the evening, I could not be easy in mind, leaving him alone in that dark room. On the other hand, if I made his bed in the parlour, our people would come to know. After dark, a long consultation with my aforesaid friend led to a disclosure of the facts to another intimate friend. He heard the news with some surprise and offered to lodge Sri Aurobindo at his house.

After ten o'clock in the night, we three escorted him to the friend's house. I could not sleep at night. I was being constantly reminded of his overnight stay. An anxious day passed. In the evening, I visited Sri Aurobindo at the friend's place. He requested me to take him back; he had no sleep the previous night. My friend agreeing, I brought him back to our house.

Our whole suite was examined to clap up a place of concealment for him. A small room in the temple, which in later years was used by boys as a prayer-room, was out of repair and stocked with chairs, I spread his bed on one side of it. After everybody's retirement, I asked him to follow me cautiously. He slowly accompanied me to the room and taking the bed, said, "You may go now, I shall be comfortable here." He loved solitude, I realized. On the previous night, someone had shared the room with him, which interfered with his *sadhana*. I hung a small mosquito curtain, piled up chairs around it more compactly and returned to my apartment.

Sleep was difficult for me at night. If he needed anything—I had not left even a pot of water! At dawn I peeped in; he was sleeping calmly. Arranging his breakfast in due time, I went to my place of business. Had anybody observed my restlessness, my changed manners could not have been concealed. But everyone was busy in his or her own way, and who cared to spy upon?

When I returned home at the usual hour, my wire beckoned me inside. With a face expressive of mingled joy and surprise, she said, "I say, what is up in your sleeve?"

I gazed at her face in speechless perplexity. She added, "How dare you mask your doings from me? How can God stand it!" I reflected: "Hang it! I am down on my luck! How unfortunate, I have failed to observe Sri Aurobindo's direction! "Did he not enjoin secrecy on me?" My fire of determination seemed in those days to burn up within, when I had a chance to carry out one word of his mouth.

Nevertheless, I thought that he had been hidden behind a wall of chairs; surely nobody could see him there. I asked, "What is the matter?"

She now laughed out: "Oh, what a hypocrite, as if he knows nothing! Here you are; I know now why the yard is soggy, the floor of the parlour moist and a piece of wet cloth drying! What is it all about?"

I was now certain that everything had fizzled out. Still I stood agape looking at her, just to hear the finale from her mouth. She continued, "It is my habit to poke and pry into every corner. What a calamity! Such a senseless man you are! Luckily I entered the temple wrapped in a pair of towels; that saved my face. Good God, what a shame!"

She remarked laughing, "How am I to know that you have immured a gentleman in that prison-house? I shifted the chairs just to see if there were any litter in the room and was suddenly down on a human form staring at me!"

I fancied it—was a hallucination, for, how can any man in his senses be there? Goodness knows, it was true indeed! No apparition nor a mean spirit—a whole man looking inquisitively at me! Do you imagine what my plight would have been, if I had no second piece of towel about?”

Feigning anger thus, she now asked, “Who is he, tell me, will you? Is he a murderer or a criminal to be hanged, that you have hidden him thus? What a bad bungling you have done!”

I humbly said, “I have not been able to hide anything from you; even today the truth has come out. You have heard his name—Aurobindo Babu.”

“Does he belong to the Swadeshi group, like Suren Babu?” she interrogated.

As the leader of the Swadeshi Movement, Surendranath Bannerjee had become well-known to the young and the old and even to women. So she said, “Is he the gentleman, whose name is known abroad like that of Suren Babu?” I replied, “Yes, Sri Aurobindo is the genuine leader, a jewel that adorns our country’s head. To escape capture by the police he has come secretly and wants to remain in hiding. He is here for this reason.”

Hearing of my incommodious treatment of him for the last two days, she said, “He has sought refuge with an admirable host, indeed! How long can he stay at this rate!”

I had nothing more to worry about now and was relieved. Breakfast was duly provided in the morning. At noon her own dish was served out; arrangement was made for the night, too. I lost sight of the fact that her own meal was forfeited. I hardly ever bothered on that score. I had taken this matter up once before, only to be ridiculed. I left her charge in the hand of God and went about my business.

As on the previous day, I helped him through a bath at noon, getting him to sit in the parlour. There was a post-prandial talk. He enquired with a chuckle, “She is your wife, I guess.” I said, “That is so.” I remember he had praised her as a woman marked out by many propitious signs in her formation.

The whole noon used to be devoted to the teaching of *yoga*. I still can recollect a discussion about the divine principle, enmeshed in a quadruple sheath. He discoursed ecstatically about Vasudeva, Sankarshan, Prodyumna and Aniruddha, and I listened with rapt attention; On the subject of re-incarnation, he cited instances of the philosophic and practical types of manifestations, explaining in detail that Vyasa was the philosophic type and Sri Krishna the practical. He freely expounded the Upanishadic principles, too. I hardly have words to depict the joy with which we passed the noon-days.

At night, my aforesaid friend used to come to discuss political subjects, which had no attraction for me, and I dozed off reclining on a chair. The discussion used so continue till mid-night. Sri Aurobindo would go to bed then.

I used to read him all the articles I had written. My dramatic piece, Udbodhan, was composed and presented about this time. I read it out to him from start to finish. He remarked, "You write Bengali well, try to write something about religion, if you can."

The literature that had been waiting in me for an exit from the imaginative realm, now flowed at his bidding like the downpour of the Gomukhi. A few short feuilletons appeared on the subject of religion. That copious flow has since run apace even up to date in the pages of the "Prabartak"; my hand has stopped, but not the pen. I do not know if my whole soul stood immobile till now in expectation of a touch from him; the portals of my life now began to open one after another in response to his push. I have tried to explain the yoga of self-surrender in "Udbodhan," but have not perhaps succeeded in being very lucid and elaborate." He opened out the secrets of consecration, and the whole thing now seemed to be clear and possessed my attention. He narrated, one by one, all the wonderful mystic experiences of his jail life and I was fascinated. How he remained suspended in the air at his meditation, how the hard iron bars of the prison-cell felt as soft as butter to his touch, how in the jail-compound devilish-looking thieves and robbers appeared transformed into so many beautiful Brahma-like forms and how divinity was manifested in all material things—he used to relate without a pause.

I have also heard from his mouth that when he was being escorted to the Lai Bazar Police Court, having been arrested by the Grey Street Police, Thackur Sri Ramkrishna sat consoling him all the time. He saw Narayana personified in the trying magistrate, the lawyers, barristers and all in the court-room and was so overjoyed that he entertained no doubt, in his inmost mind, as to his release. It is a long catalogue of facts; to relate all of it from memory would need a treatise like the Mahabharata.

We talked for hours together, leaving nothing undiscussed. I can hardly restrain my laugh, when I remember his numerous bantering remarks. Our close acquaintance made such' an impression in our hearts that it was not to be eradicated without inflicting a greater pain than that of death, at least as far as I was concerned. That memory is undefaceable.

His continual stay at a place might cause the secret to leak out and we talked about his removal. I had no objection in any way. He had come quite unexpectedly; I could not at all imagine that my heart would ache, if he went the same unexpected way back. Nor did I wish to know where he would be taken away. In any case, I was charged to escort him over the town to the southern outskirts, in the darkness of night in a carriage. His disappearance had been reported in the two magazines, "Dharma" and "Karmoyogin". People knew that he had gone among the Himalayas for *sadhana* in response to a call from the Tibetan saint Kuthumi. None the less, the police were more in the know than our countrymen; they were at that time searching for Aurobindo Babu in Calcutta.

What on earth would go wrong, if I drove him in a hackney carriage, was not clear to my senses. At mid-night, when everybody had gone to sleep, I took him to our stable, which was close to our house. The driver was rapt in sleep. I very cautiously led out the two horses and somehow yoked them to the carriage, groping in darkness. He was requested to sit inside with a friend, of mine. I smacked the whip on the back of the horses. One of the horses was a new-comer, who had the habit of pulling the carriage sideways into the gutter. When I think of the anxiety with which I held the reins tight and reached the destination, I feel inclined to laugh even now. It was mid-night and the streets were lonely; we therefore, did not encounter any mishap. Had it been otherwise, I am sure, the coach would have gone over the backs of people. At some point, on our way, the policeman on duty called up a halt. I realized now that the lamp had not been lit. I cracked the whip and drove at top-speed— the policeman made a wry mouth and uttered loud declamations.

He who was keeping tryst at the southern end of the town was entrusted with the keep of Sri Aurobindo, who was in perfect trim. I drove home back. I put the two horses in the stable—the carriage was left on the street, and breathed a sigh of relief on reaching my room. My wife had been prepared for it. She enquired, "Did not the coachman get to know?" I replied, "No." She was thoughtful and said, "What a serious thing! The carriage and the horses may be stolen any day." I laughed: "Do you not see that I am not a thief?" My heart had been filled with devotion and regard for Sri Aurobindo. I added, "The whole thing is a miraculous achievement of Sri Aurobindo. The way was not free from danger either!" She did not pursue the matter and said, "You cannot do a thing without a muddle go to bed now." ...

...I was relieved of the charge after Sri Aurobindo's departure, but I was left in an utter confusion, as it were. He had spoken of complete resignation to God. Even when the hand moved, it was controlled by an unseen Power, and, as if to explain his meaning, he had lifted his own hand up and said, "Look you, I have not lifted it; another force has taken possession of it and has pushed it up!" Miraculous indeed, if one believed; if not, it could be laughed down, too. I had taken him at his word.

After this talk, I still remember, I watched his movements with great interest. I observed—others might have seen differently—that when he walked, his feet hardly trod the ground, as if he skipped over the surface to alight on his legs somewhere else. I pricked my ears to hear his steps, which being noiseless, made my audibility frankly acknowledge them so.

When he ate, I imagined that he made no effort in the act. He was unmindful at his meal, effort noticing that I was intently watching. I fancied that it was really a third agency that consumed through his mouth. I distinctly recollect that my ears caught no sound of mastication or any other act of eating; it was done noiselessly, top.

Another peculiarity comes to my mind as clearly as the noon-day. His look never seemed to be that of any human being, as if someone behind his eyes elongated the sight to touch me with it. During his sojourn at Chandernagore, he lived a longer time with a few others than with me—I do not know whether all this avowal can stand the test of truth. Even to my wife I spoke with delight and admiration about Sri Aurobindo. She too said, "You make much of what you do or say!" I felt irritated. She remarked, "Why do you get angry for it! How can you expect others to see or understand better than you do? Judged from their angle, you do go a bit too far out."

This stigma still persists. Nevertheless, I am perfectly sure of it from my personal observation.'

Sri Aurobindo kept staring up most of his time. When he was in a communicative mood, I asked, "What do you see with your eyes so focused?" His reply is still as vividly emblazoned on my heart as ever. He said, "A multitude of letters comes trooping down in the air; I try to decipher." He explained again, "Gods of the invisible world become visible. They are significant as the alphabet and want to communicate something, which I endeavour to discover."

The power of environmental influence had been very little appreciated by me yet. Nor had symbolic interpretation received due recognition from me. "Concentrate your mind on Me"—such a mind naturally remained fixed on Him. People may call it imitation; I however, felt that an influence was getting possession of me through his medium. Shoes had been discarded. A friend was aware of Sri Aurobindo's arrival. He had the impudence to remark, "You wear your saintliness upon your sleeve, if I may say so!" My wife too, said without belittling me, "Your conduct may evoke suspicion; you had better not disclose what you aim at."

She was a secretly flowing stream like the Falgu. We had brought contradictory qualities in our union. I never saw her talk aloud. She remained calm in weal and woe; if she were angry, she suppressed her wrath in her breast under a cloak of gravity. On the other hand, I gave out everything in an outburst of emotion. But I find from subsequent developments that this unloading of feelings contained in it submerged facts of my inner life. It was my outward behaviour that deceived people. Nevertheless, if I got angry with anybody, I showed enough kindness too, towards the object of my anger; but if I loved disruption followed. One person alone had correctly understood me; others tuned their lives with her sorrow and were thus able to interpret me. Who else will distrust the object of love as I have done!

My eyes, too, came to be stilled like those of Sri Aurobindo. I am a vegetarian all my life. Once my spiritual aspirations were roused, I was seized with a fervour to acquire a great deal more than my capacity. For this reason, after Sri Aurobindo's departure, I practically passed into a meditative trance. In seeking greater restraint in food, I brought more trouble to my wife. She was

not afraid of labour, but was careful about my endurance. Sri Aurobindo did not use oil at his bath; I too, discarded oil at my bath. Moreover, I gave up the use of salt in my food. This new habit caused some emaciation of my body. She said, "Do you want to acquire virtue by this means? It matters little, if we do nothing outwardly; but who is to dissuade, if something accepted inwardly? It is said that one can dig river, if the mind is sound. My good man, I find no joy in such showiness." I knew the depth of her affection that prompted this remark. But, at the same time, like Sri Aurobindo, I too, had then interested myself for some clue to an access to the Third Power. Serious neglect infected the sphere of domestic duties.

Sri Aurobindo had come fresh from the political arena to Chandernagore. I heard him discuss political problems which flowed out copiously from his mouth. But that was not intended for me; he exclusively gave me directions for spiritual practice. Whatever may have been his inner motive, it was an opportunity to develop a new faculty in me under his care.

He was lodged quite near the temple-hall. I am sure, from the adjacent room he must have heard our daily liturgy, prayer and hymns. Besides, a band of young boys of our locality was inspired with similar aspirations as mine and paid me visits on Sunday mornings. I taught them the formularies of worship and to recite hymns; and in our Sunday debates held at noon, introduced them to the teachings of the Gita and the Upanishads, in spite of my doubtful qualification for the task, equals in age lavished jokes and gibes on my head, for this reason. My pedagogy among these was ridiculed in some quarters as midwifery. Nevertheless, these youngmen, a potential source of unfailing strength to the Samgha as they were, are to-day the backbone of this institution. I realize now, though I did not do so earlier, that the all-knowing God did not commission this blind machine for a fruitless task. Sri Aurobindo may have foreseen the consequences; a far deeper insight too, was not beyond him. He advised me always to remember the following verse of the Gita: "If you rely on me, you will overcome all difficulties through my grace." Whenever darkness chickened in my mind, I used to recall this verse. This *mantra* at last got so inseparably woven into my mental fabric that I could not extricate it without a struggle. He had depicted another piece of *mantra* upon my heart: "I know what is virtue, yet I do not hanker for it; I also know what is vice, but I do not resist it either. I do as thou, seated in my heart, oh Hrishiksha, biddest me do."...

...My days began to pass in this manner. One day my friend came abruptly and said, "Aurobindo Babu has sent for you." I was brought to my senses. It was nearly a month now since I had met him last. I had full information about him, but had no personal contact. It was not my pature to go anywhere beyond my own sphere activities and the habit still remains much the same. I was, for this reason, subjected to frequent strictures. Nevertheless, it was scarcely possible for me to do anything that was not in my grain.

Sri Aurobindo was at this time quartered in my neighbourhood. The northern town having proved unsuitable, he was for some days accommodated in a garden-house at the heart of the town. The place appeared to be too open and he moved to the northern quarter again. I, too, had a hand in this arrangement. He who was in charge of the management is now in the next world. I received news daily from Sri Aurobindo, This gentleman was employed in a mill; he used to go out at nine o'clock, locking the front-gate, and returned at dusk. Food and other necessaries would be kept ready for Sri Aurobindo, who had to spend the whole day alone.

I went to him after night-fall. He made warm enquiries about my health: "You have made yourself scarce; business engagements perhaps!" I should have to tell a long story, if I attempted anything like a right answer. I merely said 'yes' or 'no' and changed the topic.

His food consisted of fruits and roots at this time. This was his own choice. His meal was served after dark. Pistachio was soaking in a cup, I began to peel off the rind. He turned towards me and said smiling, "How do you get on with your sadhana?"

I died of shame, as it were, and could not bring myself to confess my surrender to the natural urges. I was ashamed of looking up at his face. I fully realized that my unrestrained passion for enjoyment had made me more banal and despicable under a saintly masquerade. On his arrival, I had stood before him with a proud heart; to-day I recoiled as if in horror of my own self. I loathed even the company of, a *yogi* like him selfless *sannyasi* though he was; He, however, eagerly looked at me and said, "Why are you ashamed, tell me the situation exactly as it is. I shall give you some fresh directions of *sadhana*."

I do not know how on that day I was maddened by his loving query made so spontaneously, I frankly acknowledged my change in attitude. The foundation of my life-long *sadhana* crumbled to pieces, which moved me to tears. He too, looked at me through tears, as it were, and said with emotion, "You have abandoned the vessel to the hand of Shakti; very well. Your consciousness lies entwined about the vessel; it has to be lifted up. You have spread it full length; do not try to gather it again. All you have to do is to keep your observing consciousness apart. Be on the watch as a spectator. Do not mix yourself up with the ego and will of the vessel."

So deep was the impression on my heart of this practical suggestion that its outlines still remain undefaced. His words brought a spate of tear in my eyes. He consoled me: "Why are you afraid? A long-locked room accumulates dust; when the cleansing begins, the whole thing is stirred up and stifles one's breathing. The body will get purified by this means. Especially, you are doing nothing wrong; you receive your wife's assistance. Fulfilment will come, you will be fulfilled."

His unmistakable vision came as if into visible shape by the sound of his voice. The word 'fulfilment' continued to ring in my ears till recently.

The night deepened. As I was preparing to return, he said, "Come tomorrow, if you can. I am going away shortly." I looked at him in surprise and asked, "Where do you intend to go?" He said smiling, "To some independent country." My surprise intensified. I interrogated, "I suppose, you are going abroad then?" He laughed, "No, inside of India," he said. His answer was veiled, so I did not press him further on this point. I had heard a stray news that he did not favour an incognito life, which, however, he was persuaded to accept at Sister Nivedita's earnestness. He later reconciled himself to this course as having been intended by God. ...

...A week elapsed in this way. I had not met Sri Aurobindo again. Suddenly I had to get busy in arranging for his departure, which had been decided in favour of Pondicherry. My help was needed even in fixing up his mode of travel. I do not know why I stayed away at the send-off, although other details had been attended to and necessary hands provided by me. Between two opposite forces, the body and the consciousness, it was hard to maintain the life's balance. Some time I put my whole soul into work; the next moment I was immobile and sat stock-still. On the night of his departure from Chandernagore, I attended to the necessary details, had my dinner in due time and went to bed.

I heard calls after mid-night. My wife had forbidden me to respond to any unexpected call; if she happened to be awake, she would stop my mouth with her hand. Nevertheless, night-calls were frequent on me for one reason or another. Her solicitude had, therefore, to be disregarded. As I got up, she enquired, "Where do you want to go?"

I replied, "Aurobindo Babu is going away to-day; I may have to meet him."

"That's your sort," she remarked; "you have done a lot; how do you excuse your absence when he is going away! You get along pretty well, but fail at the end. This is just the reason why you create enemies!"

I hurried out of my bed and as soon as I was outside the room, asked my friend what was up.

He said smiling, "He wants to meet you before departure."

I cohered my upper body with the fore-skirt of my *dhuti* and accompanied him. The night was just at the juncture of its third-quarter. Silence reigned everywhere, broken only by the pit-pats of nocturnal animals. The half-moon floated in the sky and the earth was flooded with moon-light. The summer with its grilling heat stood at a dwindling distance. My body was cooled by the spring breeze. Dew had fallen on green grass, which gleamed in moon-light as if set with stars. The Ganges flowed before me and dazzled my eyes as by a mine of diamond particles. I beheld Sri Aurobindo, who stood on the bank awaiting my arrival.

"I eagerly bowed to his feet. He held me to his breast as on the day of his last farewell. The one was a meeting that established me into his grace; the other, to end in eternal separation. The impression of his touch, however, indicated no difference to me in either case.

"I must get going. We shall meet again."

I cast my wondering eyes on his face and said, "How do you sustain that hope in me! Remember me please."

His eyes were suffused with tears, as far as I could see. He laid his hand on my head and said, "You will be fulfilled. Stick to your sadhana do not worry. You have gone a step up, and will go further."

I had no reply and remained silent.

I stood on the bank. He stepped into the boat with other friends. The oars clawed—swash, swash. The craft got under way and was seen sweeping off. Ah, why did the four eyes unite in an un-wavering gaze that day! The sight was painful for both; the haze of intervening half-light grew denser and denser. I turned my face homeward with a sigh. I now realized that my heart had been kept full whether I took advantage of his association or not it became vacant to-day. I sank upon my bed in tears and perhaps fell asleep under the affectionate sweeps of a guiltless hand down my body. In the morning I got up to see a new sun.."



The Way from Ghat of Ganga River to the Residence of Motilal Roy

Photo Courtesy : <http://www.matrimandir-habra.org>

BHAKTI IN THE LIGHT OF SRI AUROBINDO

Shruti Bidwaikar

Devotion is not utterly fulfilled till it becomes action and knowledge. If thou pursuest after God and canst overtake Him, let Him not go till thou hast His reality. If thou hast hold of His reality, insist on having also His totality. The first will give thee divine knowledge, the second will give thee divine works and a free and perfect joy in the universe. (Sri Aurobindo 12: 481)

What is devotion? What kind of devotion does Sri Aurobindo refer to in the above quote? How is it fulfilled in action and knowledge? A simple definition of devotion is, love and adoration for God. Devotion in India is called 'bhakti' and the one who pursues bhakti is called the 'bhakta'. The Bhakta has a specific purpose when he takes to bhakti, when he turns Godward. The purpose may be to seek protection, fulfill desires, salvation, identification or union with God or simply to love God. From times immemorial it has been observed that human beings are afraid of the powers unknown to them. In ancient times, storm, fire and such natural forces terrified them and they started worshipping some unknown higher power to stop destruction. The motive was to satisfy those powers so that they may spare the human beings. The nature of fear has changed over time but still human beings fear all that is unknown, and therefore they turn towards God and ask for protection. Desire for material wealth and prosperity has also led people to turn to God. Essentially, humanity turned towards God out of "fear and interest".

Before we proceed to salvation and other motives of bhakti, it is required to evince various modes and motives of bhakti prevalent in India. The evidences of *worshipping* God are available in the most ancient texts, particularly the Vedas. For the masses¹, the Vedas were a book of works, which instructed them how to perform sacrifices, yajna to propitiate God to gain wealth or protection. *Yajna* were also performed to establish peace, to purify and chide the evil. Upanishads documented the metaphysical experiences of the Rishis. The practice of Veda and Upanishad required great amount of concentration and long hours of meditation to attain God. At this time, there was no emotional involvement with God. The highest purpose of an individual following Vedas or Upanishads was *samādhi* through which they attained salvation or *mukti*.

It is in the relation of Sri Krishna with that of his disciples that we see a relation of 'love' between man and God. God who was only an object of reverence became the object of love too. The love and adoration of man for God is called bhakti. Sri Krishna emphasized the concept of the temple. The body was the temple and God was to be installed in it through love. The temple built of stones and concrete are only symbols of this concept. There are some rituals to install God in the temple. Each element used in the process is symbolic and has a spiritual significance. Various Indian cults define number of steps,

however, a minimum of 16 are certainly followed by majority. A few may be recalled here, *Aawahana* - Inviting God, *Aasanam* – The offering of a seat to God, *Chandan* - offering sandalpaste, *Kum Mala* or *Pushpam* - offering of garlands of flowers or just flowers, *Durva* or *Doob* - The offering of dew grass, *Pushpanjali* - offering flowers, *Deepam* – lighting a lamp. These are only a few steps not necessarily in a chronological order. Over the millennia, the spiritual import of these objects and ceremonies has been forgotten and what remains is only external, mechanical ritual. For example, the lighting of *deepam* signified the tending of aspiration and light of God's love within one's heart. However, performing these rituals was not the only way to approach God for the bhakta.

"The Ancient Indian tradition speaks of nine forms of devotion. They are at once movements for the expression of devotion and feeders for the flame of Divine Love." (Pandit: 4) They are – *shravana*² (listening to the glories of God), *kirtana* (praising of the Lord from the depth of one's heart), *smarana* (whatever one is doing, whatever the movement, to remember and to offer), *padasevana* (physical service, consecration of the physical to God), *archana* (worship), *vandana* (bowing down as a result of inner attitude of surrender), *dasya* (taking up of the attitude of a servant), *sakhya* (a readiness to assume any attitude called for by God), and *atmanivedan* (complete self-surrender in all the parts, on all the planes of the being, at all times, in all places).

Bhagawad Gita classifies four types of bhakti which leads to the corresponding *mukti*. They are *sālokya*, *sārūpya*, *sāyujya*, *sāmīpya*. These terms are complex to define. They are not rituals or simple methods to attain God, but demand complete surrender and consecration to God. Sri Aurobindo describes these modes in his *Essays on the Gita*.³ Prior to analyzing the levels of Bhakti given by Sri Aurobindo, the relation between God and the individual may be analyzed. The major difference between the worship at the Vedic-Upanishadic times and with the advent of Sri Krishna is the change of relation between God and bhakta. Earlier, there was awe, reverence, fear of God. God was at a distance to which the seeker had to reach by some means. "To fear God really is to remove oneself to a distance from Him" (Sri Aurobindo 12: 481). But love removes all these distances and where there is love there is no fear. Love then manifests in the form of different relations; this relation is assigned by bhakta to God. All the possible relations between God and bhakta are summarized by Sri Aurobindo thus,

Discipleship to God the Teacher, sonship to God the Father, tenderness of God the Mother, clasp of the hand of the divine Friend, laughter and sport with our Comrade and boy Playfellow, blissful servitude to God the Master, rapturous love of our divine Paramour, these are the seven beatitudes of life in the human body. (12:489)

With the coming of the devotional aspect, human beings did not distant themselves with God but got into an intimate relationship with God like one

who is a Father, a Mother, a Brother, a Friend, a Husband, a Child and so on, as was suitable to one's own emotions. Thus God came into a close proximity and an intimate relationship. An example of seeing God as the Mother is Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa. He saw Goddess as his Mother and adored Her. The relations between Sri Krishna and Arjuna and Sri Krishna and Sudāma are that of a "divine Friend". Arjuna and Sudama share thier anxieties with Sri Krishna as a Friend while being aware of His divinity. Rādhā relates to Sri Krishna as her Lover and Mirabai sees Him as her Husband. Similarly, Prahlād is known to be the "bhakta", the disciple who completely surrenders himself to Narayan. These examples prove how individuals relate to God and extend their love to Him.

It is with love that bhakti can increase and thus love for God, intimacy with Him and union can come. In bhakti, the ultimate aim is to reach God through love. This reaching of God is actually the 'yoga' (the joining of the two). However, there are a few steps before the bhakta can unite with God. Sri Aurobindo observes five stages which the bhakta has to go through in order to reach the stage of perfect union; which is also the stage when love, knowledge and action come together. Sri Aurobindo writes, "worship is only the first step on the path of devotion. Where external worship changes into the inner adoration, real Bhakti begins; that deepens into the intensity of divine love; that love leads to the joy of closeness in our relations with the Divine; the joy of closeness passes into the bliss of union"(24:549). The five steps thus classified by him are worship, adoration, divine love, intimacy with the divine and delight of union.

The first step of worship has two dimensions, the outer and the inner. The outer modes of worship are the ones that involve rituals and rites, like invoking the God, offering flowers and sandal-paste and the like. Sri Aurobindo observes that this stage is important as it is through the external objects one can turn inward if he wishes so. He describes the importance of *puja* (the ceremonial worship) in one of his letters,

The kind of worship (*puja*) spoken of in the letter belongs to the religious life. It can, if rightly done in the deepest religious spirit, prepare the mind and heart to some extent but no more. But if as a part of meditation or with a true aspiration to the spiritual reality and the spiritual consciousness and with the yearning for contact and union with the Divine, then it can be spiritually effective. (*Letters on Yoga*: 138)

It may be marked here that the rituals alone are not able to connect the individual with God. As discussed earlier Sri Aurobindo counts the "inner adoration" as the beginning of bhakti, for it is only with adoration, the distance between man and God fades away. The bhakta realizes that God is not someone far and unreachable but someone who can be reached and loved and possessed. At the stage of adoration, the bhakta is astonished, is pleasantly surprised at

the magnanimity, the power and beauty of God and His creation. In adoration he sings songs for God and intends to share his joy. The bhakta at this stage realizes that he exists only because of God. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, one of the poets who has written many devotional poems, expresses his joy of realizing that God controls and governs the entire creation. In "Immortal Destroyer" he says,

The Lord of Life is Lord of Death,
 Controller of all form and name.
 Lo, He can with a single breath
 Extinguish time's poor candle-flame. (7)

Many a poet like Mirabai, Surdas, Tulsidas have sung verses in the adoration of God. But, the bhakta, the adorer is also conscious of his distance and difference from God. He adores God from a particular mental distance. However, love for God takes over the bhakta and he remains intoxicated by that love. He craves for the divine love and prays that God should possess him and he should possess God. Swami Ramdas' poem would substantiate this delight and longing for the Lord,

O Lord, I longed to be with Thee,
 Thou as eternal Mother and I thy little immortal child.
 The sweet joys of Thy nearness I sought
 Gracious Mother, Thy blessing came.
 I slacked my thirst for a time at the fountain of Thy love
 In close communion with Thee
 I felt the untold thrills of ecstasy.
 Love overflowed my being – I was lost in it – yet not lost. (17)

The poet delights in the fact that the Mother has accepted and embraced him with Her Love. He is so much in possession of Her love that he has nearly lost his separate existence. But he longs for the separation so that he may continue to enjoy being in love rather than be lost in the union. Such is the play of divine love. The lover and the beloved are separate but they want to behold each other for ever and cannot bear the separation. In this stage the devotee has complete faith that God loves him in return without any reservations. This realization is a stage between adoration and "divine love". "Divine love" is the manifestation of the Love that God has for the bhakta. It is with this surety that Sri Aurobindo writes, "Others boast of their love for God. My boast is that I did not love God; it was He who loved me and sought me out and forced me to belong to Him" (CWSA 12:481).

When God's love manifests, the bhakta is able to see various forms and aspects of God. He may have certain spiritual realizations. He may see God

everywhere and can also see His working everywhere. Adoration is the bhakta's aspiration and divine love, God's answer to this aspiration. When the bhakta bathes in the joy of divine love he comes to the stage of intimate relation with God. All the stages mentioned above were comparatively simple to understand as there are various accounts of bhaktas who have gone through worship, adoration and have experienced divine love. Intimacy and union are much higher stages and it is difficult to decipher between the two without experience. In its very logical sequence, when one loves the other, when one is intimate with the other, one knows the other. That is how the bhakta comes to know the real nature of God. Sri Aurobindo describes how love leads to knowledge,

Love fulfilled does not exclude knowledge, but itself brings knowledge; and the completer the knowledge, the richer the possibility of love. "By Bhakti" says the Lord in the Gita "shall a man know Me in all my extent and greatness and as I am in the principles of my being, and when he has known Me in the principles of my being, then he enters into Me". (24: 547)

By the same sequence it is also true that the more we know and love someone, the more we tend to work for him. When we love God and know Him then automatically we want to work for Him, (this is where the love, knowledge and action converge and become an integral part of yoga). In *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo devoted eight chapters to describe how love is connected to knowledge and action, for any one of these in isolation cannot lead to complete union. The convergence of all the three – bhakti, knowledge and action form the basis of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga.

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End Notes

1. Vedas held a deeper significance for the spiritually enlightened individuals called the Rishis. As the paper discusses the meaning and dimensions of bhakti in a very general sense, Rishis are eschewed.
2. All these explanations have been taken from The Yoga of Love by M.P. Pandit.
3. The liberation of the Gita is not a self-oblivious abolition of the soul's personal being in the absorption of the One, sāyujya mukti; it is all kinds of union at once. There is an entire unification with the supreme Godhead in essence of being and intimacy of consciousness and identity of bliss, sāyujya,—for one object of this Yoga is to become Brahman, brahmabhūta. There is an eternal ecstatic dwelling in the highest existence of the Supreme, sālōkya,—for it is said, “Thou shalt dwell in me,” nivasisyasi mayyeva. There is an eternal love and adoration in a uniting nearness, there is an embrace of the liberated spirit by its divine Lover and the enveloping Self of its infinitudes, sāmīpya. There is an identity of the soul's liberated nature with the divine nature, sādśyamukti,—for the perfection of the free spirit is to become even as the Divine, madbhāvamāgatah. , and to be one with him in the law of its being and the law of its works and nature, sādharmaṃyāmāgatah. The orthodox Yoga of knowledge aims at a fathomless immergence in the one infinite existence, sāyujya; it looks upon that alone as the entire liberation. The Yoga of adoration envisages an eternal habitation or nearness as the greater release, sālōkya, sāmīpya. The Yoga of works leads to oneness in power of being and nature, sādśya. But the Gita envelops them all in its catholic integrality and fuses them all into one greatest and richest divine freedom and perfection.

The aim of Yoga being union, its beginning must always be a seeking after the Divine, a longing after some kind of touch, closeness or possession. When this comes on us, the adoration becomes always primarily an inner worship; we begin to make ourselves a temple of the Divine, our thoughts and feelings a constant prayer of aspiration and seeking, our whole life an external service and worship.

Sri Aurobindo, SABCL, Vol.21, p.547

MANKIND'S MARCH TOWARDS UNITY

Ananda Reddy

In Sri Aurobindo's vision, the goal of human unity, proposed to the conscious elite of mankind, is not based on economic or political prudence as much as it is based on the innate psychological tendencies of human life. The formation and development of the human body starts from the attraction of the sperm to the ovum. This combined unit of cells later goes through rapid stages of development and becomes the complete human body, which, though containing several organs, is enveloped in one consciousness. Similarly, the body of human unity is based on the family-cell. It is this stable nucleus that went through stages of expansion and enlargement. A gathering of a few families formed into a tribe or clan having a common system of security, a common code of behaviors, rules and regulations both on social and religious levels. Just as the human cells combine into different grouping of cells, each group specialized in a certain function, so too, the clans or tribes developed their own specific identity and clubbed themselves in a larger unit, the village.

The village gradually grew as the community economic interests increased, as the political and communal interaction between distant villages increased. And this group unit grew into the township and later into the city-state. The city-state had a tremendous advantage of several binding factors. On the physical level, there was a geographical contiguity, on the life level, there was the cementing factor of common language, common economic and social values, common political ambitions; on the mental level, a strong and almost rigid religious customs and beliefs which bound together all the other facts.

The growth from the family unit to the group-soul of city-state, however long it took, was almost an unconscious, automatic, spontaneous process of Nature, as it were. Man was not consciously instrumental in the expansion of his consciousness. This natural evolution hides, as it were, a deeper design and intention and if we can delve beyond the surface events of social history we may even discover that inherent design.

Examples of such city-states are many in Greece, Italy, Gaul, Egypt, China, Persia, India, Arabia and even in Africa and Australia. There was in a varying degree, in all these city-states 'a general vividness of life and dynamic force of culture*' that has formed the strength of all cultures and civilisations — the European and the Asiatic. Because of the inherent advantage of distance, the citizens of the city-states could take an active part in the common problems and solutions of the community, in the new ideas and feelings that are expressed by different individuals — the elite and the lowly — and they could give it a proper expression in form and organisation without having to go through the boredom of the impersonal offices of the modern cities. They could enjoy

freedom and fraternity in an intense manner which gave them a healthy and creative life of growth.

On the social level too the city-state enjoyed a great democratic equality. Of course, there were in India as well as in Greece and Rome class distinctions, but because of the intimacy of living, these distinctions were not as sharp. Therefore the exclusiveness was tempered with tolerance. The sense of personal superiority or a class superiority was blunted except when they were politically implemented as in Sparta and Venice. In India, the most sacred function and duty of a Rishi was equally open to all aspirants from all classes. The class rigidity and the arrogance of the upper classes came in later, in the larger social and political aggregates.

If the city-states were such ideal cultural and creative life-centres, then why did Nature not adopt it as its permanent mould of human collectivities? Obviously there were some basic problems in the city-states which necessitated their abolition for a higher and a larger group and the nation.

The first glaring defect of the city-states was its attitude towards slaves and women. They were denied all participation in the civic and cultural life of the city. At the most, they were granted a very narrow life which was one full of sorrow, deprivation and suffering. Both the slave and women were meant to be used for the physical and vital comforts and desires of men. In India, slavery was not there, but it had its equivalent in the untouchability, the Shudras. It is true, this social problem is still prevalent all over the world in one form or another and human society has to go a long way before it can rid itself of this cancer.

The second defect, which has also not yet been mitigated, is that of war. As each city-state was insular, there was not much communication between city-states and the only relationship was that of war and conquest. It was not a war of expansion, as was the case in the movement of colonialism; it was a war of self-protection — a protection of one's own culture and comfort.

Because of these two defects Nature perhaps moved on to greater aggregates — the empire and the nation-unit. Seemingly paradoxical, in the process of history, it was the empire that is older than nation with the exception of Egypt, Israel and some stray attempts at building an Indian or a Chinese nation. It was, as it were Nature in its hurry leaped over the stage of nation-building! Or, was it that certain men of vision and ambition, 'colossal dreamers' forced this step of an empire-building over Nation? This was the case with Assyria, Macedon, Rome, Persia and Arabia.

Men like Alexander in the ancient times and Napoleon Bonaparte in modern times were such conscious empire-builders. Before a new-born nation could establish itself and lay the foundation of national unity or a national consciousness, a personality like Alexander threw himself into conquests of cities and nations and city-states, breaking the barriers of Greek world and

the Asiatic region and created, however short-lived, "an age of civilisation and soul-interchange." Augustus Caesar was another such person of 'commanding genius' and a massive force who founded the Roman empire, which later was consolidated by Julius Caesar. Immediately after Julius Caesar, the great empire was dominated by Roman ambition and dominance. Rome used Italy as a 'spring-board' to further its conquests and to enrich itself with the boot of the fallen cities and the slaves of the world market.

The early empires had only magnified instead of solving the root problems and defects of the city-states, namely, that of serfdom, women and wars. Secondly, they had destroyed the smaller units by using 'them into food for the dominant organ'. And once nations like Egypt, Spain, Gaul were squeezed out of their essential life-force, the 'voracious centre*' had nothing to live on, and, over a period of time the empires weakened inwardly and later collapsed as a corpse at the first violent attack from the living force of the barbarian races.

On the similar pattern of the Roman and the Macedonian empires, other empire-aggregates were attempted during the medieval period and again in the early 17th and 18th centuries. The Holy Roman Empire of Charlemagne, the empire of the Caliphs in West Asia, Africa and Spain—in the medieval period, and the German dream of a world empire under the domination of the Aryan Race, the French and the British attempts in colonialism - all tried to base themselves on the Roman model. But, in a matter of a couple of centuries all attempts to revive the Roman success failed. "It is as if Nature had said, 'That experiment has been carried once to the logical consequences and once is enough. I have made new conditions...'"¹

It was as if Nature had realised its mistake and it retraced its experiments of empire-aggregates and started afresh on the necessary and logical step of nation-building.

Stages of Nation-Building

In the formation of every human aggregates Nature has followed a definite rhythm of development. She provided first a natural body, then a common life-interest that was the base for the constituents of that body and lastly a 'conscious mind' which is capable of governing and helping the central ego to express and to fulfill itself. The formation of a nation-unit also followed a similar process. The natural body, or the scaffolding or framework needed for building a nation is the first necessity. For this "a kind of lesser yet sufficiently compelling order of society and common type of civilisation" was needed. And in most of the nations such a "compelling order of society" was provided by the structure of social hierarchy of classes. In Western countries, this structure was that of priesthood, nobility, mercantile community and the proletariat. In India, we had the structure of the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, the Vysya and the Shudra classes. In other words, everywhere there were the four different social

activities — spiritual, political, mercantile and service — which became the framework in the formation of nation. It is interesting to note that in the Islamic countries where this social structure was never allowed to develop because of their dominant principle of equality and brotherhood, the nation-building never succeeded and it is only in the present century that out of the pressure of modern ideas and the fear of alien conquest that they have forged themselves into Nations.

The second stage of nation-building is that of “a period of stringent organisation” which would centralise the whole national administration. This is indeed the stage of bitter struggle between the sacerdotal and the military, because what this stage attempted was to bring all power into the hands of a monarchy or kingship. In this process, the history of Europe and the struggle between its Church and Monarchy, is a singular example. Nations passing through the second stage must choose to separate the spiritual and the secular leadership or else combine them in a single authority. Italy is an example of the latter, while England is the example of the former principle. In India the Rajputs achieved in separating the king and the Brahmin while the Sikhs under Guru Nanak combined the spiritual and the secular under the Khalsa. Otherwise in the rest of the country, there was the dominance of the Brahmin, a caste that guided the king as well as the people, but they themselves did not rule or administer. This dominance of this caste, which never stood aside and let the centralisation take place in tune with the demand of times, stood in the formation of the nation-building. A greater foreign ruler was needed to subjugate and remove this caste and make way for the secular and Kshatriya power to come forward and take up the reigns of the nation. In countries where the transfer of power took place smoothly or after great war and bloodshed, the formation of nation-building took place rapidly. It is in this light and evolutionary necessity that the kingship of a country became so very important and even to the extent of being considered sacred and of divine origin and right.

But once the nation was well-formed and got centralised in the king — ‘*L’etat c’est Moi,*’ ‘I am the State’ — the monarchy came tumbling down. All the four classes, revolted, as if, in a chorus and executed the authority of the monarchy. There was a complete collapse of the old world and the birth of a new age was on the horizon.

This is the third stage in the nation-building process. It is “a period of free external development as soon as the formation is assured and unity has become a mental and vital habit”.² So it happened. After the guillotining of Louis XVI, the French Revolution gave to the new world, that was in the birth-pangs, a new ideal- Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. And the twentieth century has been for most countries the time to realise and to consolidate these three ideals.

Now is the next step beyond nation, internationalism, a world-union. For, just as a village or a city-state survives and prospers and lives only in the

background of the whole nation, so too a nation can exist meaningfully and healthily only through the life of a world union or human unity. If the nations do not move consciously and willingly towards the largest human aggregate, the world-union, then Nature may force it down upon them under crushing circumstances. The transition from the old order of a nationhood to internationalism has to take place, it is the inevitable next stage of human evolution.

Unification of Mankind

Never before has the ideal of human unity been more in the front of human consciousness than in the present times. We do not know if Nature is just testing humanity to see if it is ready for the harmony of mankind that she has been planning. However, this ideal has become a concrete force that shall influence, if not determine as yet, the major changes and upheavals of the world. The mind of man is caught by it and it is being strengthened by the material and economic circumstances, especially the scientific and technological advancements which have tied up the globe in a single web of communicative internet. The elite of humanity has heard the call of the future, but the mass of humanity has yet to hear and respond to this summons from the Future.

The response from peoples and nations is still forthcoming because of the basic difficulties involved in the unification of mankind. The first difficulty is whether the collective egoisms, the nations, are ready to be abolished or modified in the interest of an external unity. Secondly, there is the doubt if the external unity, whatever its form, will not crush the freedom of the individual and the free expression of the national aggregates in the name of unity. Lastly, it is to be debated whether such a unity can be maintained by economic, political or administrative forces or there is the need for such a unity to be preceded by some kind of a 'moral and spiritual oneness'. For, if there is no real change of the heart and mind, all efforts at human unity are foredoomed to failure.

In spite of these difficulties, the effort towards unification must go on for unification of humanity is a thing decreed.

First Stage of Unification

Till the formation of the nation-unit, the original unit of the human aggregate has been the family. Similarly, for all aggregates beyond the level of the nation, the nation-unit promises to be the real unit. There is something eternal about the nation-unit, something indestructible that withstands all ravages of conquest and colonisation. A nation is not formed out of common pacts of profit or alliances. It is made out of dreams and sufferings, labour and love, or as Ernest Renan puts it, "In the past a heritage of glory and regrets to share, in the future the same programme to realise, to have suffered, enjoyed, hoped together, that indeed is better than common customs and strategic frontiers;

that is what one understands in spite of diversities of race and language ... yes, common suffering unites more than common joy. In respect of the memories of a nation griefs are worth more than triumphs."³

The truth of a real national unity is so strong that "even nations which never in the past realised an outward unification" writes Sri Aurobindo, "to which Fate and circumstance and their own selves have been adverse, nations which have been full of centrifugal forces and easily overpowered by foreign intrusions, have yet always developed a centripetal force as well and arrived inevitably at organised oneness."⁴

This has been the case with Greece, which after its empire was broken up survived the ravages of barbarians and the Turkish yoke and ultimately regained its separate body identity. Such has been the case in our times with Germany — the two Wars could not divide it permanently. It has been once again fused into a single country.

India is another striking example of such a phenomenon. Its political history shows a succession of kingdoms and empires each of them being destroyed by centrifugal forces but there was a constant effort towards a nation building. It had always upheld the ideal of Samrat or Chakravarti Raja as seen in the *Mahabharata* or an imperial reign of justice. The psychological basis of unity was always present in India but it is the political unification which took almost two thousand years, even like France, Germany, modern Italy each of which took one to two thousand years to form into a unified national unit.

Since the essential psychological unity was there, since it had the external scaffolding of the social structure needed for making a nation, no amount of external pressure could permanently break India or disintegrate it. No external or internal forces could prevail against its 'obstinate subconscious necessity'.

A nation once it achieves the inner necessity of a psychological unity, it may be dominated or destroyed temporarily, but it refuses to be annihilated for good that it is because "the nation stands as the one living group-unit of humanity into which all others must merge or to which they must become subservient. Even old persistent race unities and cultural unities are powerless against it.... The nation in modern times is practically indestructible, unless it dies from within.... All modern attempts to destroy by force or break up a nation are foolish and futile, because they ignore this law of the natural evolution. Empires are still perishable political units; the nation is immortal. And so it will remain until a greater living unit can be found into which the nation-idea can merge in obedience to a superior attraction."⁵

Second Stage of Unification

The time has come for 'the nation to merge in obedience to a superior attraction* — the attraction of a human unity. The ideal of one human family has become

insistent and the nations which have found their psychological as well as their political unity, are becoming a hindrance in the further evolution of human aggregate. Just as the city-states or the religious forces could not baulk Nature's efforts in bringing about a nation-unity, so too, now, no nation or group of nations can arrest Nature's march towards the next evolutionary step—the human unity. The choice of the new form to be evolved is left to the nations, but the centralisation of the nations has to take place in whatever manner and form.

However, in the meanwhile, several alternatives stand before humanity, alternatives of the external form, that this ideal of human unity can take. Sri Aurobindo discusses a few amongst the most prominent ones. Just as in the second stage of the development of a nation, there came up a centralised monarchy, so too, if the nations cannot come to a swift formation of a unity, there could be the birth of a king-nation with the mission to break the national borders and to fuse them into some kind of a unity. It may not be by war, for a military conquest of the whole world is an impossibility of the present age, but by a successful diplomacy and with enough of skill to federate the different nation-constituents a king-nation could be born. At present, America is in such a position and earlier Germany had such an ambition of a king-nation. This may be a brutal method indeed, but, Nature may adopt this means of a temporary domination by a powerful country if “the incoherence is too great for the trend of unification to triumph.”

Another simpler possibility, if the nations realise their need and necessity and are willing to forego some of their interests would be an imperial aggregation consisting partly of federal, partly of confederate commonwealths or empires. With the present national egoism, this possibility may seem to be remote, but there are some steps that are being taken in this direction. Attempts like SAARC and ASEAN countries are such imperial units which could serve as ‘half-way house’ towards humanity, that is ‘an experiment in administrative and economic confederation on a large scale.’ They could also serve as a training in international living — one ‘common political family’ cutting across differences of race, traditions, colour and civilisation.

After the Second World War, one of the major steps taken to eliminate any future World War, was the establishment of an International Court. Because of the innate possibility of this law being obeyed by countries as long as it was expedient, it is necessary, wrote Sri Aurobindo in the early 1920s, that's some form of a ‘European Federation, however loose, is... essential’. In a footnote added before the publication of *The Ideal of Human Unity* he predicted that the “United States of Europe is now a practical possibility and has begun to feel towards self-accomplishment”⁶ This prediction became a reality of the present with the formation of E. E. C. (European Economic Community).

Based on similar principles, “the unity of mankind could most rationally and conveniently arrange itself upon the basis of a European grouping, an

Asiatic grouping, an American grouping, with two or three sub-groups in America, Latin and English-Speaking, three in Asia, the Mongolian, Indian and West-Asian, with Moslem North perhaps as a natural annex to the third of these, four in Europe, the Latin, Slavonic, Teutonic and Anglo- Celtic ..."⁷

All these steps of imperial aggregates may ultimately lead toward the formation of a World-State. In fact, the two great Wars shocked human sense of individual security, and the nations are forced to move to a collective and group security in some form of a world-state or a world-union. Of course, the formation of a world-state has to take place in a graded manner over a length of time, for, any haste may result in the recoil of the movement. Sri Aurobindo traces the process of this evolution as thus:

At first, taking up the regulation of international disputes and of economic treaties and relations, the international authority would start as an arbiter and an occasional executive power and change by degrees into a legislative body and a standing executive power...

At first it might confine itself to the most important questions and affairs which obviously demanded itself to the most important questions and affairs which obviously demanded its control; but it would tend increasingly to stretch its hand to all or most matters that could be viewed as having an international effect and importance...

And eventually it would permeate the whole system of the national life and subject it to international control in the interests of the better co-ordination of the united-life, culture, science, organisation, education, efficiency of the human race. It would reduce the now free and separate nations first to the position of the States of the American Union... and eventually perhaps to that of geographical provinces... of the single nation of mankind.⁸

We see that the process of the formation of a World-State is similar to the process of centralisation adopted by a Nation-Unit. Depending on the psychological pressures from within or a shock of forces from outside, the World-State would have to become a symbol of human race providing the nations and the peoples of the constituent nations common benefits which would outweigh the advantages of nationhood. The World-authority has to abolish the sharp divisions of race, colour, religion, country which are the cause of a major suffering of humanity. Instead, it has to bring about a sense of common humanity and collective life on a global scale.

The gains of a World-State would be immense, indeed. Firstly, there would be an assured peace of the world, a state of existence for which mankind has been even dreaming. In such an atmosphere of co-existence, all the negative forces of mind would be put to use for the well-being of all the nations with the added advantage that the best minds of the world would work as one instead of working separately and against each other. This could lead to unprecedented efflorescence of cultural and intellectual activities for there would be a common

fund of monies, ideas, energies. There would be something like a golden age with a global ease and amenity in the development of human life. All humanity would enjoy a kindly and friendly disposition towards each other and there would be a near "fraternity" though not a real brotherhood for true brotherhood cannot come by mere political peace or a social and cultural union.

But this utopian world may not last long. Like the Roman empire, it may undergo a static condition, leading to stagnation, decay and disintegration. The main reason for this predictable collapse is that the 'conditions of a vigorous life would be lost', there will not be liberty and mobile variation, essential in a thriving life of humanity. It is true that democracy would be the guiding principle of a world-state, but, 'democracy is by no means a sure preservative of liberty*. Democracy, for what it has come out to be nowadays is a tyranny of the majority, suffocating the individual's sense of well-being. And such a tyranny would be felt a hundred-fold more if man were to be exposed to the tyranny of the whole mankind.

Secondly, in trying to bring unity, the World-State may end up in a steam-rolled uniformity 'enforced practical convenience'. This may result in abolishing national individuality and cultural variation; it would be a kind of death in life for the individual. Such a suppression is bound to bring forth a reaction and a revolt from the intellectual, vital and spiritual seekings. "A centralised mechanical World-State must rouse in the end a similar force against it and might well terminate in a crumbling up and disintegration, even in the necessity for a repetition of the cycle of humanity ending in a better attempt to solve the problem."⁹

If the formation of a World-State is predestined to failure because of its inherent faults, then, the only way left for mankind to unite itself is in the form of a World-Union which may be either 'a close federation or a simple confederacy of the people for the common ends of mankind'. Unlike the World-State which may regard the nations and the geographical groupings as 'so many conveniences for provincial division, for the convenience of administration', a World-Union would maintain the living diversity of people and nations, for the very basis of a World-Union would be a complex unity based on a diversity and that diversity must be based on free self-determination'. There would be a free grouping of nations depending upon their freewill and natural affinities. The present groupings of nations like SAARC and ASEAN and EEC are more based on economic and cultural affinities. But there could be a coherence of nations divided by geographical distance but united by a common culture like Australia and England.

In a World-Union the advantages would be far superior to those seen in a World-State. There would be peace and no military aggression. There would be a variety of cultures and nations, but no dominance of the stronger over the weaker nations, for all differences would be sorted out by agreement or arbitration. The forceful exploitation on the economic front would disappear

though there would remain a peaceful economic struggle and separativeness based on mutual accommodation and settling of differences by common agreement.

This ideal unification of mankind may not be practicable at present and we may be too far from it because the prerequisite conditions for such a unification do not yet exist. However, the creation of the U. N. O. after the Second War promises to take human unity towards this goal. In its present status, the U. N. O may not be very effective but some such arranged centre of order has become indispensable 'if modern civilisation is not to collapse in bloodshed and chaos'.

It is the 'capital event', says Sri Aurobindo, 'the crucial and decisive outcome' of Nature's working towards a human unity. It forms the beginning of an outer basis for a 'fairer and brighter and nobler life for all mankind'. In spite of its 'blunders and the malignancies' that may jeopardise its very existence, the future of the world depends on U. N. O. and it must be preserved, mended where it is faulty though, a too hasty endeavour to rectify its defects may lead to 'a crash of the whole edifice'. The leaders of the nations who are responsible in making decisions in U. N. O must find ways to circumvent, without breaking the institution, all the obstinate difficulties and oppositions. They must work with patience and an open-mind and 'the frustration of the world's hope prevented at any cost'. There is, on the horizon of human evolution, no other organisation or way except U. N. O that could take humanity towards its destiny, unless and until there is the miracle of the change of human nature or there is a greater way or solution laid open by the Divine Will.

Out of its several different attempts to bring together the nations and to bring in peace to humanity, the U. N. O. tried to have an international control through 'a composite armed force of control set over the nations and their separate military strength'. Though it has used this control successfully in some instances, there have been instances when some nations refused to participate in some military operations initiated by the U. N. O. This is, therefore, an inherent problem in this system, namely, the affiliations of the soldiers of the composite army be more with their nation than with the nebulous entity of the U. N. O.

In the recent years, there has been an attempt at the limitation of armies and armaments. The move began with U. S. A. and U. S. S. R. but this ideal stood ineffective as soon as the clash of war became a reality as was exemplified by the U. S. A and Iran war. What we learn from this move is that it can only lighten the national burden in peace but actually 'it cannot prevent or even minimise the disastrous intensity and extension of war'. Ultimately, even if war were to be eliminated or minimised by a strange twist of circumstances, the internal strife within the constituent countries would use arms and armies to crush or to control the revolts against injustice and oppression and violation of human rights.

After the break-up of the U. S. S. R, there is an attempt by the U. S. A to become a dominant Power with the support of European allies and with the 'monopoly of an overwhelming superiority in the use of some of the tremendous' weaponry that science has put at its use.

The nations of the world have realised this ominous danger and they have put forward the idea of a nuclear test ban with the idea of preventing the military use of these inventions. But 'so long as the nature of mankind has not changed, this prevention must remain uncertain and precarious', for the unscrupulous ambition of the dominant power may use this nuclear weaponry. In the present condition of the world, such a possibility may seem impossible, but the possibility has to be noted and measures of prevention have to be taken —one of them being the total and not partial ban of the nuclear test, the stand taken by India.

Apart from these attempts at world peace and unity, the U. N. O has to move positively towards some outer form. There are two alternatives that present themselves as possibilities. A federation of free nationalities on the model adopted in the formation of the U. S. A and Australia. In this form all nations would have an equal status. But a confederacy of nations for a common goal, wedded to the ideal of 'removal of all causes of strife and difference' and yet enjoying 'full internal freedom and power of self-determination,' is another alternative.

These two possibilities, the world-federation and the world-confederation, although the best alternatives for the future of humanity, also are not without inherent weaknesses. A federal system, as is seen in the U. S. A, tends towards a 'general type of human life, institutions and activities', for the attitudes of the federal government do trickle down to the state level influencing the institutions and the law controlled by the states. A federal government on the international level also would eradicate all the variation of cultures leaving room for a play of minor variation only. On the other hand, a confederacy, being a much looser unity wherein the nations are just allied keeping independent their governments and cultures, may invite centrifugal forces. 'The spirit of separativeness and the causes of clash' may ultimately take over and the confederacy may break up and get back into its original elements.

Any system or form of the U. N. O. — may be a federation or a confederation — which has been brought together on the basis of political ideas and machinery, wooing the nations with economic advantages, that is, 'by the idea of and experience of the material advantages, conveniences, well-being secured by unification, is bound to break down ultimately, by the suppressed desire of the constituent nations to recover the lost element of variation and independence. The only solution to keep together a world-union, irrespective of what form it takes, a World-State, a World-Federation or a World-Confederation — is an inner change of human heart and mind.

“That change would be the growth of the living idea or religion of humanity, for only so could there come the psychological modification of life and feeling and outlook which would accustom both individual and group to live in their common humanity first and most, subduing their individual and group egoism, yet losing nothing of their individual or group-power to develop and express in its own way the divinity in man which, once the race was assured of its material existence, would emerge as the true object of human existence.”¹⁰

Third Stage of Unification

Just as in the formation of a nation, there is the third stage of detente and devolution of central authority towards an equality and freedom - the monopoly and privileges of kings disbanned, the bourgeois capitalism reduced to an economic order in which the suffering of the poor is sought to be eliminated, dignity and freedom of man restored, - there has got to be in the unification of mankind such a third stage when the national-units, though politically united under one roof, must move towards a deeper bond of unity, mutuality and harmony. One of the strongest features that the nation has developed in its attempts at unification and harmony was the religion of country, not an officially established religion, but the country itself looked upon as a deity, like the idea of Bharatmata.

A similar psychological force has to be developed to bring about unity, mutuality and harmony amongst the nations of the world to keep them united under one roof. Man has to recognise that he belongs to a single Soul of humanity of which each man and each people is an incarnation and soul-form. The practical means of achieving this psychological oneness is education and a religion of humanity.

A true and living education, in whatever system, must emphasise upon three things — the man, the nation and universal humanity. A proper education must bring out all that is in the individual man - his physical, vital and mental capacities. At the same time, the individual must be taught about the true nature and culture and the proper role of one's country in the terrestrial orchestra. He has to be helped to enter into his right relation with the life and society and soul of the country to which he belongs. Along with the idealism of one's country, the individual must be given 'a wider understanding of the role of other nations' which form 'a separate and yet inseparable' part of the soul of humanity.

Internationalism, which is at present a living fact of humanity, grew up out of a historical necessity — a need based upon political, economic, mechanical factors and the desire for a great international coordination which would promote not only economic and political interests of a country but also avert the danger of a global war. The basic attitude of internationalism, on a psychological

level, is that it looks at man in his manhood 'only', not at his background of social status or birth or colour or rank or nationality or creed. Science and technology have helped establish this idea of internationalism; scientific spirit is in itself an international spirit and the present world being strongly under the sway of scientific attitude has spread this attitude of internationalism. But, as the situation is today, this idea of internationalism has caught only the mind of the ruling bodies of governments or elitist sections of society only, it has not sunk into the deeper levels of life itself. A greater element is required to make internationalism a living reality.

The intellectual religion of humanity, of which the spirit of internationalism is the outer, mental expression, is the shadow of a spirit that is yet unborn, but is preparing for its birth. Though not yet fully bodied, the idea of the religion of humanity is at present a mind-born reality.

The religion of humanity with its based idealism has by now achieved many things which an orthodox religion could not do. As its faith is in humanity and its earthly' future, unlike orthodox religion which has its eyes on a life beyond death, the religion of humanity, has to some degree "humanised society, humanised law and punishment, humanised the outlook of man on man, abolished legalised torture and the cruder forms of slavery... stimulated philanthropy and charity and service of mankind, encouraged everywhere the desire of freedom ... but it was a remarkable record for a century and a half or a little more..."¹¹

In spite of its grand achievements, this ideal of the religion of humanity has not been able to achieve the eternal aspiration of man—"love, mutual recognition of human brotherhood, a living sense of human oneness and practice of human oneness in thought, feeling and life, the ideal which was expressed first some thousands of years ago in the ancient Vedic hymn ('One and common be your aspiration, united your hearts, common to you be your mind, — so that close companionship be yours.' *Rig Veda*, X, 191) and must always remain the highest injunction of the spirit within us to human life upon earth".¹² The cause of this failure is obvious — the religion of humanity, like all other religious efforts, addressed itself more to the mind and the emotion of humanity and not to the inner being of man. Therefore, it got stuck with 'the egoism of the individual, the egoism of class and nation and thereby could not realise the third ideal of the French Revolution, fraternity or brotherhood.

The religion of humanity has, therefore, to take a spiritual dimension if it has to fulfil its mission. A spiritual dimension does not mean a universal religion because there can be no such religion 'one in mental creed and vital form'. The spiritual dimension means "the growing realisation that there is a secret spirit, a divine Reality, in which we are all one, that humanity is its highest present vehicle on earth, that the human race and the human being are the means by which it will progressively reveal itself here... There must be a realisation by the individual that only in the life of his fellow-men is his own

life complete. There must be the realisation by the race that only on the free and full life of the individual can its own perfection and permanent happiness be founded".¹³

In order to make this spiritual oneness as the base of the psychological oneness, independent of all outward or mechanical uniformity, what is needed is a growing number of men who will realise this truth and seek to develop it in themselves, "so that when the mind of man is ready to escape from its mechanical bent, — perhaps when it finds that the mechanical solutions are all temporary and disappointing, — the truth of the Spirit may step in and lead humanity to the path of its highest possible perfection".¹⁴

In the meanwhile, until such a number of men of spiritual realisation of humanity's truth increases and becomes influential, the work of the mechanical means of human unity must proceed.

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(N.B.: This article, based on *The Ideal of Human Unity*, presents the book's major arguments.)

TAGORE'S POETRY AND SONGS : AN APPROACH THROUGH SRI AUROBINDO

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Sri Aurobindo began writing the *Future Poetry* in 1917 at the end of his great prose series, *The Life Divine*, *Essays on the Gita*, the *Human Cycle* and the *Synthesis of Yoga*, as if to offer his final statement of knowledge. Sisirkumar Ghose rightly observes : "Sri Aurobindo, places poetry, fairly and firmly, at the centre of human knowledge and activities, as the leader of our inner progress, the divine *Agni*, the sacred fire in our creative evolution". (SKG:51:1969). Ghose was certainly thinking of Sri Aurobindo's own words from *The Future Poetry*, where he was focusing again and again on Tagore as a pioneer of a new poetry. Sri Aurobindo writes :

Poetry and art most of all our powers can help to bring this truth home to the mind of man with an illumining and catholic force, for while philosophy may lose itself in abstractions and religion turn to an intolerant otherworldliness and asceticism, poetry and art are born mediators between the material and the concrete, the spirit and life (F P 1994:199)

The passage is something like an introduction to Tagore's achievement as a poet-singer, who seems to have been quite deliberate in reviving the upanishadic spirit of poetry in his newly created Bengali language.

By 1917, Sri Aurobindo had known the Bengali language sufficiently enough to go deep into the texture of Tagore's poetry and songs. Although Sri Aurobindo rated *Gitanjali* as a masterpiece in a letter written to K.D.Sethna on the 11th of July, 1931, his eyes and ears were on the original Bengali songs and lyrics.

Sri Aurobindo was talking of the new possibilities in the English poetry, which poets like Whitman, Carpenter, A.E. and Yeats had opened up. The inclusion of a Bengali poet in that cluster, repeated focus on him and highlights on his exact achievement, show he was taking Tagore very seriously as a modern *mantric* poet. While talking of the return of the *rishi*, the *Kavi*, Sri Aurobindo uses the compound word "poet-singer" too frequently, which is a significant clue to the fact that he is drawing our attention to the musical atmosphere of *mantric* poetry.

I shall just cite one passage on Tagore to explain what Sri Aurobindo has exactly found in his songs and poetry.

The poetry of Tagore owes its sudden and universal success to this advantage that he gives us more of this discovery and fusion for which the mind of our age is in quest than any other creative writer of the time. His work is a constant overpassing of the borders, a chant-filled realm in which

the subtle sounds and lights of the truth of the spirit give new meanings to the finer subtleties of life (SABCL 9:1972:229).

By “chant-filled realm”, Sri Aurobindo is meaning the incantatory musical world of Tagore. By the word ‘discovery’, he means Tagore’s ability to discover the *Word*, that rhythmic speech, which rises at once from the heart of the seer and from the distant home of the Truth. However, the word ‘fusion’ is curious. Most probably Sri Aurobindo is meaning here Tagore’s absolute mastery of fusing words with music, which come to him as an automatic fusion, as incantatory music, which goes beyond all analysis. Even in transcreations at times, the rhythmic speech is transferred to the English language.

That gleaming look from the dark came upon me like a breeze that sends a shiver through the rippling water and sweeps away to the shadowy shore (Das 1994:94).

or

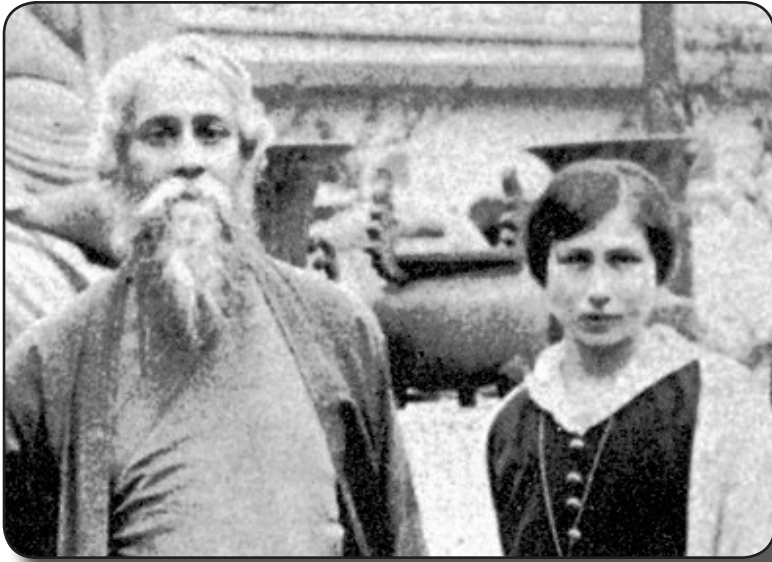
A flutter of a flitting touch brushed me and vanished in a moment like a torn flower petal blown in the breeze (Das: 1994:95).

Sisir Kumar Das has spoken adversely against the translations in the *Gardener* (Das: 1994-24). But these two instances from the *Gardener* catch something of the Infinite in miracled moments of discovery. The poet discovers a secret vibration in his soul and we cannot really analyse it with the intellect. If Sri Aurobindo selects Whitman and Carpenter for their vast rhythmic sweep of large-heartedness, he finds in Tagore another variety in the elements of sweetness of the All-Beautiful manifested on earth. The mystic soul of Tagore finds its echo everywhere before his eyes, the far-away stars of his beloved “Thou”, the joyful rivulet dancing down the hills through the plains, the smell of flowers, the glowworm in bushes, the boatman ferrying him across the river, the flock of birds moving across the infinite azure and so many things before our eyes which had made Emerson record that wonderful apophthegm in “The American Scholar”: “This shadow of the soul or Other me”. The sudden outburst of enthusiasm around Tagore’s poetry and songs in the millennium indicates man’s secret yearning for a poetry that had sought to refine human consciousness in the past.

Works Cited

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- Sisirkumar Ghose. *The Poetry of Sri Aurobindo*, Calcutta: Chatuskone, 1969.
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THE MOTHER AND RABINDRANATH TAGORE



The Mother with Rabindranath Tagore

Photo Courtesy : www.sriaurobindoashram.info

The Mother met Tagore again in 1919 in Kyoto. She is seen with him in a group photograph taken there.

The Mother: "I was with Tagore in Japan. He claimed to have reached the peace of Nirvana and he was beaming with joy. I thought: "here is a man who claims to have got the peace and reached Nirvana. Let us see." I asked him to meditate with me and I followed him in meditation and found that he had reached just behind the vital and the mind: a sort of emptiness. I waited and waited to see if he would go beyond; I wanted to follow him. But he would not go further. I found that he was supremely satisfied and believed that he had entered Nirvana." (http://www.aurobindo.ru/persons/00138_e.htm)