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In our prayers, we often ask our gods for protection - for ourselves as well as for others. Protection from what?

From the calamities that we see striking all others around us - natural upheavals that leave one floundering in the dark, diseases that deliver one's last breath, unforeseen events that render one homeless, hungry, penniless. We ask for our loved ones to be protected from the wrath of demons disguised in the garb of humans who feed on vulnerability and innocence. We almost plead to protect the children of the world from the suffering that robs them of their smiles.

But how often do we ask to be protected from ourselves? Do we ever ask for protection against our own weaknesses? Are these not greater than any foe we may encounter in the outside world? Do they not wreak havoc in our lives, more destructive than the worst tempest? These are the damnable demons that we house within and to ask for protection from these forces of suffering becomes paramount for us.

Recognize these, and the way to the Light only becomes brighter. We may not all have the immense strength required to eliminate our weaknesses but we certainly can take the first and most important step - pray for protection.

Until the next time...

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# *Eternally Yours*

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*Lord, give us the indomitable courage  
that comes from a perfect trust in Thee.*

*The Mother*



# Living Words

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*When you are truly changed,  
everything around you  
will also be changed.*

*The Mother*





# Flowers and their Messages

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For the month of March we had the flower "Correct Perception". For this month we have chosen the flower with the spiritual significance "Correct self-evaluation", as part of our theme 'Qualities required for living'.



<b>Spiritual Name</b>	Correct self-evaluation "Simple and modest, does not try to put itself forward."
<b>Botanical Name</b>	Jasminum humile
<b>Common Name</b>	Italian yellow jasmine

## **General Description**

Correct self-evaluation is an evergreen shrub or loose vine which grows up to 3m with compound leaves. It has yellow small salver form flowers which are fragrant. The flowers are borne on sparse umbellate clusters. The flowering season is from July to August.

The plant can be propagated best by seeds. It grows well in a good well-drained loam in sunny conditions. Pruning can be carried out in early to mid spring. Removing one third of the oldest growth down to ground level rejuvenates the plant and encourages greater flowering.

This plant has many medicinal values and it used as an astringent, decongestant or tonic for heart and general tonic. The leaves and bark are used as condiment or in tea.

## **Quotes from the Mother on to know oneself correctly**


Everything people say is of little importance, because human judgments are always partial and therefore ignorant.

To know oneself, one must look at oneself with a higher and deeper consciousness which can discern the true causes of reactions and feelings.

A superficial observation cannot help. And so long as one is not in contact with one's psychic being, it would be better to strive always to do as well as possible and be as good as one can, instead of passing one's time in useless analysis.

The Mother

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## Question of the Month

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### **What is my field of work? How best to help others?**

We often receive questions from aspirants, who are not satisfied with their present lives, who are trying to find a meaning in their lives, a deeper reason for why things happen as they do, and who are searching for a light to guide them in their actions.

Each month we take a question of this nature and present an answer based on the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, with the belief that this could be of help to a larger number of persons. We welcome further comments on making our endeavour beneficial to all.

Somewhere within each of us there is this urge, this aspiration to know what really is my work in life, what can I do which will give a meaning and value to my life for myself and for others. And to this is often added the wish to serve and help others in the best way.

*Question : What exactly is my field of work? What is it that I have to do upon earth? How best can I help and serve others? Is it very important to know oneself?*

Here is the Mother's beautiful, short and simple, yet very deep and practical answer.

Very important, of capital importance! Besides, that's the field of work given to each one. It is this one must understand, that each one-this totality of substance constituting your inner and outer body, the totality of substance with which your being is built from the outermost to the inmost-is a field of work; it is as though one had gathered together carefully, accumulated a certain number of vibrations and put them at your disposal for you to work upon them fully. It is like a field of action constantly at your disposal: night and day, awake or asleep, all the time-nobody can take it away from you, it is wonderful! You may refuse to use it (as most people do), but it is a mass to be transformed that is there in your hands, fully at your disposal, given to you so that you may learn to work upon it. So, the most important thing is to begin by doing that.

You can do nothing for others unless you are able to do it for yourself. You can never give a good advice to anyone unless you are able to give it to yourself first, and to follow it. And if you see a difficulty somewhere, the best way of changing this difficulty is to change it in yourself first. If you see a defect in anyone, you may be sure it is in you, and you begin to change it in yourself. And when you will have changed it in yourself, you will be strong enough to change it in others.

And this is a wonderful thing, people don't realise what an infinite grace it is that this universe is arranged in such a way that there is a collection of substance, from the most

material to the highest spiritual, all that gathered together into what is called a small individual, but at the disposal of a central Will. And that is yours, your field of work, nobody can take it away from you, it is your own property. And to the extent you can work upon it, you will be able to have an action upon the world. But only to that extent. One must do more for oneself, besides, than one does for others....

I don't think, truly, sincerely I don't think that it is possible to help anyone unless one has already helped oneself first. If you are unconscious, how do you expect to bring consciousness into others! This seems to me an insoluble problem. That is what people usually do, but that's no reason for approving it. This is exactly why, I believe, things go so wrong. It is like those who seeing others quarrelling rush forward and begin shouting louder than they to tell them, "Keep quiet!"

The Mother

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*The Mother's commentaries on the Dhammapada were given between August 1957 and September 1958 to the members of Her Friday class at the Ashram Playground. After reading a chapter of the text, the Mother spoke about the points which interested Her and then asked the class to meditate on them. She did not systematically discuss all the Dhammapada verses, but she did cover most of the central ideas in the text.*

*We will be reproducing each of the sessions in order of sequence in this series.*

### **Those who take error for truth**

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## **The Mother**

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### **Conjugate Verses**

***Those who take error for truth, and the truth for error, will never attain the supreme goal, for they are led astray by vain desires and false views.***

A comment could be added; for, if one were satisfied with taking error for truth and truth for error, it should be logically very easy to make one's choice as soon as one found for some reason or other or with some help, what is truly the truth and what is truly the error; one adopts the truth and rejects the error. But unfortunately one loves one's error, somewhere in the being there is an unwillingness to recognise what is true.

My experience is like this: whenever you sincerely want to know the truth, you do know it. There is always something to point out the error to you, to make you recognise the truth. And if you observe yourself attentively you find out that it is because you prefer error that you do not find the truth.

Even in small details, the very smallest-not to speak of the big things of life, the big decisions that one has to take-even in the smallest things, whenever the aspiration for the truth and the will to be true are wholly sincere, the indication always comes. And precisely, with the method of the Buddhist discipline, if you follow up within yourself the causes of your way of being, you always find out that persistence in error comes from desire. It is because you have the preference, the desire to feel, to act, to think in a particular way, that you make the mistake. It is not simply because you do not know what is true. You do not know it precisely because you say in a vague, general, imprecise way, "Oh, I want the truth." In fact, if you take a detail, each detail, and put your finger on it,

you discover that you are playing the ostrich in order not to see. You put up something uncertain, something vague, a veil, in order not to see behind it.

Whenever there is sincerity, you find that the help, the guidance, the grace are always there to give you the answer and you are not mistaken for long.

It is this sincerity in the aspiration for progress, in the will for truth, in the need to be truly pure-pure as it is understood in the spiritual life-it is this sincerity which is the key to all progress. With it you know-and you can.

There is always, somewhere in the being, something which prefers to deceive itself, otherwise the light is there, always ready to guide, but you shut your eyes in order not to see it.

*22 November 1957*

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*Sri Aurobindo observed that the "Upanishads are at once profound religious scriptures, - for they are a record of the deepest spiritual experiences, - documents of revelatory and intuitive philosophy of an inexhaustible light, power and largeness and, whether written in verse or in cadenced prose, spiritual poems of an absolute, an unfailing inspiration inevitable in phrase, wonderful in rhythm and expression." He further writes about the structure of the Upanishads: "There is a perfect totality, a comprehensive connection of harmonious parts in the structure of each Upanishad; but it is done in the way of a mind that sees masses of truth at a time and stops to bring only the needed word out of a filled silence. The rhythm in verse or cadenced prose corresponds to the sculpture of the thought and the phrase. The metrical forms of the Upanishads are made up of the four half-lines each clearly cut, the lines mostly complete in themselves and integral in sense, the half-lines presenting two thoughts or distinct parts of a thought that are wedded to and complete each other, and the sound movement follows a corresponding principle, each step brief and marked off by the distinctness of its pause, full of echoing cadences that remain long vibrating in the inner hearing: each is as if a wave of the infinite that carries in it the whole voice and rumour of the ocean. It is a kind of poetry, - word of vision, rhythm of the spirit, - that has not been written before or after."*

*We present below the verses nine, ten and eleven of the Isha Upanishad translated by Sri Aurobindo along with a commentary.*

## ईशोपनिषद् īśopaniṣad

### Third Movement Verse 9-11

अन्धं तमः प्रविशन्ति ये ऽविद्यामुपासते ।

ततो भूय इव ते तमो य उ विद्यायां रताः ॥

andhaṁ tamaḥ praviśanti ye 'vidyām upāsate  
tato bhūya iva te tamo ya u vidyāyāṁ ratāḥ.

**Into a blind darkness they enter who follow after the ignorance, they as if into a greater darkness who devote themselves to the knowledge alone.**

अन्यदेवाहुर्विद्ययाऽन्यदाहुरविद्यया ।

इति शुश्रुम धीराणां ये नस्तद्विचक्षिरे ॥

anyadevāhurvidyayā'nyadāhuravidyayā  
iti śuśrūma dhīrāṇām ye nastadvicacakṣire.

**Other, verily, it is said, is that which comes by the knowledge, other that which comes by the ignorance; this is the lore we have received from the wise who revealed That to our understanding.**

विद्याञ्चाविद्याञ्च यस्तद्वेदोभयं सह ।

अविद्यया मृत्युं तीर्त्वा विद्ययामृतमश्नुते ॥

vidyāñcāvidyāñca yastadvedobhayaṁ saha  
avidyayā mṛtyuṁ tīrtvā vidyayāmṛtamāśnute.

**He who knows That as both in one, the knowledge and the ignorance, by the ignorance crosses beyond death and by the knowledge enjoys immortality.**

## Commentary

### Knowledge And Ignorance

#### Vidya and Avidya

All manifestation proceeds by the two terms, Vidya and Avidya, the consciousness of Unity and the consciousness of Multiplicity. They are the two aspects of the Maya, the formative self-conception of the Eternal.

Unity is the eternal and fundamental fact, without which all multiplicity would be unreal and an impossible illusion. The consciousness of Unity is therefore called Vidya, the Knowledge.

Multiplicity is the play or varied self-expansion of the One, shifting in its terms, divisible in its view of itself, by force of which the One occupies many centres of consciousness, inhabits many formations of energy in the universal Movement.

Multiplicity is implicit or explicit in unity. Without it the Unity would be either a void of non-existence or a powerless, sterile limitation to the state of indiscriminate self-absorption or of blank repose.

But the consciousness of multiplicity separated from the true knowledge in the many of their own essential oneness,-the viewpoint of the separate ego identifying itself with the divided form and the limited action,-is a state of error and delusion. In man this is the

form taken by the consciousness of multiplicity. Therefore it is given the name of Avidya, the Ignorance.

Brahman, the Lord, is one and all-blissful, but free from limitation by His unity; all-powerful, He is able to conceive Himself from multiple centres in multiple forms from which and upon which flow multiple currents of energy, seen by us as actions or play of forces. When He is thus multiple, He is not bound by His multiplicity, but amid all variations dwells eternally in His own oneness. He is Lord of Vidya and Avidya. They are the two sides of His self-conception (Maya), the twin powers of His Energy (Chit-Shakti).

Brahman, exceeding as well as dwelling in the play of His Maya, is ish, lord of it and free. Man, dwelling in the play, is anish, not lord, not free, subject to Avidya. But this subjection is itself a play of the Ignorance, unreal in essential fact (paramartha), real only in practical relation (vyavahara), in the working out of the actions of the divine Energy, the Chit-Shakti. To get back to the essential fact of his freedom he must recover the sense of Oneness, the consciousness of Brahman, of the Lord, realise his oneness in Brahman and with the Lord. Recovering his freedom, realising his oneness with all existences as becomings of the One Being who is always himself (so'ham asmi, He am I), he is able to carry out divine actions in the world, no longer subject to the Ignorance, because free in the Knowledge.

The perfection of man, therefore, is the full manifestation of the Divine in the individual through the supreme accord between Vidya and Avidya. Multiplicity must become conscious of its oneness, Oneness embrace its multiplicity.

### **The Extreme Paths**

The purpose of the Lord in the world cannot be fulfilled by following Vidya alone or Avidya alone.

Those who are devoted entirely to the principle of multiplicity and division and take their orientation away from oneness enter into a blind darkness of Ignorance. For this tendency is one of increasing contraction and limitation, disaggregation of the gains of knowledge and greater and greater subjection to the mechanical necessities of Prakriti and finally to her separative and self-destructive forces. To turn away from the progression towards Oneness is to turn away from existence and from light.

Those who are devoted entirely to the principle of indiscriminate Unity and seek to put away from them the integrality of the Brahman, also put away from them knowledge and completeness and enter as if into a greater darkness. They enter into some special state and accept it for the whole, mistaking exclusion in consciousness for transcendence in consciousness. They ignore by choice of knowledge, as the others are ignorant by compulsion of error. Knowing all to transcend all is the right path of Vidya.

Although a higher state than the other, this supreme Night is termed a greater darkness, because the lower is one of chaos from which reconstitution is always possible, the higher is a conception of Void or Asat, an attachment to non-existence of Self from which it is more difficult to return to fulfilment of Self.

### **The Gains in Either Path**

Pursued with a less entire attachment the paths of Vidya and Avidya have each their legitimate gains for the human soul, but neither of these are the full and perfect thing undertaken by the individual in the manifestation.

By Vidya one may attain to the state of the silent Brahman or the Akshara Purusha regarding the universe without actively participating in it or to His self-absorbed state of Chit in Sat from which the universe proceeds and towards which it returns. Both these states are conditions of serenity, plenitude, freedom from the confusions and sufferings of the world.

But the highest goal of man is neither fulfilment in the movement as a separate individual nor in the Silence separated from the movement, but in the Uttama Purusha, the Lord, He who went abroad and upholds in Himself both the Kshara and the Akshara as modes of His being. The self of man, the Jivatman, is here in order to realise in the individual and for the universe that one highest Self of all. The ego created by Avidya is a necessary mechanism for affirming individuality in the universal as a starting-point for this supreme achievement.

By Avidya one may attain to a sort of fullness of power, joy, world-knowledge, largeness of being, which is that of the Titans or of the Gods, of Indra, of Prajapati. This is gained in the path of self-enlargement by an ample acceptance of the multiplicity in all its possibilities and a constant enrichment of the individual by all the materials that the universe can pour into him. But this also is not the goal of man; for though it brings transcendence of the ordinary human limits, it does not bring the divine transcendence of the universe in the Lord of the universe. One transcends confusion of Ignorance, but not limitation of Knowledge,-transcends death of the body, but not limitation of being,-transcends subjection to sorrow, but not subjection to joy,-transcends the lower Prakriti, but not the higher. To gain the real freedom and the perfect Immortality one would have to descend again to all that had been rejected and make the right use of death, sorrow and ignorance.

The real knowledge is that which perceives Brahman in His integrality and does not follow eagerly after one consciousness rather than another, is no more attached to Vidya than to Avidya. This was the knowledge of the ancient sages who were dhira, steadfast in the gaze of their thought, not drawn away from the completeness of knowledge by one light or by another and whose perception of Brahman was consequently entire and comprehensive and their teaching founded on that perception equally entire and comprehensive (vicacakshire). It is the knowledge handed down from these Ancients that is being set forth in the Upanishad.

## **The Complete Path**

Brahman embraces in His manifestation both Vidya and Avidya and if they are both present in the manifestation, it is because they are both necessary to its existence and its accomplishment. Avidya subsists because Vidya supports and embraces it; Vidya depends upon Avidya for the preparation and the advance of the soul towards the great Unity. Neither could exist without the other; for if either were abolished, they would both pass away into something which would be neither the one nor the other, something inconceivable and ineffable beyond all manifestation.

In the worst Ignorance there is some point of the knowledge which constitutes that form of Ignorance and some support of Unity which prevents it in its most extreme division, limitation, obscurity from ceasing to exist by dissolving into nothingness. The destiny of the Ignorance is not that it should be dissolved out of existence, but that its elements should be enlightened, united, that which they strive to express delivered, fulfilled and in the fulfilment transmuted and transfigured.

In the uttermost unity of which knowledge is capable the contents of the Multiplicity are inherent and implicit and can any moment be released into activity. The office of Vidya is not to destroy Avidya as a thing that ought never to have been manifested but to draw it continually towards itself, supporting it the while and helping it to deliver itself progressively from that character of Ignorance, of the oblivion of its essential Oneness, which gives it its name.

Avidya fulfilled by turning more and more to Vidya enables the individual and the universal to become what the Lord is in Himself, conscious of His manifestation, conscious of His non-manifestation, free in birth, free in non-birth.

Man represents the point at which the multiplicity in the universe becomes consciously capable of this turning and fulfilment. His own natural fulfilment comes by following the complete path of Avidya surrendering itself to Vidya, the Multiplicity to the Unity, the Ego to the One in all and beyond all, and of Vidya accepting Avidya into itself, the Unity fulfilling the Multiplicity, the One manifesting Himself unveiled in the individual and in the universe.

## **Mortality and Immortality**

### **Mortality**

By Avidya fulfilled man passes beyond death, by Vidya accepting Avidya into itself he enjoys immortality.

By death is meant the state of mortality which is a subjection to the process of constant birth and dying as a limited ego bound to the dualities of joy and sorrow, good and evil, truth and error, love and hatred, pleasure and suffering.

This state comes by limitation and self-division from the One who is all and in all and beyond all and by attachment of the idea of self to a single formation in Time and Space of body, life and mind, by which the Self excludes from its view all that it verily is with the exception of a mass of experiences flowing out from and in upon a particular centre and limited by the capacities of a particular mental, vital and bodily frame. This mass of experiences it organises around the ego-centre in the mind and linking them together in Time by a double action of memory, passive in state, active in work, says continually, "This is I."

The result is that the soul attributes to itself a certain portion only of the play of Prakriti or Chit-Shakti and consequently a certain limited capacity of force of consciousness which has to bear all the impact of what the soul does not regard as itself but as a rush of alien forces; against them it defends its separate formation of individuality from dissolution into Nature or mastery by Nature. It seeks to assert in the individual form and by its means its innate character of Ish or Lord and so to possess and enjoy its world.

But by the very definition of the ego its capacity is limited. It accepts as itself a form made of the movement of Nature which cannot endure in the general flux of things. It has to form it by the process of the movement and this is birth, it dissolves it by the process of the movement and this is death.

It can master by the understanding only so much of its experiences as assimilate with its own viewpoint and in a way which must always be imperfect and subject to error because it is not the view of all or the viewpoint of the All. Its knowledge is partly error and all the rest it ignores.

It can only accept and harmonise itself with a certain number of its experiences, precisely because these are the only ones it can understand sufficiently to assimilate. This is its joy; the rest is sorrow or indifference.

It is only capable of harmonising with the force in its body, nerves and mind a certain number of impacts of alien forces.

In these it takes pleasure. The rest it receives with insensibility or pain.

Death therefore is the constant denial by the All of the ego's false self-limitation in the individual frame of mind, life and body.

Error is the constant denial by the All of the ego's false sufficiency in a limited knowledge.

Suffering of mind and body is the constant denial by the All of the ego's attempt to confine the universal Ananda to a false and self-regarding formation of limited and exclusive enjoyments.

It is only by accepting the oneness of the All that the individual can escape from this constant and necessary denial and attain beyond. Then All-being, All-force, All-consciousness, All-truth, All-delight take possession of the individual soul. It changes mortality for immortality.

### **Mortality and Avidya**

But the way of attaining to immortality is not by the self-dissolution of the individual formation into the flux of Prakriti, neither is it by prematurely dissolving it into the All-soul which Prakriti expresses. Man moves towards something which fulfils the universe by transcending it. He has to prepare his individual soul for the transcendence and for the fulfilment.

If Avidya is the cause of mortality, it is also the path out of mortality. The limitation has been created precisely in order that the individual may affirm himself against the flux of Prakriti in order eventually to transcend, possess and transform it.

The first necessity is therefore for man continually to enlarge himself in being, knowledge, joy, power in the limits of the ego so that he may arrive at the conception of something which progressively manifests itself in him in these terms and becomes more and more powerful to deal with the oppositions of Prakriti and to change, individually, more and more the terms of ignorance, suffering and weakness into the terms of knowledge, joy and power and even death into a means of wider life.

This self-enlargement has then to awaken to the perception of something exceeding itself, exceeding the personal manifestation. Man has so to enlarge his conception of self as to see all in himself and himself in all (verse 6). He has to see that this "I" which contains all and is contained in all, is the One, is universal and not his personal ego. To That he has to subject his ego, That he has to reproduce in his nature and become, That is what he has to possess and enjoy with an equal soul in all its forms and movements.

He has to see, that this universal One is something entirely transcendent, the sole Being, and that the universe and all its forms, actions, egos are only becomings of that Being (verse 7). World is a becoming which seeks always to express in motion of Time and Space, by progression in mind, life and body what is beyond all becoming, beyond Time and Space, beyond mind, life and body.

Thus Avidya becomes one with Vidya. By Avidya man passes beyond that death, suffering, ignorance, weakness which were the first terms he had to deal with, the first assertions of the One in the birth affirming Himself amid the limitations and divisions of the Multiplicity. By Vidya he enjoys even in the birth the Immortality.

### **Immortality**

Immortality does not mean survival of the self or the ego after dissolution of the body. The Self always survives the dissolution of the body, because it always pre-existed before

the birth of the body. The self is unborn and undying. The survival of the ego is only the first condition by which the individual soul is able to continue and link together its experiences in Avidya so as to pursue with an increasing self-possession and mastery that process of self-enlargement which culminates in Vidya.

By immortality is meant the consciousness which is beyond birth and death, beyond the chain of cause and effect, beyond all bondage and limitation, free, blissful, self-existent in conscious-being, the consciousness of the Lord, of the supreme Purusha, of Sachchidananda.

### **Immortality and Birth**

On this realisation man can base his free activity in the universe.

But having so far attained, what further utility has the soul for birth or for works? None for itself, everything for God and the universe.

Immortality beyond the universe is not the object of manifestation in the universe, for that the Self always possessed.

Man exists in order that through him the Self may enjoy Immortality in the birth as well as in the non-becoming.

Nor is individual salvation the end; for that would only be the sublime of the ego, not its self-realisation through the Lord in all.

Having realised his own immortality, the individual has yet to fulfil God's work in the universe. He has to help the life, the mind and the body in all beings to express progressively Immortality and not mortality.

This he may do by the becoming in the material body which we ordinarily call birth, or from some status in another world or even, it is possible, from beyond world. But birth in the body is the most close, divine and effective form of help which the liberated can give to those who are themselves still bound to the progression of birth in the lowest world of the Ignorance.

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## About Woman

### Panchakanyam Smarenityam

("Ever remember the five maidens")

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**Nolini Kanta Gupta**

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The relation between man and woman is not a thing without any alternatives or variations. It has taken different forms in different ages. On the one hand the customs have changed due to the change in external conditions, and as a result of simultaneous change in the course of the mind a change in the ideal has also come about. One should remember that not only the change of time but also the change of space brings a change in customs and ideals. Therefore it seems to be unjust to measure the value of customs and ideals of a certain age with the yardstick of customs and ideals of another space and time. Though many conclude that in the evolution of the customs and ideals of humanity there is always a progressive development, it is not so easy to establish the case with reason. To decide whether the expression that the customs and ideals of the ancients and of the past are inferior to those of the moderns and of the present in anything more than a notional dictum, needs a lot of judgement. Whatever it is, we are not going to make this issue our topic of discussion. We only want to say that the system existing in each space and time is appropriate for the condition and culture of that particular space and time. Human beings follow the dharma of their time and space. It is a dangerous mistake to try to understand the dharma of another time and space in the light of the dharma of a given time and space.

In the modern age the relation between man and woman which has become a sort of prevailing custom and ideal everywhere is that one man and one woman shall remain mutually sincere in their conjugal life. Of course out of the prevailing ideal a new one is trying to raise its head. This ideal is unwilling to accept the glory of marriage. It wants an independent, self-willed and free union between man and woman. But the ideal is still mostly confined to the mental world. The need of circumstances could not bring it down into the field of life, within the social system. Therefore we don't want to say anything in particular about it. The ideal of the present which has social sanction behind it is "monogamy". The word is foreign. There is no exact equivalent of it in an Indian language. Therefore it is natural to suspect that not only the word but also the idea behind it has come from abroad. That the marriage or conjugal relation of a man or a woman can

exist with only one person (at a time) is the system prescribed by Europe and the Christian religion. As European influence extended into our country, this ideal also occupied our mind. Not only the inner attitude but also the external conditions-the economic policy along with the norms of duty-came to make of this ideal a social system.

Prior to this present system we had "polygamy", the dreaded word which makes Europe and Christianity shudder and we too have started to shudder under the influence of the newly acquired ideal prevalent in our country. Of course this polygamy was permissible for man only; for woman the rule was a single marriage. Polygamy was the custom of our country-from when? It is not possible to answer with any precision. Before the English-influence, as we go back more and more to the past, at least up to the ages of the Mahabharata and Ramayana, we notice its extensive prevalence. Not only in India, but in the whole of the East this custom was in vogue[1] in some form or other. With whatever strong disdain we moderns look upon polygamy, our forefathers never considered it in the same light. And it is also not a fact that the social order and ethics deteriorated due to this. Nor were the greatness and nobility of man and woman crippled in that social system. The greatness of the great, from Yajnyavalkya to Shivaji-whether he is a man of knowledge or a man of action-did not get tarnished. Even Raja Rammohan, the initiator of the modern age, was himself polygamous. And such instances are not rare where a woman performed her duties as required and became worthy to be ever remembered even while being one of a number of wives.

Now the point is, whether there was another age with a different custom prior even to this polygamic age. There was, it seems. And we cannot say for sure that woman was not given the right to polygamy in one way or another in that age. We must not get stunned by the statement. We must look into it without prejudice, with eyes open, remaining calm and impartial. The varied diversity of truth does not always depend on the standard of good and evil of our modern age. In the primitive society, which we term uncivilized, there is no dearth of this custom even today[2]. In Tibet all the brothers together marry a single wife. The word de-vara in our country only means second husband. The custom of niyoga also was prevalent in this very country of ours. Whatever it is, we just want to say only this much: in that most ancient of ages, whether or not there was any sanction to polygamy for woman, there was at least a freer relation between man and woman. Man and woman united more freely and not through the stringent and carefully prepared familiar system of marriage. Woman rather had more freedom than man. Man did not have the sole authority in society. On the contrary woman used to dominate. In Burma abroad and in Kerala within India, even now we find some instances of this system. Equal freedom for man and woman is the trend of the modern age. Patriarchy dominated the Middle Ages. And matriarchy dominated the most ancient of ages. This is how, it seems, society has undergone a triple transformation with regard to the relations between man and woman.

In fact, from the point of view of principle, we find the examples of the three modes of relation that may exist between Purusha and Prakriti in these three epochs. First, when Purusha and Prakriti face each other standing on the same level. That is why in the present epoch man and woman are waking up with a separate being and personality of

their own and are willing to unite. Second, when Prakriti is subjugated to Purusha. That is why in the Middle Ages we see that woman is subservient to man under all circumstances. The fulfillment of woman's womanhood was in giving herself to man. The mantra of this very age was *na nari svatantryamarhati* (woman should never be independent). And in this very age, the ideals of sati and single-minded devotion to one's husband came into being. Third, when Purusha is subjugated to Prakriti. This was the principle underlying the relation between man and woman in the most ancient of ages. Shiva under the feet of his goddess-consort portrays that age. Woman at that time probably was not sati but was sakti.

Sita and Savitri are the ideals of the Middle Ages. This very ideal got so deeply implanted in our social life that even in modern times, while trying to follow a more novel ideal, we wanted this ideal also to be kept unimpaired within the more novel one. The glory of this ideal has been sung in all our cultures, customs and systems. It has been built up as an unshakable notion, an eternal truth as it were, in our minds and hearts. Besides, we have forgotten the ideal prior to it. We cannot bring it back even with our imagination. The ideal of sati has come to exercise its sole authority since the ages of the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Yet some reminiscence of that most ancient of ages still remained even in this epic age. And it seems to me that the "five maidens" are the instances of that very reminiscence. In these five maidens we get a hint or a shade of the truth that woman is not merely sati but predominantly and fundamentally she is sakti. Even the epic age had to labour a lot in trying to judge and prove her greatness not as sakti but as sati. We moderns also, instead of looking upon the five maidens as maidens, have tried with some manipulation to remember them as sati. We cannot easily admit that there was or could be any other standard of woman's greatness beside chastity.

A strange thing is noticeable in the lives of the five maidens. Their adultery with gods is related. Their unchastity is supported and sanctified by the instructions and blessings of the gods. Ahalya lost her chastity devaraja kutuhalat (due to the curiosity of Indra, the king of the gods). Kunti too gave herself up to the six gods, namely, Surya, Indra, Vayu, etc. The five husbands of Draupadi are the companions of Lord Krishna and emanations of five gods. Tara and Mandodari gave themselves up to their husbands' brothers, even though the brothers were enemies of their husbands, according to the wishes and sanction of Lord Rama. Whatever these five maidens may be from the standpoint of single-minded devotion to their husbands, it seems to me that a sublimation of human force took place through them into divine force. Their souls did neither accept the human ideal (of that time or thereafter) as unique, nor admit the dharma-adharma of human ethics as the absolute provision of life. Their beings were glorified with a greater and higher capacity. Matrimonial sincerity or adultery became irrelevant in that glory.

In fact, from a certain point of view, the most ancient of ages was the age when humans were in a juvenile state. They were not exclusively confined to their humanity. The vision and experience, intuition and imagination of a human was not regulated only by humanity or physical dimensions (compare with Nietzsche's "Human, all too human"). There used to exist a free interchange between a human and the invisible higher beings and forces in creation. At that time earth and heaven had not got separated. Earthly humans used to go

and roam about in heaven. Gods used to visit the earth, unite and mix with humans. Gods and humans were mutual helpers and companions. A human male could dare desire even a heavenly nymph. A human female could satisfy even a god. We see a shadow of this most ancient of ages in ancient Greece as portrayed by Homer. The heroes of Homer are either born of a god mating with a woman, or a man mating with a goddess.

In a mantra from the Rigveda (10:85) dealing with matrimony, Surya, daughter of sun-god Surya, accepts all the gods as husbands one after another. Probably this is symbolic of the principle of marriage between humans also of that time. Woman will take resort to man not for chastity but for the touch and manifestation of the gods, to have offspring born under divine influence. Probably there was always an effort within us like a subterranean flow to keep alive the idea that there could be a divine sakti-dharma like this for woman beside chastity and single-minded devotion to her husband. We hear about many affairs of adultery in the practice of Tantra, but is the cryptic ceremony of accepting the sakti and adoring the prakṛti in that practice not a pointer to this very principle? Well, we no longer approve of this ideal as sociable. In modern times in our day-to-day life we have turned out to be all too human. All our systems have been based on human mental and ethical considerations.

Our shastras speak of four ages, namely, Satya, Treta, Dvapara and Kali. From this consideration, four ideals have emerged in those four ages with regard to the social relation between man and woman. It seems to me that it is sincerity relating to the body that has been held in magnified esteem in Kaliyuga. In Dvapara it was sincerity of the vital being, in Treta it was sincerity of the mental being, and in Satyayuga it was sincerity of the soul's truth. In the other yugas, the fundamental principle, the primary basis, of conjugal relation was a sort of single-minded devotion of a person to another. But in Satyayuga this relation never became the ultimate in the form of union between two individuals. Then, the tie between person and person did not become firm and exclusive. At least externally it was quite free and expansive. Then, a person used to follow the law of one's own being, one's own path of truth and establish a freer and wider relation with another. Recently, are we not turning round again and gradually moving towards some such aim? Whatever it is, if the ideal of the ancients does not conform to ours, we may not accept it, but none of us has the right to reduce it according to our standard.

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*(Nolini Kanta Gupta was a revolutionary, linguist, scholar, critic, poet, philosopher and a man of deep spiritual realisation. Author of nearly 60 books he was a Trustee of Sri Aurobindo Ashram.)*

## **References**

*1. In China and Japan polygamy was not prevalent in the sense that one was married there to a single wife. But one could keep more than one unmarried wife, which had the sanction of custom and the shastra. Though the Europeans term these unmarried wives concubines, they had equal rights and status as the married ones and their sons were also legal heirs. Save for the ceremonial marriage there was no other distinction between these two types of wives.*

2. *Many scientists nowadays admit the fact that the primitive society is not necessarily uncivilised, that the primitives are the fallen residual fractions of the various civilised and educated societies belonging to a hoary past.*

## *Go, Kiss the World*

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I was the last child of a small-time government servant, in a family of five brothers. My earliest memory of my father is as that of a District Employment Officer in Koraput, Orissa. It was and remains as back of beyond as you can imagine. There was no Electricity, no primary school nearby and water did not flow out of a tap. As a result, I did not go to school until the age of eight; I was home-schooled. My father used to get transferred every year. The family belongings fit into the back of a jeep so the family moved from place to place and, without any trouble, my mother would set up an establishment and get us going. Raised by a widow who had come as a refugee from the then East Bengal, she was a matriculate when she married my father. My parents set the foundation of my life and the value system which makes me what I am today and largely defines what success means to me today.

As District Employment Officer, my father was given a jeep by the government. There was no garage in the office, so the jeep was parked in our house. My father refused to use it to commute to the office. He told us that the jeep is an expensive resource given by the government - he reiterated to us that it was not 'his jeep' but the government's jeep. Insisting that he would use it only to tour the interiors, he would walk to his office on normal days. He also made sure that we never sat in the government jeep we could sit in it only when it was stationary. That was our early childhood lesson in governance a lesson that corporate managers learn the hard way, some never do.

The driver of the jeep was treated with respect due to any other member of my father's office. As small children, we were taught not to call him by his name. We had to use the suffix 'dada' whenever we were to refer to him in public or private. When I grew up to own a car and a driver by the name of Raju was appointed I repeated the lesson to my two small daughters. They have, as a result, grown up to call Raju, 'Raju Uncle' very different from many of their friends who refer to their family drivers as 'my driver'. When I hear that term from a school- or college-going person, I cringe. To me, the lesson was significant you treat small people with more respect than how you treat big people. It is more important to respect your subordinates than your superiors.

Our day used to start with the family huddling around my mother's chulha an earthen fire place she would build at each place of posting where she would cook for the family. There was no gas, nor electrical stoves. The morning routine started with tea. As the brew was served, father would ask us to read aloud the editorial page of The Statesman's 'muffosil' edition delivered one day late. We did not understand much of what we were reading. But the ritual was meant for us to know that the world was larger than Koraput district and the English I speak today, despite having studied in an Oriya medium school, has to do with that routine. After reading the newspaper aloud, we were told to fold it neatly. Father taught us a simple lesson. He used to say, "You should leave your newspaper and your toilet, the way you expect to find it". That lesson was about showing consideration to others. Business begins and ends with that simple precept.

Being small children, we were always enamored with advertisements in the newspaper for transistor radios we did not have one. We saw other people having radios in their homes and each time there was an advertisement of Philips, Murphy or Bush radios, we would ask Father when we could get one.

Each time, my father would reply that we did not need one because he already had five radios alluding to his five sons. We also did not have a house of our own and would occasionally ask Father as to when, like others, we would live in our own house. He would give a similar reply, "We do not need a house of our own. I already own five houses". His replies did not gladden our hearts in that instant. Nonetheless, we learnt that it is important not to measure personal success and sense of well being through material possessions.

Government houses seldom came with fences. Mother and I collected twigs and built a small fence. After lunch, my mother would never sleep. She would take her kitchen utensils and with those she and I would dig the rocky, white ant infested surrounding. We planted flowering bushes. The white ants destroyed them. My mother brought ash from her chulha and mixed it in the earth and we planted the seedlings all over again. This time, they bloomed. At that time, my father's transfer order came. A few neighbors told my mother why she was taking so much pain to beautify a government house, why she was planting seeds that would only benefit the next occupant. My mother replied that it did not matter to her that she would not see the flowers in full bloom. She said, "I have to create a bloom in a desert and whenever I am given a new place, I must leave it more beautiful than what I had inherited". That was my first lesson in success. It is not about what you create for yourself, it is what you leave behind that defines success.

My mother began developing a cataract in her eyes when I was very small. At that time, the eldest among my brothers got a teaching job at the University in Bhubaneswar and had to prepare for the civil services examination. So, it was decided that my mother would move to cook for him and, as her appendage, I had to move too. For the first time in my life, I saw electricity in homes and water coming out of a tap. It was around 1965 and the country was going to war with Pakistan. My mother was having problems reading and in any case, being Bengali, she did not know the Oriya script. So, in addition to my daily chores, my job was to read her the local newspaper end to end. That created in me a sense of connectedness with a larger world. I began taking interest in many different things. While reading out news about the war, I felt that I was fighting the war myself. She and I discussed the daily news and built a bond with the larger universe. In it, we became part of a larger reality. Till date, I measure my success in terms of that sense of larger connectedness.

Meanwhile, the war raged and India was fighting on both fronts. Lal Bahadur Shastri, the then Prime Minister, coined the term "Jai Jawan, Jai Kishan" and galvanized the nation in to patriotic fervor. Other than reading out the newspaper to my mother, I had no clue about how I could be part of the action. So, after reading her the newspaper, every day I would land up near the University's water tank, which served the community. I would spend hours under it, imagining that there could be spies who would come to poison the water and I had to watch for them. I would daydream about catching one and how the next day, I would be featured in the newspaper. Unfortunately for me, the spies at war ignored the sleepy town of Bhubaneswar and I never got a chance to catch one in action. Yet, that act unlocked my imagination. Imagination is everything. If we can imagine a future, we can create it, if we can create that future, others will live in it. That is the essence of success.

Over the next few years, my mother's eyesight dimmed but in me she created a larger vision, a vision with which I continue to see the world and, I sense, through my eyes, she was seeing too. As the next few years unfolded, her vision deteriorated and she was operated for cataract. I remember, when she returned after her operation and she saw my face clearly for the first time, she was astonished. She said, "Oh my God, I did not know you were so fair". I remain mightily pleased with that adulation even till date. Within weeks of getting her sight back, she developed a corneal ulcer and, overnight, became blind in both eyes. That was 1969. She died in 2002. In all those 32 years of living with blindness, she never complained about her fate even once. Curious to know what she saw with blind eyes, I asked her once if she sees darkness. She replied, "No, I do not see darkness. I only see light even with my eyes closed". Until she was eighty years of age, she did her morning yoga everyday, swept her own

room and washed her own clothes. To me, success is about the sense of independence; it is about not seeing the world but seeing the light.

Over the many intervening years, I grew up, studied, joined the industry and began to carve my life's own journey. I began my life as a clerk in a government office, went on to become a Management Trainee with the DCM group and eventually found my life's calling with the IT industry when fourth generation computers came to India in 1981.

Life took me places I worked with outstanding people, challenging assignments and traveled all over the world. In 1992, while I was posted in the US, I learnt that my father, living a retired life with my eldest brother, had suffered a third degree burn injury and was admitted in the Safderjung Hospital in Delhi. I flew back to attend to him he remained for a few days in critical stage, bandaged from neck to toe. The Safderjung Hospital is a cockroach infested, dirty, inhuman place. The overworked, under-resourced sisters in the burn ward are both victims and perpetrators of dehumanized life at its worst.

One morning, while attending to my father, I realized that the blood bottle was empty and fearing that air would go into his vein, I asked the attending nurse to change it. She bluntly told me to do it myself. In that horrible theatre of death, I was in pain and frustration and anger. Finally when she relented and came, my father opened his eyes and murmured to her, "Why have you not gone home yet?" Here was a man on his deathbed but more concerned about the overworked nurse than his own state. I was stunned at his stoic self. There I learnt that there is no limit to how concerned you can be for another human being and what is the limit of inclusion you can create. My father died the next day.

He was a man whose success was defined by his principles, his frugality, his universalism and his sense of inclusion. Above all, he taught me that success is your ability to rise above your discomfort, whatever may be your current state. You can, if you want, raise your consciousness above your immediate surroundings. Success is not about building material comforts the transistor that he never could buy or the house that he never owned. His success was about the legacy he left, the continuity of his ideals that grew beyond the smallness of a ill-paid, unrecognized government servant's world.

My father was a fervent believer in the British Raj. He sincerely doubted the capability of the post-independence Indian political parties to govern the country. To him, the lowering of the Union Jack was a sad event. My mother was the exact opposite. When Subhash Bose quit the Indian National Congress and came to Dacca, my mother, then a schoolgirl, garlanded him. She learnt to spin khadi and joined an underground movement that trained her in using daggers and swords. Consequently, our household saw diversity in the political outlook of the two. On major issues concerning the world, the Old Man and the Old Lady had differing opinions. In them, we learnt the power of disagreements, of dialogue and the essence of living with diversity in thinking. Success is not about the ability to create a definitive dogmatic end state; it is about the unfolding of thought processes, of dialogue and continuum.

Two years back, at the age of eighty-two, Mother had a paralytic stroke and was lying in a government hospital in Bhubaneswar. I flew down from the US where I was serving my second stint, to see her. I spent two weeks with her in the hospital as she remained in a paralytic state. She was neither getting better nor moving on. Eventually I had to return to work. While leaving her behind, I kissed her face. In that paralytic state and a garbled voice, she said, "Why are you kissing me, go kiss the world." Her river was nearing its journey, at the confluence of life and death, this woman who came to India as a refugee, raised by a widowed mother, no more educated than high school, married to an anonymous government servant whose last salary was Rupees Three Hundred, robbed of her eyesight by fate and crowned by adversity - was telling me to go and kiss the world! Success to me is about Vision. It is the ability to rise above the immediacy of pain. It is about imagination. It is about sensitivity to small people. It is about building inclusion. It is about connectedness to a larger world

existence. It is about personal tenacity. It is about giving back more to life than you take out of it. It is about creating extra-ordinary success with ordinary lives.

Thank you very much; I wish you good luck and Godspeed. Go, kiss the world."

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*(This was a welcome address given by Subroto Bagchi, Chief Operating Officer, MindTree Consulting to the Class of 2006 at the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore on defining success.)*



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*It is not easy to define what is to be considered as true news. Each of us may differ in our opinion of such a definition. However, we at Next Future have an idea, although it is as yet in its infancy. True News is news that carries some weight &ndash; the weight of truth, of beauty, of hope, of the greatness of the human spirit, of the aspirations that we hold within, of the dreams we fulfill, of the differences that we make. Our media is spilling to the brim with news but more often than not, it is pointing to the things going wrong, the negatives, the senseless goings-on. One cant certainly shy away from reality but at the same time, one can and must continue to hope and cherish the idea of a better world. Some may even go further and act on this idea and make it a concrete reality. True News will explore such instances which make the heart swell with pride and the mind feel the peace that goes together with goodwill and harmony. More importantly, True News will be that which leads one from today unto tomorrow &ndash; nothing that is transient but all that is evolutionary, leading from step to higher step. The smallest episodes that make up our lives at times form such a step and thus begins our climb to a wonderful future.*

### **The Redoubtable Babus of Mumbai**

Here's an example of how the meek might inherit India. Here too, is an insight into what really makes India tick, keeping hope alive amidst unrelieved chaos and selfishness. A small bunch of office clerks, typists and receptionists in Mumbai have found themselves a mission. During working hours they were viewed as rulers of ossified interiors of government offices. After work, they seemed to have no relevance.

A chance offered itself 15 years ago to shrug off their ghost like existence in the big city. They grabbed it to become people who matter, instead of people seen-if at all-as hurdles. Every year they visit the Konkan coast bearing goods and support for hundreds of schools. The rest of the year, they work to plan for that visit.

They are babus transformed into guardian angels of Ratnagiri's poor school-children. They run the Lanja Rajapur Sanghameshwar Taluka Utkarsha Mandal 'Association for Uplift of Lanja, Rajapur and Sangameshwar Counties'.

### **How Green-and Grim-the Valley**

A vast district in southern Maharashtra, Ratnagiri is for the most part green and pretty. But despite abundant annual rains, its intrinsically agricultural community faces an unobvious sort of poverty due to recurrent droughts.

Education though esteemed, is elusive. Majority of schools are located many miles away from scattered homes, past steep hillocks and streams that overflow in the rains; it's a daily trek that many children make without shoes, umbrellas or school uniforms.

Nearly none of the schools has furniture; classes are held on the floor with as many as five different grades handled simultaneously by a single teacher in one classroom. And for this service, there are fees to pay; though modest, they are still beyond the means of most parents. Thus it is, that it's hard to keep children in the 1500 or so schools of Ratnagiri's talukas. Most students drop out of school by class 7 or 8, to become farm hands or industrial apprentices in nearby towns.

### **Clerical Energy**

In 1990, Madhukar Krishnaji Pawar had already been a clerk for 15 years, in Mumbai's government-run Nair Hospital. That's long enough time, you might say, for one in a secure job, to forget his early days of deprivation in Lanja taluka of Ratnagiri district. But Pawar a man in his fifties, with a professorial demeanour had been silently restless in Mumbai, while searching for a way to express his gratitude for having made it after a fashion. A chance meeting, during a visit home that year, gave him a lead: he ran into a bright boy who had dropped out of school for a trifling reason. Then he met a few more similar boys and then some more.

Back in Mumbai, he found it hard to keep pushing his pen. When he shared his impressions with a few Ratnagiri-natives, a response to the problem seemed within their reach. Fellow hospital clerks, Pradeep Salunke and Ganpat Devrookhar and two clerks from the Mumbai Port Trust, Vijay Chavan and Dilip Chachad and Pawar himself, huddled around the problem. Yes, we must do something for the place we came from. But where do we start?

They decided to ask how they might help. They wrote to a few headmasters.

### **15 Years on the Road**

The response was immediate and grateful; headmasters asked for notebooks, furniture, school uniforms and scholarships for bright students. It was only then, that they turned to money issues.

A cloth merchant donated textile for 500 sets of uniforms. They began to collect partly used stationery. The rest of the requisitioned items had to be bought. Pawar took a loan for Rs.15,000. Let us pause a moment, to applaud a clerk who borrowed to give and so founded a mission. They hired a van and travelled for a week to rural schools in Lanja taluka. There at simple meetings, they distributed their collection. And returned home fulfilled.

That pattern has barely changed in the last 15 years, though everything has grown and become organised. Within three years, what began in Lanja taluka, extended to

Sangameshwar and Rajapur talukas. They began to communicate through advertisements in local papers as the response grew steadily. In 1994, the Lanja Rajapur Sanghameshwar Taluka Utkarsha Mandal was formed as a charitable trust. Today with some 50 busy, salaried clerks as members, the Trust runs an operation spanning 3 counties, hundreds of schools and children, calling for an average annual budget between Rs 500,000 and Rs 900,000.

### **Regular as the Monsoons**

The Mandal's two main activities are to provide materials and supplies to schools and children, and to find sponsors willing to adopt promising children's continued education. The exercise begins a couple of months before every monsoon. In March-April headmasters respond to the Mandal's advertisements in their local dailies and send in their requisitions mostly stationery, basic furniture, clothing, shoes, school bags etc. Trivially priced for most of us, but unaffordable for thousands of rural children.

After sifting through hundreds of responses, members prepare a master shopping list. It's a rule they have that only the best will do; no cheap goods just because the children are poor and in the countryside. They shop for best value deals.

The Mandal began its adoption programme in 1996. Under it, promising students are selected based on their needs, diligence and potential to benefit from the programme. Teachers and headmasters endorse applicants and during annual visits, Mandal members personally interview short listed candidates. Detailed files are prepared on each and sent to donors.

Mandal's criteria for selection and terms of offer, are noteworthy. The application form asks for no details of caste or religion. What they ask in return for support, is that the student maintains a minimum of 90% attendance and passes all exams every term; there is no pressure to top the class or score high.

If these two requirements are not met, the Mandal withdraws all support to the school. These conditions motivate teachers, headmaster and the whole village community to monitor and support the child, lest the whole school should forfeit assistance. The support funds are deposited in a local bank account jointly operated by the headmaster and the student.

### **So Affordable for Us:**

It costs a mere Rs 2,000 per year to support a child's entire education. To take a child from early education, through to a three-year bachelor's degree in college, it costs but Rs 30,000 spread over ten years. The Mandal has never approached the government for help, because it works on the basis of caste. Supporters have not been lacking. Early donors were Mandal members. Soon doctors in Nair Hospital where many Mandal members are clerks, adopted several children. Others followed. As of date, the Mandal has arranged totally supported education of 171 children, 91 of them girls.

Most of the Rs 500,000 they raise annually for purchases, comes from members' own contributions and their friends'. They never run active campaigns or approach any firms. Pawar firmly believes the middle-classes must take to philanthropy. "There is a belief in India that philanthropy is for the rich," he says. "We want to show that everyone can afford it."

His faith has not been belied. Most of the funds are from faces in the street, offices and trains.

Once every two years, they stage a Marathi play as a fund-raiser, the proceeds from which are considerable. They bring out a souvenir volume on the occasion, featuring articles by members, teachers and beneficiary students. Details of Mandal's activities are included.

Whenever there is a short-fall, a member takes a personal loan for a year, to be repaid from Mandal's proceeds next year; this goes on by rotation. "There is no lack of money for good causes," says Pawar.

### **In Delivery Mode**

When the shopping has been done, it's time to plan the trip to deliver the goods to the schools. The Mandal has a well ordered structure. Besides the President, 3 VPs and a General Secretary [Pawar], there is an Executive Committee of 19 members. No one is ever paid anything, not even incidental expenses. The Mandal has zero-overheads. What they raise equals what they give. All incidental expenses are picked up by member subscriptions.

The annual trip by a hired van, costs about Rs 20,000 contributed by Committee members whether or not they make the trip. Several of them make the week-long trip, often foregoing pay at work.

June: the monsoons have arrived in Mumbai and the west coast. It's time too for the Mandal's annual date with Ratnagiri's rural children. Local dailies would have announced the babus' schedule; country schools await them, having arranged a series of little ceremonies.

The Mandal van slugs from village to village on rain soaked roads. Often narrow roads turn into streams and streams become impassable bodies of water. Getting to some schools means parking their vehicle up to 3 kms away, trekking up hills and wading through knee-deep water.

What pushes them along are memories of earlier meetings where eager faces awaited them; of successes they have wrought. In 15 years they have touched and assisted 650 schools; helped create 27 graduates, including an engineer. Many more under support, are

still young but will one day realise their potential.

These little known clerks know ways to make some rural dreams come true. So they keep their dates. They arrive regular as the monsoons. They have done so, for fifteen years, now. Even as you read this, they are getting ready for this year's tryst.

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*(This article was taken from <http://www.goodnewsindia.com> GoodNewsIndia is dedicated to little known stories of positive action and is published by D. V. Sridharan)*

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# Integral Education

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*Education is perhaps the most important domain related to human progress. Except, here we do not mean the kind of syllabus oriented teaching imparted solely in school or college, but rather a form of constant learning that takes place through the life of an individual. This kind of education is integral and complete, leaving no area ignored within the human being. Its objective is to forever widen itself, and by developing the right consciousness, be able to rise from truth to higher truth.*

*Each one has to actively work towards this, framing one's own agenda, aspiring for one's own goal. It isn't a discipline meant only for the chosen few but in fact if practiced consciously can transform the very nature of every being. At the end, it all boils down to something extremely basic but easily forgotten... in the words of The Mother, "Of one thing you can be sure - your future is in your hands. You will become the man you want to be and the higher your ideal and your aspiration, the higher will be your realization, but you must keep a firm resolution and never forget your true aim in life."*

*In our section called Integral Education, we will put forth concrete ideas of how such a thorough form of learning can be both inculcated in oneself as well as imparted to another.*

## Words on Sleep

### **Sri Aurobindo**

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This is not a yoga in which physical austerities have to be done for their own sake. Sleep is necessary for the body just as food is. Sufficient sleep must be taken, but no excessive sleep. What sufficient sleep is depends on the need of the body.

\*

If you do not sleep enough the body and the nervous envelope will be weakened and the body and the nervous envelope are the basis of the sadhana.

\*

Both for fevers and for mental trouble sleep is a great help and its absence very undesirable it is the loss of a curative agency.

\*

Sleep, because of its subconscious basis, usually brings a falling down to a lower level, unless it is a conscious sleep; to make it more and more conscious is the one permanent remedy: but also until that is done, one should always react against this sinking tendency when one wakes ... But these things need always a settled endeavour and discipline and must take time, sometimes a long time. It will not do to refrain from the effort because immediate results do not appear.

\*

It is not a right method to try to keep awake at night; the suppression of the needed sleep makes the body tamasic and unfit for the necessary concentration during the waking hours. The right way is to transform the sleep and not suppress it, and especially to learn how to become more and more conscious in sleep itself. If that is done, sleep changes into an inner mode of consciousness in which the. sadhana can continue as much as in the waking state, and at the same time one is able to enter into other planes of consciousness than the physical and command an immense range of informative and utilisable experience.

\*

[To be conscious in sleep:] You have to start by concentrating before you sleep always with a specific will or aspiration. The will or aspiration may take time to reach the subconscious, but if it is sincere, strong and steady, it does reach after a time so that an automatic consciousness and will are established in the sleep itself which will do what is necessary.

\*

In sleep one very commonly passes from consciousness to deeper consciousness in a long succession until one reaches the psychic and rests there or else from higher to higher consciousness until one reaches rest in some silence and peace. The few minutes one passes in this rest are the real sleep which restores, if one does not get it, there is only a half rest. It is when you come near to either of these domains of rest that you begin to see these higher kinds of dreams.

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# Integral Health

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## A Unified System

**Dr. D.B. Bisht**

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Like all parents who think their child is imbued with extraordinary intelligence until it becomes adult (when the real worth becomes apparent!), the practitioners of a system of medicine hold their own in a high esteem and are not prepared to accept its limitations. They regard their system sacrosanct, nothing less than God's dictate. And yet there has been talk of integration and the necessity of including the best of the different strands into medical practice. So much has been written about this for so long; but like the tide, its waters merge into a vast ocean of ignorance. Humans cannot conquer their egos, and whenever there is discussion about integration, the underlying inferiority complex of someone shoots the idea down.

There are mainly twenty or so different systems of medicine practiced in the world. Certain countries have produced legislation to bar the practice of many so called alternative systems of medicine unless they conform to scientific standards. But every patient wants to be cured of illness and is hardly bothered about how it is achieved. So what needs to be done?

A simple answer would be a unified system. How can this be achieved is the million dollar question. Attempts were made in India by the Director General of Health Services, to bring top practitioners of different systems under one roof so that they could consider ways and means of achieving something which might be called a 'national system'.

But what was the result? Chaos. The so-called system practitioners started highlighting the pitfalls of all the others and the meetings could achieve nothing.

It resembled a heated dispute between two 'lovers' of Shakespeare who were quarrelling about whether Macbeth or Hamlet was superior. However each when asked if he had read the other play had to say no, since none had read both.

For the patient or family, it is often a dilemma who should be consulted if the usual medical expert who has been looking after them fails to give relief. There are no guidelines since the type of system best suited for a particular patient is not available. In America, there is a vast array of doctors and medical personnel specialising in a

particular set of symptoms or illness. But it is an ocean and it is often impossible to choose from the list.

Many talk about holistic medicine, a holistic approach etc. but neither is it taught in the medical schools nor is it practiced. Only lip service is given. It is doubtful if there is a single textbook on holistic medicine for medical students.

We don't have even have an integrated body in India to look after medical teaching. No doubt, there are more than 200 medical colleges for the 'modern system' and about 150 for homoeopathy. There are more than 100 colleges of Ayurveda. We produce about 50,000 so called registered doctors in India and if you add to it all unregistered practioners we have a mass of medical personnel at our disposal.

One can ask why is it that, with so many experts available in the country, health for all has not been achieved?

The answer lies in an over production of Human Man Power (HMP) on one side and mal-distribution on the other. Besides, the tools of health care are simply not available for one reason or the other.

What are the basic requirements for good health? Everyone knows it: food, water, air, clothing and shelter. And none of these are in the hands of doctors or medical people. They deal only with illness and the housing for illnesses i.e. dispensaries, clinics, nursing homes and hospitals.

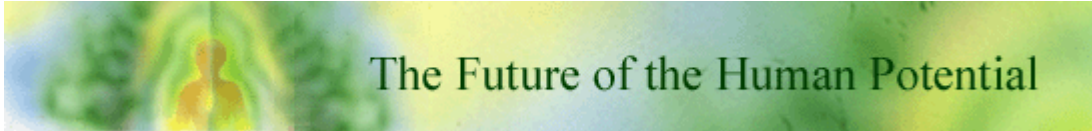
Therefore the first thing that we must clearly define is: 'What is health' 'What is medical care' and assign responsibility to people with authority to look after the parameters of health and others to look at the parameters of illness on all levels.

Only then we can identify and create correct objectives of medical institutions and assign specific responsibility to the different categories of health power.

The ultimate question remains - which alternative system will survive? Only time will tell, but meanwhile we should continue to study in an unbiased manner the outcome of various therapies. Truth cures and truth survives.

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*(Dr. Bisht was the Director-General of Health Services, Govt. of India and Deputy Regional Director of WHO (South-East Asia Region). He is a co-founder and Chairman of the Sri Aurobindo International Institute for Integral Health and Research (SAIIHR), Pondicherry. He is the author of many books and journal articles.)*



*Futurology is now emerging as a new and fledgling field of knowledge. Modern futurology tries to plot the future trends in the external life of man - in economics, society, politics, business, technology. We will be presenting here an alternative scenario with an emphasis on the future of the Human Potential, especially the potentialities of the inner being of man, his psychological and spiritual potentialities. For, we believe that it is in this inner realm lies the future of human evolution.*

*In this series of articles we will try to do what is called in modern futurology as "scenario building", sketching a line of future possibilities in the light of Sri Aurobindo and Mother's vision of the future, with an emphasis on the brighter and more luminous possibilities. Many of the themes or terms discussed here have become familiar jargons and cliches of the ever-growing New Age literature. But the deeper spiritual significance of these themes of the future are not yet well-understood. In this series, we will try to clarify the deeper and broader significance of some of these New Age cliches like holism or globalism or global consciousness.*

*To a too earthly and pragmatic mind most of these future verities may appear dreamy or utopian. But, what else is human progress than a progressive realisation of our utopias? And as Sri Aurobindo says in his epic Savitri, "Earth's winged chimera's are Truth's steeds in Heaven!". The Truth's steeds may sometimes use our winged chimeras to descend into earth carrying their heavenly possibilities.*

### **Holism: Age of Integration and Synthesis**

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**M.S. Srinivasan**

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The impulse and awakening towards the unity-consciousness leads to the awareness of the two dimensions of Unity: Horizontal and Vertical. The horizontal dimension leads to the consciousness of the universal Oneness of all existence; the vertical dimension leads to the unifying intuition which can create a perfect synthesis and integration of the inner being and outer life of man in a clear and conscious perception of the indivisible wholeness of life or in other words "Holism". We have discussed the first aspect of unity in our previous section. Awakening in this horizontal dimension leads to the Global Consciousness. In this section we will discuss the future possibilities in the second vertical dimension of Unity. But to foresee the future in this vertical dimension of unity we have to first understand the present condition of our consciousness in this dimension.

The past history and evolution of the human race was governed mainly by the ego in the Mind with Reason as the pilot and the highest faculty of knowledge. But the ego-mind-reason is in its essence a consciousness of division and analysis and not of integration or synthesis. To arrive at a truly creative synthesis we must be able to comprehend the indivisible unity and wholeness of life. But the ego-centric mentality is inherently incapable of comprehending the unity and wholeness of life because it is by its very nature, a consciousness of division and analysis. It can not see and feel the whole but can only see the parts fragments and aspects of the whole and most of the time mistakes the

fragment as the whole. So its quest for knowledge begins with the perception of a fragment and proceeds through the analysis of the fragment as if it is the whole. And the result is an attitude to knowledge which creates irreconcilable contradiction between what are actually complimentary aspects of existence and an outlook on life based on either- or that-or-this approach. Thus we have the eternal tug of war between unresolved antinomies capitalism vs. socialism, democracy vs. aristocracy, religion vs. science, reason vs. intuition, idealism vs. pragmatism, spiritualism vs. materialism. And the human evolution stumbled on in an Hegelian zigzag from thesis and antithesis to dubious synthesis... dubious because, as we have indicated earlier, the human mind is inherently incapable of a true synthesis. Whatever synthesis the human mind has arrived at is a superficial or an eclectic compromise, which only shifts the problem to a different domain or level, and not a deep synthesis which leads to a lasting solution. Had the human mind possessed the capacity for true synthesis, it would have by now solved most of its problems.

For as Sri Aurobindo points out, all problems are in essence problems of harmony; they are the result of a lack of balance and synthesis between the different aspects of life. The very fact none of the antinomies of mind and life which we have listed earlier (and many more) had been satisfactorily solved shows, reason is inherently incapable of synthesis. It may arrive at some form of synthesis or insight into the whole at the conceptual level in thought or idea, but it doesn't have the practical intuition and the force to actualize this insight or synthesis in life and action.

This inherent defect of the human mind and reason can be more poignantly felt in the inner being of man. In most of us there is always an acute imbalance and disorder between the various parts of our being, our body, mind and heart, and their faculties of thought, sensations, feeling, will and action. Reason was never able to achieve a perfect or even a satisfactory integration or harmony between the various parts or powers of our being. Each part of our beings has its own legitimate needs, values and aspirations. Our body seeks for material survival, sustenance, ease, comfort; the will in the life and the dynamic force in us seeks for power action expansion, achievement, realisation possession and enjoyment; emotions seek for love and to be loved and for harmonious relationship; the intellect seeks for knowledge and understanding; there is a deeper and higher part of our mind, which seeks for ideals like truth, beauty, goodness, harmony and unity. Our human Reason, which is the highest faculty available to us in our present stage of evolution, is called upon to integrate and harmonise all these faculties and their aspirations into a coherent whole. Any one who made even a little bit of sincere effort towards self-development, and tried to control or integrate the various parts of his being using reason would have realized how hopelessly inadequate it is for the task. Our Reason cannot do it because it has neither the light nor the power to harmonise the conflicting pulls of the different part of our being.

For, our being or life is not entirely rational. Reason is not the highest source or destiny of our being or life; it is only a transitional or intermediate part or faculty of our being. There is a large tract of our being and life below reason like for example our subconscious instincts, vital impulses or heart's emotions which are non-rational. Reason

cannot control them because, first, their needs and aspirations are different from reason, so they don't listen to or agree with reason; second, they are much more concrete and powerful than reason and its ideas and abstractions. Similarly there are large tracks of subliminal and superconscious regions behind or above Reason, which it cannot enter, unless it opens its consciousness to this unknown realm in a silent and humble surrender or they force themselves on Reason in the course of natural evolution. This suprarational ranges of our consciousness contain the deeper sources of our being and life and hold the key to the future evolution and destiny of our race and our plant. They contain a range of higher faculties and powers which can do what Reason cannot or unable to do and lead our human life to its highest fulfillment, harmony and perfection.

The reason may not be entirely incapable of enforcing some control or mastery over our being. But it is mostly a muted and forced control in which all other faculties are dominated and suppressed by a single rigid idea or ideal of the rational, ethical or aesthetic mind and will. But such a forced control can never lead to a true and lasting mastery over our nature. For, the suppressed faculties can at any moment surge up and destroy the forcefully held and constructed edifice when the dominating faculty becomes weak or lax in its vigilance. But such a forced control can never lead to true mastery which comes only through harmonious integration of the personality. But the mind's approach and effort leads only to imbalanced human beings like for example the thinker, visionary idealist, poet or artist with no hold on the actual or practical realities of life; the pragmatic man with a narrow vision of life which cannot see beyond its nose; the efficient man who is immoral and the honest man who is inefficient. It should be noted here that whatever we have said regarding Reason applies to the ethical and aesthetic faculties of the mind. They are also afflicted with the same inherent defect of the divisible mental consciousness. Similarly, when this inner imbalance expresses itself in the outer collective life it creates more or less same type of imbalance in the groups, and civilizations like for example civilizations which are great in culture but weak in economy or polity and vice versa. This we have already discussed in some detail in our earlier articles.

This is the present condition of our mind. In the future we may probably witness the gradual healing of this inherent melody of the mind through the emergence of new and higher faculties beyond reason or a new mind altogether, which cannot only conceive wholeness but also can feel, live, manifest and realize wholeness in our inner being and outer life.

As the human consciousness evolves rapidly into the future, there will be a growing awakening to the horizontal and vertical dimensions of unity. The first result of the awakening will be an acute awareness of the inherent inadequacy of mind and reason and the perpetual and insoluble conflicts it engenders in our consciousness and life. In the past evolution of our race, we have lived with these conflicts because they have not become sufficiently painful, acute or urgent for our survival or success in the outer life.

The spiritual minds of humanity, or most of them, had a clear, concrete spiritual insight, vision or experience of the whole and arrived at an intuitive synthesis and integration of

the various part of their being and different aspects of life. The intellectual and aesthetic mind of humanity, in its highest flights, on many occasions arrived at an intellectual or aesthetic insight into the whole and made some form synthesis in thought and imagination. But the pragmatic mind of humanity was never able to arrive at any practical synthesis and integration of the different aspects and dualities of life in the outer life of the race. This is because the ideal of integration or synthesis has not become a pragmatic necessity for survival or success in the outer life. But in the future as the humanity moves closer towards its destiny, a stage may come when the need for a lasting solution to the conflicts of mind and life becomes a pragmatic necessity for survival and success in the outer life. When this happens it will lead to a sincere and earnest quest for synthesis and integration not only in the thinking mind but also in the pragmatic mind. To this aspiration Nature will respond by bringing forward higher faculties which can lead to a lasting harmony of the inner being and outer life of man.

We will discuss the nature of these faculties a little later. First we need a little more clarity on the ideal of integration. Individually, it means integration of our physical, vital and mental being and all its faculties of thoughts, feeling, will and action around the deepest and innermost spiritual centre of our being. But this will not be a forced integration achieved through domination and suppression. The Spirit in us does not impose itself; it gently illumines, inspires and persuades each part of our being and its faculties to flower freely according to its unique nature, truth or law, dharma, in complementing harmony with other parts and faculties, and grow towards their highest potentialities. So a free, harmonious and integral development of all the powers faculties and potentialities of our being from the lowest physical to the highest spiritual level is the ideal of integration for the individual. For the collectivity, the ideal is the harmonious and integral self-expression of these powers of our being in the outer economic, social, political and cultural life leading to a perfect integration of the inner being and the outer life. When humanity awakens to this ideal and it begins to realize itself in the individual and the collective life of man, then all imbalances and conflicts which mar the present human life, governed by the divisive consciousness of mind, will be gradually healed and a great harmony will begin to reign over human life.

The imbalances of the truncated mind will be healed. Since all the faculties of the integrated human being will express harmoniously through every human activity there won't be any conflict or imbalances like for example between ethics and efficiency or idealism and pragmatism. As a result, the pragmatic activities and institutions like business, politics or technology will be awakened to the ethical, aesthetic and spiritual dimension. Similarly idealistic activities and institutions which deal with the pure idea or the ethical, aesthetic or spiritual values will be awakened to the pragmatic dimension; they will seek and find methods to manifest and materialise their ideas and values in the outer economic, social and political life of man. The pragmatic mind of man will become more and more sensitive to the higher ethical, aesthetic and spiritual values and aims. The intellectual ethical, aesthetic and spiritual mind will become more and more sensitive to the pragmatic realities of life. There will develop in the consciousness of the race a spiritual pragmatism and a higher integral intuition which can reconcile the higher aims, ideals and values of the ethical, aesthetic and spiritual mind with the pragmatic realities

of the material, economic, social and political life. A higher intuition will develop in the race and reconcile all the conflicting "isms" of the mind in a transcending synthesis, not merely in thought, but in life and action. This will be the future ideal of integration which the Mother articulates succinctly:

"To be integral is to make a harmonious synthesis of all one's possibilities."

This brings us to the content of integration. What are the unmanifest possibilities in man which will manifest in the future? To answer this question we have to understand the nature of the higher ranges of our consciousness beyond the present condition of our mind.

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*(M.S. Srinivasan is a research associate in Sri Aurobindo Society.)*

## The Wonder that is Sanskrit

*"...it will not be a good day for India when the ancient tongue ceases entirely to be written or spoken."*

*So prophesied Sri Aurobindo about Devabhasha, the language of the gods, otherwise known as Sanskrit. There is a growing awareness off late of the genius behind this ancient language. People from all walks of life are discovering how it relates to their life and more importantly, how it enhances the quality of life itself. Over the next twelve months we will put across some of these views from around the world which will help our readers appreciate and understand the worth of Sanskrit and the need for a conscious resurgence.*

### **Sanskrit as the National Language of India**

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The Nobel Laureate physicist, Dr. C.V. Raman, believed that Sanskrit was the only language that could be the national language of India. He said, "Sanskrit flows through our blood. It is only Sanskrit that can establish the unity of the country." It is true that a national language is a very important element in the growth and self-actualisation of a people and a nation. It helps to develop and also to give expression to their heart, mind and soul. Says Sri Aurobindo, "It is of the utmost value to a nation, a human group-soul, to preserve its language and to make of it a strong and living cultural instrument. A nation, race or people which loses its language, cannot live its whole life or its real life."

We have to ask ourselves what are the requirements of a national language and which language of India meets best these requirements. Firstly, a national language should be national in the true sense, that is, it should have taken birth in the country and be capable of expressing its special ethos and genius. It cannot be a foreign language, even though the foreign language may be widely spoken. Therefore, straight away we cannot consider English as the national language of India, though it is spoken all over the country and may even have a special role to play in the future. The national language of India has to be a language of and from India.

The national language has to express the many facets of the genius, culture and heritage of the country in diverse fields. And without doubt, one can say that no other Indian language has such a rich treasure of noblest thoughts, highest achievements in religion and philosophy, in art and literature, in science and technology, in dance and music, architecture and sculpture, than Sanskrit. It is for the sake of this knowledge and wisdom that, through the centuries, travellers and seekers from all over have come to India. Even in the present times scholars from the West and the East are studying and translating Indian texts, a majority of which are in Sanskrit. But unfortunately, most Indians now come into contact with our ancient wisdom not by studying them in the original but through English translations. So much so that "English lexicons, and English histories of Sanskrit language and literature, English estimates of our writers and expositions of our

texts, secular and religious - these are our standard authorities and references." This has also inevitably led to many distortions and misinterpretations and if we want to find the roots of our culture, its greatness and its living force, we have to go once again to Sanskrit. It will not be an exaggeration to say that if India has to rise, Sanskrit will have to rise once again.

A third requirement of a national language is that it must not be too closely identified with any particular region of the country. Every Indian language we may think of, whether it is Gujarati, Bengali, Tamil, Telegu, Malayalam, Punjabi or Assamese, is closely identified with one state or region. Hindi alone is perhaps not identified with a particular province but still it is regional in the sense that it belongs to the north of India. Sanskrit alone is non-regional. No province or state or people can claim it as its own. It has not sprung up in one area. It belongs to the whole of India and has been used in the whole of India for centuries.

Recent archeological and historical researches have shown that it was the link language from ancient times for the entire Indian sub-continent. Jean Filliozat, the well known French Indologist observes, "While Middle-India dialects and other languages were local, Sanskrit was universal throughout India. It was fully known by a few people only, but everywhere; and it was superficially known by more numerous people mixing it with local language."

Sanskrit alone, even if it was the mother tongue of a limited number of groups or families, and in spite of its sophisticated shape, was regularly taught everywhere in traditional schools. In fact, Sanskrit has always been the binding force except for a short period when it was replaced by Pali and the Prakrits. However, it soon regained its importance during the middle ages. It became a sort of common link language among the speakers of different mother tongues. Thus, in his *Nashadhiyacharita*, Sriharsha describes the kingly suitors of Damayanti, from all parts of India, as speaking to each other in Sanskrit to avoid unintelligibility. Rajashekhara, in his *Kavyamimamsa*, written in the 10th century A.D., says that the Magadha king Sisunaga and the Ujjain ruler Sahasanka insisted that the royal women should speak only in Sanskrit. Another poet, Bilhana, in the 11th century, mentions in his *Vikramankadevacharita* that in Kashmir, in every house Sanskrit was spoken like the mother tongue. Shankara, born in the Southern state of Kerala, travelled and debated with scholars all over the country and established mathas in the four corners of this land. This became possible only through Sanskrit, the link language, which was understood in all parts of the country.

### **Sanskrit and other Indian Languages**

If Sanskrit was so widespread over the whole of India and was the common language of communication, it no doubt had a very special relation with and a great influence on all Indian languages. "The ideas, the literary forms and even the themes of the literature of our great regional languages are predominantly derived from Sanskrit. For proper use of a large percentage of words, even in Dravidian languages, an understanding of Sanskrit is necessary; the great classics of India, not only the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, but

the masterpieces from which everyone in India draws his inspiration from the simple Pañcatantra to Shakuntala, are in Sanskrit, and it is on their translations and their vulgarisations that our minds are fed and nourished from childhood."5

The relation of Sanskrit with North Indian languages is obvious. Sanskrit is universally accepted as the mother of all North Indian languages - Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Rajasthani, Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi, Kashmiri, Maithali, Sindhi etc. They are all derived from and rooted in Sanskrit in their vocabulary, syntax and grammatical structure. These languages belong to the Indo-Aryan group and contain four types of words:

1. Tatsama - words which are the same as in Sanskrit
2. Tadbhava - words which are derived from Sanskrit
3. Deshya - words peculiar to the language and the region
4. Vaideshika - words borrowed from foreign languages

A proper study of all North Indian languages would show that more than 70 percent of the words in these languages are Tatsama and Tadbhava, that is, they have been taken directly from Sanskrit or are derived from Sanskrit. This is why there are a very large number of words like hasta, pada, karuna, dana, mahan) found in all North Indian languages. We find that when a person speaks in one North Indian language it is often possible for another North Indian to understand even though he may not know that language. This is because, along with the vocabulary, there is a very great similarity in the sentence structure.

In fact all the North Indian languages have basically the same alphabet, similar classifications and the same grammar. So much so that when Hemachandra wrote the first non-Sanskrit grammar his concluding remark was "...Whatever you cannot find in this apabhramsha grammar, is the same as it is in the Sanskrit grammar."

The situation is slightly different with the South Indian languages - Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and Tamil. These languages belong to what is known as the Dravidian group and there is a feeling among some that they do not have a close relationship with Sanskrit. This again is a misconception. If we take the example of Telugu, out of forty thousand words in a modern Telugu dictionary, nearly twenty-five thousand, that is 65 percent of the words, would be derived from Sanskrit. A large number of important literary works in Sanskrit have been adapted or translated into Telugu and often the Sanskrit vocabulary has been retained and Telugu endings added.

The same applies to Kannada and Malayalam in slightly different degrees. An interesting point to note is that many of the early grammars for Kannada, Malayalam and Telugu were written in Sanskrit, with commentary and explanatory notes in Sanskrit and modelled on the Paninian system. And in Kerala an entire poetical style came into existence, with its own literature, freely employing a large number of Sanskrit words with Malayalam endings, and a strong influence of Sanskrit metres and figures of speech. This special literary dialect came to be called Manipravalam, meaning a necklace strung with

'pearls and corals'. But what about Tamil? Even here we find a close relationship when we look at the alphabet, the syntax and even the vocabulary, though it may be to a lesser degree. In fact the cultural and historical bond between the Dravidian languages and Sanskrit has been very strong. The four great Acharyas who wrote major Bhashyas or commentaries on the Bhagavadgita - Shankara, Ramanuja, Vallabha and Madhva - were all from the South. These commentaries are all in Sanskrit and are studied as authoritative interpretations of the Gita by seekers and scholars from all over India. Sanskrit has been the language of prayer and worship in the temples all over the South from times immemorial.

The great Sayana, who wrote the well-known commentary on the Vedas, lived in the Vijayanagara Empire. The other two Vedic commentators, Venkatamadhava and Bharatasvamin, were under the Cholas and the Hoysalas. Mallinathasuri, who commented on the works of Kalidasa, was a Telugu speaker. Kumarila Bhatta and Appaya Dikshita were great scholars from the South and enriched Sanskrit language by their works.

Although early Tamil literature, for example the Sangam texts, shows certain special characteristics that are perhaps unique to Tamil, it is fully within the ambit of Sanskrit. As Sivajnana-munivar has said in his commentary on the Tolkappiyam, the oldest extant grammar of Tamil: "The nature of Tamil will not be clear to those who have not learnt Sanskrit". Tamil of the oldest Sangam texts shows a very good number of Sanskrit words, and the number goes on increasing with the centuries.

There was a time when the Mayapith Empire was established by the Tamil kings in Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam and Malaya by Emperor Vijay. In the 12th century A.D. these Tamil kings made Sanskrit the state language of these countries. The Andhra people established the Moan Empire in Burma, which extended from Pegu to Mandalaya. The state language of this Empire was Sanskrit and it remained so up to the 12th Century A.D. Take the case of Malayasia, where people from both Tamil and Andhra nationality dwelled. Malaya's last king was Parameswaran. He adopted the Arabic script but the state language continued to be Sanskrit till about 150 years ago.

It is significant to read what the great Tamil poet Subramania Bharati wrote under the title 'O Mir Mani Kovai' for Swadesha Mitran, which was later on reproduced in the June 1942 issue of KalaimagaM: "Elders such as Gandhiji are of the opinion that Hindi may be offered as the common language for India. But Aurobindo Ghose, who may be rightly called the greatest of the Indian patriots, and many others speak of Sanskrit as the common language of India. They say that it is not a new status to be conferred upon Sanskrit; it has enjoyed it from ancient times. For instance, before the advent of the British rule in this country, in which language would a king from Tamil Nadu have written to a king in Gujarat if he wanted to communicate with him? If it were in Tamil the Gujarati king would not have understood it, and it would not have been possible for the Tamil king to write in Gujarati. Hence their communication had to be in Sanskrit, a language in which the pandits, the Rajagurus and the chief ministers of both the States were equally well-versed. Is that not evident?

Some people state that it will not be practical to keep Sanskrit as the common language for the whole country, since it is difficult to learn Sanskrit and acquire proficiency in it. This is perhaps true if we were to follow the old way of learning. But we do not need to do that any more. Now Shri Bhandarkar, a pandit from Bombay, has written primers through which one can learn Sanskrit in seven or eight months without the help of a teacher. Of these, the first book has already been translated into Tamil. This method can be even further simplified. In fact, anyone who reads the Pañcatantra three times with an understanding of its meaning and learns it by heart, should acquire the ability to speak Sanskrit fluently. It may take some more time to be familiar with the strenuous style of Bana and Bhatti; but for a common use, works like the Pañcatantra which are written in a simple style are sufficient."

If such are the views and feelings of a poet and a patriot like Subramania Bharati, then why has there been recently such a strong opposition to Sanskrit in the South? We must first realise that this is a relatively recent phenomenon and for centuries Sanskrit and Tamil have not only lived together but enriched one another. The opposition has never come from persons who were educated in the true sense of the word, who had the necessary catholicity and depth of vision. In fact the eminent Tamil scholar, Dr. V. Raghavan who has written several books on Sanskrit, claims that it is possible to speak in Tamil sentences made entirely of Sanskrit words and to be understood.

The reasons for the recent divide are to be found in human folly and ignorance. One of the historical aberrations that has fuelled this controversy is the widely accepted idea of the Aryan invasion into India by which the original Dravidian inhabitants were driven down into the South, leading to a constant conflict and opposition. Fortunately, now more and more historians are realising that this theory has no factual basis and was wrongly propounded by some Western historians, and Aryan and Dravidian, North and South are two aspects of the same Indian culture.

### **A Capacity to Grow**

It is obvious that there is no language apart from Sanskrit which has such a close relationship with all the other languages of India. But there is another characteristic of Sanskrit that is of great importance. A national language must have at its command a storehouse of a very large vocabulary to meet the demands of a vast range of subjects and disciplines, from science to spirituality, art to animals, from philosophy to information technology. Sanskrit fulfills these requirements admirably. "Look at the wonderful pageant of Sanskrit literature, in arts, crafts, science and politics, in concrete spheres and in realms of abstractions and speculations. Its Shilpa, Ganita, Rasayana, Ayurveda, Jyotisha, Arthashastra and Dharmashastra literature forms a mine of technical terms which can assist efficiently in the rendering into an Indian medium all kinds of knowledge now known and learnt from English."

But this vocabulary can be static, while the demand of the changing times and the explosion of information and knowledge in every field require that the language should have within itself sufficient growing power or vitality, to put forth fresh forms to tackle

the new and vastly expanded needs. As has been pointed out by several reputed scholars, the wonderful grammatical structure of Sanskrit is such that the language has an eternal fecundity and an incredible capacity to widen itself without losing its genius and individuality.

Therefore, apart from its own vitality, growth and adaptability, Sanskrit can serve and has been serving as a feeder language for other Indian languages. "The reason for this lies in the linguistic structure of Sanskrit language which possesses high potentiality in affixation and word-compounding and richness in abstract concepts and discursive terms, besides being a rich store-house of knowledge."

In the words of the noted Indologist Monier Williams, "India, though it has, as we have seen, more than 500 spoken dialects, has only one sacred language and only one sacred literature, accepted and revered by all... however diverse in race, dialect, rank and creed. That language is Sanskrit and that literature is Sanskrit literature... the only quarry whence the requisite materials may be obtained for improving the vernaculars or for expressing important religious and scientific ideas."

### **A Source of Unity and Pride**

A vast and diverse country like India needs a national language that can unify and harmonise. We have seen that Sanskrit was this great unifying force for centuries. Even when India was not a single political unit, Sanskrit made the Indian people one in spirit, heart and culture.

Now when India has attained political unity, but is being torn apart by various divisive forces, the role of Sanskrit becomes even more important. Any other language will add to the divisive tendencies. It is only Sanskrit which can help India and Indians to rise above narrow regional and linguistic factionalism and to grow in oneness and unity.

A national language must not only unite but give its people a sense of pride in their past, a sense of belonging to the present, a sense of hope and confidence for the future. It must bring to them a feeling of fulfillment in their achievements and have the power to mould their character and to inspire them to greater endeavours, attainments and heights.

"Sanskrit is a language which through its contents, sonority and mellifluousness, has the power to lift us up above ourselves - it is, as thousands of people would say from their own experience, a potent aid to the formation of character and sense of exaltation, in addition to ensuring a sense of pan-Indian cultural as well as political unity."

Through Sanskrit every Indian can feel a oneness and belonging with every other Indian and with every part of India. We can feel proud of a great and magnificent heritage, which can compare with the best in the world in every field, and to which every region of India has contributed. We can look to the future with the confidence that this mighty nation will rise again and attain a glory far greater than ever attained in the past, and in which every Indian has a role to play.

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*(Compiled from the book "The Wonder that is Sanskrit" authored by Sampad and Vijay)*

# TALES TOLD BY MYSTICS

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*The Indian tradition of literature, unique for its content as well as chronological development, ran in two lines : Mythological and Pragmatic.*

*Beginning with the Vedas at the dawn of civilisation the first line branched out into the Upanishads, gave way to the epics and the Mahapuranas, followed by Upapuranas and the rest.*

*The second line consisted of the Brihat Katha (the precursor of the Kathasaritsagara), the Jatakas and the Panchatantra, etc. They shed light on different aspects of life, on its worldly and other worldly complexities, sometimes didactic (as in the Jatakas) but more often simply expository of the various possibilities of life.*

*Between these two lines quietly ran a third, the treasure of tales told by the hermits, mendicants, ascetics and other mystics. Profound for psychological studies, sharp with mystic experiences, these tales of light, wit and delight remained a oral tradition for the most part.*

*We propose to serialise some of them, "retold by a master story teller of our time - one of the best-loved writers of India" - as the India's National Academy of Letters introduces the author, Manoj Das.*



## A Fight against Fate

**Manoj Das**

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It was a festive night, for the king had been blessed with a son. The king and the queen had performed a number of rites and had observed several vows to obtain this boon, for they had remained without any issue for twelve years of their married life.

The queen was congratulated by all her near and dear ones. The bonny child lay beside her. At the approach of midnight all were asked to leave the queen's room so that she could have a restful sleep, guarded by her maids outside her room. The lamps were dimmed.

The queen slept for a while but, all of a sudden, she woke up. A strange light seemed to have appeared near her head. She strained her eyes to look at its source. What she saw stunned her. There stood a luminous being, his right hand spread towards her new-born son's head. As the queen saw him, the being withdrew his hand and smiled.

The queen sat up. "I don't know who you are, but you are surely a godly being. Please bless my son so that he becomes lucky," said the queen. The luminous being kept silent. That intrigued the queen. "Why don't you speak?" she demanded with great humility. "And wouldn't you be kind enough to identify yourself before the ignorant lady that I am?"

"I am the god of Fate. My only business is to write on the forehead of a new-born child what is in store for it in this life. I cannot wish for a child anything more than what his Karma had ordained for it. I appear at the birth of every child, though people cannot see me. That you could see me, speaks of a certain occult quality you possess, even though you were not aware of it," said the god of Fate.

The queen bowed to the god. "Wouldn't you reveal to me what you wrote on my child's forehead?"

"I cannot do so. Even if I do, it will be of no use to you. On the other hand, it will unnecessarily cause you anxiety," said the god.

"You have told me almost half of what I wished to know. I guess, all is not well with my son's destiny. You must tell me the whole truth; otherwise I will not let you depart. If you go away forcibly, I will kill myself," said the queen in a voice tender but determined.

The dialogue between the queen and the god went on for some more time. At last the god was obliged to disclose to her that her son would live poor and far from the locality-in a forest!

The queen shed tears of despair, but managed to ask the god for some small boon that would at least alleviate her son's misery.

"Well," said the god, "I grant that he shall be able to catch a deer a day, enough to maintain himself and yourself in a humble way. This now becomes a part of his fate. I cannot do anything beyond that."

And then the god took leave of the queen.

Days passed. The queen kept her anguish and anxiety to herself. A year later the king fell ill and died. The minister, a wicked plotter, usurped the throne under the pretext that the prince was a child and secretly tried to kill the queen and the prince. On time the queen, along with her child, escaped into a forest.

It was awfully hard for the queen to adjust herself to a havenot's life. But the god of Fate's assurance proved true. Every evening the queen spread a few nets in different parts of the forest. In the morning it was found that a deer had fallen into one of them. She handed over the catch to a forest-dweller who sold it in the town and gave the queen her due.

This went on for years. Soon the toddler prince began helping his mother. When he was twelve, he took up the entire work on himself. Meanwhile, he became a hermit's student and learnt reading and writing. He proved intelligent and was bursting with ideas. He was endowed with a spirit of adventure.

"It is rather strange that I catch never more than one deer although I spread nets at five places. It is even more strange that I never go without a deer!" one day he mused in his mother's hearing.

"It is because you are destined to net a deer a day!" commented the mother.

Well, she had given a part of her secret knowledge away. The prince insisted on knowing what she meant by that and the queen was obliged to tell him all, by and by.

The prince sat, composed in a strange silence. "Mother!" he declared after a long time, "I will change my fate!"

"How can you do that, my son? It is beyond man."

"I can, if I am responsible for the present fate of mine through my actions in my previous life!" said the little prince. He sat in meditation for long and emerged from it with determination writ large on his face.

That day, instead of five nets, he spread only one. As he had anticipated, he found a deer caught in it.

The next day instead of spreading the net anywhere on the ground, he hung it on a tree. Nevertheless, a deer was in it all the same!

And next, he hung the net not only on the tallest tree, but also he lighted a fire around the tree!

At midnight he woke up to behold a luminous being standing by his bedside.

"Are you by any chance the god of Fate?" he asked.

"I am."

"Thanks. I was expecting you," said the prince with a chuckle.

"Well, what do you mean by hanging your net on a tree and lighting a fire around it? Don't you understand that even if I am a god, in the material world I cannot steer clear of physical laws, that carrying the deer to the tree-top was a tough task?"

"But I am destined to net a deer a day and the one who knows it for certain is, of course, the god of Fate. How he puts the deer into my net is his business," said the prince.

"Must you make me suffer for the boon I granted to you?" demanded the god.

"Had I not made your job difficult, you would not have cared to appear before me tonight," calmly stated the prince.

"But why did you wish me to appear before you?"

"So that you can erase the writing on my forehead which condemns me to an existence in exile!"

The god of Fate stood in silence. The prince closed his eyes and ardently aspired for a new destiny. A long time passed. The prince felt the god's hand passing on his forehead. He opened his eyes.

"With your will and aspiration, you have been able to change your old destiny," said the god of Fate. "My blessings are with you," he added as he disappeared.

Next day the friendly forest-dwellers brought the prince and his mother the report of a revolt in the kingdom. The usurper who had become a tyrant, had been dethroned. The queen and the prince proceeded to the palace forthwith.

Everybody recognised the queen. There was great rejoicing at getting back the real heir to the throne. The prince was crowned the king.

*(The concept of fate does not arise out of an illogical doctrine of determinism. If the present circumstances of one's life are the result of his earlier will and action, his conscious will and action of the moment can naturally shape his future and even alter the course of the running present. This story projects this truth in a typical folktale way.)*

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*(Manoj Das is an internationally known creative writer. He is the recipient of India's national recognition, the Sahitya Akademi Award and the nation's most prestigious literacy award, the Saraswati Samman. As a social commentator, his columns in India's national dailies like The Times of India, The Hindustan Times, The Hindu and The Statesman, revealing the deeper truth and the untraced aspects behind current issues, have been highly appreciated.)*



# SAVITRI

the Golden Bridge, the Wonderful Fire

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**Mangesh Nadkarni**

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## Instalment-32

In the last two instalments, we strayed away from the text of Savitri in order to review briefly Sri Aurobindo's basic concept of evolution as the evolution of consciousness and also his concept of the perfection of the entire being of man – his body, life and mind as well as the liberation of his soul – as the goal of his yoga. We now return to our study of Canto Four of Book X of Savitri.

Savitri uses the logic of evolution to answer the God of Death's contention that this earth is a hopeless enterprise and it is foolish to try to bring down God here. There is no home for him here. He shows to her the panorama of human history and its futile round of civilisations built and destroyed, of wars and ruination of all that man builds carefully over centuries of hard labour and destroys in an instant of frenzy. The human mind dreams but in vain because the world is a myth that happens to come true. If Mind is all, the God of Death declares there is no hope of Truth, for Mind can never see the body of Truth. He asks her to cast off her mind. Even if God is there, he cares not for this world. He sees everything with a calm indifferent gaze. In any case, man cannot hold in his mind God's truth. He tells Savitri that it is foolish to try to change the world God has made.

He asks Savitri to cast off life and mind so that she can realise herself as the soul. And if she is Spirit, and Nature is only the garb of Spirit, cast off your garb and be your naked self. That is the only truth of life. Turn to God, O Savitri, leave everything behind, and seek the immobile peace of the spirit. I am the gate to immortality. This, it must be remembered, has the sanction of various spiritual traditions. Not here on earth can there be any fulfilment for man, but in the other worlds, or in the world within can man find the kingdom of God. In certain schools of Indian philosophy, this is known as the Mayavada. It takes the position that the world is an illusion (maya) and the solitary Self, designated Atman-Brahman is alone real. Action in an illusory world, of course, can have no significance except possibly as an exercise for the purification of the mind in preparation of its union with the Absolute. The intention here is the greatest wisdom lies in escaping from this world.

We have now also examined briefly the philosophical implications of what the God of Death has been claiming as the truth about this world and how Savitri confronts him with

the integral truth that evolution of consciousness shows him. Furthermore Savitri now begins to emphasise that she is a deputy of the aspiring world and that she seeks not only the liberty for her spirit but for all. The aim of the yoga pursued by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother did not have the salvation of the individual as its supreme goal but the redemption of the whole of humanity. One can see the growing insistence of this in Savitri's struggle with the God of Death from now on.

Then once again, a deep cry was heard from Death. But this time his voice sounded different. It continued to be disdainful but did not have the ring of confidence it had earlier. It sounded weary and compassionate as though it felt oppressed by its own obstinacy. It now sounded more like Life's, somewhat bewildered by traversing countless paths and tired. His form of dread was altered as though he admitted our transient effort to attain eternity. He still had doubts about any thing good and beautiful ever emerging on this earth from its long and seemingly unavailing struggle with Fate, Chance and Time.

The voice of Death cried out to Savitri:

"You, Oh Savitri, know the wisdom that goes beyond both the acceptance and the rejection of forms; that is why you are delivered by the seeing gods. If only you had kept your mind aloof from the fierce pressure of the struggle of life, you too would have been omniscient and calm like the gods. But your heart is passionate and it refuses to dwell in calm aloofness; it is like the storm-wing of an anarchic power. It seeks to tear up the decree of Fate, overthrow the rule of Death, and the governing law and Will that maintains all. Such great spirits like you who are fired with excessive love for all in this creation hasten action and tend to violate the laws of God. They are like you; they come into the narrow bounds of life with natures too large for life. These worshippers of force do not know how life recoils with unexpected results as they compel the troubled years to move in the direction of their choice.

"But those who are wise are tranquil; they are not like the imperious ones. Like the great hills they are seated on their unchanging base trying ceaselessly to rise towards their un-reached sky, with their heads dreamless in the immutable domain in the heavens. These mighty mediators, who are sublime and still, are content to watch the movements of the stars. They may look motionless but they are the might of the earth; they see the ages pass, but they themselves are ever the same.

"The wise think largely, in terms of the cycles of time; they foresee things that are yet to happen far ahead in the future; they hear the tread of far-off things; patient and unmoved, they keep their dangerous wisdom restrained in their depths to prevent the possibility of man's fragile ship foundering and sinking into the abyss of the stupendous seas, dragged down by some leviathan (monster) chained and kept captive there

"Lo, how everything shakes when the gods come too near! All moves, all is in danger, all is in anguish and everything is torn and thrown up. If heaven's strength were to surprise this imperfect earth, and knowledge without any veils on it were to strike these unfit souls

on earth, the speeding ages would plunge chaotically into some abyss. That is why the gods veil their frightful powers. God seems to hide his thought, and at times he even seems to err. In this world always be calm and slow in your reactions. You, Savitri, are filled with the might of powerful goddess (Durga) to whom you offered worship this morning. Do not use the strength as the wild Titans do. Do not disturb the fixed and well laid-out lines; these are ancient laws. Respect the serene calm of great established things."

(We can clearly see here that the God of Death has once again changed his strategy. He is not any more haughty and imperious. He cannot just ignore Savitri or pretend that what she is trying to do is of no consequence to him. So now he uses the technique of 'damning her with faint praise'. He recognises the great power she has within her, but in the interest of the world and in her own interest he advises her to be calm and wise. Do not please disturb the peace of settled things. Please respect the wisdom of the creator who has made this world what it is. Leave it to him to initiate what changes he might like to make in it and when he might like to make them.)

Savitri now replies to the huge God: " O Death, what is this calm you have suddenly started praising so much? Is it not just the mechanical and inert tread of huge, inhuman energies chained to an unchanging round entirely soulless? If unchanging law is the supreme reality, then the soul's hope is all in vain. The speeding ages ever move on ceaselessly to the new and unknown and justify the purpose of God in this creation. Look at the great ages of the earth and the progress they have brought about; how could they have come about if not by breaking the chain of all fixed laws? It is only through such a free and open adventure into the new that life has leaped on to the hurried paths it has taken. In this, the earth was encouraged by the inspiring divine words which human gods have left behind. Do not impose on sentient minds and hearts the dull fixity that is appropriate only to inanimate things. The rule you admire so much is only for the animal species which are content to live beneath the unchanging yoke of Nature. But it is not meant for man, who aspires to a higher walk and seeks to master all.

"With my feet I trample upon your law O Death, for I was born to live in freedom. If I am mighty, let my force be unveiled, and you will see that it is equal companion of the dateless power. Or else, let my frustrated soul sink down in the original sleep, since it is unworthy. I claim from Time my will's eternity and I claim God in his becomings in the moments of Time."

(Savitri has no respect for the counsel of inertia; she doesn't fancy sticking to the old laws and not daring anything new which the God of Death tries to hold up before her as a great ideal. She reacts against such an ideal almost vehemently and denounces the attempts of Death to imprison her in the past. Evolution would not have come so far if it had not shown the daring to leave old ways and try out new modes of being.)

Death now uses very subtle arguments to try to confuse Savitri:  
Why should the noble and immortal will  
Stoop to the petty works of transient earth,

Freedom forgotten and the Eternal's path?  
Or is this the high use of strength and thought,  
To struggle with the bonds of death and time  
And spend the labour that might earn the gods  
And battle and bear agony of wounds  
To grasp the trivial joys that earth can guard  
In her small treasure-chest of passing things?  
Child, hast thou trodden the gods beneath thy feet  
Only to win poor shreds of earthly life  
For him thou lov'st cancelling the grand release,  
Keeping from early rapture of the heavens  
His soul the lenient deities have called?  
Are thy arms sweeter than the courts of God?" (P. 652)

The God of Death asks Savitri in effect whether it is the best use of her great capacities and talents to use them to fight death here on earth? After all what does earth have to offer but disappointment, suffering, struggle and death? Death brings to the being released from the nightmare of life great relief and peace. So he asks her:

"Why should you let your noble and immortal will stoop to the petty works of transient earth, forgetting its own high freedom and its proper path to the eternal? Or is this the right and high use of your strength and creativity to struggle on earth with the bonds of death and time and waste the effort that might earn you godhood if employed elsewhere? Why do you fight and bear the agony of wounds, only to grasp the trivial joys that earth can guard in her small treasure-chest of passing things? O child, have you risen even beyond the gods to win only poor shreds of earthly life for him (Satyavan) whom you love cancelling the great release the lenient gods have granted him by taking him away from the earthly life? Are your arms then sweeter than death?"

Savitri answered:

"I walk unhesitatingly on the road that has been hewn for me by the mighty hand of God who has planned all for us. I run where the sweet and imperious voice of God commands me and where I am driven by the reins in his hands. If all this creation is futile, why did God draw such a wide scheme of the great worlds and why did he fill all infinity with his passionate, intense fervour? Or why did he build my human form and sow in me his bright and high desires if not to achieve something through them, to see them blossom in me and enable me to grow in love? Has he not carved in me his human image richly shaped in thoughts, his largeness and his golden powers?"

"Heaven can wait our coming in its calm. The heavens were easy for God to build. Earth was difficult to build, for in building the earth he had glory and he had problems to face, and he had strife to contend with. There on earth are the foreboding masks, the terrible powers to conquer. To create the gods on earth is the real challenge."

Far Heaven can wait our coming in its calm.  
Easy the heavens were to build for God.  
Earth was his difficult matter, earth the glory  
Gave of the problem and the race and strife.  
There are the ominous masks, the terrible powers;  
There it is greatness to create the gods. (Page: 653)

(These lines remind us of a very famous declaration of Sri Aurobindo which goes as follows: "Heavens we have always possessed, it is the earth that we have yet to possess, and the aim of my yoga is, in the language of the Vedas, to make heaven and earth equal and one." This is central to the entire thinking of Sri Aurobindo. True spirituality should help in making the manifestation of the perfection of God here on earth. It does not seek to escape from the problems of this world to some distant heavens or Nirvana, or chid-loka, or Kailasa. Savitri is reiterating here this central idea of Sri Aurobindo's spiritual thought. And then in the following lines, she clinches the issue.)

Is not the spirit immortal and absolved  
Always, delivered from the grasp of Time?  
Why came it down into the mortal's Space? (Page 653)

Savitri is asking Death what is the whole point of running away with one's soul to a world of liberation, or Nirvana? Isn't the soul always immortal and free, always delivered from Time. The Bhagavad Gita describes it as that "which is not born, does not die" as "unborn, immutable, eternal, imperishable and ancient" as something that is "eternally stable, immobile, all-pervading, and is for ever and ever." (Bhagavad Gita: Ch. 2: 20-25)

If the whole purpose of this life is that we should use it to find the quickest way to run away from it, why did God create it then? Is it being suggested that God made a mistake in creating this world, and we try correct him by running away from it? If the immortal spirit came down and wrapped itself in ignorance here, that must be for a purpose. What is that purpose?

Savitri declares that God has given a noble mission to man when he sent his high spirit to this earth and he has stamped his decree on Nature's forehead.

A charge he gave to his high spirit in man  
And wrote a hidden decree on Nature's tops. (Page: 653)

What is this charge given to man's high spirit by God?

Freedom is this with ever seated soul,  
Large in life's limits, strong in Matter's knots,  
Building great stuff of action from the worlds  
To make fine wisdom from coarse, scattered strands  
And love and beauty out of war and night,  
The wager wonderful, the game divine. (Page: 653)

When the Divine sent the soul of man to be engulfed in the limiting and suffocating world of matter and life, he gave it the inner freedom, and set up a divine game. What was the aim of that game? "To make fine wisdom from coarse, scattered strands" - to weave fine wisdom out of the coarse strands of life's experiences in matter and the vital and the early ranges of the mind. And second? To create "love and beauty out of war and night". There is so much strife and darkness here on earth, but to create love and beauty out of all this - that is the divine game, that is the "wager wonderful, the game divine", Sri Aurobindo puts it very beautifully at the very beginning of his philosophical magnum opus *The Life Divine* (pp. 1-2):

To know, possess and be the divine being in an animal and egoistic consciousness, to convert our twilight or obscure physical mentality into the plenary supramental illumination, to build peace and a self-existent bliss where there is only a stress of transitory satisfactions besieged by physical pain and emotional suffering, to establish an infinite freedom in a world which presents itself as a group of mechanical necessities, to discover and realise the immortal life in a body subjected to death and constant mutation,-this is offered to us as the manifestation of God in Matter and the goal of Nature in her terrestrial evolution.

Now Savitri takes up the challenge thrown at her by the God of Death when he asked her, "You are trying to call him back to earth and its miserable life from the great peace and relief that death has given him. He had asked her: "Are thy arms sweeter than the courts of God?" Are your arms then sweeter than the courts of God to which death has sent him? Her answer is contained in the following lines:

What liberty has the soul which feels not free  
Unless stripped bare and cannot kiss the bonds  
The Lover winds around his playmate's limbs,  
Choosing his tyranny, crushed in his embrace?  
To seize him better with her boundless heart  
She accepts the limiting circle of his arms,  
Bows full of bliss beneath his mastering hands  
And laughs in his rich constraints, most bound, most free.  
This is my answer to thy lures, O Death." (Page: 653)

What kind of liberty does the soul enjoy then if he is not free to strip himself bare and kiss the bonds of the Beloved which wind around his limbs, choosing her tyranny, crushed in her embrace? In order to seize her more effectively with his unbounded heart, the soul accepts the limiting circle of her arms, abandons himself entirely under her masterful hands and takes immense delight in her rich constraints. He is most free when he is thus most bound.

This is not only a most wonderful poetic statement of the basic mystery of this life but it also makes philosophically a most profound statement. The Brahman is in the grip of the tight embrace of maya; does a lover suffer when he is embraced tightly by his beloved? Does it show he is helpless? The Supreme Brahman allows himself to be bound by

Ignorance, by Maya, not because he is helpless and Maya is too strong for him and he has no choice but to submit to her. This would be tantamount to admitting that Maya is a greater truth than the Supreme Brahman. This would mean admitting another reality that is as powerful as the Supreme Brahman. To avoid getting caught into this trap Shankara and his followers claim that Ignorance or Maya is not real, except in its pragmatic effect. They are bound to describe Ignorance as unreal and this world created by the Ignorance also as unreal, as a mirage. Sri Aurobindo, on the other hand, proclaims that the so-called Maya is also real and real also this world it creates. The world is imperfect, but this self-limitation is not imposed on the Supreme by any force outside of himself – it is a voluntary self-limitation he gladly submits himself to. As he says in *The Life Divine* (Vol. II, Part I, p. 280), this self-limitation, which the Ignorance represents, is for a particular working. Instead of being incompatible with the absolute conscious force of the Divine Being, it is precisely one of its powers which exists among the manifold energies of the Infinite. The Supreme binds himself because he is free to bind himself. That is a sign of his omnipotence and absolute freedom and not of any limitation on his freedom.

Savitri has now given the God of Death a fitting reply to his question to her: "Are your arms then sweeter than death?"

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*(Mangesh Nadkarni retired as professor of Linguistics a few years ago. He enjoys sharing with as many people as possible what he receives from his study of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother)*



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## **Spontaneity and Experience**

### **The Mother**

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... once one enters the yoga and wants to do yoga, it is very necessary not to be the toy of one's own mental formations. If one wants to rely on one's experiences, one must take great care not to construct within oneself the notion of the experiences one wants to have, the idea one has about them, the form one expects or hopes to see. For, the mental formation, as I already have told you very often, is a real formation, a real creation, and with your idea you create forms which are to a certain extent independent of you and return to you as though from outside and give you the impression of being experiences. But these experiences which are either willed or sought after or expected are not spontaneous experiences and risk being illusions-at times even dangerous illusions.

Therefore, when you follow a mental discipline, you must be particularly careful not to imagine or want to have certain experiences, for in this way you can create for yourself the illusion of these experiences. In the domain of yoga, this very strict and severe spontaneity is absolutely indispensable.

For that, naturally, one must not have any ambition or desire or excessive imagination or what I call "spiritual romanticism", the taste for the miraculous-all this ought to be very carefully eliminated so as to be sure of advancing fearlessly.

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## Shiva, leaning lovingly on his bull Nandi



And it is surely time for us to see, as is now by many admitted, that an acknowledgement of the greatness of Greek art in its own province ought not to prevent the plain perception of the rather strait and narrow bounds of that province. What Greek sculpture expressed was fine, gracious and noble, but what it did not express and could not by the limitations of its canon hope to attempt, was considerable, was immense in possibility, was that spiritual depth and extension which the human mind needs for its larger and deeper self-experience. And just this is the greatness of Indian sculpture that it expresses in stone and bronze what the Greek aesthetic mind could not conceive or express and embodies it with a profound understanding of its right conditions and a native perfection.

Sri Aurobindo

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*Shiva, leaning lovingly on his bull Nandi, the personification of pure bhakti. Detail. Dharmaraja Ratha, Mamallapuram, Pallava. Photograph by Elizabeth Beck.*