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Thinking about the past year, with the tsunami, droughts, famines, floods, human conflicts and the innumerable atrocities that take place almost every moment of the day, one can't help but wonder what's going on. Pushed to extremes, one may have even questioned the presence of the Higher Power, the Supreme Authority whose world this is and whose children suffer so.

But if there was indeed no presence, if there really was no Beauty and Light and Love, then how would we have had the ability to look a new dawn in the face? How would we have understood the fortune that made us survivors? How would we have the composure to take the next step?

Impossible.

And thus, it is not only important to survive from suffocating under the blankets of dark that envelope our being, but more importantly, to be able to recognize, hope and joy where there seemed none, to hear the angel's harp in the midst of angry noise, to discover the warmth of Grace in a game of cold chance.

God's joy moves from unmarked box to unmarked box,  
From cell to cell. As rainwater, down into flowerbed.  
As roses, up from ground.  
Now it looks like a plate of rice and fish,  
now a cliff covered with vines,  
now a horse being saddled.  
It hides within these,  
till one day it cracks them open.

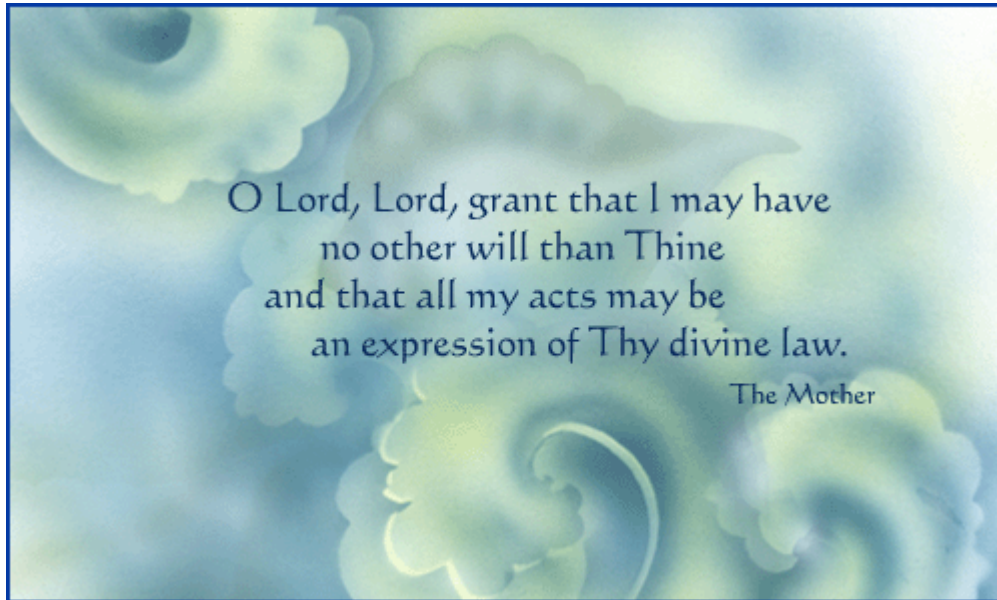
Rumi

With such a beautiful thought, we take leave of a year that has dealt its cards for each of us in a different way, grateful for the lessons it had come to teach us.

Until the next time...



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# Living Words

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## Flowers and their Messages

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December and we think of Christmas. This month we have chosen the Mistletoe, a plant with tiny, translucent white berries, which is closely related to Christmas. The name given by the Mother to these berries is “Sign of the Spirit.”



<b>Spiritual Name</b>	Sign of the Spirit “The Spirit says, “I am here!”
<b>Botanical Name</b>	Viscum album
<b>Common Name</b>	Mistletoe

### General Description

There are two types of mistletoe. The mistletoe that is commonly used as a Christmas decoration (*Phoradendron flavescens*) is native to North America and the other type of mistletoe, *Viscum album*, is of European origin. The European mistletoe is a green shrub with small, yellow flowers and white, sticky berries which are considered poisonous. It is commonly seen on apple but only rarely on oak trees. The rarer oak mistletoe was greatly venerated by the ancient Celts and Germans and used as a ceremonial plant by early Europeans. The Greeks and earlier peoples thought that it had mystical powers and through the centuries it became associated with many folklore customs.

### **The Spirit and its Significance**

...it is the Divine itself that is here, behind us, pervading the manifestation, supporting the world with its oneness; it is the Divine that is in us upholding itself the burden of the fall and its dark consequence. If above It stands for ever in its perfect Light, Bliss and Peace, It is also here; its Light, Bliss and Peace are secretly here supporting all; in ourselves there is a spirit, a central presence greater than the series of surface personalities which, like the supreme Divine itself, is not overborne by the fate they endure. If we find out this Divine within us, if we know ourselves as this spirit which is of one essence and being with the Divine, that is our gate of deliverance and in it we can remain ourselves even in the midst of this world's disharmonies, luminous, blissful and free.

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The Spirit descends into Matter and the material world with all its lights and glories and powers and with them fills and transforms life in the material world so that it becomes more and more divine.

The transformation is not a change into something purely subtle and spiritual to which Matter is in its nature repugnant and by which it is felt as an obstacle or as a shackle binding the Spirit; it takes up Matter as a form of the Spirit though now a form which conceals and turns it into a revealing instrument, it does not cast away the energies of Matter, its capacities, its methods; it brings out their hidden possibilities, uplifts, sublimates, discloses their innate divinity.

The divine life will reject nothing that is capable of divinisation; all is to be seized, exalted, made utterly perfect.

Sri Aurobindo

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## Question of the month

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### **Why Death comes in to separate two persons who are very close ?**

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.

Death is the ultimate mystery, the unanswered question which seems to deprive life of all its meaning. And it appears that none can escape it.

The pain and the suffering becomes even more poignant and unbearable, when one has had a very beautiful and close relationship with someone, when there has been a deep inner contact, perhaps over a long period of time. Then suddenly Death intervenes, the tie is cut asunder in one stroke, there is a void which cannot be filled.

At such times, many questions naturally arise:

***Question :** Why at all do two individuals meet and come together on this wide earth? Why is there a feeling of such deep closeness and oneness spontaneously? What then is the meaning of Death coming in between and snatching away one of the persons? And finally what is life, why does it have to end in Death and what happens after Death?*

We give here excerpts from two letters of Sri Aurobindo which deal very briefly with these questions with a deep yogic insight.

### **Meeting in Life and separation through Death**

“It is a very intricate and difficult question to tackle and it can hardly be answered in a few words. Moreover, it is impossible to give a general rule as to why there are these close inner contacts followed by a physical separation through death—in each case there is a difference and one would have to know the persons and be familiar with their soul history to tell what was behind their meeting and separation.

In a general way, a life is only one brief episode in a long history of spiritual evolution in which the soul follows the curve of the line set for the earth, passing through many lives to complete it. It is an evolution out of material inconscience to consciousness and towards the Divine Consciousness, from ignorance to Divine Knowledge, from darkness through half-light to Light, from death to Immortality, from suffering to the Divine Bliss. Suffering is due first to the Ignorance, secondly to the separation of the individual consciousness from the Divine Consciousness and Being, a separation created by the Ignorance—when that ceases, when one lives in the Divine and no more in one's separated smaller self, then only suffering can altogether cease.

Each soul follows its own line and these lines meet, journey together for a space, then part to meet again perhaps hereafter—they meet once more to help each other on the journey in one way or another. As for the after-death period, the soul passes into other planes of existence, staying there for a while till it reaches its place of rest where it remains until it is ready for another terrestrial existence.

This is the general law, but for the connections of embodied souls, that is a matter of personal evolution of the two on which nothing general can be said, as it is intimate to the soul stories of the two and needs a personal knowledge. That is all I can say, but I don't know that it will be of much help to her as these things are helpful usually only when one enters into the consciousness in which they become not mere ideas but realities. Then one grieves no longer because one has entered into the Truth and the Truth brings calm and peace.”

### **Life and the one thing Important**

“Each person follows in the world his own line of destiny which is determined by his own nature and actions—the meaning and necessity of what happens in a particular life cannot be understood except in the light of the whole course of many lives. But this can be seen by those who can get beyond the ordinary mind and feelings and see things as a whole, that even errors, misfortunes, calamities are steps in the journey,—the soul gathering experience as it passes through and beyond them until it is ripe for the transition which will carry it beyond these things to a higher consciousness and higher life.

When one comes to that line of crossing, one has to leave behind one the old mind and feelings. One looks then on those who are still fixed in the pleasures and sorrows of the ordinary world with sympathy and wherever it is possible with spiritual helpfulness, but no longer with attachment. One learns that they are being led through all their stumblings and trusts to the Universal Power that is watching and supporting their existence to do for them whatever for them is the best. But the one thing that is really important for us is to get into the greater Light and the Divine Union—to turn to the Divine alone, to put our trust there alone whether for ourselves or for others.”

Sri Aurobindo

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## *Sri Aurobindo's Withdrawal*

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### **M.P.Pandit**

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A yogi working for his liberation from ignorance and union with the Divine Reality relies on his own strength albeit aided by the Grace, directly or indirectly. The success of his effort depends upon his sincerity and capacity. Individual salvation is entirely within the range of individual effort.

But not so in the case of one who undertakes a yogic labour that aims at a collective spiritual change. In the process of a yoga that has collective dimensions, factors of the collectivity play an important if not a decisive part. Thus in the case of the spiritual mission (of Sri Aurobindo which envisages a new Consciousness for the whole of mankind as a result of one or more individuals spearheading a successful ascent to that Consciousness and preparing for its general descent on the peaks of humanity, individual success alone is not enough. Every important step in the effort has got to be related to the collective environment. In fact the progress of the individual involved depends very much on the degree of response and collaboration received from the collectivity. There are two main factors: an effective individual Centre and Call and an answering, supporting environment creating a field of spiritual energy which in turn sends out spontaneous waves or liberative force in the world. The Leader cannot afford to go too far beyond the generality. He has to carry them with him. He has to prepare them, wait for them to join him and play their essential role. If conditions arise when there is too much disparity between the central advance and the state or position of the base, there is no alternative except to wait for things to improve.

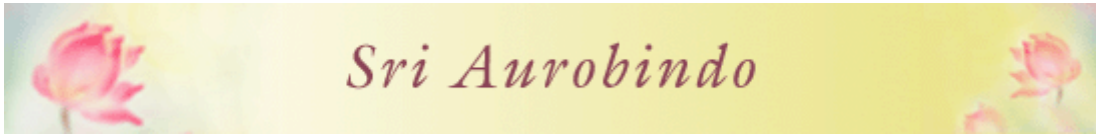
This is precisely what happened with Sri Aurobindo. He was called upon to initiate and build a collective yoga that would make it possible for man to live a divine life of peace, oneness and joy. For decades he laboured, laid the path, ascended the steps of the rising tiers of Consciousness, invoked the powers of these realms in this field of evolution on earth. Side by side, he generated an aspiration in the higher mind of man for this high change. He watched over the natural formation of a spiritual society around him which he hoped would become the nucleus of a future gnostic society of which he speaks so enthusiastically in his *Life Divine*. He scaled virgin heights of Consciousness and articulated their breath in his writings and activities, spiritual and other. But a stage came when he had to take into account the condition of readiness or otherwise of the general collectivity. Even as early as 1921, when he was asked why he had discontinued the *Arya* in which he was expounding the new Knowledge he had worked out, he replied that the mind of

humanity could not absorb more. He had thus to keep to this reference again and again. Apart from the receptivity of the world at large, the readiness of his immediate surroundings was of substantial importance. Things were not too encouraging in this regard. He seems to have had some premonition of this lack of response necessitating an indefinite wait as early as before 1938. He had said to the Mother, "One of us must go". We will have occasion to refer to this point later in our studies. Suffice it to say that a stage came by the end of the forties when no further step was possible without an adequate supportive response which was not forthcoming. And he withdrew from the physical scene in 1950.

This decision, however, does in no way detract from the truth of his vision and the relevance of his message. What he came to establish viz. a bridge between the claims of Matter and the call of the Spirit, a harmonisation between the One and the Many, a push to the evolving consciousness of man to go beyond the limits of the mind and realise the still higher dimensions of existence — all these are worked out in principle. Hereafter there is no going back to the old negative paths of rejection of life, refusal of the variety of manifestation. A positive Goal in terms of an eventual divinisation of life has been firmly set before the progressive mind of humanity and one day man is sure to arrive. Time will justify Sri Aurobindo, the Prophet.

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*(M.P. Pandit came to the Ashram at a very young age. He is the author of a large number of books and articles on Integral Yoga and the Indian spiritual tradition. He was the Chairman of World Union International.)*



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## Arabinda Basu

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Brahman defies description, mind and speech return baffled from it. Likewise Sri Aurobindo defies description, no adjective, no epithet, no appellation seems to be adequate. So universal is his genius, so many-faceted his personality, so varied his life and career that mind and speech are overwhelmed and fall silent when confronted by him, a being without peer — scholar, journalist, educationist, politician, statesman, revolutionary leader, nation-builder, poet, philosopher, lover of humanity, lover of God, Yogi, Guru and Master.

Sri Aurobindo himself has said that he was an agnostic in his student days and did not believe in God. But a great truth about him is that he became a Rishi, a seer. The traditional idea in India is that a Rishi sees the Truth. He is not a philosopher, speculating about the nature of truth, building a system of ideas, arguing for and against certain positions; a Rishi *per se* is not an intellectual, though he may be one. But he has a direct vision of Truth. The point will be clear from what Sri Aurobindo says about the nature of the Rishi. "There are many who, lamenting the by-gone glories of this great and ancient nation, speak as if the Rishis of old, the inspired creators of thought and civilisation, were a miracle of our heroic age, not to be repeated among degenerate men and in our distressful present. This is an error and thrice an error. Ours is the eternal land, the eternal people, the eternal religion, whose strength, greatness, holiness may be overclouded but never, even for a moment, utterly cease. The hero, the Rishi, the saint are the natural fruits of our Indian soil; and there has been no age in which they have not been born.

"His (the Rishi's) life may not have been distinguished by superior holiness, nor his character by an ideal beauty. He is not great by what he was himself but by what he has expressed. A great and vivifying message had to be given to a nation or to humanity, and God had chosen this mouth on which to shape the words of the message. A momentous vision had to be revealed; and it is his eyes that the Almighty first unseals. The message which he has received, the vision which has been vouchsafed to him he declares to the world with all the strength that is in him, and in the supreme moment of inspiration expresses it in words which have merely to be uttered to stir men's inmost nature, clarify their mind, seize their hearts and impel them to things which would have been impossible to them in their ordinary moments. Those words are the mantra which he was born to reveal and of that mantra he is the seer."<sup>1</sup>

Needless to say, Sri Aurobindo was the Rishi *par excellence* in this sense. Indeed he attained a perfect silence of the mind and had no need to think. All his knowledge came to him by intuition and vision. In answer to a question from a disciple as to what he thought about a certain matter, Sri Aurobindo, the *seer*, answered, "Good Lord! you still want me to think? I either see or don't see." Judging from his writings one has no hesitation in saying that he certainly had *trikaaladrishiti*, the vision of the three times-past, present and future.

But Sri Aurobindo was a Rishi in the more technical sense of the term also. *Rsayah mantra-drastarah*, Rishis are seers of mantra. The hymns of the Veda were not composed but seen by the

rishis. They are embodiments of truths revealed to the seers and expressed by them in language which itself was not merely human but an expression of a subtler speech which came from some higher heaven of consciousness to the inner audience of the inspired seers about whom it has been said that they heard the truth, *kavayah satya-srutayah*.

Sri Aurobindo also saw a mantra, a new *Gayatri* :

*Tatsaviturvaram          rupam          jyotih          parasya          dhimahi*  
*yannah satyena dipayet.*

Let us mediate on the most auspicious (best) form of *Savitri*, on the Light of the Supreme which shall illumine us with the Truth.<sup>2</sup>

The Light of the highest, the supreme Person is celebrated in this mantra. This Light is His body, which is the same as Para Prakriti, the supreme Nature which yogis can see in spiritual vision and which illumines us with the Truth. We can attain as a result of its work in us a state of being in which we are united with the Divine Being and His Light and creative Power.

The Vedic Rishi was also *Kavi*, a word which has come to mean a poet but originally signified the illumined, the wise. He was also an inspired singer and his song was the mantra. Sri Aurobindo the illumined and inspired seer-poet has raised poetry to the level of mantra and transformed English into a *devabhasha*, a language of the gods. Only the most impervious to the spiritual power of language will fail to feel the mantric force of a passage like this:

" The Absolute, the Perfect, the Immune,  
One who is in us as our secret self,  
Our mask of imperfection has assumed,  
He has made this tenement of flesh his own,  
His image in the human measure cast  
That to his divine measure we might rise;  
Then in a figure of divinity  
The Maker shall recast and impose,  
A plan of godhead on the mortal's mould  
Lifting our finite minds to his infinite,  
Touching the moment with eternity.  
This transfiguration is earth's due to heaven:  
A mutual debt binds man to the Supreme:  
His nature we must put on as he put ours;  
We are sons of God and must be even as he;  
His human portion we must grow divine,  
Our life is a paradox with God for key."<sup>3</sup>

Sri Aurobindo's life was also distinguished by superior holiness and his character by an ideal beauty. But he was not merely a saint, a highly sattwic person with a deep religious temperament and faith. The superiority of holiness and the ideal beauty of his character were the expressions of a deep and many-sided perfection which was a result of yoga. Yoga, says Sri Aurobindo, is nothing but a systematic effort to study in detail the forces of man's subjective being and nature. It is also a persistent attempt to apply this knowledge to remake man in this light. Nature herself is constantly trying to achieve perfection in all that she creates, Yoga also is a seeking of

perfection and therefore completely normal and natural. On the other hand Nature herself is doing yoga. .

Yoga is union between that which is One beyond creation, but has become self-divided in the world, and the units of its self variation. It is a joining together of the individual soul and the Supreme Self of which it is a portion. Finally, the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo aims at the transformation of mind, life and matter so that they can also realise God. Sri Aurobindo took to yoga in 1904 and till the day in 1950 when he sacrificed his physical life to hasten the descent of a conscious power which had never directly functioned in the world before, he was ceaselessly engaged in an all-out search after total perfection. It should not be understood from this that he had not attained any assured realisation. Our contention is that he refused to accept any experience as final, that while he had all the fundamental realisations attained by great yogis throughout the unbroken history of Yoga in India and abroad — we say abroad because all the great religions in their deeper spiritual aspects, have their own mystical disciplines and yogic practices — he was still experimenting with methods of invoking what he called the supermind, effecting its descent into the world and establishing it here as an evolutionary principle. The integral yoga, we have said, seeks to manifest the Divine in life here on earth and is not content only with realisation, or, the perfect realisation is an integral realization by man's whole being including his physical nature. For even the body to be capable of realising God, a new faculty of realisation must be made available to man and that is the supermind.

Sri Aurobindo has observed that one can go on exploring the Divine eternally.<sup>4</sup> There is certainly a crossing between Ignorance of the Reality and genuine experience and realisation of it. Nevertheless, the seeker even after he attains authentic experience of God, can, if he will, go on exploring the inexhaustible splendours of the Spirit without end. In spite of being securely established in the highest realisation, vouchsafed to man till his time, Sri Aurobindo was progressing, achieving, consolidating and again advancing. For however much his Yoga reaches up to the higher levels of consciousness, it does not abandon its lower levels. On the contrary the whole principle of the Yoga is to possess the highest level of creative consciousness, the supermind, and bring it down to Matter to its lowest self-formulation and transform physical nature by its inherent power. "...as in Thought, so in life, the true rule of self-realisation is a progressive comprehension. Brahman expresses itself in many successive forms of consciousness, successive in the relation even if co-existent in being or coeval in Time, and Life in its self-unfolding must also rise to ever new provinces of its own being. But if in passing from one domain to another we renounce what has already been given us from eagerness for our new attainment, if in reaching the mental life we cast away or belittle the physical life which is our basis, or if we reject the mental and physical in our attraction to the spiritual we do not fulfil God integrally, nor satisfy the condition of His self-manifestation. We do not become perfect, but only shift the field of our imperfection or at most attain a limited altitude. However high we may climb, even though it be to the Non-Being itself, we climb ill if we forget our base. Not to abandon the lower, but to transfigure it in the light of the higher to which we have attained, is true divinity of nature. Brahman is integral and unifies many states of consciousness at a time; we also, manifesting the nature of Brahman, should become integral and all-embracing."<sup>5</sup>

It was not for himself that Sri Aurobindo was aspiring after this perfection. He needed neither liberation nor supramentalisation. It was for the Divine that he was ceaselessly engaged in perfecting his Yoga. The purpose was to fulfil God's intention in creation — utter manifestation of the Creator in the created. "It is a higher Truth I seek, whether it makes men greater or not is not the question, but whether it will give them truth and peace and light to

live in and make life something better than a struggle with ignorance and falsehood and pain and strife. Then even if they are less great than the men of the past, my object will have been achieved. For me mental conceptions cannot be the end of all things. I know that the Supermind is the truth.

" It is not for personal greatness that I am seeking to bring down the Supermind. I care nothing for greatness or littleness in the human sense. I am seeking to bring some principle of inner Truth, Light, Harmony, Peace into the earth-consciousness; I see it above and know what it is — I feel it ever gleaming down on my consciousness from above and I am seeking to make it possible for it to take up the whole being into its own native power, instead of the nature of man continuing to remain in half-light, half-darkness. I believe the descent of this Truth opening the way to a development of Divine Consciousness here to be the final sense of the earth evolution. If greater men than myself have not had this vision and this ideal before them, that is no reason why I should not follow my Truth-sense and Truth-vision."<sup>6</sup>

To the question whether Sri Aurobindo had achieved fully what he was seeking after, the answer is definitely in the affirmative. The giving up of his body by Sri Aurobindo, we have said, was a sacrifice. To many it may look like a failure, but the Divine uses mysterious means for the fulfilment of his purpose. "Why should the Divine", asks Sri Aurobindo, "be tied down to succeed in all his operations? What if failure suits him better and serves better his ultimate purpose?"<sup>7</sup> But Sri Aurobindo did accomplish what he had set out to achieve. We say this in spite of the fact that physical transformation was not fully achieved in his physical body. For he has himself said "It is a question between the Divine and myself - whether it is the Divine Will or not, whether I am sent to bring that down or open the way for its descent or at least make it more possible or not."<sup>8</sup> Not only did he make the descent of the supermind more possible but actually effected it.

Supramentalisation means the opening of the parts of our nature to the supermind. As far as the vital and the mental parts are concerned, they opened out to the supermind and received its transforming influence in the thirties of this century. But it was the physical part that was the last stronghold of Ignorance and did not receive the supermind. But during the last days of his physical existence, Sri Aurobindo brought down the supermind into his body so that there was a direct contact between the supreme Knowledge-Will and Matter organised as his body. Earth received the transfiguring touch of Heaven. The touch has grown into an influence and the influence into an active power which is transforming matter into the image of the divine substance. Physical, vital and mental nature is being forged by the supermind into moulds of the Divine's manifestation which they have been masking till now.

The restoration of Dharma to its rightful place in life after putting down the forces of Adharma is the declared mission of the Avatar.<sup>9</sup> Sri Aurobindo however sees more than that in the

phenomenon of Incarnation. The Divine descends into the world so that man can ascend into the Divine nature and consciousness, can "be born anew in a second birth of the soul. It is that new birth which Avatarhood and the upholding of the Dharma are intended to serve."<sup>10</sup> And again, "If there were not this rising of man into the godhead to be helped by the descent of God into humanity, Avatarhood for the sake of the Dharma would be an otiose phenomenon, since mere Right, mere justice or virtues can always be upheld by the divine omnipotence through its ordinary means, by great men or great movements, by the life and work of sages and kings and religious teachers, without any actual incarnation. The Avatar comes as the manifestation of the divine nature in the human nature, the apocalypse of its Christhood, Krishnahood, Buddhahood, in order that the human nature may be moulding its principle, thought, feeling, action, being on the lines of that Christhood, Krishnahood, Buddhahood transfigure itself into the divine. The law, the Dharma which the Avatar establishes is given for that purpose chiefly; the Christ, Krishna, Buddha stands in its centre as the gate, he makes through himself the way men shall follow."<sup>11</sup> "...The Avatar is one who comes to open the way for humanity to a higher consciousness."<sup>12</sup> Then Sri Aurobindo associates more closely the idea of Avatarhood with that of evolution. "Avatarhood would have little meaning", says he, "if it were not connected with the evolution."<sup>13</sup> The evolution is of ever higher levels of consciousness till there emerges in the world the supreme Truth-Consciousness, the integral Knowledge and infallible Will and self-existent Bliss. This alone can manifest the Divine more fully and overtly here on earth. If Sri Aurobindo's life-task has been to realise the Divine by the supermind and then to effect its descent in Mind, Life and Matter, to help man become superman, then he is pre-eminently the Avatar of the Age. The agnostic became a seer, the seer evolved into a yogi, the yogi received in his material body the supramental consciousness, the spiritual mystic without peer became the incarnate Divine.

The day is not far off when cosmic Nature will sing an endless paean of tribute to the Rishi, the Yogi, the Avatar — Sri Aurobindo.

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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.*

### Strong wind uproots a feeble tree

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## **The Mother**

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### **Conjugate Verses**

***Just as the strong wind uproots a feeble tree, so Mara overwhelms the man who lives only in pursuit of pleasure, who does not control his senses, who knows not how to moderate his appetite, who is lazy and wastes his energies.***

In Buddhist literature, Mara represents the Spirit of Evil, all that is contrary or opposed to the spiritual life; in certain cases he represents death—not so much physical death as death to truth, to the spiritual being.

Here, it means that so long as one does not control one's senses and desires, and concerns oneself with external material satisfactions as the most important thing, one has not the will necessary to resist the attack of hostile forces and all that pulls us down and leads us away from the spiritual reality.

The Dhammapada does not take its stand so much on the moral point of view; it is not evil as men understand it with their blind justice and their arbitrary sense of good and bad. Evil, from the spiritual point of view, is truly that which leads us away from the goal, which sometimes even tears us away from the deepest purpose of our existence, from the truth of our being and prevents us from realising it.

This is the way in which it should be understood.

11 October 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 unfailling 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 first three verses of the Isha Upanishad translated by Sri Aurobindo along with a commentary.*

ईशोपनिषद्

īśopaniṣad

Verses 4 and 5

अनेजदेकं मनसो जवीयो नैनद्देवा आप्नुवन् पूर्वमर्षत् ।

तद्भावतोऽन्यानत्येति तिष्ठत् तस्मिन्नपो मातरिश्वा दधाति ॥

anejadekaṁ manaso javīyo nainaddevā āpnuvan pūrvamarṣat  
taddhāvato'nyānatyeti tiṣṭhat tasminnapo mātariśvā dadhāti.

4. One unmoving that is swifter than Mind, That the Gods reach not, for It progresses ever in front. That, standing, passes beyond others as they run. In That the Master of Life establishes the Waters.

तदेजति तन्नेजति तदूरे तद्वन्तिके ।

तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तदु सर्वस्यास्य बाह्यतः ॥

tadejati tannejati taddūre tadvantike

tadantarasya sarvasya tadu sarvasyāsyā bāhyataḥ.

5. That moves and That moves not; That is far and the same is near; That is within all this and That also is outside all this.

## Commentary

### Brahman: Oneness of God and the World

#### Brahman—The Unity

The Lord and the world, even when they seem to be distinct, are not really different from each other; they are one Brahman.

#### “One Unmoving”

God is the one stable and eternal Reality. He is One because there is nothing else, since all existence and non-existence are He. He is stable or unmoving, because motion implies change in Space and change in Time, and He, being beyond Time and Space, is immutable. He possesses eternally in Himself all that is, has been or ever can be, and He therefore does not increase or diminish. He is beyond causality and relativity and therefore there is no change of relations in His being.

#### “Swifter Than Mind”

The world is a cyclic movement (samsara) of the Divine Consciousness in Space and Time. Its law and, in a sense, its object is progression; it exists by movement and would be dissolved by cessation of movement. But the basis of this movement is not material; it is the energy of active consciousness which, by its motion and multiplication in different principles (different in appearance, the same in essence), creates oppositions of unity and multiplicity, divisions of Time and Space, relations and groupings of circumstance and Causality. All these things are real in consciousness, but only symbolic of the Being, somewhat as the imaginations of a creative Mind are true representations of itself, yet not quite real

in comparison with itself, or real with a different kind of reality. But mental consciousness is not the Power that creates the universe. That is something infinitely more puissant, swift and unfettered than the mind. It is the pure omnipotent self-awareness of the Absolute unbound by any law of the relativity. The laws of the relativity, upheld by the gods, are Its temporary creations. Their apparent eternity is only the duration, immeasurable to us, of the world which they govern. They are laws regularising motion and change, not laws binding the Lord of the movement. The gods, therefore, are described as continually running in their course. But the Lord is free and unaffected by His own movement.

### **“That Moves, That Moves Not”**

The motion of the world works under the government of a perpetual stability. Change represents the constant shifting of apparent relations in an eternal Immutability. It is these truths that are expressed in the formulae of the one Unmoving that is swifter than Mind, That which moves and moves not, the one Stable which outstrips in the speed of its effective consciousness the others who run.

### **Transitional Thought**

If the One is pre-eminently real, “the others”, the Many are not unreal. The world is not a figment of the Mind. Unity is the eternal truth of things, diversity a play of the unity. The sense of unity has therefore been termed Knowledge, Vidya, the sense of diversity Ignorance, Avidya. But diversity is not false except when it is divorced from the sense of its true and eternal unity. Brahman is one, not numerically, but in essence. Numerical oneness would either exclude multiplicity or would be a pluralistic and divisible oneness with the Many as its parts. That is not the unity of Brahman, which can neither be diminished nor increased, nor divided. The Many in the universe are sometimes called parts of the universal Brahman as the waves are parts of the sea. But, in truth, these waves are each of them that sea, their diversities being those of frontal or superficial appearances caused by the sea's motion. As each object in the universe is really the whole universe in a different frontal appearance, so each individual soul is all Brahman regarding Itself and world from a center of cosmic consciousness. For That is identical, not single. It is identical always and everywhere in Time and Space, as well as identical beyond Time and Space. Numerical oneness and multiplicity are equally valid terms of its essential unity. These two terms, as we see them, are like all others, representations in Chit, in the free and all-creative self-awareness of the Absolute regarding itself variously, infinitely, innumerably and formulating what it regards. Chit is a power not only of knowledge, but of expressive will, not only of receptive vision, but of formative representation; the two are indeed one power.

For Chit is an action of Being, not of the Void. What it sees, that becomes. It sees itself beyond Space and Time; that becomes in the conditions of Space and Time. Creation is not a making of something out of nothing or of one thing out of another, but a self-projection of Brahman into the conditions of Space and Time. Creation is not a making, but a becoming in terms and forms of conscious existence. In the becoming each individual is Brahman variously represented and entering into various relations with Itself in the play of the divine consciousness; in being, each individual is all Brahman. Brahman as the Absolute or the Universal has the power of standing back from Itself in the relativity. It conceives, by a subordinate movement of consciousness, the individual as other than the universal, the relative as different from the Absolute. Without this separative movement, the individual would always tend to lose itself in the universal, the relative to disappear into the Absolute. Thus, It supports a corresponding reaction in the individual who regards himself as “other” than the transcendent and universal Brahman and “other” than the rest of the Many. He puts identity behind him and enforces the play of Being in the separate Ego. The individual may regard himself as eternally different from the One, or as eternally one with It, yet different, or he may go back entirely in his consciousness to the pure Identity. But he can never regard himself as independent of some kind of Unity, for such a view would correspond to no conceivable truth in the universe or beyond it. These three attitudes correspond to three truths of the Brahman which are simultaneously valid and none of them entirely true without the others as its complements. Their co-existence, difficult of conception to the logical intellect, can be experienced by identity in consciousness with Brahman. Even in asserting Oneness, we must remember that Brahman is beyond our mental distinctions and is a fact not of Thought that discriminates, but of Being which is absolute, infinite and escapes discrimination. Our consciousness is representative and symbolic; it cannot conceive the thing-in-itself, the Absolute, except by negation, in a sort of void, by emptying it of all that it seems in the universe to contain. But the Absolute is not a void or negation. It is all that is here in Time and beyond Time. Even oneness is a representation and exists in relation to multiplicity. Vidya and Avidya are equally eternal powers of the supreme Chit. Neither Vidya nor Avidya by itself is the absolute knowledge. (See verses 9–11) Still, of all relations oneness is the secret base, not multiplicity. Oneness constitutes and upholds the multiplicity, multiplicity does not constitute and uphold the oneness. Therefore we have to conceive of oneness as our self and the essential nature of Being, multiplicity as a representation of Self and a becoming. We have to conceive of the Brahman as One Self of all and then return upon the Many as becomings of the One Being (bhutani... atmanam). But both the Self and the becomings are Brahman; we cannot regard the one as Brahman and the others as unreal and not Brahman. Both are real, the one with a constituent and comprehensive, the others with a derivative or dependent reality.

## **The Running of the Gods**

Brahman representing Itself in the universe as the Stable, by Its immutable existence (Sat), is Purusha, God, Spirit; representing Itself as the Motional, by Its power of active Consciousness (Chit), is Nature, Force or World-Principle (Prakriti, Shakti, Maya). The play of these two principles is the Life of the universe. The Gods are Brahman representing Itself in cosmic Personalities expressive of the one Godhead who, in their impersonal action, appear as the various play of the principles of Nature. The “others” are sarvani bhutani of a later verse, all becomings, Brahman representing itself in the separative consciousness of the Many. Everything in the universe, even the Gods, seems to itself to be moving in the general movement towards a goal outside itself or other than its immediate idea of itself. Brahman is the goal; for It is both the beginning and the end, the cause and the result of all movement. But the idea of a final goal in the movement of Nature itself is illusory. For Brahman is Absolute and Infinite. The Gods, labouring to reach him, find, at every goal that they realise, Brahman still moving forward in front to a farther realisation. Nothing in the appearances of the universe can be entirely That to the relative consciousness; all is only a symbolic representation of the Unknowable. All things are already realised in Brahman. The running of the Others in the course of Nature is only a working out (Prakriti), by Causality, in Time and Space, of something that Brahman already possesses. Even in Its universal being Brahman exceeds the Movement. Exceeding Time, It contains in Itself past, present and future simultaneously and has not to run to the end of conceivable Time. Exceeding Space, It contains all formations in Itself coincidentally and has not to run to the end of conceivable Space. Exceeding Causality, It contains freely in Itself all eventualities as well as all potentialities without being bound by the apparent chain of causality by which they are linked in the universe. Everything is already realised by It as the Lord before it can be accomplished by the separated Personalities in the movement.

## **The Principle of Life Matarishwan and the Waters**

What then is Its intention in the movement? The movement is a rhythm, a harmony which That, as the Universal Life, works out by figures of Itself in the terms of conscious Being. It is a formula symbolically expressive of the Unknowable,—so arranged that every level of consciousness really represents something beyond itself, depth of depth, continent of continent. It is a play of the divine Consciousness existing for its own satisfaction and adding nothing to That, which is already complete. It is a fact of conscious being, justified by its own existence, with no purpose ulterior to itself. The idea of purpose, of a goal is born of the progressive self-unfolding by the world of its own true nature to the individual Souls inhabiting its forms; for the Being is gradually self-revealed within its own becomings, real Unity emerges out of the Multiplicity and changes

entirely the values of the latter to our consciousness. This self-unfolding is governed by conditions determined by the complexity of consciousness in its cosmic action. For consciousness is not simple or homogeneous, it is septuple. That is to say, it constitutes itself into seven forms or grades of conscious activity descending from pure Being to physical being. Their interplay creates the worlds, determines all activities, constitutes all becomings. Brahman is always the continent of this play or this working. Brahman self-extended in Space and Time is the universe. In this extension Brahman represents Itself as formative Nature, the universal Mother of things, who appears to us, first, as Matter, called *prthivi*, the Earth-Principle. Brahman in Matter or physical being represents Itself as the universal Life-Power, *Matarishwan*, which moves there as a dynamic energy, *prana*, and presides effectively over all arrangement and formation. Universal Life establishes, involved in Matter, the septuple consciousness; and the action of *prana*, the dynamic energy, on the Matrix of things evolves out of it its different forms and serves as a basis for all their evolutions.

### **Transitional Thought The Waters**

There are, then, seven constituents of Chit active in the universe. We are habitually aware of three elements in our being, Mind, Life and Body. These constitute for us a divided and mutable existence which is in a condition of unstable harmony and works by a strife of positive and negative forces between the two poles of Birth and Death. For all life is a constant birth or becoming (*sambhava*, *sambhuti* of Verses 12–14). All birth entails a constant death or dissolution of that which becomes, in order that it may change into a new becoming. Therefore this state of existence is called *mṛtyu*, Death, and described as a stage which has to be passed through and transcended. (Verses 11, 14) For this is not the whole of our being and, therefore, not our pure being. We have, behind, a superconscious existence which has also three constituents, *sat*, *cit-tapas* and *ananda*. *Sat* is essence of our being, pure infinite and undivided, as opposed to this divisible being which founds itself on the constant changeableness of physical substance. *Sat* is the divine counterpart of physical substance. *Chit-Tapas* is pure energy of Consciousness, free in its rest or its action, sovereign in its will, as opposed to the hampered dynamic energies of *Prana* which, feeding upon physical substances, are dependent on and limited by their sustenance. *Tapas* is the divine counterpart of this lower nervous or vital energy. *Ananda* is Beatitude, the bliss of pure conscious existence and energy, as opposed to the life of the sensations and emotions which are at the mercy of the outward touches of Life and Matter and their positive and negative reactions, joy and grief, pleasure and pain. *Ananda* is the divine counterpart of the lower emotional and sensational being. This higher existence, proper to the divine *Sachchidananda*, is unified, self-existent, not confused by the figures of Birth and Death. It is called, therefore, *amṛtam*, Immortality, and offered to us as the goal to be aimed at and the felicity to be

enjoyed when we have transcended the state of death. (Verses 11, 14, 17, 18) The higher divine is linked to the lower mortal existence by the causal Idea or supramental Knowledge-Will, vijñana. It is the causal Idea which, by supporting and secretly guiding the confused activities of the Mind, Life and Body, ensures and compels the right arrangement of the universe. It is called in the Veda the Truth because it represents by direct vision the truth of things both inclusive and independent of their appearances; the Right or Law, because, containing in itself the effective power of Chit, it works out all things according to their nature with a perfect knowledge and prevision; the Vast, because it is of the nature of an infinite cosmic Intelligence comprehensive of all particular activities. Vijnana, as the Truth, leads the divided consciousness back to the One. It also sees the truth of things in the multiplicity. Vijnana is the divine counterpart of the lower divided intelligence. These seven powers of Chit are spoken of by the Vedic Rishis as the Waters, they are imaged as currents flowing into or rising out of the general sea of Consciousness in the human being. They are all co-existent in the universe eternally and inseparably, but capable of being involved and remanifested in each other. They are actually involved in physical Nature and must necessarily evolve out of it. They can be withdrawn into pure infinite Being and can again be manifested out of it. The infolding and unfolding of the One in the Many and the Many in the One is therefore the law of the eternally recurrent cosmic Cycles.

### **The Vision of the Brahman**

The Upanishad teaches us how to perceive Brahman in the universe and in our self-existence. We have to perceive Brahman comprehensively as both the Stable and the Moving. We must see It in eternal and immutable Spirit and in all the changing manifestations of universe and relativity. We have to perceive all things in Space and Time, the far and the near, the immemorial Past, the immediate Present, the infinite Future with all their contents and happenings as the One Brahman. We have to perceive Brahman as that which exceeds, contains and supports all individual things as well as all universe, transcendently of Time and Space and Causality. We have to perceive It also as that which lives in and possesses the universe and all it contains. This is the transcendental, universal and individual Brahman, Lord, Continent and Indwelling Spirit, which is the object of all knowledge. Its realisation is the condition of perfection and the way of Immortality.

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## About Woman

### Economic Independence of Woman

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**Nolini Kanta Gupta**

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The freedom of woman will start becoming a reality only when she achieves economic independence. [1] Of course there must first be the inner independence, freedom of mind, freedom from traditional customs and habits, there must be the awakening of self, of personality within and in the heart of hearts. For this what is needed is education and, even more than that, an initiation. But, the thing within can take shape only with the support of a container without; the inner truth never matures, never finds an expression without having an outer base. Therefore, woman must have freedom of physical and vital sustenance if she wants to make effective her freedom of self and mind. A woman from the West, fighting for her sex's freedom and independence, made a statement on this issue in a very straightforward and simple manner: "How can you be courageous when you have not a penny and are incapable of earning one?" As a matter of fact, the change in women's economic condition lies at the root of whatever place in Europe and America they have acquired for themselves in society. The day the Married Woman's Property Act was passed in 1881 marked the beginning of a new age in the social life of women in England.

It is needless to say to what extent women in our country are enslaved to men just for the sake of food and clothing. Man's responsibility is to provide subsistence to woman and woman's responsibility is to serve man—this is the arrangement provided for in the very mantra of marriage ornamented with a great spiritual gesture. Not to speak of independent living, the way the framers of shastras guarded the receiving and enjoying wealth and property by women, whether it be a gift or an inheritance, reveals simply their only intention—*na strisvatantryamarhati* (Woman should never be independent). Katyayana has made this general rule about the personal property of woman:

that is to say, the husband too has his right on whatever the wife earns by her effort or whatever she receives as gift from others, but it is only these gifts if anything at all belongs solely to the wife. Of course the framers of the shastras will be wronged if we don't mention here that they have also specified some personal property of woman where the wives have full willful right and which the father, the son, the brother or even the husband has no right to sell or gift away.

But even then some such flaws and excuses are handy by virtue of which this right of woman becomes null and void effortlessly. Whatever it may be, whatever may be there in the shastras, in practice we find that any personal possession or acquisition of woman seems to man to be an extremely strange affair; man has a legitimate birthright over everything that belongs to woman! There is a story that a certain rustic became very angry at the upsurge of woman-independence in England and thumping the table said: “Do you mean to tell me that if my missis had a hundred pounds left her I couldn’t spend it without asking her first?” We can safely vouch that many an educated person will agree with this rustic though he may not voice the thought.

In our country, for the so-called low-born women, there is some effort and scope of independent earning; but for high-born women there is hardly any. Not only so, earning is regarded as a sort of disgrace for high-born women. Better let me live without food and clothing but to earn my livelihood—*sirasi ma likha ma likha* (let not Providence prescribe it for me)! Better to die than take up the dharma of man on myself. It is not that the objection is from women alone; even when women are willing, a collective social pressure keeps that will in check. Let me relate here an incident so that everybody may realise our state of affairs. Finding no other alternative, two helpless girls from a respectable Brahmin family used to make wicker-baskets at home and send them for sale to the market through a sympathetic young boy; out of the profits both somehow managed to survive. But when the matter was brought to the notice of the elders of the community, they all rushed menacingly to the scene with a hue and cry, “What an abominable practice! What an infernal age! The daughters of a Brahmin adopting the occupation of a low-born!” They warned the boy and threatened the girls too but at the same time said with a show of pride that so long as they were alive, the Brahmin-girls should not be in want of anything. But after this the wretched girls were on the point of starvation—luckily they survived by some other means. This is an utterly extreme application of that very system of traditional religious where women are not worthy of any freedom whatsoever under any circumstances.

And yet it is not a question of subsistence only. How miserable the heart of woman remains, how much her mind and life plunge into ignorance and falsehood with this utter dependence upon another, with this hanging on man solely—this is the matter which needs special attention. It is said that want is at the root of corruption. Indeed, when woman knows and feels that she has nothing save want, and only man is the answer to meet this want, then her nature, her womanhood is curbed and humbled a lot, her true self cannot blossom in such a condition, instead some perverse notions, some dirt of falsehood accumulates. Let me tell you how it happens.

Ours is the land of Sita and Savitri, it is said. The characteristic of our society too is that, nowhere can one find such unreserved self-giving, such unflinching single-minded devotion of woman; the womanhood of our women is incomparable in the world. Superficially it seems to be very true, but on a deeper probe some such things show their faces which disturb our natural and simple faith to a great extent. We come to understand in what measure our women were forcibly made as chaste and devoted as Savitri, to what degree they have made a virtue of necessity, finding no other alternative. Before knowing themselves, our women have heard, seen and been taught that they have no other go but to depend solely on man; social atmosphere and past habit have unknowingly rooted this notion firmly in the heart of woman that to become dependent on man is a must for her—*es) a dharmah’ sanatanah’* (this is the eternal dharma). Had this notion remained only in the world of ideas—in the mind and heart—then it would have been safe to some extent; but even the practical arrangement has been made in such a way that the body too has been tied up according to that notion. Before she is mature, when she has the least acquaintance with her own self, woman in our society is given to man in marriage like an inert bundle—and man has to carry that burden with his arms upraised. One who remains habituated

to depending fully on another from childhood, suddenly when one day she attains maturity, she finds that she is absolutely helpless without this other, she has no place to stand, nor even the capacity; so she wants to fully suppress this knowledge and start knitting around it a net of dharma, of good. “What shall I do in the absence of my husband?” —is a very common utterance by women. But to what extent this comes from the attraction of hearts, that is to say of soul to soul and to what extent it is simply material, that is to say just the apprehension about food, clothing and shelter, is questionable; this may hurt our egotism but cannot for that matter alter the truth. Even with hundreds of spiritual explanations one cannot nullify the propensity to survive, the urge for food, clothing and shelter—because this is a fundamental propensity, a fundamental urge of a human. Therefore when I see this propensity, this urge of mine is satiated with another’s support, then it is quite natural that I shall clasp and stick to that support with redoubled force. But a human is not merely an animal, so he covers and dresses up this natural propensity and urge and gives it a colour, or at best really puts and mixes it with some higher propensities. But then to think that they become non-existent or that their strength is reduced is a great error amounting to self-deceit. Most people dare not dig into the unsavoury hidden account, a tragedy itself, that lies under the high-sounding words like self-giving and single-minded devotion of womanhood in our society. Our women adore the husband like a god but to what extent that devotion is out of fear—fear of being deprived of his favour in case the god is dead and gone—is a thing that cannot be overlooked by the seeker of truth even though it may sound impolite.

It is now clear that woman is bound to man by bare necessity so to say from the very beginning. This primary bondage must be released to see what the nature and dharma of woman want, how they move; then whatever relation she may establish with man will at least not be shadowed by that uneasy and unhealthy relation of giver and receiver, of master and slave—there will be an opportunity for both to have the true relation between two free and self-reliant souls. From the spiritual point of view this will do good to woman as well as man; the system of society too will be able to put into practice a more up-to-date, more natural and more true form of arrangement. From the material point of view also this will be of advantage for all, particularly in the days of indigent circumstances.

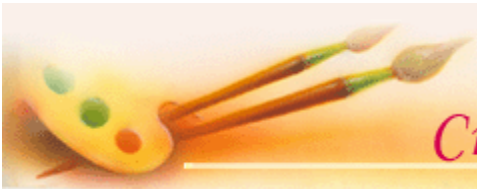
One reason cited against woman’s independent earning is her burden of child-bearing. But this reason is nothing but an excuse; because we see every day low-born uneducated women earn whatever possible in spite of the burden of motherhood. And our high-born women are no less diligent so far as physical labour is concerned; and with a little art, a bit of order and orientation, a bit of will and endeavour this labour could very well be used for earning purposes; and others who waste their time in idle talk and sleep or useless work have no excuse at all.

In the very beginning we have already said that the basic thing is freedom of mind, awakening of the soul—education and initiation. Without this inner thing all external ingredients are useless. In Burma and among the Khasia tribes of our country there is ample economic right for women but even then their society does not seem to be so very rich and developed; because there also this basic inner thing has not been given due emphasis. Yet we want to draw the attention of those who view freedom of woman as detrimental to the social order in those types of society—to the fact that it is possible to structure a society, give society an altogether different form with woman at its head, without the sovereignty of man.

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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.)*

[1] This article was written at a time when the kind of freedom that one sees today had still not come about. Even so, there is still a lot more that can be done in this area, especially in villages and small towns. – editor.



## Creative Corner

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### *Is this the end*

*Is this the end of all that we have been,  
And all we did or dreamed, —  
A name unremembered and a form undone, —  
Is this the end? \**

*A body rotting under a slab of stone  
Or turned to ash in fire,  
A mind dissolved, lost its forgotten thoughts, —  
Is this the end?*

*Our little hours that were and are no more,  
Our passions once so high  
Being mocked by the still earth and calm sunshine, —  
Is this the end?*

*Our yearnings for the human Godward climb  
Passing to other hearts  
Deceived, while smiles towards death and hell the world, —  
Is this the end?*

*Fallen is the harp; shattered it lies and mute:  
Is the unseen player dead?  
Because the tree is felled where the bird sang,  
Must the song too hush?*

*One in the mind who planned and willed and thought,  
Worked to reshape earth's fate,  
One in the heart who loved and yearned and hoped,  
Does he too end?*

*The Immortal in the mortal is his Name;  
An artist Godhead here  
Ever remoulds himself in diviner shapes,  
Unwilling to cease*

*Till all is done for which the stars were made,  
Till the heart discovers God  
And the soul knows itself. And even then  
There is no end.*

*Sri Aurobindo*



# 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 disciple 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.*

## Sri Aurobindo and The Mother on Physical Education

### The Divine Body

#### **Sri Aurobindo**

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*(Continued from previous issue)*

There is one problem raised by sex for those who would reject in to the obligations imposed by the animality of the body and put forward by it as an insistent opposition in the way of the aspirant to a higher life: it is the necessity of the prolongation of the race for which the sex activity is the only means already provided by Nature for living beings and inevitably imposed upon the race. It is not indeed necessary for the individual seeker after a divine life to take up this problem or even for a group who do not seek after it for themselves alone but desire a wide acceptance of it by mankind as at least an ideal. There will always be the multitude who do not concern themselves with it or are not ready for its complete practice and to these can be left the care for the prolongation of the race. The number of those who lead the divine life can be maintained and increased as the ideal extends itself, by the voluntary adhesion of those who are touched by the aspiration and there need be no resort to physical means for this purpose, no deviation from the rule of a strict sexual abstinence. But yet there may be circumstances in which

from another standpoint, a voluntary creation of bodies for souls that seek to enter the earth-life to help in the creation and extension of the divine life upon earth might be found to be desirable. Then the necessity of a physical procreation for this purpose could only be avoided if new means of a supraphysical kind were evolved and made available. A development of this kind must necessarily belong to what is now considered as the sphere of the occult and the use of concealed powers of action or creation not known or possessed by the common mind of the race. Occultism means rightly the use of the higher powers of our nature, soul, mind, life-force and the faculties of the subtle physical consciousness to bring about results on their own or on the material plane by some pressure of their own secret law and its potentialities, for manifestation and result in human or earthly mind and life and body or in objects and events in the world of Matter. A discovery or an extension of these little known or yet undeveloped powers is now envisaged by some well-known thinkers as a next step to be taken by mankind in its immediate evolution; the kind of creation spoken of has not been included among these developments, but it could well be considered as one of the new possibilities. Even physical science is trying to find physical means for passing beyond the ordinary instrumentation or procedure of Nature in this matter of propagation or the renewal of the physical life-force in human or animal beings; but the resort to occult means and the intervention of subtle physical processes, if it could be made possible, would be a greater way which could avoid the limitations, degradations, incompleteness and heavy imperfection of the means and results solely available to the law of material force. In India there has been always from the earliest times a widely spread belief in the possibility and reality of the use of these powers by men with an advanced knowledge of these secret things or with a developed spiritual knowledge and experience and dynamic force and even, in the Tantras, an organised system of their method and practice. The intervention of the Yogi in bringing about a desired birth of offspring is also generally believed in and often appealed to and the bestowal on the child so obtained of a spiritual attainment or destiny by his will or his blessings is sometimes asked for and such a result is recorded not only in the tradition of the past but maintained by the witness of the present. But there is here still the necessity of a resort to the normal means of propagation and the gross method of physical Nature. A purely occult method, a resort to supraphysical processes acting by supraphysical means for a physical result would have to be possible if we are to avoid this necessity: the resort to the sex impulse and its animal process could not be transcended otherwise. If there is some reality in the phenomenon of materialisation and dematerialisation claimed to be possible by occultists and evidenced by occurrences many of us have witnessed, a method of this kind would not be out of the range of possibility. For in the theory of the occultists and in the gradation of the ranges and planes of our being which Yoga-knowledge outlines for us there is not only a subtle physical force but a subtle physical Matter intervening between life and gross Matter and to create in this subtle physical substance and precipitate the forms thus made into our grosser materiality is feasible. It should be possible and it is believed to be possible for an object formed in this subtle physical substance to make a transit from its subtlety into the state of gross Matter directly by the intervention of an occult force and process whether with or even without the assistance or intervention of some gross material procedure. A soul wishing to enter into a body or form for itself a body and take part in a divine life upon earth might be assisted to do so or even provided with such a form by this method of direct transmutation without passing through birth by the sex process or undergoing any degradation or any of the heavy limitations in the growth and development of its mind and material body inevitable to our present way of existence. It might then assume at once the structure and greater powers and functionings of the truly divine material body which must one day emerge in a progressive evolution to a totally transformed existence both of the life and form in a divinised earth-nature.

But what would be the internal or external form and structure and what is the instrumentation of this divine body? The material history of the development of the animal and human body has left

it bound to a minutely constructed and elaborated system of organs and a precarious order of their functioning which can easily become a disorder, open to a general or local disorganisation, dependent on an easily disturbed nervous system and commanded by a brain whose vibrations are supposed to be mechanical and automatic and not under our conscious control. According to the materialist all this is a functioning of Matter alone whose fundamental reality is chemical. We have to suppose that the body is constructed by the agency of chemical elements building up atoms and molecules and cells and these again are the agents and only conductors at the basis of a complicated physical structure and instrumentation which is the sole mechanical cause of all our actions, thoughts, feelings, the soul a fiction and mind and life only a material and mechanical manifestation and appearance of this machine which is worked out and automatically driven with a figment of consciousness in it by the forces inherent in inconscient Matter. If that were the truth it is obvious that any divinisation or divine transformation of the body or of anything else would be nothing but an illusion, an imagination, a senseless and impossible chimera. But even if we suppose a soul, a conscious will at work in this body it could not arrive at a divine transformation if there were no radical change in the bodily instrument itself and in the organisation of its material workings. The transforming agent will be bound and stopped in its work by the physical organism's unalterable limitations and held up by the unmodified or imperfectly modified original animal in us. The possibility of the disorders, derangements, maladies native to these physical arrangements would still be there and could only be shut out by a constant vigilance or perpetual control obligatory on the corporeal instrument's spiritual inhabitant and master. This could not be called a truly divine body; for in a divine body an inherent freedom from all these things would be natural and perpetual; this freedom would be a normal and native truth of its being and therefore inevitable and unalterable. A radical transformation of the functioning and, it may well be, of the structure and certainly of the too mechanical and material impulse and driving forces of the bodily system would be imperative. What agency could we find which we could make the means of this all-important liberation and change? Something there is in us or something has to be developed, perhaps a central and still occult part of our being containing forces whose powers in our actual and present make-up are only a fraction of what could be, but if they became complete and dominant would be truly able to bring about with the help of the light and force of the soul and the supramental truth-consciousness the necessary physical transformation and its consequences. This might be found in the system of Chakras revealed by Tantric knowledge and accepted in the systems of Yoga, conscious centres and sources of all the dynamic powers of our being organising their action through the plexuses and arranged in an ascending series from the lowest physical to the highest mind centre and spiritual centre called the thousand-petalled lotus where ascending Nature, the Serpent Power of the Tantrics, meets the Brahman and is liberated into the Divine Being. These centres are closed or half closed within us and have to be opened before their full potentiality can be manifested in our physical nature: but once they are opened and completely active, no limit can easily be set to the development of their potencies and the total transformation to be possible.

But what would be the result of the emergence of these forces and their liberated and diviner action on the body itself, what their dynamic connection with it and their transforming operation on the still existing animal nature and its animal impulses and gross material procedure? It might be held that the first necessary change would be the liberation of the mind, the life-force, the subtle physical agencies and the physical consciousness into a freer and a diviner activity, a many-dimensional and unlimited operation of their consciousness, a large outbreak of higher powers and the sublimation of the bodily consciousness itself, of its instrumentation, capacity, capability for the manifestation of the soul in the world of Matter. The subtle senses now concealed in us might come forward into a free action and the material senses themselves become means or channels for the vision of what is now invisible to us or the discovery of things surrounding us but at present unseizable and held back from our knowledge. A firm check might

be put on the impulses of the animal nature or they might be purified and subtilised so as to become assets and not liabilities and so transformed as to be parts and processes of a diviner life. But even these changes would still leave a residue of material processes keeping the old way and not amenable to the higher control and, if this could not be changed, the rest of the transformation of the body would demand a sufficient change of the most material part of the organism, its constitution, its processes and its set-up of nature.

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

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

This aim, it must be said, would be sufficiently served if the instrumentation of the centres and their forces reigned over all the activities of the nature with an entire domination of the body and made it both in its structural form and its organic workings a free channel and means of communication and a plastic instrument of cognition and dynamic action for all that they had to do in the material life, in the world of Matter. There would have to be a change in the operative processes of the material organs themselves and, it may well be, in their very constitution and their importance; they could not be allowed to impose their limitations imperatively on the new physical life. To begin with, they might become more clearly outer ends of the channels of

communication and action, more serviceable for the psychological purposes of the inhabitant, less blindly material in their responses, more conscious of the act and aim of the inner movements and powers which use them and which they are wrongly supposed by the material man in us to generate and to use. The brain would be a channel of communication of the form of the thoughts and a battery of their insistence on the body and the outside world where they could then become effective directly, communicating themselves without physical means from mind to mind, producing with a similar directness effects on the thoughts, actions and lives of others or even upon material things. The heart would equally be a direct communicant and medium of interchange for the feelings and emotions thrown outward upon the world by the forces of the psychic centre. Heart could reply directly to heart, the life-force come to the help of other lives and answer their call in spite of strangeness and distance, many beings without any external communication thrill with the message and meet in the secret light from one divine centre. The will might control the organs that deal with food, safeguard automatically the health, eliminate greed and desire, substitute subtler processes or draw in strength and substance from the universal life-force so that the body could maintain for a long time its own strength and substance without loss or waste, remaining thus with no need of sustenance by material elements, and yet continue a strenuous action with no fatigue or pause for sleep or repose. The soul's will or the mind's could act from higher sources upon the sex centre and the sex organs so as to check firmly or even banish the grosser sexual impulse or stimulus and instead of serving an animal excitation or crude drive or desire turn their use to the storing, production and direction towards brain and heart and life-force of the essential energy, *ojas*, of which this region is the factory so as to support the works of the mind and soul and spirit and the higher life-powers and limit the expenditure of the energy on lower things. The soul, the psychic being, could more easily fill all with the light and turn the very matter of the body to higher uses for its own greater purpose.

This would be a first potent change, but not by any means all that is possible or desirable. For it may well be that the evolutionary urge would proceed to a change of the organs themselves in their material working and use and diminish greatly the need of their instrumentation and even of their existence. The centres in the subtle body, *sūks)ma śarīra*, of which one would become conscious and aware of all going on in it would pour their energies into material nerve and plexus and tissue and radiate them through the whole material body; all the physical life and its necessary activities in this new existence could be maintained and operated by these higher agencies in a freer and ampler way and by a less burdensome and restricting method. This might go so far that these organs might cease to be indispensable and even be felt as too obstructive: the central force might use them less and less and finally throw aside their use altogether. If that happened they might waste by atrophy, be reduced to an insignificant minimum or even disappear. The central force might substitute for them subtle organs of a very different character or, if anything material was needed, instruments that would be forms of dynamism or plastic transmitters rather than what we know as organs. This might well be part of a supreme total transformation of the body, though this too might not be final. To envisage such changes is to look far ahead and minds attached to the present form of things may be unable to give credence to their possibility. No such limits and no such impossibility of any necessary change can be imposed on the evolutionary urge. All has not to be fundamentally changed: on the contrary, all has to be preserved that is still needed in the totality, but all has to be perfected. Whatever is necessary for the evolutionary purpose for the increasing, enlarging, heightening of the consciousness, which seems to be its central will and aim here, or the progression of its enabling means and preserving environment has to be kept and furthered; but what has to be overpassed, whatever has no longer a use or is degraded, what has become unhelpful or retarding, can be discarded and dropped on the way. That has been evident in the history of the evolution of the body from its beginning in elementary forms to its most developed type, the human, there is no reason why this process should not intervene in the transition from the human into the divine

body. For the manifestation or building of a divine body on earth there must be an initial transformation, the appearance of a new, a greater and more developed type, not a continuance with little modifications of the present physical form and its limited possibilities. What has to be preserved must indeed be preserved and that means whatever is necessary or thoroughly serviceable for the uses of the new life on earth; whatever is still needed and will serve its purpose but imperfect, will have to be retained but developed and perfected; whatever is no longer of use for new aims or is a disability must be thrown aside. The necessary forms and instrumentations of Matter must remain since it is in a world of Matter that the divine life has to manifest, but their materiality must be refined, uplifted, ennobled, illumined, since Matter and the world of Matter have increasingly to manifest the indwelling Spirit.

The new type, the divine body, must continue the already developed evolutionary form; there must be a continuation from the type Nature has all along been developing, a continuity from the human to the divine body, no breaking away to something unrecognisable but a high sequel to what has already been achieved and in part perfected. The human body has in its parts and instruments that have been sufficiently evolved to serve the divine life; these have to survive in their form, though they must be still further perfected, their limitations of range and use removed, their liability to defect and malady and impairment eliminated, their capacities of cognition and dynamic action carried beyond the present limits. New powers have to be acquired by the body which our present humanity could not hope to realise, could not even dream of or could only imagine. Much that can now only be known, worked out or crated by the use of invented tools and machinery might be achieved by the new body in its own power or by the inhabitant spirit through its own direct spiritual force. The body itself might acquire new means and ranges of communication with other bodies, new processes of acquiring knowledge, a new aesthesis, new potencies of manipulation of itself and objects. It might not be impossible for it to possess or disclose means native to its own constitution, substance or natural instrumentation for making the far near and annulling distance, cognising what is now beyond the body's cognisance, acting where action is now out of reach or its domain, developing subtleties and plasticities which could not be permitted under present conditions to the needed fixity of a material frame. These and other numerous potentialities might appear and the body become an instrument immeasurably superior to what we can now imagine as possible. There could be an evolution from a first apprehending truth-consciousness to the utmost heights of the ascending ranges of supermind and it may pass the borders of the supermind proper itself where it begins to shadow out, develop, delineate expressive forms of life touched by a supreme pure existence, consciousness and bliss which constitute the worlds of a highest truth of existence, dynamism of *Tapas*, glory and sweetness of bliss, the absolute essence and pitch of the all-creating Ananda. The transformation of the physical being might follow this incessant line of progression and the divine body reflect or reproduce here in a divine life on the earth something of this highest greatness and glory of the self-manifesting Spirit.

# 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 Most Delicious Drink

**Manoj Das**

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There was excitement in the town, people talking of a young sage not only dared to argue with great scholars of the king's court but also succeeded in silencing them. He spoke on difficult issues of philosophy with extraordinary fluency and force.

There was a young man who was very ambitious. He went to see the sage. What impressed him more than the sage's wisdom was the admiration he received from his audience.

The young man approached the sage's host. "I shall be very happy to attend upon the sage on your behalf," he said.

The host found nothing amiss in the offer.

The young man lived with the sage fetched food for him from his host's kitchen, cleaned his utensils and dried his clothes and did sundry works.

Soon it was marked that he had begun dressing like the sage, putting on the kind of clothes the sage used and the way he used. His gait and postures too became a successful imitation of the sage's.

The sage used to often utter, *Sivoham!* Which meant, "I am Siva". He said so when through his absolute devotion for Siva, he became identified with the Lord.

It was doubtful whether the young man even knew the meaning of the phrase, but he started saying *Sivoham* whenever he saw some people. He acted in a way as if there was hardly any difference between the sage and himself!

A week later the sage was on his way to a village in the suburb of the town. The young man was among those who accompanied him.

While walking, the sage told a follower, "Sometimes I feel I am non-existent".

"Do you feel so, Sir? I also feel the same quite often," said the young man promptly.

"At other times I feel one with Siva!" said the sage. "Lord Siva had swallowed the terrible poison that emerged from the ocean during its churning by the Devas and the Asuras. I feel I can also swallow something like that with His Grace."

"Sir, I too feel the same," said the young man, sure that he had impressed all those who followed the sage.

The sage suddenly sat down before the hut of a blacksmith. "I'm thirsty", he said. But he did not ask for water. There was a molten iron in a pot. He lifted the pot and drank half of its content. Then he held out the pot to the young man. "You too would probably relish this!" he said.

The young man trembled in awe and wonder. He fell at the sage's feet. The sage smiled with compassion and patted him on the back.

The young man continued to follow him, but never did he show any inclination to imitate him in the future.

(This miracle of drinking the molten iron is attributed to Shankarachya in some versions of the story, the theme of which is meant to snub the pretentious and the hypocrite.)

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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-28**

The God of Death has now taken Savitri through the Dream twilight of the Ideal and Savitri comes through it all unfazed. This undermines considerably the confidence of the God of Death, and he begins to sense the great power working behind her and through her. Now he takes her through another Dream twilight world -- that of the earthly Real. The landscape through which they are travelling also indicates this change.

The marvel of the ideal world was slowly getting lost, and so was its crowding wonder of delicate dreams and the vague half-etched sublimities. Thought itself seemed to have fallen to a lower level; it had now become hard and tense as if it longed for the touch of some crude reality. The twilight floated as before but its symbol colours were pale and wrapped a much less delightful dream than before and resembled the dull, greyish mist of a sombre day. Savitri heard louder and sadder sounds and her eyes caught vast stretches of planes and cloudy mountains and tawny streams. She saw cities with minarets and towers, long quays, ghauts and harbours white with sails. These scenes lingered before her for a while and were gone. In between these scenes, she saw toiling multitudes in ever changing groups. All these were shadowy shapes as in a foiled cinema.

The tedium of the repetitiousness of life and its machine-like thoughts and acts is also felt. The poet describes this in these words:

A savage din of labour and a tramp  
Of armoured life and the monotonous hum  
Of thoughts and acts that ever were the same,  
As if the dull reiterated drone  
Of a great brute machine, beset her soul,—  
A grey dissatisfied rumour like a ghost  
Of the moaning of a loud unquiet sea.

Pages: 641- 642

These were all the creations of an ignorant mind, philosophies, disciplines and laws created by man. The messages of the evangelists, of the prophets, the ideals, systems, poems and crafts were like dreams crossing an empty vast. On the whole, it was a dismal spectacle which reinforced the pessimism of the God of Death.

Once more was heard the great destroying voice of the God of Death, rising above the spectacle of the fruitless labour of the worlds. His huge denial seems to have pursued the ignorant march of Time. He says to Savitri:

“Behold, Savitri, this futile spectacle on earth man is forever engaged in creating. Look at these great deeds accomplished on earth and the ultimate outcome that nature gives to these human efforts. Everything is devoured here by time and everything gets destroyed.

Man’s primary sin is the sin of being, of existence and his great error is his desire to live and of nursing the incurable malady of hope. Since nature cannot change, man too will not be able to change. He seems to be obeying nature’s fixed law, which allows only a change in form but only ends up creating newer versions of her often-repeated old forms. He thinks that he is creating something new, but ends simply creating a newer version of the old. Man’s mind is confined within circling boundaries. For Mind is man, and beyond it he cannot rise. If only he could rise beyond his mind and thoughts, he would be safe, but even when he sees this, he cannot mount to greater heights. He is a captive in the net of his mind, and even with wings he rises only to fall back to his native soil. He beats his wings in vain against the walls of life.

“In vain his heart lifts up its yearning prayer to Gods, who, he believes, live in the formless Void. But he is disappointed because nobody in the Void responds to his prayers. This disappointment drives him to seek his release in Nothingness. He seeks the *Nirvana* (the extinction) of the dream of his self. The Word, all that is created, thus ends in silence. In Nought is there release for everything and everybody.

“When he finds himself lonely among the human multitudes, man calls upon God to be the lover of his lonely soul and casts his spirit into the empty embrace of this imagined God. He formulates his own copy in the impartial, impersonal All, and imparts to it his will and attributes to it his own anger and love, and thus gives to the Ineffable a thousand forms and names. Do not, O Savitri, hope to call God down into this life. How will the eternal and the infinite live in this finite and Time-bound world?

“Savitri, you are making a mistake in believing that that there can be an aim to this Matter’s world. There is no aim here, but only a will to be. Everything is bound by Nature and is forever the same. As an illustration of what he has been saying the God of Death unveils before Savitri a fleeting panorama of the history of this world. This is one of the most memorable passages depicting human drama in this epic poem.

Look on these forms that stay awhile and pass,  
These lives that long and strive, then are no more,  
These structures that have no abiding truth,  
The saviour creeds that cannot save themselves,  
But perish in the strangling hands of the years,  
Discarded from man's thought, proved false by Time,  
Philosophies that strip all problems bare  
But nothing ever have solved since earth began,  
And sciences omnipotent in vain  
By which men learn of what the suns are made,  
Transform all forms to serve their outward needs,  
Ride through the sky and sail beneath the sea,  
But learn not what they are or why they came;  
These polities, architectures of man's brain,

That, bricked with evil and good, wall in man's spirit  
And, fissured houses, palace at once and jail,  
Rot while they reign and crumble before they crash;  
These revolutions, demon or drunken god,  
Convulsing the wounded body of mankind  
Only to paint in new colours an old face;  
These wars, carnage triumphant, ruin gone mad,  
The work of centuries vanishing in an hour,  
The blood of the vanquished and the victor's crown  
Which men to be born must pay for with their pain,  
The hero's face divine on satyr's limbs,  
The demon's grandeur mixed with the demigod's,  
The glory and the beasthood and the shame;  
Why is it all, the labour and the din,  
The transient joys, the timeless sea of tears,  
The longing and the hoping and the cry,  
The battle and the victory and the fall,  
The aimless journey that can never pause,  
The waking toil, the incoherent sleep,  
Song, shouts and weeping, wisdom and idle words,  
The laughter of men, the irony of the gods?  
Where leads the march, whither the pilgrimage?  
Who keeps the map of the route or planned each stage?

Pages: 644 – 45

(Incidentally, this passage leaving out the last two lines consists of 280 words and is probably the longest single sentence in the whole of Savitri. If you come across a sentence longer than this in this poem, please let me know.)

“The God of Death shows to Savitri scenes of the ever-changing drama of human history. They all flourish for a while and then just disappear. They do not seem to have any abiding truth about them. Nothing here lives forever. There are some which appear as saving creeds but these do not seem to be able to save themselves even. They perish at the strangling hands of time, discarded from men’s thought, or proved false by Time. Then there are philosophies which seem to be able strip all problems bare but which have not solved any real problem facing man since the time the world began. The same is true of sciences as well. They seem to have made man omnipotent but in vain. Man has learnt from them what the suns are made of, and transform almost everything to make them serviceable to man. They have taught him how ride through the sky and sail underneath the sea, but they have no clue to what human beings are made of and why they are here on earth.

“Look at these varied political organisations that man has built one after the other; each of them contains as many bricks of good as of evil; they are all attempts to wall in the human spirit and yet each of them has cracks in them, and they can serve as palaces as well as jails. Even when they reign, they degenerate and become corrupt, and finally start disintegrating before they crash.

“These are the much-vaunted revolutions during which men behave violently like demons or drunken gods. They shake violently the wounded body of mankind, only to paint new colours on an old face, without achieving anything worthwhile for all the drama and turmoil.

“Then look at these wars during which carnage becomes triumphant and there is mad ruin everywhere. These wars destroy in a brief hour what took centuries to build. The blood of the vanquished as well as the crown of the victor take a heavy toll on generations to come. Generations to come pay for the victory of the victorious as much as for the defeat of the vanquished. The glory of a war is like a heroic face on the limbs of a Satyr (a sylvan deity in Greek mythology having certain characteristics of a horse or goat). It is like bringing together the demon’s grandeur with that of a demi-god. You have there glory, beasthood and shame all put together.

“One often wonders why does all this keep happening, all this labour and all this discordant welter of sounds? What is the meaning of all these transient joys? And why should there be this endless sea of tears? This constant longing, and the hoping and the cry, the battle, this victory and the defeat, and this aimless journey that has gone on without a pause! All the endless toil during waking hours followed by an incoherent sleep! All the song, shouts and all the weeping, and all the wisdom and all the idle words man uses so glibly, this laughter of men and the irony of the gods – where leads this march, and to which place is this pilgrimage? Is any one planning this pilgrimage or is this world of ours self-moved and goes its own way?

“Or is there no final truth behind all these things but all this is only a play of the Mind that dreams. Is the world then a mere myth, something wholly imaginary that happened to come true? Is it a legend told by a conscious Mind to itself and imaged and enacted on the false ground of Matter in an unsubstantial Vast? Mind then is the author, the spectator, the actor and the stage of this entire drama. If so, Mind must be the only reality, and what it thinks, we see around us.

“But if Mind is all that is, then renounce the hope of bliss, and the hope of finding the truth, for Mind can never touch the body of Truth and Mind can never see the soul of God. It can only grasp his shadow or his laugh since its tendency is to turn away from him to the unreal appearance of things. Mind is a tissue woven of light and shade; it is as often right as it is wrong. Or Mind is Nature’s marriage of convenience between truth and falsehood, between joy and pain, this struggling pair no court can separate.

“Each thought that issues out of Mind is like a gold coin covered with a bright alloy, and error and truth are its obverse and reverse. It comes from the royal mintage of the brain and all the currency that issues out of this mint is of the same kind.

(The human mind, Sri Aurobindo has explained in *The life Divine*, is in its essence a consciousness which measures, limits, cuts forms of things from the indivisible whole and contains them as if each were separate integer. It cannot see the Truth as a whole. There are many places in his writings where he has discussed the strengths and limitations of the human mind. I shall quote one brief passage below:

Mind is not sufficient to explain existence in the universe. Infinite Consciousness must first translate itself into infinite faculty of Knowledge or, as we call it from our point of view, omniscience. But Mind is not a faculty of knowledge nor an instrument of omniscience; it is a faculty for the seeking of knowledge, for expressing as much as it can gain of it in certain forms of a relative thought and for using it towards certain capacities of action. Even when it finds, it does not possess; it only keeps a certain fund of current coin of Truth—not Truth itself—in the bank of Memory to draw upon according to its needs. For Mind is that which does not know, which tries to know and which never knows except as in a

glass darkly. It is the power, which interprets truth of universal existence for the practical uses of a certain order of things; it is not the power which knows and guides that existence and therefore it cannot be the power which created or manifested it.)<sup>[1]</sup>

“Do not hope to plant the living Truth on earth or do not try to make Matter’s world the home of God. There is no God or he exists only in name. And if there is a Self, it is bodiless and is never born. It cannot be identified with anyone and it is nobody’s possession. On what shall you then build your happy world here? Be ready to cast off your mind and life, be the stark Self. An all-seeing Omnipresence alone, and all by itself, exists; even if there is a God, he does not seem to care for the world. He sees everything with an indifferent gaze. He has doomed all hearts to sorrow and to desire and he has bound all of life with pitiless laws. He does not respond to the ignorant voice of prayer.

“He is eternal while the word he made toils below through time but he is unmoved and untouched by whatever happens here in the world he created. He sees the agony of his animal creatures as also the fate of man as just minute details of his vast creation. Being immeasurably wise, he exceeds your thought. He takes joy in his solitariness and does not need your love. Human thinking cannot hold God’s truth. If you desire truth, then stop all your thinking and still your mind forever, and then the unseen Light of God’s truth will dawn on you. Immortal bliss cannot live within any finite human mould. The mighty Mother will not consent to keep her calm delight in the narrow fragile vessel of the human mind, or to lodge her sweet unbroken delight in human hearts which earthly sorrow can overwhelm and in human bodies which careless death can slay at will.

“It is futile to try to change the world which God has planned so carefully.”

Then the God of Death tries to clinch his argument by what seems to be an unassailable argument, which he puts in these words:

Dream not to change the world that God has planned,  
Strive not to alter his eternal law.  
If heavens there are whose gates are shut to grief,  
There seek the joy thou couldst not find on earth;  
Or in the imperishable hemisphere  
Where Light is native and Delight is king  
And Spirit is the deathless ground of things,  
Choose thy high station, child of Eternity.  
If thou art Spirit and Nature is thy robe,  
Cast off thy garb and be thy naked self  
Immutable in its undying truth,  
Alone for ever in the mute Alone.  
Turn then to God, for him leave all behind;  
Forgetting love, forgetting Satyavan,  
Annul thyself in his immobile peace.  
O soul, drown in his still beatitude.  
For thou must die to thyself to reach God's height:  
I, Death, am the gate of immortality.”

“This world is governed by certain eternal laws which God has made, and since they cannot be changed, the world cannot be changed. If there are heavens whose gates are shut to human sorrows, you can seek there the joys you could not find on earth. Or choose your eternal station in the deathless hemisphere where knowledge is native and delight rules supreme and undisturbed. This will be the world of the Spirit.

But then if you really are the Spirit and nature is only a garb which you are wearing, cast off your garb and be your naked self. This self is changeless and deathless, and it lives in its loneliness (*kaivalya*). Turn then entirely to God and for him leave everything behind. Forget Love and forget also Satyavan. Seek thy annulment; seek to dissolve yourself in the immobile peace of that realm. O soul, if that is what you are seeking, drown yourself in this still beatitude. But you must die to yourself, abandon all that you are, your individuality, your dreams of a perfect love on a perfect earth with Satyavan as your companion, etc. to reach this height. I, death, am the gate of this immortality”.

The God of Death is now using the central argument of a certain variety of Indian spirituality. It says that you cannot find either truth or bliss or perfection of any kind on this earth. Generations have tried for these ends over millennia but to no avail. Therefore wise men have rightly concluded that this world is going to remain forever imperfect, a home of inadequacy, incapacity, frustration, sorrow and death. And therefore the wise man rejects this world, turns his attention within and tries to find peace, bliss and fulfilment in the kingdom of God that dwells within us.

Thus negation of life becomes the most favoured path of spirituality. Even today, the Indian mind understands spirituality to mean renunciation of life. Sri Aurobindo has put it trenchantly:

All voices are joined in one great consensus that not in this world of dualities can there be our kingdom of heaven, but beyond, whether in the joys of the eternal Brindavan or the high beatitudes of Brahmaloaka, beyond all in the featureless unity of the indefinable existence. And through many centuries a great army of shining witnesses, saints, teachers, names sacred to Indian memory and dominant in Indian imagination, have borne always the same witness and swelled always the same lofty and distant appeal ... renunciation the sole path of knowledge, the acceptance of physical life the act of the ignorant, cessation of birth the right use of human birth, the call of the Spirit, the recoil from Matter.[2]

It is interesting that the God of Death takes this stand against Savitri’s position. A moment’s reflection will show you that this canker of world negation is found at the heart of all religions in some form or the other.

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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)*

[1] Sri Aurobindo: *The Life Divine*, page 118.

[2] Sri Aurobindo: *The Life Divine* (SABCL Vol. 18) p. 23.



# Integral Health

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## Health at the Crossroads – the Indian Scene

**Dr.D.B. Bisht**

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India is not only a sub-continent but a mini universe. Where else can one find such a variation in almost anything in life? From the bullock cart to the most modern jet; from abject poverty to utmost affluence; from shattered shanties to super deluxe mansions; from the most simple primitive tribals to the most sophisticated avant-garde five-star society; from most backward villages to multi-storied metropolises; you can find almost in any field gradations extending from zero to almost infinity. Not only its people, its culture but nature too has provided this land of ours a wide variety. Ask for sunlight, sand, snow, rocks, mountains, forests, deserts, beaches, flora, fauna; and you have it. Where else can you find in a country places with minus 20 to plus 20 degree celsius available at any time of the year?

What is true for nature and life is true for health institutions also. We have with us on the one hand, the most modern sophisticated institutions and on the other the most primitive health centres where even the bare minimum of facilities for health and sickness are yet to be provided.

We are aware that due to various historical and socio-economic developments, our country has become a land of gross imbalances. Yet our forefathers have given us a constitution which, if followed in word and action, would result in a true state of equality, fraternity, liberty and human dignity. However, as long as hunger and poverty stalk our population, enjoyment of health, human dignity and quality of life will remain a distant dream.

Then what must we do?

We had adopted 'planning' as a means to achieve our goals. Every five years we had framed our policies, identified targets and built our strategies. However, many types of constraints continue to restrict our endeavour. Inflation runs high in most of the developing countries. Our economists, industrialists and planners are busy making structural adjustments, but unless the poorer sections of our population get gainful employment generating sufficient wages, they will not be able to provide for the minimum basic requirements, particularly nutrition. A high morbidity amongst the poor will be the result. And if we mean business, a higher expenditure would result to meet the consequent demands of ill-health.

In the recent past we have witnessed a dilemma of over full godowns of grain on one side and empty stomachs on the other. All this urgently needs correction. With industrialisation and use of insecticides and pesticides, our food chain and environment have been polluted so much that

the basic essentials of health viz. nutrition, safe drinking water, sanitation and healthy environments are not available any more. Add to it the need of proper education to the masses and the picture becomes all the more gloomy. Such compelling circumstances necessitate that more dynamic attention should be given to health promotion.

In planning health strategies therefore we are at the crossroads of decision making. Our national commitment by signing the Alma-Ata declaration has provided a clearer guidance for decision making. We had adopted primary health care as a strategy to achieve the goal of health for all by the year 2000. In order to achieve this cherished goal, a paper on 'National Health Policy' was placed for being adopted in the Parliament in the early eighties. It provided targets for health and family welfare programmes to be achieved in a set timeframe. It identified a number of health parameters for containing infant mortality through control of communicable diseases and immunization of the population as well as achieving the desired birth rate, death rate, growth rate, family size etc. These were supposed to be monitored regularly at periodic intervals. It projected guidelines for population stabilization, medical and health education, manpower development, provision of standard quality food, environmental sanitation and various health services to be rendered in a comprehensive manner through the primary health care system duly supported by proper referrals. What has been the end-result? Did we achieve 'health for all' by 2000? The distinction between the affluent and deprived classes has become more sharp. Suicides, even group suicides due to primary economic strains have increased manifold; such as amongst farmers. Secondly our policies have brought in the evil effects of a *nouveau-riche* culture burdened with violence and perversity. Violence is being manifested in many forms such as riots, terrorism, abduction and economic corruption.

Health Science is NOT a basic science. It is an applied science. And yet, health science is the oldest science. It quickly adapts itself to the advances made in any branch of science including humanities. It is also obliged to do so — since it is for the benefit of mankind.

The rate of scientific discoveries and the speed with which new technologies replace older ones, leaves one aghast. Human progress has been given a tremendous boost by scientific and technological advances for its welfare and enjoyment. Whereas space technology has introduced ultra-miniaturization on one hand, automation especially controlled by computerisation has resulted in mass production and quality control. These together have ensured a greater availability of micro and macro facilities, thereby enabling the remote areas and the people at the fringe of society to take advantage of the innovations. These technological inputs and approaches have succeeded in every field. However, we have to sound a word of caution. Quality of medicare has improved vastly but a large population cannot afford the benefit of science. There must be equity if not equality in health care. Affordability can and should be the cornerstone of all health policies. Unless we ensure a just and fair distribution of national and international resources, by combating human greed and lust for power, we are likely to land ourselves in a situation where the very survival of the human race might be endangered.

India needs a revolution in human health. Let us start with ourselves. Accelerated evolution is revolution. And the initial place for any true revolution is the human heart. Let us, therefore look into our hearts and prepare ourselves for a better tomorrow for all of us.

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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.)



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**Unceasing Effort for Progress**

## The Mother

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*“The delight of victory is sometimes less than the attraction of struggle and suffering; nevertheless the laurel and not the cross should be the aim of the conquering human soul.*

*“Souls that do not aspire are God’s failures; but Nature is pleased and loves to multiply them because they assure her of stability and prolong her empire.*

*“Those who are poor, ignorant, ill-born or ill-bred are not the common herd; the common herd are all who are satisfied with pettiness and an average humanity.*

*“Help men, but do not pauperise them of their energy; lead and instruct men, but see that their initiative and originality remain intact; take others into thyself, but give them in return the full godhead of their nature. He who can do this is the leader and the guru.*

*“God has made the world a field of battle and filled it with the trampling of combatants and the cries of a great wrestle and struggle. Would you filch His peace without paying the price He has fixed for it?*

*“Distrust a perfect-seeming success, but when having succeeded thou findest still much to do, rejoice and go forward; for the labour is long before the real perfection.*

*“There is no more benumbing error than to mistake a stage for the goal or to linger too long in a resting place.”*

Sri Aurobindo

All that Sri Aurobindo says here is aimed at fighting against human nature with its inertia, its heaviness, laziness, easy satisfactions, hostility to all effort. How many times in life does one meet people who become pacifists because they are afraid to fight, who long for rest before they have earned it, who are satisfied with a little progress and in their imagination and desires make it into a marvellous realisation so as to justify their stopping half-way.

In ordinary life, already, this happens so much. Indeed, this is the bourgeois ideal, which has deadened mankind and made man into what he is now: “Work while you are young, accumulate

wealth, honour, position; be provident, have a little foresight, put something by, lay up a capital, become an official—so that later when you are forty you “can sit down”, enjoy your income and later your pension and, as they say, enjoy a well-earned rest.”—To sit down, to stop on the way, not to move forward, to go to sleep, to go downhill towards the grave before one’s time, cease to live the purpose of life—to sit down!

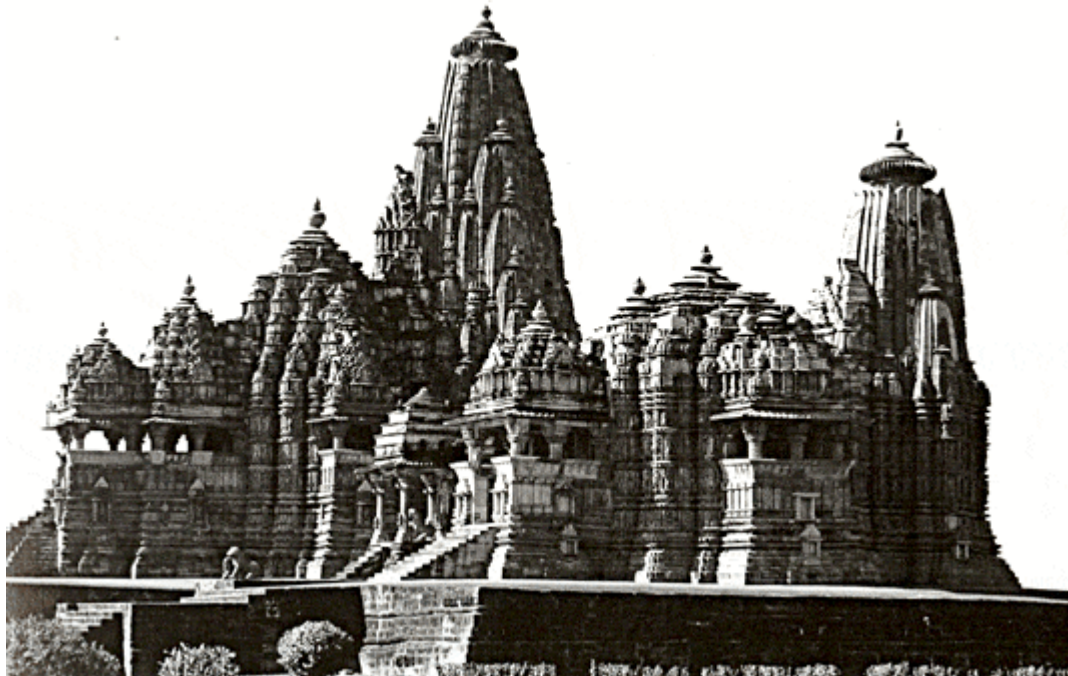
The minute one stops going forward, one falls back. The moment one is satisfied and no longer aspires, one begins to die. Life is movement, it is effort, it is a march forward, the scaling of a mountain, the climb towards new revelations, towards future realisations. Nothing is more dangerous than wanting to rest. It is in action, in effort, in the march forward that repose must be found, the true repose of complete trust in the divine Grace, of the absence of desires, of victory over egoism.

True repose comes from the widening, the universalisation of the consciousness. Become as vast as the world and you will always be at rest. In the thick of action, in the very midst of the battle, the effort, you will know the repose of infinity and eternity.

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## [The Khandaryya Mahadeva and Devi Jagadambi temple](#)



Now it may readily be admitted that the failure to see at once the unity of this architecture is perfectly natural to a European eye, because unity in the sense demanded by the western conception, the Greek unity gained by much suppression and a sparing use of detail and circumstance or even the Gothic unity got by casting everything into the mould of a single spiritual aspiration, is not there. And the greater unity that really is there can never be arrived at at all, if the eye begins and ends by dwelling on form and detail and ornament, because it will then be obsessed by these things and find it difficult to go beyond to the unity which all this in its totality serves...

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*The Khandaryya Mahadeva and Devi Jagadambi temple. Khajuraho, Chandella dynasty, eleventh century. Photograph by Elizabeth Beck.*



## *Your Voice*

*Enthusiasm is quite possibly the most important ingredient of any new venture. Without it, there is nothing exceptional, spontaneous or living about what one is trying to create. Your Voice is a section where we invite opinions and view points from our readers and where we showcase letters with suggestions, ideas, support and criticism. We entreat you to feel free and write to us about anything that may strike you regarding Next Future in its concrete form as well as from a larger perspective. There is a possibility that we may not have enough space to feature all letters coming in, but we will try our utmost to do so.*

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The articles are so enriching that every time I feel I have educated myself more as I find the answers I seek.

Ananya Roy

\*

I read this article "The Mother's Withdrawal" with avid interest and cherished it.

Nilanjan Chatterjee

\*

Excellent magazine. Touches the soul and pacifies it.

Deepti Panuganti

\*

The Next Future has become my only friend here, in Kinshasa, Congo!

Month after month I get just the articles I need either to get some answers to my questions or hesitations, or to get rid of any confusions or doubts, as if the writers know what I am going through or what is troubling me!

Rajasree

\*

MP Pandit's article has created a very great faith in the Mother and Her Presence on earth and the editorial is very important as people speak mostly about mental will but this will take us into the deeper aspects.

PJ Trivedi

\*

Excellent. A great source of inspiration, invigoration and refreshment. Looking forward to the next issue.

Mondira Sen Deb

\*

The Mother's Withdrawal by M.P.Pandit was very inspiring. It is true that one feels Mother's presence even today if one has an opening. She is still on earth and showing the path.

Ajay Sharma

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