

The Resurgent India

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“Let us all work for the Greatness of India.”
– The Mother

Year 5

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A Declaration

We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

We do not fight against any form of government.

We do not fight against any social class.

We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, Truth, and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.

- The Mother

(Collected works of the Mother 13, p. 124-25)

OURSELVES AND OUR IDEAL

“O our Mother, O Soul of India, Mother who hast never forsaken thy children even in the days of darkest depression, even when they turned away from thy voice, served other masters and denied thee.... Guide us so that we may be always on the side of great ideals and show to men thy true visage, as a leader in the ways of the spirit and a friend and helper of all the peoples.”

The Resurgent India, which will be more of a national review than a monthly news paper, is dedicated to the integral resurgence of India so that it may assume its rightful place among the community of nations and, by its powerful example and spiritual influence, open for humanity the way leading to its supreme fulfilment. To assume its true position and to fulfil its true role, India must find back and manifest her true soul which, at present, seems to be completely covered up by an overwhelming commercialism which has arisen out of an onslaught on her of the Western spirit of a very shortsighted utilitarianism whose virus seems to have infected every fibre of her frame. Therefore, we shall notice current events – be they regional, national or international – only as they evidence, help, affect or resist the growth of our national life and the development of the soul of the nation. All political, economic, social and cultural problems shall be dealt with, primarily, from this standpoint, seeking first the spiritual roots and inner causes of all such problems and then proceeding to necessary measures and remedies. In a similar spirit we shall deal with all sources of our national strength – whatever collectivity they may manifest into and whatever source they may be drawing from – seeking to bring them home to the comprehension of all our people so as to make them dynamically applicable to all our life and creation.

At present, India is apparently going through a process where all the aspects of its life and values are increasingly coming under the sway of Western spirit and values. It is a great mistake to believe that our salvation can come by allowing ourselves to be even more completely dominated by Western

utilitarian spirit and thereby instituting an even more vigorous pursuit of the same goals that drive the modern Western societies. We believe that India is destined to work out her own independent life and civilisation, to stand in the forefront of the world and solve the political, social, economic and moral problems besetting modern societies which the West has failed to solve, yet the pursuit of whose solution and the feverish passage in that pursuit from experiment to experiment, from failure to failure she calls her progress. A successful pursuit of great ends requires great means and the strength to discover and use such means can only be found by seeking the eternal source of strength within ourselves – a task which India alone is equipped to perform in spite of its present precarious condition.

We have been seeking to regain life by following the law of another being than our own. We must get back and seek the springs of life and strength within ourselves. We must know our great past and recover it for the purpose of a greater future. Our business is to realise ourselves first and mould everything to the law of India's eternal spirit before we can safely take a leap towards the future. It will therefore be the object of **The Resurgent India** to read the heart of our religion, our society, our philosophy, politics, literature, art, jurisprudence, science, thought, everything that was and is ours, so that we may be able to say to our nation, 'This is our Dharma'. We shall review the Western civilisation and its values and institutions from the standpoint of Indian thought and knowledge in order to have our people throw off from themselves the dominating stamp of this alien culture. What we need to take from West we should take as Indians.

All this must not be taken to mean that we can recover our true dharma either by creating organisation for the perpetuation of the mere dress and body of Hinduism or by multiplying new sects – of which, at any rate, there seems to be no dearth at present – limited within the inferior ideas of religion imported from the West. In spite of the present wave of religious intolerance and terrorism with which the present century seems to have begun, a deeper perception can clearly see the world moving through an indispensable interregnum of free thought and materialism to a new synthesis of all religious thought and experience, to a world-life free from all intolerance (religious or otherwise), yet full of faith and fervour and capable

of accepting all forms of religious and spiritual experience without denying any because it would have discovered the One behind all the human masks. The religion which embraces Science and Faith, Theism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism and yet is none of these, is that to which the world-spirit is moving. "In our own, which is the most sceptical and the most believing of all, the most sceptical because it has questioned and experimented the most, the most believing because it has the deepest experience and the most varied and positive spiritual knowledge, – that wider Hinduism which is not a dogma or combination of dogmas but a law of life, which is not a social framework but the spirit of a past and future social evolution, which rejects nothing but insists on testing and experiencing everything and when tested and experienced turning it to the soul's uses, in this Hinduism we find the basis of the future world-religion. This Sanatana Dharma has many scriptures, Veda, Vedanta, Gita, Upanishad, Darshana, Purana, Tantra, nor could it reject the Bible or the Koran; but its real, most authoritative scripture is in the heart in which the Eternal has His dwelling."²

The time has come when humanity has to take a further great and decisive step and rise out of a predominantly material existence into a higher, deeper and wider existence leading ultimately to the establishment of the divine life on earth on the basis of a higher and larger consciousness which will lead to the solution of all the problems which have perplexed and vexed man ever since he began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society.

India is the only country in the world which has always lived for the Divine and never for itself alone. Therefore, our ideal and aim is to work, in whatever way we can, for the building up of an India which will play a decisive role in leading humanity to its divine destiny. We wish this paper to be in the nature of a clarion call to all the people, the world over, who share our vision and will to join their hearts, minds and souls to ours in adherence to the following call of the Mother:

"Let us all work for the Greatness of India."³

References:

1. Collected works of the Mother 13, page 352
2. Complete works of Sri Aurobindo 08, page 26
3. Collected works of the Mother 13, page 377

THE FORTHCOMING PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

There is a general expectation in the masses that things may improve after the installation of the new government headed, most likely, by Narendra Modi. It is the sheer power of the spirit – the deeper truth of our individual and collective being – that such a hope has persisted throughout and continues to be entertained even in the face of an almost unbroken record of poor governance, – governance that has been getting progressively worse over the last sixty five years. To the ordinary material intellect which takes its stand on appearances, such a record of a direct and continued contradiction of the persistent hope is a solid argument against readily entertaining any such hope in the near future and according to it, such a phenomenon may be attributable only to the foolishness and irrationality of general human nature. However, to a deeper view of the workings of evolutionary nature, such an opposition between an unrealized but persistent ideal or hope and the realized fact appears, to use Sri Aurobindo's words, "... as part of Nature's profoundest method and the seal of her completest sanction"¹ – her sanction for the future realization of such an ideal or hope. So, let us remain hopeful for a glorious future for this country against all apparent denials and odds.

Although the final election results are due only around the middle of the next month, it is progressively becoming clear that the ruling party is set to get a sound drubbing – well deserved and earned^{*} – at the hands of the Indian people. The new government and leadership is not expected and even cannot reasonably be expected – given the tremendous asuric forces that, being well entrenched in this field, can impeccably use the false sense of self-preservation to turn even a decent soul into little more than a 'political animal' – to do anything but remain solely concerned, at least initially, with the surface material needs and concerns of the masses.

It should be clear from the above that this may be so even when there

^{*}This needs explaining. The ruling party had been – at least during its present term – solely moved by the spirit of a very narrow self-interest which makes one almost entirely oblivious to the interest – however narrowly perceived – of the nation. This is obvious from its blind and persistent appeasement of organized groups based on caste, religion, language etc. and its unabashed attempts to placate or buy the common man through hand-outs and other frills. The latter policy is being shamelessly and perniciously pursued by the politicians even when they know very well that when the government takes a rupee out of people's pockets, it can give them back – thanks to the utterly corrupt government machinery – only a small fraction of it through its schemes. The government's

is a perception in some quarters of the new leadership that unless we stop the progressive deterioration of our national character – something that cannot be accomplished merely by making newer and newer and more stringent laws and erecting more elaborate government machinery – resulting from an unabashed pursuit of materialistic goals under the pressure and assault of Western values and the institutions that have sprung up and evolved out of such values, there can be no real deliverance for us and improvement in our condition because India is not Europe and has a separate Dharma of its own and cannot fulfill herself by aping an alien culture. Here it is instructive to quote the following soul-stirring words of Swami Vivekananda:

“If you give up . . . spirituality, leaving it aside to go after the materializing civilisation of the West, the result will be that in three generations you will be an extinct race; because the backbone of the nation will be broken, the foundation upon which the national edifice has been built will be undermined, and the result will be annihilation all round.”²

If the new leadership continues in the old-rut without paying heed to this aspect of India then we cannot expect anything much different but only a repetition of the old wine in new bottles.

The root of all our present problems lies in the acute human selfishness that has emerged or come out into the open due to our blind pursuit of the materialistic ideal and pervades all our individual and collective thinking, feeling and living. During the past few years, things have come to such a state that the snowball of selfishness and corruption have become visible to all who at all care to look behind the surface appearances of things. Even among those who are rigorously pursuing their selfish pecuniary aims, there are likely to be very few who would not, in their reflective moments, feel that their life has become really very sinful and they are not wrong because, truly, **selfishness is the only**

own publication has this to report on this: “A study by Dutta and Ramaswami . . . showed by using 1993-4 NSS data that the bottom quintile of rural population in Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh got 10 percent and 20 percent, respectively, of the foodgrain that they were supposed to get. In general, several studies . . . confirm that our track record of delivering to the vulnerable remains highly flawed. One of the most comprehensive recent studies of this, by Swedberg . . . suggest that a key secret lies in giving the benefit to the poor directly. Swedberg estimates that to transfer Rs. 1 to a poor household by the current method of giving cheap food first to PDS stores and then having them transfer it to the poor, the Government of India incurs a budgetary expenditure of Rs 9. At this rate a large food programme would be fiscally unviable.” (Economic Survey 2011-12, P. 28.)

sin and selflessness is the only real virtue. The names of some of the most common fruits of this poisonous root which have assumed a much greater prominence ever since the beginning of this century are Commercialism, Corruption, Adulteration, Pollution, Exploitation, Terrorism, etc. All these are interrelated and spring from one common root – acute selfishness. After the terrorist attack of September 2001 (in the USA), terrorism came to be universally acknowledged as the most serious problem faced by humanity. But recently corruption has taken the front-rank in India, especially after a spontaneous demonstration of strong public disapproval and disgust at the conduct of politicians and big business who have been in league plundering public resources and money. What makes this problem still more disturbing for the common man is the awareness that all **these shocking exposures of graft are only the tip of the iceberg.**

Now, what is the solution? Charity begins at home and one must begin with oneself, not by looking censoriously at others and their conduct but by looking into the depths of one's own being – the only place where the roots of all our problems lie. Only by doing so can one discover how when one passionately pursues a materialistic – or for that matter any egoistic – ideal one exposes oneself to the danger of adverse vital forces taking effective possession of one's surface being and nature. When this happens, the result is that **“...man intellectually developed, mighty in scientific knowledge and the mastery of gross and subtle nature, using the elements as his servants and the world as his footstool, but undeveloped in heart and spirit, becomes only an inferior kind of Asura using the powers of a demigod to satisfy the nature of an animal.** According to dim traditions and memories of the old world, of such a nature was the civilisation of old Atlantis, submerged beneath the Ocean when its greatness and its wickedness became too heavy a load for the earth to bear, and our own legends of the Asuras represent a similar consciousness of a great but abortive development in humanity.”³ To a deeper glance, this is an exact description of the present condition of humanity in general which, with the threat of moral and ecological disaster looming large on the horizon, faces the prospect of extinction in not too distant a future.

References:

1. Complete works of Sri Aurobindo 21, page 4
2. Complete works of Swami Vivekananda 03, page 153, Mayavati Memorial Ed. ISBN 81-85301-46-8
3. Complete works of Sri Aurobindo 01, page 439

THE ECONOMIC BARBARISM OF MODERN MAN AND ITS FALLOUT

Modern society acknowledges only two gods, life and practical reason organized under the name of science. Its main ideals are the physical good and vitalistic well-being of the individual and the community, the entire satisfaction of the desire for bodily health, long life, comfort, luxury, wealth, amusement, recreation, a constant and tireless expenditure of the mind and the dynamic life-force in remunerative work and production, creations and conquests of various kinds, discovery, commercial victory, travel, adventure, the full possession and utilization of the earth. The best system of governance and economic production is that which leads to the greatest fulfillment of these ideals. On this score, today democracy and capitalism have come to be almost universally acknowledged as the systems best suited for modern mankind. However, as should have been expected, **the naked and unabashed pursuit of capitalism during the past two decades after the collapse of communism in Russia has been increasingly leading humanity towards an ever higher and higher level of a new kind of barbarism – the barbarism of the economic man – which is proving dangerous not only for the existence of the Capitalistic economic system but even for the very existence of the human race.**

“This economic barbarism is essentially that of the vital man who mistakes the vital being for the self and accepts its satisfaction as the first aim of life. The characteristic of Life is desire and the instinct of possession. Just as the physical barbarian makes the excellence of the body and the development of physical force, health and prowess his standard and aim, so the vitalistic or economic barbarian makes the satisfaction of wants and desires and the accumulation of possessions his standard and aim. His ideal man is not the cultured or noble or thoughtful or moral or religious, but the successful man. To arrive, to succeed, to produce, to accumulate, to possess is his existence. The accumulation of wealth and more wealth, the adding of possessions to possessions, opulence, show, pleasure, a cumbrous inartistic luxury, a plethora of conveniences, life devoid of beauty and nobility, religion

vulgarised or coldly formalised, politics and government turned into a trade and profession, enjoyment itself made a business, this is commercialism. To the natural unredeemed economic man beauty is a thing otiose or a nuisance, art and poetry a frivolity or an ostentation and a means of advertisement. His idea of civilisation is comfort, his idea of morals social respectability, his idea of politics the encouragement of industry, the opening of markets, exploitation and trade following the flag, his idea of religion at best a pietistic formalism or the satisfaction of certain vitalistic emotions. He values education for its utility in fitting a man for success in a competitive or, it may be, a socialised industrial existence, science for the useful inventions and knowledge, the comforts, conveniences, machinery of production with which it arms him, its power for organisation, regulation, stimulus to production. The opulent plutocrat and the successful mammoth capitalist and organiser of industry are the supermen of the commercial age and the true, if often occult rulers of its society.

The essential barbarism of all this is its pursuit of vital success, satisfaction, productiveness, accumulation, possession, enjoyment, comfort, convenience for their own sake. The vital part of the being is an element in the integral human existence as much as the physical part; it has its place but must not exceed its place. A full and well-appointed life is desirable for man living in society, but on condition that it is also a true and beautiful life. Neither the life nor the body exist for their own sake, but as vehicle and instrument of a good higher than their own. They must be subordinated to the superior needs of the mental being, chastened and purified by a greater law of truth, good and beauty before they can take their proper place in the integrality of human perfection. Therefore **in a commercial age with its ideal, vulgar and barbarous, of success, vitalistic satisfaction, productiveness and possession the soul of man may linger a while for certain gains and experiences, but cannot permanently rest. If it persisted too long, Life would become clogged and perish of its own plethora or burst in its straining to a gross expansion. Like the too massive Titan it will collapse by its own mass, mole ruet sua.**¹

“The West has made the growth of the intellectual, emotional, vital

and material being of man its ideal, but it has left aside the greater possibilities of his spiritual existence. Its highest standards are ideals of progress, of liberty, equality and fraternity, of reason and science, of efficiency of all kinds, of a better political, social and economical state, of the unity and earthly happiness of the race. These are great endeavours, but experiment after experiment has shown that they cannot be realised in their truth by the power of the idea and the sentiment alone: their real truth and practice can only be founded in the spirit. **The West has put its faith in its science and machinery and it is being destroyed by its science and crushed under its mechanical burden. It has not understood that a spiritual change is necessary for the accomplishment of its ideals.**"²

As elucidated by Sri Aurobindo, the West has been pursuing the path leading to Mammon and during the past few decades, Asia also seems to have joined it wholeheartedly. As a result, the whole human race has become afflicted with the short-sighted spirit of utilitarianism. In the words of the Mother, **"For the last hundred years or so mankind has been suffering from a disease which seems to be spreading more and more and which has reached a climax in our times; it is what we may call "utilitarianism". People and things, circumstances and activities seem to be viewed and appreciated exclusively from this angle. Nothing has any value unless it is useful.** Certainly something that is useful is better than something that is not. But first we must agree on what we describe as useful – useful to whom, to what, for what?

For, more and more, the races who consider themselves civilised describe as useful whatever can attract, procure or produce money. Everything is judged and evaluated from a monetary angle. That is what I call utilitarianism. And this disease is highly contagious, for even children are not immune to it.

At an age when they should be dreaming of beauty, greatness and perfection, dreams that may be too sublime for ordinary common sense, but which are nevertheless far superior to this dull good sense, children now dream of money and worry about how to earn it.

So when they think of their studies, they think above all about what can be useful to them, so that later on when they grow up they can earn a lot of money.

And the thing that becomes most important for them is to prepare themselves to pass examinations with success, for with diplomas, certificates and titles they will be able to find good positions and earn a lot of money.

For them study has no other purpose, no other interest.

To learn for the sake of knowledge, to study in order to know the secrets of Nature and life, to educate oneself in order to grow in consciousness, to discipline oneself in order to become master of oneself, to overcome one's weaknesses, incapacities and ignorance, to prepare oneself to advance in life towards a goal that is nobler and vaster, more generous and more true... they hardly give it a thought and consider it all very utopian. The only thing that matters is to be practical, to prepare themselves and learn how to earn money."³

Even though we have crossed the mark of seven billion on this small planet, there may be enough to meet everyone's need but certainly not enough for even one man's greed – then what to say about the greed of the modern organized industry. Actually what modern economic barbarism dignifies by the name of industry is nothing more than an organized selfishness, cruelty and greed which has been ruthlessly exploiting – practically unabated – not only the elements, the flora and fauna but also humans in general, not excluding even those connected with it and directly or indirectly instruments of its plunder – employees, customers, final consumers, suppliers, etc. All are exploited with unvarying ruthlessness in spirit which is modified in practice only by way of a careful weighing of the possibilities of losses arising from possible unfavorable reactions – punitive (legal) or defensive or offensive – from people or groups adversely affected by its activities. This kind of exploitation has lately reached such alarming proportions that even Nature is troubled and conveying her anguish by way of an unusual increase in natural disasters and the possibility of an ecological disaster threatening the very existence of the human race. Even the human masses seem to be coming out of their usual wide-eyed wonder at the doings of these great beasts and

are becoming conscious of the mortal damage that is being done if the recent spontaneous eruptions around the world against corruption in public life and the conduct of big business are any indication.

If human beings are ever going to truly come out of the repeated rounds of wasted efforts, emotions, untold suffering and useless strivings, they must first realize that the working of things in this universe is such that all works from within without and that nothing can really manifest unless it is already within. Therefore, what they (human beings) are within that alone they shall enjoy outside. It can never be otherwise. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "This erring race of human beings dreams always of perfecting their environment by the machinery of government and society; but it is only by the perfection of the soul within that the outer environment can be perfected. What thou art within, that outside thee thou shalt enjoy; no machinery can rescue thee from the law of thy being."⁴ He further declares, **"A perfected human world cannot be created by men or composed of men who are themselves imperfect.** Even if all our actions are scrupulously regulated by education or law or social or political machinery, what will be achieved is a regulated pattern of minds, a fabricated pattern of lives, a cultivated pattern of conduct; but a conformity of this kind cannot change, cannot re-create the man within, it cannot carve or cut out a perfect soul or a perfect thinking man or a perfect or growing living being. For soul and mind and life are powers of being and can grow but cannot be cut out or made; an outer process or formation can assist or can express soul and mind and life but cannot create or develop it. One can indeed help the being to grow, not by an attempt at manufacture, but by throwing on it stimulating influences or by lending to it one's forces of soul or mind or life; but even so the growth must still come from within it, determining from there what shall be made of these influences and forces, and not from outside. This is the first truth that our creative zeal and aspiration have to learn, otherwise all our human endeavour is foredoomed to turn in a futile circle and can end only in a success that is a specious failure."⁵

In the Indian conception of man, man is a soul flowering (manifesting?) in mind, life and body – a conscious manifestation in terrestrial nature of the truth of the spiritual being. We commit a gross error when we confuse our outer person (mask) with this our true self and most of our problems – individual and collective – may be traced to this gross error. For example, in the present intellectual age most deliberations on problems concerning individual and collectivities are focused on how to utilize all the resources and outer living creatures (including human beings) for one's (the surface self's) best advantage. Such a habit of thinking and the spirit of approaching others is responsible for much selfishness, insensitiveness and cruelty in our lives. We must first discover and then learn to take our stand on our real Self where we are inseparably one with all. Until this is done we can never really solve any of our problems but only convert them into a different set of problems. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, "... the radical defect of all our systems is their deficient development of just that which society has most neglected, the spiritual element, the soul in man which is his true being. Even to have a healthy body, a strong vitality and an active and clarified mind and a field for their action and enjoyment, carries man no more than a certain distance; afterwards he flags and tires for want of a real selffinding, a satisfying aim for his action and progress. These three things do not make the sum of a complete manhood; they are means to an ulterior end and cannot be made for ever an aim in themselves. Add a rich emotional life governed by a well-ordered ethical standard, and still there is the savour of something left out, some supreme good which these things mean, but do not in themselves arrive at, do not discover till they go beyond themselves. Add a religious system and a widespread spirit of belief and piety, and still you have not found the means of social salvation. All these things human society has developed, but none of them has saved it from disillusionment, weariness and decay. The ancient intellectual cultures of Europe ended in disruptive doubt and sceptical impotence, the pieties of Asia in stagnation and decline. Modern society has discovered a new principle of survival, progress, but the aim of that progress it has never discovered, — unless the aim is always more knowledge, more equipment, convenience and comfort, more enjoyment, a greater and still greater complexity of the social economy, a

more and more cumbrously opulent life. But these things must lead in the end where the old led, for they are only the same thing on a larger scale; they lead in a circle, that is to say, nowhere: they do not escape from the cycle of birth, growth, decay and death, they do not really find the secret of self-prolongation by constant self-renewal which is the principle of immortality, but only seem for a moment to find it by the illusion of a series of experiments each of which ends in disappointment. That so far has been the nature of modern progress. Only in its new turn inwards, towards a greater subjectivity now only beginning, is there a better hope; for by that turning it may discover that the real truth of man is to be found in his soul.”⁶

The upshot of all this is that **we have been trying to solve our problems from a centre of focus other than the one to which they belong. This insolubility of our problems is a grace in disguise because humanity in its present state, especially in its surface physical nature, is very crude and will not make the necessary effort for self-discovery in any other way. “Wherefore God hammers so fiercely at his world, tramples and kneads it like dough, casts it so often into the blood-bath and the red hell-heat of the furnace? Because humanity in the mass is still a hard, crude and vile ore which will not otherwise be smelted and shaped: as is his material, so is his method. Let it help to transmute itself into nobler and purer metal, his ways with it will be gentler and sweeter, much loftier and fairer its uses.”**⁷

References:

1. Complete works of Sri Aurobindo 25, page 79-81
2. Complete works of Sri Aurobindo 13, page 509-10
3. Collected works of the Mother 12, page 353-54
4. Complete works of Sri Aurobindo 12, page 468
5. Complete works of Sri Aurobindo 22, page 1058-59
6. Complete works of Sri Aurobindo 25, page 224
7. Complete works of Sri Aurobindo 13, page 210

HISTORY OF INDIA – THE VEDIC AGE

INTRODUCTION

History is commonly understood as “the study of man’s dealings with other men and the adjustments of working relations between human groups”¹. It may also be viewed as “the discipline that studies the chronological record of events (as affecting a nation or people), based on a critical examination of source materials and usually presenting an explanation of their causes”.² Can we really confine the meaning of history to such narrow definitions or is there another broader and deeper way of looking at it? Yes, history can be viewed in a much deeper and broader way than as a set of straight narrations of events which occurred during a course of time. The modern as well as the traditional historians dwell mostly on the outer happenings and neglect almost completely the psychological elements – the base on which the history of a nation should be built and studied. The outer events and facts have their own place in history, but they should not be taken as all important and sufficient in themselves or even as the most important. This is the great mistake that most historians invariably make. They focus mainly on the outer facts and ignore or just give a secondary importance to the psychological element. This is because, as Sri Aurobindo says, “Modern Science, obsessed with the greatness of its physical discoveries and the idea of the sole existence of Matter, has long attempted to base upon physical data even its study of Soul and Mind and of those workings of Nature in man and animal in which a knowledge of psychology is as important as any of the physical sciences. Its very psychology founded itself upon physiology and the scrutiny of the brain and nervous system. It is not surprising therefore that in history and sociology attention should have been concentrated on the external data, laws, institutions, rites, customs, economic factors and developments, while the deeper psychological elements so important in the activities of a mental, emotional, ideative being like man have been very much neglected. This kind of science would explain history and social development as much as possible by economic necessity or motive, – by economy understood in its widest sense. There are even historians who deny or put aside as of a very

subsidiary importance the working of the idea and the influence of the thinker in the development of human institutions.”³

Such a tendency of materialistic historians to simplify and reduce the problem to simple material formulas is also due to the fact that “The Surfaces of life are easy to understand; their laws, characteristic movements, practical utilities are ready to our hand and we can seize on them and turn them to account with a sufficient facility and rapidity. But they do not carry us very far. They suffice for an active superficial life from day to day, but they do not solve the great problems of existence. On the other hand, the knowledge of life’s profundities, its potent secrets, its great, hidden, all-determining laws is exceedingly difficult to us. We have found no plummet that can fathom these depths; they seem to us a vague, indeterminate movement, a profound obscurity from which the mind recoils willingly to play with the fret and foam and facile radiances of the surface. Yet it is these depths and their unseen forces that we ought to know if we would understand existence; on the surface we get only Nature’s secondary rules and practical bye-laws which help us to tide over the difficulties of the moment and to organise empirically without understanding them her continual transitions.

Nothing is more obscure to humanity or less seized by its understanding, whether in the power that moves it or the sense of the aim towards which it moves, than its own communal and collective life. Sociology does not help us, for it only gives us the general story of the past and the external conditions under which communities have survived. History teaches us nothing; it is a confused torrent of events and personalities or a kaleidoscope of changing institutions. We do not seize the real sense of all this change and this continual streaming forward of human life in the channels of Time. What we do seize are current or recurrent phenomena, facile generalisations, partial ideas. We talk of democracy, aristocracy and autocracy, collectivism and individualism, imperialism and nationalism, the State and the commune, capitalism and labour; we advance hasty generalisations and make absolute systems which are positively announced today only to be abandoned perforce tomorrow; we espouse causes and ardent enthusiasms whose triumph turns to an early disillusionment and then forsake them for others, perhaps for those that we have taken so much trouble to destroy. For a whole century mankind thirsts

and battles after liberty and earns it with a bitter expense of toil, tears and blood; the century that enjoys without having fought for it turns away as from a puerile illusion and is ready to renounce the depreciated gain as the price of some new good. And all this happens because our whole thought and action with regard to our collective life is shallow and empirical; it does not seek for, it does not base itself on a firm, profound and complete knowledge. The moral is not the vanity of human life, of its ardours and enthusiasms and of the ideals it pursues, but the necessity of a wiser, larger, more patient search after its true law and aim. Today the ideal of human unity is more or less vaguely making its way to the front of our consciousness. The emergence of an ideal in human thought is always the sign of an intention in Nature, but not always of an intention to accomplish; sometimes it indicates only an attempt which is predestined to temporary failure. For Nature is slow and patient in her methods. She takes up ideas and half carries them out, then drops them by the wayside to resume them in some future era with a better combination. She tempts humanity, her thinking instrument, and tests how far it is ready for the harmony she has imagined; she allows and incites man to attempt and fail, so that he may learn and succeed better another time. Still the ideal, having once made its way to the front of thought, must certainly be attempted, and this ideal of human unity is likely to figure largely among the determining forces of the future; for the intellectual and material circumstances of the age have prepared and almost impose it, especially the scientific discoveries which have made our earth so small that its vastest kingdoms seem now no more than the provinces of a single country.”⁴

We approach the history of the Vedic Age for a profound understanding of the true law and aim of the individual and the collective existence.

(I) THE TRUE LAW AND AIM OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COLLECTIVE EXISTENCE

It would seem safe to assume that all individuals and collectivities, knowingly or unknowingly, strive after their greatest possible fulfilment. How successful they will be in this striving depends critically on the depth of

their perception and understanding of the true law and aim of the individual and the collective existence. Therefore, all human pursuits undertaken for the sake of a greater knowledge and awareness of themselves and their surroundings must give utmost importance to such an understanding. The study of history must also have this as its most important aim.

The lines on which one's search for the true law and aim of human existence will be pursued will depend to a large extent on the view one takes of what constitutes a human being and his fulfilment. All past human approaches to this problem can be broadly grouped under the following three headings:

- (1) The Materialistic View or Approach
- (2) The Traditional Ascetic Approach
- (3) The Integral Spiritual Approach

(i) *The Materialistic View or Approach*

The human individual is a complex being – composed of many apparently contradictory elements and planes of being. According to the traditional Indian view, man is a soul enclosed into five sheaths – Annamaya (physical), Pranamaya (vital), Manomaya (mental), Vigyanmaya (supramental) and Anandmaya (blissful). These five sheaths enable him to live on five corresponding planes. The physical, the vital and the mental sheaths are generally called the lower sheaths. The other two are called the higher sheaths which although they co-exist with the lower sheaths and are a part of the complete system, but, not being well formed in human beings, are superconscious to them.

Therefore, to an ordinary consciousness, man is constituted only by the three lower sheaths which are the only ones fairly well formed in him. The materialist does not admit the reality of the soul and to him man is constituted solely by his physical, vital (life) and mental sheaths. He accepts only the scientific account of physical development of things in matter and the law of development of life and mind on the basis of matter. To him matter is the only substance and the fundamental reality. He affirms that the

physical senses are the sole means of knowledge. In this view the sole source of knowledge is the mind which is critically dependent on the proper functioning of the human brain – a fine flower of the material evolution.

The materialist gives utmost importance to the preservation and maintenance of the material body and the satisfaction of its animal appetites and only a secondary importance to the satisfaction of man's two higher sheaths – the vital and the mental. The organisation of a materialistic society is such that all the attainments of man's higher parts are put – overwhelmingly – at the service of his physical being constituted by the material body, the physical vital and the physical mind. In such a view of the law and aim of human existence the efficiency of a collective existence is judged by its capacity to provide for the greatest possible fulfillment – in this limited sense – of the individuals constituting it.

A historian who looks at history from this point of view will try to judge past cultures and civilizations on the basis of their achievements in the outer fields – the ones alone that he is able to perceive and observe in the historical records. For what we get from history depends entirely on how we look at it and what we are looking for. So, when one looks at history from this point of view, one discovers, mostly the external material and social and political dimensions of human life and the degree to which it has been able to make advancements in science and technology, art and craft, literature, philosophy and ethics. When a historian subscribes to – as most modern historians do – this view of things, he is only superficially – if at all – able to look at the ideas or psychological motives behind these endeavours. Anything deeper – the deeper religious or spiritual motives – would entirely escape his notice, for, to this view of life, man is always seeking solely for some sort of fulfillment and satisfaction of his outer being and his history is the account of his efforts in this direction.

(ii) The Traditional Ascetic View

This view starts from the other end of the spectrum. As the materialistic point of view insists on matter as the sole reality, the traditional ascetic view insists on the pure spirit or soul as the sole reality – the only thing free from

death, disease and ignorance. This view takes man beyond the confinements of the outer fulfillment to something greater and vaster. It perceives that there is a greater thing, the inmost or the real being – not this life, mind and body but the divinity within – the Spirit and these other things are only veils of this true thing and are in essence only a maya i.e. without any substantial reality. The supreme purpose of life is to escape from the bewilderment and illusion of outer life by identifying with this supreme truth of one's being. This temporal world in this view is only a frame for experience and the senses the instruments of experience. To pursue after the Spirit is the sole thing necessary because that alone would enable man to finally get out from this world of maya and dualities and their accompanying suffering into some ineffable reality and bliss of the Spirit.

When viewing history from this perspective one would be interested only in finding and studying the records of the heroic deeds and the ways and disciplines undertaken by the shining individuals of the race in their pursuit of this ascetic spiritual ideal. Like the materialist view this view will also limit history to an essential but a very narrow ambit of man's life.

(iii) *The Integral Spiritual Approach*

In this approach the Spirit is not denied expression in the physical life and man is entitled to proceed towards the leading of a full life: by which is meant, obviously, not a life of blind subjection to the animal appetites of the physical being, but a life dedicated to the completest expression of the Spirit through all the three lower sheaths – the physical, the vital and the mental – which constitute almost entirely his existence for the material man. According to Sri Aurobindo the Vedic Age was characterized by the predominance of this approach which continued to dominate the Indian view of human life until the coming of the Buddha and Shankara. In spite of the huge ascetic spiritual shadow cast by these two towering personalities, it has always continued as an independent undercurrent through all the ups and downs of the history of the Indian spiritual culture.

In our times this approach has found the most powerful and completest expression and support in the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

and a living expression in the practice of their system of yoga, called the Integral Yoga. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have added some great new vistas – the inevitability of the supramental manifestation and the establishment of the divine life upon earth – and have brought this approach to the forefront of the consciousness of the human elite. This approach harmonises the materialistic and the ascetic approaches by neglecting neither the Spirit nor the life in matter. It aims at the perfection of life in matter by the power of the Spirit culminating into the formula of a divine life in a divine body – a body no longer subject to death, disease and ignorance and therefore fit to be the material envelope of the Supramental Consciousness. In this view, “A spiritual evolution, an evolution of consciousness in Matter in a constant developing self-formation till the form can reveal the indwelling spirit, is . . . the keynote, the central significant motive of the terrestrial existence. This significance is concealed at the outset by the involution of the Spirit, the Divine Reality, in a dense material Inconscience; a veil of Inconscience, a veil of insensibility of Matter hides the universal Consciousness-Force which works within it, so that the Energy, which is the first form the Force of creation assumes in the physical universe, appears to be itself inconscient and yet does the works of a vast occult Intelligence. The obscure mysterious creatrix ends indeed by delivering the secret consciousness out of its thick and tenebrous prison; but she delivers it slowly, little by little, in minute infinitesimal drops, in thin jets, in small vibrant concretions of energy and substance, of life, of mind, as if that were all she could get out through the crass obstacle, the dull reluctant medium of an inconscient stuff of existence. At first she houses herself in forms of Matter which appear to be altogether unconscious, then struggles towards mentality in the guise of living Matter and attains to it imperfectly in the conscious animal. This consciousness is at first rudimentary, mostly a half subconscious or just conscious instinct; it develops slowly till in more organised forms of living Matter it reaches its climax of intelligence and exceeds itself in Man, the thinking animal who develops into the reasoning mental being but carries along with him even at his highest elevation the mould of original animality, the dead weight of subconsciousness of body, the downward pull of gravitation towards the original Inertia and Nescience, the control of an inconscient material Nature over his conscious evolution,

its power for limitation, its law of difficult development, its immense force for retardation and frustration. This control by the original Inconscience over the consciousness emerging from it takes the general shape of a mentality struggling towards knowledge but itself, in what seems to be its fundamental nature, an Ignorance. Thus hampered and burdened, mental man has still to evolve out of himself the fully conscious being, a divine manhood or a spiritual and supramental supermanhood which shall be the next product of the evolution. That transition will mark the passage from the evolution in the Ignorance to a greater evolution in the Knowledge, founded and proceeding in the light of the Superconscious and no longer in the darkness of the Ignorance and Inconscience.”⁵

When we view the present condition of humanity in this light it is apparent that, “At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny; for a stage has been reached in which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way. A structure of the external life has been raised up by man’s ever-active mind and life-will, a structure of an unmanageable hugeness and complexity, for the service of his mental, vital, physical claims and urges, a complex political, social, administrative, economic, cultural machinery, an organised collective means for his intellectual, sensational, aesthetic and material satisfaction. Man has created a system of civilisation which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilise and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites. For no greater seeing mind, no intuitive soul of knowledge has yet come to his surface of consciousness which could make this basic fullness of life a condition for the free growth of something that exceeded it. This new fullness of the means of life might be, by its power for a release from the incessant unsatisfied stress of his economic and physical needs, an opportunity for the full pursuit of other and greater aims surpassing the material existence, for the discovery of a higher truth and good and beauty, for the discovery of a greater and diviner spirit which would intervene and use life for a higher perfection of the being; but it is being used instead for the multiplication of new wants and an aggressive expansion

of the collective ego. At the same time Science has put at his disposal many potencies of the universal Force and has made the life of humanity materially one; but what uses this universal Force is a little human individual or communal ego with nothing universal in its light of knowledge or its movements, no inner sense or power which would create in this physical drawing together of the human world a true life unity, a mental unity or a spiritual oneness. All that is there is a chaos of clashing mental ideas, urges of individual and collective physical want and need, vital claims and desires, impulses of an ignorant life-push, hungers and calls for life satisfaction of individuals, classes, nations, a rich fungus of political and social and economic nostrums and notions, a hustling medley of slogans and panaceas for which men are ready to oppress and be oppressed, to kill and be killed, to impose them somehow or other by the immense and too formidable means placed at his disposal, in the belief that this is his way out to something ideal. The evolution of human mind and life must necessarily lead towards an increasing universality; but on a basis of ego and segmenting and dividing mind this opening to the universal can only create a vast pullulation of unaccorded ideas and impulses, a surge of enormous powers and desires, a chaotic mass of unassimilated and intermixed mental, vital and physical material of a larger existence which, because it is not taken up by a creative harmonising light of the spirit, must welter in a universalised confusion and discord out of which it is impossible to build a greater harmonic life. Man has harmonised life in the past by organised ideation and limitation; he has created societies based on fixed ideas or fixed customs, a fixed cultural system or an organic life-system, each with its own order; the throwing of all these into the melting pot of a more and more intermingling life and a pouring in of ever new ideas and motives and facts and possibilities call for a new, a greater consciousness to meet and master the increasing potentialities of existence and harmonise them. Reason and Science can only help by standardising, by fixing everything into an artificially arranged and mechanised unity of material life. A greater whole-being, whole-knowledge, whole-power is needed to weld all into a greater unity of whole-life.

A life of unity, mutuality and harmony born of a deeper and wider truth of our being is the only truth of life that can successfully replace

the imperfect mental constructions of the past which were a combination of association and regulated conflict, an accommodation of egos and interests grouped or dovetailed into each other to form a society, a consolidation by common general life-motives, a unification by need and the pressure of struggle with outside forces. It is such a change and such a reshaping of life for which humanity is blindly beginning to seek, now more and more with a sense that its very existence depends upon finding the way. The evolution of mind working upon life has developed an organisation of the activity of mind and use of Matter which can no longer be supported by human capacity without an inner change.”⁶

An inner change can be brought about only by the development of that “...which society has most neglected, the spiritual element, the soul in man which is his true being. Even to have a healthy body, a strong vitality and an active and clarified mind and a field for their action and enjoyment, carries man no more than a certain distance; afterwards he flags and tires for want of a real self-finding, a satisfying aim for his action and progress. These three things do not make the sum of a complete manhood; they are means to an ulterior end and cannot be made for ever an aim in themselves. Add a rich emotional life governed by a well-ordered ethical standard, and still there is the savour of something left out, some supreme good which these things mean, but do not in themselves arrive at, do not discover till they go beyond themselves. Add a religious system and a widespread spirit of belief and piety, and still you have not found the means of social salvation. All these things human society has developed, but none of them has saved it from disillusionment, weariness and decay. The ancient intellectual cultures of Europe ended in disruptive doubt and sceptical impotence, the pieties of Asia in stagnation and decline.”⁷

The human civilization in its chequered evolution through the ages has never really been conscious of its true destiny – an ascension to a divine life in a divine body. After the Vedic age, the mind of the race has wavered fundamentally between the two extreme views of existence; what Sri Aurobindo has termed as the two negations: (i) the materialist’s denial of the spirit and, (ii) the ascetic’s refusal of life in matter.

“In Europe and in India, respectively, the negation of the materialist and the refusal of the ascetic have sought to assert themselves as the sole

truth and to dominate the conception of Life. In India, if the result has been a great heaping up of the treasures of the Spirit, – or of some of them, – it has also been a great bankruptcy of Life; in Europe, the fullness of riches and the triumphant mastery of this world's powers and possessions have progressed towards an equal bankruptcy in the things of the Spirit. Nor has the intellect, which sought the solution of all problems in the one term of Matter, found satisfaction in the answer that it has received.”⁸

“The salvation of the human race lies in a more sane and integral development of the possibilities of mankind in the individual and in the community. The safety of Europe has to be sought in the recognition of the spiritual aim of human existence, otherwise she will be crushed by the weight of her own unillumined knowledge and soulless organisation. The safety of Asia lies in the recognition of the material mould and mental conditions in which that aim has to be worked out, otherwise she will sink deeper into the slough of despond of a mental and physical incompetence to deal with the facts of life and the shocks of a rapidly changing movement. It is not any exchange of forms that is required, but an interchange of regenerating impulses and a happy fusion and harmonising.”⁹

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have given humanity the integral spiritual ideal which harmonises East and West by rising above the two negations. It aims at the perfection of life in matter by the power of the Spirit – the essence of the whole striving of the Vedic seers which, though concealed deliberately, can be discovered with its unsurpassably rich, deep, varied and high expression in the Veda by anyone who approaches it with the right spirit and a background of a vast and high spiritual knowledge and experience. According to the Veda the only way out for man – the one and the only thing that can truly lift him beyond himself* – is to discover his soul and its soul force and instrumentation and replace by it both the

*Only the Supermind can do it. According to Sri Aurobindo, the idea of Supermind is to be found only in its principle in the Rig Veda and in its seed form in the Upanishads and is absent in the later Hindu tradition. The Vedic seers missed the secret of the descent of the Supramental Truth Consciousness in the terrestrial nature and thereby the secret of the physical immortality and the formula of a divine life upon the earth.

mechanization of mind and the ignorance and disorder of his life-nature.

To approach history in the light of the integral spiritual ideal one needs to go behind appearances and look for the progressive manifestation of the spirit in the terrestrial nature which was also the essential preoccupation of the Veda. We shall attempt to study the Veda and the history of the Vedic Age in the light of this approach because we feel that this alone is really suited for this difficult task.

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We need faith above all things, faith in ourselves, faith in the nation, faith in India's destiny. A dozen men rendered invincible by a strong faith in their future, have in other times, spread the contagion of nationalism to the remotest corner of vast countries.

- Sri Aurobindo

(Complete works of Sri Aurobindo 06, p. 348)
