

— The — Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

December 2015



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

– The Mother

Year 6

Issue 9

The Resurgent India English monthly published and printed by
Smt. Suman Sharma on behalf of The Resurgent India Trust
Published at C/o J.N. Socketed Cement Pipes Pvt. Ltd., Village
Bhamraula Post Bagwara, Kichha Road, Rudrapur (U.S Nagar)
email: sadlecjnn@gmail.com, info@resurgentindia.org, URL :
www.resurgentindia.org

Printed at : Priyanka Printing Press, Hotel Krish Building, Janta
Inter College Road, Udham Nagar, Rudrapur, Uttarakhand

Editor : Ms. Garima Sharma, B-45, Batra Colony, Village Bharatpur,
P.O. Kaushal Ganj, Bilaspur Distt. Rampur (U.P)

THE RESURGENT INDIA

A Monthly National Review

December 2015



SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella

Common name: Indian blanket, Blanket flower, Fire-wheels

Year 6

Issue 9

CONTENTS

The Working of the Commercial and Utilitarian Spirit and its Possible Culmination..... 6

- A. The Hidden Spring 7
- B. Some Salient Features of the Process of Progression
of the Utilitarian Spirit and its Culmination 7
- C. The Only Way Out 12

History of India – The Vedic Age (15) 15

- VIII. The Secret of the Veda 15
 - C. Sri Aurobindo's Discovery of the Secret
of the Veda 15
 - D. Why the Secret of the Veda, Even when It Has
Been Unveiled, Remains Still a Secret 24

The Greatness of India and Its Culture (14) 26

- 2. Indian Civilisation and Culture 26
 - IV. The Greatest Accomplishment of Indian Culture
– the Web of the Sanatana Dharma 26
 - G. The Spirit and Forms of Indian Religion and
Spiritual Culture 26
 - (ii) *The Post-Vedic Age* 26
 - (iii) *The Purano-Tantric Stage* 29
 - (iv) *The Third and the Last Stage* 32

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)

THE WORKING OF THE COMMERCIAL AND UTILITARIAN SPIRIT AND ITS POSSIBLE CULMINATION

Things are much worse today than when the Mother said, "The latest scientific discoveries, applied to life, have put within the reach of everyone all kinds of things which formerly were reserved only for the intellectual and artistic elite; and to justify their effort and profit by their work, they have made things which can sell most, that is, the lowest, most ordinary, most vulgar things, the easiest to understand because they require no effort and no education. And the whole world is drowned under these things, to such an extent that when there's someone who has written a good book or a fine play, there is no longer any place for him anywhere, because the whole place has been taken up by these things.

Naturally there are sensible people who try to react; but it is very difficult. First of all the commercial mentality should be driven out from the world. This will take some time.... there is yet the golden calf, there, reigning over the world; before it is pulled down some time will yet go by, I am afraid. This has so perverted men's mind, that it is for them the criterion. You see, in America when someone is spoken about, it is said: "He, oh, he is worth a million dollars!" This indeed is the greatest compliment one can pay. And it is this: someone asks, "Do you know this person? What is he worth?" – "He is worth a hundred thousand dollars", "He is worth five hundred dollars." So this means that he has a position which brings him this. "Is he intelligent, is he stupid? Is he..." This is not at all important. "Is he a good man or a bad one?" That makes no difference at all! "Is he a rich man or a poor one?" If he is rich, ah, ah! "I would like to know him very much! If he is poor, I have nothing to do with him." There! Naturally America is a young country, so its ways are those of a child, but of a fairly ill-bred child. But the older countries have become too old and can no longer react, they shake their heads and wonder if after all this youth is not right. Everything is like that. **The world is very ill.**¹

A. THE HIDDEN SPRING

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have repeatedly told us that in our surface human nature we are usually the unconscious slaves of many undivine and anti-divine powers of the vital and mental worlds whose very purpose is to block the descent of Divine Love, Light and Force so that they can continue to keep this evolving earth-nature subject to their yoke of falsehood, suffering and death. A person or a society which blindly pursues – as we have been doing ever since we have been in a position of doing so – a surface vital-mental objective comes increasingly under the influence of these powers with predictable consequences. This has always been well understood and recognized in India, but under the influence of Western materialistic and utilitarian spirit we have nationally forgotten it and as a result have gotten ourselves into the present precarious and dangerous situation. **The hostile powers not only invade and try to bring under their sway the life of the individuals but also the psychological infrastructure of the collectivity which under such an influence progressively loses its capacity to distinguish between right and wrong or true and false.** A successful possession of the collective infrastructure makes them virtually irresistible for individuals – even for such individuals who have a developed inner being and who, in a normal collective atmosphere, would have been successful in countering the evil influence of these beings to a large extent. Fear and Desire are the two powerful levers that the hostile powers use to take increasing possession of individuals in a utilitarian society.

B. SOME SALIENT FEATURES OF THE PROCESS OF PROGRESSION OF THE UTILITARIAN SPIRIT AND ITS CULMINATION

“System, organisation, machinery have attained their perfection. Bondage has been carried to its highest expression, and from a passion for organising external liberty Europe is slaying her spiritual freedom. When the inner freedom is gone, the external liberty will follow it, and a social tyranny more terrible, inquisitorial and

relentless than any that caste ever organised in India, will take its place. The process has already begun. The shell of external liberty remains, the core is already being eaten away. Because he is still free to gratify his senses and enjoy himself, the European thinks himself free. He does not know what teeth are gnawing into the heart of his liberty.”²

The Nature of the hostile vital powers is such that they are never satisfied – theirs is an insatiable thirst, it is the distorted reflection of the hunger of the Infinite. This is the reason why the human vital afflictions like greed and lust resulting from the action of these powers have a similar character. The utilitarian or the commercial spirit (a narrower form limited to the field of finance and money) which is a powerful and willing instrument in the hands of the hostile powers is never at rest. If left to itself – and it is a very big “if” because there are divine powers in the depths of our being who counter it and keep humanity from going to perdition – it will ever progress towards an increasing possession – approaching ever deeper and wider levels – of the being of whatever comes under its evil influence. **In appearance the action of the utilitarian spirit is like that of a canker which leaves the outside appearance of a fruit practically unscathed even while eating the core. In reality the action of this spirit is much more like the rust which not only spreads or expands laterally but also digs into ever deeper and deeper layers of the metal and stops only when it has turned it to dust.** All this becomes very clear when we take practical examples of its twofold action in individuals and collectivities.

(a). At present **the famous dictum “a bad coin drives the good coin out of circulation” is becoming true in practically all walks of life due to the relentless action of the utilitarian spirit. More and more individuals are increasingly finding that the situation in their life and the field of work has become such that they must consent to the use of more and more unethical and degrading means to succeed or even to survive.** For example, let us assume that A and B are two competitors in a business and A

resorts to the practice of avoiding paying of government taxes (whenever he can get away with it) and starts selling his articles a little cheaper. Even if B is a man of scruples, when he finds it increasingly difficult to stay in business he copies A. Now, to do better A decides to undercut his competitor by taking out of the product, in quality and substance, all that could be taken out 'safely' – without affecting the appearance, i.e. without the risk of the consumer finding out. This lowers the costs and enables A to further reduce his price. Now B must do something similar or if through his experience of so called 'realities of life', he gets exceedingly groomed in the commercial spirit he may even do better and discover novel ways of cheating customers and undercutting his competitors. Thus the disease percolates to deeper and deeper levels. Even people who begin with good intentions in any business or profession are either thrown out or begin sinking to ever lower levels in ethics and morality. At present things have reached such disgustingly low levels that one hears of big drug companies producing and having ready large stock of necessary medicine for containing an epidemic before they secretly disperse the microbes that would spread it. Aren't we truly getting ready to destroy each other?

(b). The utilitarian spirit not only digs deeper, it also expands laterally and quickly spreads and has not remained confined to the area of business and finance. **It has already made deep inroads in the area of services that practically must remain – as they traditionally have been – free from the commercial spirit if they are at all going to be able to perform their sacred task. Education, health and medicine, justice and not even philanthropy and religion are any longer immune from the corrosive action of this rust of the human soul. Politics and Government has become so thoroughly contaminated with this spirit that modern politician and leaders have only a one point program – to somehow or anyhow acquire power and to keep it at any cost.** People have become so cynical that they cannot believe that a person in politics could be really honest even though what they call honest is far from the way honesty has traditionally been understood. So low have

become the standards of honesty in public life that a politician manipulates his office (or status) and uses it exclusively for the sole object of staying in power, but, if he refrains from indulging in glaring financial irregularities for pecuniary gain, he will easily pass the test of public ethics and will be considered honest. **In all the areas where the utilitarian octopus spreads its tentacles, it starts digging deeper and deeper and consequently more and more ingenious discoveries are made in ways to cheat others for one's personal gain.** Close family ties and intimate personal relations have so far remained largely free from the grosser forms of this commercialism because India has strong family ties and a spiritual tradition. However, a turn towards it has already been made – particularly in the urban areas – and it may not be too long before it spreads and India begins to catch up with the Western gospel of each man for himself.

(c). All this is frightening enough but actually things are much more serious and dangerous. **Given the deep permeation of the hostile powers in the collective psychology, it is not surprising that, even in the presence of such imminent danger, most people are so oblivious that no large scale collective action to tackle the problem has yet been organized anywhere.** The surface reason or reasoning that may be coming in the way of any organized action may perhaps be based on some popular but false notions about the true nature, power and future role of science and its potent discoveries and their real value for the race.

In the face of an unrepentant and triumphant march of western Science and its dazzling success in almost every field during the last two centuries, the whole of the human race has become so enamoured of the power of Science and its machinery to solve all its pressing problems – even those pertaining to the perfection of man and his society – that not only is it lax in addressing serious outer ecological and environmental problems looming large, but is even neglecting the serious inner psychological and moral problems which are assuming such alarming proportions

– global terrorism is only an outer symptom of these – as to pose a serious threat to its very existence. **Our eyes are turned outside while the root of all the problems lies in our own inner constitution.**

Humanity at large has to understand and realize keenly that what Science can do for it is very limited and even that does not come without a very heavy price to be paid in terms of the diminution of our inner peace and happiness. In the words of Sri Aurobindo, **“The utmost widening of a physical objective knowledge, even if it embrace the most distant solar systems and the deepest layers of the earth and sea and the most subtle powers of material substance and energy, is not the essential gain for us, not the one thing which it is most needful for us to acquire. That is why the gospel of materialism, in spite of the dazzling triumphs of physical Science, proves itself always in the end a vain and helpless creed, and that too is why physical Science itself with all its achievements, though it may accomplish comfort, can never achieve happiness and fullness of being for the human race. Our true happiness lies in the true growth of our whole being, in a victory throughout the total range of our existence, in mastery of the inner as well as and more than the outer, the hidden as well as the overt nature; our true completeness comes not by describing wider circles on the plane where we began, but by transcendence.”**³

Even in the traditional perception – which does not go anywhere near this deeper perception – Science has been known to be a double edged sword which may be used both to help and hurt. In the light of this, perhaps the most dangerous thing that is happening is that the rapid advances in Science and Technology are progressively putting ever more and more potent and dangerous new instruments in the hands of individuals and collectivities infested with the spirit of utilitarianism. The future is full of very grave dangers. Even as it is, these advancements have become an instrument in the hands of uncontrolled human greed which has led to a progressive and ruthless

exploitation of physical elements, flora and fauna and all forms of life on earth. There is another possibility that has recently arisen on the horizon – the possibility of manipulation of mighty cosmic level forces to man's advantage. And this is not the end; many more such things may in future confront the human midget who may end up causing irreparable damage to himself and to other life forms on the planet. **We hope that by the intervention of the divine Grace humanity will soon begin charting a different route without having to go through the experience of another round of devastating physical afflictions, because if things keep on moving as they are, human beings face the sure prospect of a devastation both at the physical and the psychological levels of their existence.**

C. THE ONLY WAY OUT

We must realise in our mind, heart and soul that **the modern ideal of progress and material prosperity, even when pursued efficiently, cannot lead us to a state basically different from the state of the modern developed societies which has nothing to recommend for itself.** Consider the loneliness and psychological and emotional deprivation of individuals resulting from an extreme concentration on one's physical being – even to the extent of the exclusion of one's nucleus family – and imagine the relentless suffering that comes one's way from the feeling of not being loved or wanted by anyone and from the psychological disorders resulting from this – so common in “developed” societies – and it would be obvious that, in this respect, India is still much better than the advanced societies it is foolishly aspiring to imitate. This will be a state, lower – in terms of individual happiness and fulfilment – than where we are even at present, because we have not yet gone whole hog in the material pit and we still inherently trust the power of the eternal Indian spirit to prevent that from ever happening in the future. We may not sink to the bottom but as long as we are shut up in our present narrow surface consciousness with its enormous concentration on material pleasures and comforts, the effective pursuit and attainment of any ideal state (worthy of its name) is not really possible for us. **The key to the whole**

problem lies, as India has always known, in a transition to a higher level of consciousness. For, at present level of consciousness, no matter how ingeniously and efficiently we organize our society, we cannot basically do too much better than the other materially advanced societies. In fact, this evolutionary world has been so planned as to have a built-in incentive for rising into ever higher and higher planes of consciousness, because the problem and difficulties at any level of consciousness – and they are different at different levels – are really solvable only at a higher level of consciousness.

We must turn to the Divine Magician for the attainment of a higher level of consciousness. “There is no fundamental significance in things if you miss the Divine Reality; for you remain embedded in a huge surface crust of manageable and utilizable appearance. It is the magic of the Magician you are trying to analyse, but only when you enter into the consciousness of the Magician himself can you begin to experience the true origination, significance and circles of the Lila. I say “begin” because the Divine Reality is not so simple that at the first touch you can know all of it or put it into a single formula; it is the Infinite and opens before you an infinite knowledge to which all Science put together is a bagatelle.”⁴

It is to the Divine Magician that India must turn to for a true resolution of all her problems. And, as Vedanta tells us, He is not far, He is our very own self – the highest truth of our being and nature in which we are inseparably one with all existence. **To aspire for the Divine is to aspire for the greatest possible perfection and fulfilment. “Whatever is man’s faith or sure Idea in him, that he becomes,”** says Lord Krishna in the Gita. Now, this is the sheer truth of the workings of this universe which is at the very foundation of all Yoga systems. Thus, if a person whole-heartedly aspires for the Divine with an unshakable faith, he is sure to realise his essential identity with Him and eventually have his whole nature transformed into the Divine Nature.

The Indian society can, therefore do nothing better than to

make the seeking, finding, and manifestation of the Divine on the part of its members as the first and the only aim of all its activities and endeavours. In the process it will tend to grow in knowledge, power and beauty and there will be an automatic dissolution of the problems that normally beset a society, including material deprivation and poverty. To make an effective start in this direction, "There must be a group forming a strong body of cohesive will with the spiritual knowledge to save India and the world. It is India that can bring Truth in the world. By manifestation of the Divine Will and Power alone, India can preach her message to the world and not by imitating the materialism of the West. By following the Divine Will India shall shine at the top of the spiritual mountain and show the way of Truth and organise world unity."⁵

All this is not to suggest that we should – even if we could, which is impossible – go back to the past forms of ancient Indian culture. That will be an unnatural imposition on the present time spirit. Rather, we should do as Sri Aurobindo suggested, "You need not come back to the old forms, but you can retain the spirit which might create its own new forms..."⁶

We call upon all our brothers and sisters, the world over, to make a start in this direction in their own way.

References:

1. **Collected Works of the Mother**, Vol.07, pp.311-12, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry
2. **Collected Works of the Mother**, Vol.01, p.547, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry
3. **Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo**, Vol.22, pp.757-58, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry
4. **Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library**, Vol.22, p.97, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry
5. **Collected Works of the Mother**, Vol.07, pp.286-87, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry
6. **India's Rebirth**, p. 176, Institute for Evolutionary Research, Paris & Mira Aditi, Mysore

HISTORY OF INDIA – THE VEDIC AGE (15)

VIII. THE SECRET OF THE VEDA

C. Sri Aurobindo's Discovery of the Secret of the Veda

“Like the majority of educated Indians I had passively accepted without examination, before myself reading the Veda, the conclusions of European Scholarship both as to the religious and as to the historical and ethnical sense of the ancient hymns. In consequence, following again the ordinary line taken by modernised Hindu opinion, I regarded the Upanishads as the most ancient source of Indian thought and religion, the true Veda, the first Book of Knowledge. The Rig Veda in the modern translations which were all I knew of this profound Scripture, represented for me an important document of our national history, but seemed of small value or importance for the history of thought or for a living spiritual experience.

My first contact with Vedic thought came indirectly while pursuing certain lines of self-development in the way of Indian Yoga, which, without my knowing it, were spontaneously converging towards the ancient and now unfrequented paths followed by our forefathers. At this time there began to arise in my mind an arrangement of symbolic names attached to certain psychological experiences which had begun to regularise themselves; and among them there came the figures of three female energies, Ila, Saraswati, Sarama, representing severally three out of the four faculties of the intuitive reason, – revelation, inspiration and intuition. Two of these names were not well known to me as names of Vedic goddesses, but were connected rather with the current Hindu religion or with old Puranic legend, Saraswati, goddess of learning and Ila, mother of the Lunar dynasty. But Sarama was familiar enough. I was unable, however, to establish any connection between the figure that rose in my mind and the Vedic hound of heaven, who was associated in my memory with the Argive Helen and

represented only an image of the physical Dawn entering in its pursuit of the vanished herds of Light into the cave of the Powers of darkness. When once the clue is found, the clue of the physical Light imaging the subjective, it is easy to see that the hound of heaven may be the intuition entering into the dark caverns of the subconscious mind to prepare the delivery and out-flashing of the bright illuminations of knowledge which have there been imprisoned. But the clue was wanting and I was obliged to suppose an identity of name without any identity of the symbol.

It was my stay in Southern India which first seriously turned my thoughts to the Veda. **Two observations that were forced on my mind, gave a serious shock to my second-hand belief in the racial division between Northern Aryans and Southern Dravidians.** The distinction had always rested for me on a supposed difference between the physical types of Aryan and Dravidian and a more definite incompatibility between the northern Sanskritic and the southern non-Sanskritic tongues. I knew indeed of the later theories which suppose that a single homogeneous race, Dravidian or Indo-Afghan, inhabits the Indian peninsula; but hitherto I had not attached much importance to these speculations. **I could not, however, be long in Southern India without being impressed by the general recurrence of northern or 'Aryan' types in the Tamil race.** Wherever I turned, I seemed to recognise with a startling distinctness, not only among the Brahmins but in all castes and classes, the old familiar faces, features, figures of my friends of Maharashtra, Gujerat, Hindustan, even, though this similarity was less widely spread, of my own province Bengal. The impression I received was as if an army of all the tribes of the North had descended on the South and submerged any previous populations that may have occupied it. A general impression of a Southern type survived, but it was impossible to fix it rigidly while studying the physiognomy of individuals. And in the end I could not but perceive that whatever admixtures might have taken place, whatever regional differences might have been evolved, **there remains, behind all variations,**

a unity of physical as well as of cultural type^a throughout India. For the rest, this is a conclusion to which ethnological speculation^b itself has an increasing tendency.

But what then of the sharp distinction between Aryan and Dravidian races created by the philologists? It disappears. If at all an Aryan invasion is admitted, we have either to suppose that it flooded India and determined the physical type of the people, with whatever modifications, or that it was the incursion of small bands of a less civilised race who melted away into the original population. We have then to suppose that entering a vast peninsula occupied by a civilised people, builders of great cities, extensive traders, not without mental and spiritual culture, they were yet able to impose on them their own language, religion, ideas and manners. Such a miracle would be just possible if the invaders possessed a very highly organised language, a greater force of creative mind and a more dynamic religious form and spirit.

And there was always the difference of language to support the theory of a meeting of races. But here also my preconceived ideas were disturbed and confounded. For on examining the vocables of the Tamil language, in appearance so foreign to the Sanskrit form and character, I yet found myself continually guided by words or by families of words supposed to be pure Tamil in establishing new relations between Sanskrit and its distant sister, Latin, and occasionally, between the Greek and the Sanskrit. Sometimes the Tamil vocable not only suggested the connection, but proved the missing link in a family of connected words. And it was through this Dravidian language that I came first to perceive what seems to me now the true law, origins and, as it were, the embryology of the

^a I prefer not to use the term race, for race is a thing much more obscure and difficult to determine than is usually imagined. In dealing with it the trenchant distinctions current in the popular mind are wholly out of place.

^b Always supposing that ethnological speculations have at all any validity. The only firm basis of ethnology is the theory of the hereditary invariability of the human skull which is now being challenged. If it disappears, the whole science disappears with it.

Aryan tongues. I was unable to pursue my examination far enough to establish any definite conclusion, but it certainly seems to me that **the original connection between the Dravidian and Aryan tongues was far closer and more extensive than is usually supposed** and the possibility suggests itself that they may even have been two divergent families derived from one lost primitive tongue. If so, the sole remaining evidence of an Aryan invasion of Dravidian India would be the indications to be found in the Vedic hymns.

It was, therefore, with a double interest that for the first time I took up the Veda in the original, though without any immediate intention of a close or serious study. **It did not take long to see that the Vedic indications of a racial division between Aryans and Dasyus and the identification of the latter with the indigenous Indians were of a far flimsier character than I had supposed.** But far more interesting to me was the discovery of a considerable body of profound psychological thought and experience lying neglected in these ancient hymns. And the importance of this element increased in my eyes when I found, first, that the mantras of the Veda illuminated with a clear and exact light psychological experiences of my own for which I had found no sufficient explanation either in European psychology or in the teachings of Yoga or of Vedanta, so far as I was acquainted with them, and, secondly, that they shed light on obscure passages and ideas of the Upanishads to which, previously, I could attach no exact meaning and gave at the same time a new sense to much in the Puranas.

I was helped in arriving at this result by my fortunate ignorance of the commentary of Sayana. For I was left free to attribute their natural psychological significance to many ordinary and current words of the Veda, such as *manas*, thought or understanding, *manas*, mind, *mati*, thought, feeling or mental state, *manas*, intellect, *ṛtam*, truth; to give their exact shades of sense to *kavi*, seer, *manas* thinker, *vipra*, *vipracit*, enlightened in mind, and a number of similar words; and to hazard a psychological sense, justified by more extensive

study, for words like *dakṣa* which for Sayana means strength and *ṛavaś* which he renders as wealth, food or fame. The psychological theory of the Veda rests upon our right to concede their natural significance to these vocables.

Sayana gives to the words *dhṛ*, *ṛtam*, etc., very variable significances. *Ṛtam*, which is almost the key-word of any psychological or spiritual interpretation, is rendered by him sometimes as 'truth', more often 'sacrifice', occasionally in the sense of water. The psychological interpretation gives it invariably the sense of Truth. *Dhṛ* is rendered by Sayana variously 'thought', 'prayer', 'action', 'food', etc. The psychological interpretation gives it consistently the sense of thought or understanding. And so with the other fixed terms of Veda. Moreover, Sayana's tendency, is to obliterate all fine shades and distinctions between words and to give them their vaguest general significance. All epithets conveying ideas of mental activity mean for him simply 'intelligent', all words suggesting various ideas of force, and the Veda overflows with them, are reduced to the broad idea of strength. I found myself on the contrary impressed by the great importance of fixing and preserving the right shade of meaning and precise association to be given to different words, however close they may be to each other in their general sense. I do not see indeed why we should suppose that the Vedic Rishis, unlike all other masters of poetic style, used words pell-mell and indiscriminately without feeling their just associations and giving them their right and exact force in the verbal combination.

By following this principle I found that without departing from the simple natural and straightforward sense of words and clauses an extraordinarily large body not only of separate verses but of entire passages came at once into evidence which entirely altered the whole character of the Veda. For this Scripture then appeared to have a constant vein of the richest gold of thought and spiritual experience running all through it and appearing sometimes in small streaks, sometimes in larger bands, in the majority of its hymns. Moreover, besides the words that in their plain and ordinary sense give at once

a wealth of psychological significance to their context, the Veda is full of others to which it is possible to give either an external and material or an internal and psychological value according to our conception of the general purport of Veda. For instance such words as *rāye*, *rayi*, *rāhas*, *ratna*, may mean either merely material prosperity and riches or internal felicity and plenitude applying itself equally to the subjective and the objective world; *dhana*, *vāja*, *poṭa* may mean either objective wealth, plenty and increase or all possessions internal or external, their plenitude and their growth in the life of the individual. *Rāye* is used in the Upanishads, in a quotation from the Rig Veda, to mean spiritual felicity; why should it be incapable of bearing that sense in the original text? *Vāja* occurs frequently in a context in which every other word has a psychological significance and the mention of physical plenty comes in with a violent jar of incoherency into the homogeneous totality of the thought. Commonsense, therefore, demands that the use of these words with a psychological import should be admitted in the Veda.

But if this is done consistently, not only whole verses and passages, but whole hymns assume at once the psychological complexion. On one condition this transformation is frequently complete, leaving no word or phrase unaffected, – the condition that **we should admit the symbolic character of the Vedic sacrifice.** We find in the Gita the word *yajña*, sacrifice, used in a symbolic sense for all action, whether internal or external, that is consecrated to the gods or to the Supreme. Was such symbolic use of the word born of a later philosophical intellectuality, or was it inherent in the Vedic idea of sacrifice? I found that in the Veda itself there were hymns in which the idea of the *yajña* or of the victim is openly symbolical, others in which the veil is quite transparent. The question then arose whether these were later compositions developing an incipient symbolism out of old superstitious practices or rather the occasional plainer statement of a sense which is in most hymns more or less carefully veiled by the figure. If there were no constant recurrence of psychological passages in the Veda, the former explanation would, no doubt, have to be accepted. But on the contrary

whole hymns took naturally a psychological sense proceeding with a perfect and luminous coherency from verse to verse, where the only points of obscurity were the mention of the sacrifice or of the offering or sometimes of the officiating priest, who might be either a man or a god. If these words could be interpreted symbolically, I found always that the progression of thought became more perfect, more luminous, more coherent and the sense of the hymn in its entirety was victoriously completed. I felt therefore justified by every canon of sound criticism in pursuing my hypothesis farther and including in it the symbolic sense of the Vedic ritual.

Nevertheless here intervenes the first real difficulty of the psychological interpretation. Hitherto I had been proceeding by a perfectly straightforward and natural method of interpretation based on the surface meaning of the words and sentences. Now I came to an element in which the surface meaning had, in a sense, to be overridden, and this is a process in which every critical and conscientious mind must find itself beset by continual scruples. Nor can one always be sure, even with the utmost care, of having hit on the right clue and the just interpretation.

The Vedic sacrifice consists of three features, – omitting for the moment the god and the mantra, – the persons who offer, the offering and the fruits of the offering. If the *yajña* is the action consecrated to the gods, I could not but take the *yajamāna*, the giver of the sacrifice, as the doer of the action. *Yajña* is works, internal or external, the *yajamāna* must be the soul or the personality as the doer. But there were also the officiating priests, *hotṛ*, *ṛvij*, *purohita*, *brahmā*, *adhvaryu* etc. What was their part in the symbolism? For if we once suppose a symbolic sense for the sacrifice, we must suppose also a symbolic value for each feature of the ceremony. **I found that the gods were continually spoken of as priests of the offering and in many passages it was undisguisedly a non-human power or energy which presided over the sacrifice. I perceived also that throughout Veda the elements of our personality are themselves continually personified.** I had only to apply this rule

inversely and to suppose that the person of the priest in the external figure represented in the internal activities figured a non-human power or energy or an element of our personality. It remained to fix the psychological sense of the different priestly offices. Here I found that the Veda itself presented a clue by its philological indications and insistences, such as the use of the word *purohita* in its separated form with the sense of the representative 'put in front' and a frequent reference to the god Agni who symbolises the divine Will or Force in humanity that takes up the action in all consecration of works.

The offerings were more difficult to understand. Even if the Soma-wine by the context in which it occurred, its use and effect and the philological indication of its synonyms, suggested its own interpretation, what could possibly be indicated by the 'ghritam', the clarified butter in the sacrifice? And yet the word as used in the Veda was constantly insisting on its own symbolical significance. What for instance could be made of clarified butter dropping from heaven or dripping from the horses of Indra or dripping from the mind? Obviously, this was grotesque nonsense, if the sense of *ghṛta* as clarified butter was anything more than a symbol used with great looseness, so that often the external sense was wholly or partly put aside in the mind of the thinker. It was possible of course to vary conveniently the sense of the words, to take *ghṛta* sometimes as butter and sometimes as water and *manas* sometimes as the mind, sometimes as food or a cake. But I found that *ghṛta* was constantly used in connection with the thought or the mind, that heaven in Veda was a symbol of the mind, that Indra represented the illuminated mentality and his two horses double energies of that mentality and even that the Veda sometimes speaks plainly of offering the intellect (*manom*) as purified *ghṛta* to the gods, *ghṛtaṁ na pṛtaṁ manom*.^a The word *ghṛta* counts also among its philological significances the sense of a rich or warm brightness. It was by this concurrence of indications that I felt justified in fixing a certain psychological significance for the figure of the clarified butter. And I found the

^a See Rig Veda I.110.6 and III.2.1. – Ed.

same rule and the same method applicable to other features of the sacrifice.

The fruits of the offering were in appearance purely material – cows, horses, gold, offspring, men, physical strength, victory in battle. Here the difficulty thickened. But I had already found that the Vedic cow was an exceedingly enigmatical animal and came from no earthly herd. The word *go* means both cow and light and in a number of passages evidently meant light even while putting forward the image of the cow. This is clear enough when we have to do with the cows of the sun – the Homeric kine of Helios – and the cows of the Dawn. Psychologically, the physical Light might well be used as a symbol of knowledge and especially of the divine knowledge. But how could this mere possibility be tested and established? I found that passages occurred in which all the surrounding context was psychological and only the image of the cow interfered with its obtrusive material suggestion. Indra is invoked as the maker of perfect forms to drink the wine of Soma; drinking he becomes full of ecstasy and a ‘giver of cows’; then we can attain to his most intimate or his most ultimate right thinkings, then we question him and his clear discernment brings us our highest good. It is obvious that in such a passage these cows cannot be material herds nor would the giving of physical Light carry any sense in the context. In one instance at least the psychological symbolism of the Vedic cow was established with certainty to my mind. I then applied it to other passages in which the word occurred and always I saw that it resulted in the best sense and the greatest possible coherency in the context.

The cow and horse, *go* and *āva*, are constantly associated. Usha, the Dawn, is described as *gomatāva*. Dawn gives to the sacrificer horses and cows. As applied to the physical dawn *gomatāva* means accompanied by or bringing the rays of light and is an image of the dawn of illumination in the human mind. Therefore *āva* also cannot refer merely to the physical steed; it must have a psychological significance as well. **A study of the Vedic horse led me to the conclusion that *go* and *āva* represent the two**

companion ideas of Light and Energy, Consciousness and Force, which to the Vedic and Vedantic mind were the double or twin aspect of all the activities of existence.

It was apparent, therefore, that the two chief fruits of the Vedic sacrifice, wealth of cows and wealth of horses, were symbolic of richness of mental illumination and abundance of vital energy. It followed that the other fruits continually associated with these two chief results of the Vedic karma must also be capable of a psychological significance. It remained only to fix their exact purport.”¹

According to Sri Aurobindo, gold is the concrete symbol of the higher light, the gold of the Truth. In certain passages of the Veda, offspring – *apatyam* – a son born to us in an image of some inner birth and men (*Vira*) – heros or servants – signify conquering energies. Similarly, wealth of various kinds – cows, horses, men, ratha, etc. – is “....no material wealth, it is something which Thought, the Thought embodied in the Mantra, can give and it is the result of the same Thought that nourishes our human things in the Immortals, in the Great Heavens. A process of divinisation, and of a bringing down of great and luminous riches, treasures won from the Gods by the innerwork of sacrifice, is hinted at in terms necessarily covert but still for one who knows how to read these secret words, *niy vac* *si*, sufficiently expressive, *kavaye nivacan*.”²

D. WHY THE SECRET OF THE VEDA, EVEN WHEN IT HAS BEEN UNVEILED, REMAINS STILL A SECRET

Even after a thorough study of Sri Aurobindo’s translation, analysis and interpretation of the Vedic hymns, one could expect only to intellectually understand their general purport and surface suggestions. As clearly stated by Sri Aurobindo, “More would be hardly possible. **To enter into the very heart of the mystic doctrine, we must ourselves have trod the ancient paths and renewed the lost discipline, the forgotten experience.** And which of us can hope to do that with any depth or living power? Who in this Age of Iron shall have

the strength to recover the light of the Forefathers or soar above the two enclosing firmaments of mind and body into their luminous empyrean of the infinite Truth? The Rishis sought to conceal their knowledge from the unfit, believing perhaps that the corruption of the best might lead to the worst and fearing to give the potent wine of the Soma to the child and the weakling. But whether their spirits still move among us looking for the rare Aryan soul in a mortality that is content to leave the radiant herds of the Sun for ever imprisoned in the darkling cave of the Lords of the sense-life or whether they await in their luminous world the hour when the Maruts shall again drive abroad and the Hound of Heaven shall once again speed down to us from beyond the rivers of Paradise and the seals of the heavenly waters shall be broken and the caverns shall be rent and the immortalising wine shall be pressed out in the body of man by the electric thunderstones, their secret remains safe to them. **Small is the chance that in an age which blinds our eyes with the transient glories of the outward life and deafens our ears with the victorious trumpets of a material and mechanical knowledge many shall cast more than the eye of an intellectual and imaginative curiosity on the passwords of their ancient discipline or seek to penetrate into the heart of their radiant mysteries. The secret of the Veda, even when it has been unveiled, remains still a secret.**"³

References:

1. **Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.15, pp.36-44, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry**
2. **Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.16, p.13, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry**
3. **Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.15, pp.368-69, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry**

THE GREATNESS OF INDIA AND ITS CULTURE (14)

2. INDIAN CIVILISATION AND CULTURE

IV. The Greatest Accomplishment of Indian Culture – the Web of the Sanatana Dharma

G. The Spirit and Forms of Indian Religion and Spiritual Culture

(ii) The Post-Vedic Age

“The second or post-Vedic age of Indian civilisation was distinguished by the rise of the great philosophies, by a copious, vivid, many-thoughted, many-sided epic literature, by the beginnings of art and science, by the evolution of a vigorous and complex society, by the formation of large kingdoms and empires, by manifold formative activities of all kinds and great systems of living and thinking. Here as elsewhere, in Greece, Rome, Persia, China, this was the age of a high outburst of the intelligence working upon life and the things of the mind to discover their reason and their right way and bring out a broad and noble fullness of human existence. But in India this effort never lost sight of the spiritual motive, never missed the touch of the religious sense. It was a birth time and youth of the seeking intellect and, as in Greece, philosophy was the main instrument by which it laboured to solve the problems of life and the world. Science too developed, but it came second only as an auxiliary power. It was through profound and subtle philosophies that the intellect of India attempted to analyse by the reason and logical faculty what had formerly been approached with a much more living force through intuition and the soul’s experience. But the philosophic mind started from the data these mightier powers had discovered and was faithful to its parent Light; it went back always in one form or another to the profound truths of the Upanishads which kept their place as the highest authority in these matters. There was a constant admission that spiritual experience is a greater thing and its light a truer if

more incalculable guide than the clarities of the reasoning intelligence.

The same governing force kept its hold on all the other activities of the Indian mind and Indian life. The epic literature is full almost to excess of a strong and free intellectual and ethical thinking; there is an incessant criticism of life by the intelligence and the ethical reason, an arresting curiosity and desire to fix the norm of truth in all possible fields. But in the background and coming constantly to the front there is too a constant religious sense and an implicit or avowed assent to the spiritual truths which remained the unshakable basis of the culture. These truths suffused with their higher light secular thought and action or stood above to remind them that they were only steps towards a goal. Art in India, contrary to a common idea, dwelt much upon life; but still its highest achievement was always in the field of the interpretation of the religio-philosophical mind and its whole tone was coloured by a suggestion of the spiritual and the infinite. Indian society developed with an unsurpassed organising ability, stable effectiveness, practical insight its communal coordination of the mundane life of interest and desire, *kāma, artha*; it governed always its action by a reference at every point to the moral and religious law, the Dharma: but it never lost sight of spiritual liberation as our highest point and the ultimate aim of the effort of Life. In later times when there was a still stronger secular tendency of intellectual culture, there came in an immense development of the mundane intelligence, an opulent political and social evolution, an emphatic stressing of aesthetic, sensuous and hedonistic experience. But this effort too always strove to keep itself within the ancient frame and not to lose the special stamp of the Indian cultural idea. The enlarged secular turn was compensated by a deepening of the intensities of psycho-religious experience. New religious or mystic forms and disciplines attempted to seize not only the soul and the intellect, but the emotions, the senses, the vital and the aesthetic nature of man and turn them into stuff of the spiritual life. And every excess of emphasis on the splendour and richness and power

and pleasures of life had its recoil and was balanced by a corresponding potent stress on spiritual asceticism as the higher way. The two trends, on one side an extreme of the richness of life experience, on the other an extreme and pure rigorous intensity of the spiritual life, accompanied each other; their interaction, whatever loss there might be of the earlier deep harmony and large synthesis, yet by their double pull preserved something still of the balance of Indian culture.

Indian religion followed this line of evolution and kept its inner continuity with its Vedic and Vedantic origins; but it changed entirely its mental contents and colour and its outward basis. It did not effectuate this change through any protestant revolt or revolution or with any idea of an iconoclastic reformation. A continuous development of its organic life took place, a natural transformation brought out latent motives or else gave to already established motive-ideas a more predominant place or effective form. At one time indeed it seemed as if a discontinuity and a sharp new beginning were needed and would take place. Buddhism seemed to reject all spiritual continuity with the Vedic religion. But this was after all less in reality than in appearance. The Buddhist ideal of Nirvana was no more than a sharply negative and exclusive statement of the highest Vedantic spiritual experience. The ethical system of the eightfold path taken as the way to release was an austere sublimation of the Vedic notion of the Right, Truth and Law followed as the way to immortality, *Ātasya panthā*. The strongest note of Mahayana Buddhism, its stress on universal compassion and fellow-feeling, was an ethical application of the spiritual unity which is the essential idea of Vedanta.* The most characteristic tenets of the new discipline, Nirvana and Karma, could have been supported from the utterances of the Brahmanas and Upanishads. Buddhism could easily have claimed for itself a Vedic origin and the claim would

* Buddha himself does not seem to have preached his tenets as a novel revolutionary creed, but as the old Aryan way, the true form of the eternal religion.

have been no less valid than the Vedic ascription of the Sankhya philosophy and discipline with which it had some points of intimate alliance. But what hurt Buddhism and determined in the end its rejection, was not its denial of a Vedic origin or authority, but the exclusive trenchancy of its intellectual, ethical and spiritual positions. A result of an intense stress of the union of logical reason with the spiritualised mind – for it was by an intense spiritual search supported on a clear and hard rational thinking that it was born as a separate religion, – its trenchant affirmations and still more exclusive negations could not be made sufficiently compatible with the native flexibility, many-sided susceptibility and rich synthetic turn of the Indian religious consciousness; it was a high creed but not plastic enough to hold the heart of the people. Indian religion absorbed all that it could of Buddhism, but rejected its exclusive positions and preserved the full line of its own continuity, casting back to the ancient Vedanta.”¹

(iii) The Purano-Tantric Stage

“This lasting line of change moved forward not by any destruction of principle, but by a gradual fading out of the prominent Vedic forms and the substitution of others. There was a transformation of symbol and ritual and ceremony or a substitution of new kindred figures, an emergence of things that are only hints in the original system, a development of novel idea-forms from the seed of the original thinking. And especially there was a farther widening and fathoming of psychic and spiritual experience. The Vedic gods rapidly lost their deep original significance. At first they kept their hold by their outer cosmic sense but were overshadowed by the great Trinity, Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva, and afterwards faded altogether. A new pantheon appeared which in its outward symbolic aspects expressed a deeper truth and larger range of religious experience, an intenser feeling, a vaster idea. The Vedic sacrifice persisted only in broken and lessening fragments. The house of Fire was replaced by the temple; the karmic ritual of sacrifice was transformed into the

devotional temple ritual; the vague and shifting mental images of the Vedic gods figured in the mantras yielded to more precise conceptual forms of the two great deities, Vishnu and Shiva, and of their Shaktis and their offshoots. These new concepts stabilised in physical images which were made the basis both for internal adoration and for the external worship which replaced sacrifice. The psychic and spiritual mystic endeavour which was the inner sense of the Vedic hymns, disappeared into the less intensely luminous but more wide and rich and complex psycho-spiritual inner life of Puranic and Tantric religion and Yoga.

The Purano-Tantric stage of the religion was once decried by European critics and Indian reformers as a base and ignorant degradation of an earlier and purer religion. It was rather an effort, successful in a great measure, to open the general mind of the people to a higher and deeper range of inner truth and experience and feeling. Much of the adverse criticism once heard proceeded from a total ignorance of the sense and intention of this worship. Much of this criticism has been uselessly concentrated on side-paths and aberrations which could hardly be avoided in this immensely audacious experimental widening of the basis of the culture. For there was a catholic attempt to draw towards the spiritual truth minds of all qualities and people of all classes. Much was lost of the profound psychic knowledge of the Vedic seers, but much also of new knowledge was developed, untrodden ways were opened and a hundred gates discovered into the Infinite. If we try to see the essential sense and aim of this development and the intrinsic value of its forms and means and symbols, we shall find that this evolution followed upon the early Vedic form very much for the same reason as Catholic Christianity replaced the mysteries and sacrifices of the early Pagan religions. For in both cases the outward basis of the early religion spoke to the outward physical mind of the people and took that as the starting-point of its appeal. But the new evolution tried to awaken a more inner mind even in the common man, to lay hold on his inner vital and emotional nature, to support all by an awakening

of the soul and to lead him through these things towards a highest spiritual truth. It attempted in fact to bring the mass into the temple of the spirit rather than leave them in the outer precincts. The outward physical sense was satisfied through its aesthetic turn by a picturesque temple worship, by numerous ceremonies, by the use of physical images; but these were given a psycho-emotional sense and direction that was open to the heart and imagination of the ordinary man and not reserved for the deeper sight of the elect or the strenuous tapasya of the initiates. The secret initiation remained but was now a condition for the passage from the surface psycho-emotional and religious to a profounder psychic-spiritual truth and experience.

Nothing essential was touched in its core by this new orientation; but the instruments, atmosphere, field of religious experience underwent a considerable change. The Vedic godheads were to the mass of their worshippers divine powers who presided over the workings of the outward life of the physical cosmos; the Puranic Trinity had even for the multitude a predominant psycho-religious and spiritual significance. Its more external significances, for instance the functions of cosmic creation, preservation and destruction, were only a dependent fringe of these profundities that alone touched the heart of its mystery. The central spiritual truth remained in both systems the same, the truth of the One in many aspects. The Trinity is a triple form of the one supreme Godhead and Brahman; the Shaktis are energies of the one Energy of the highest divine Being. But this greatest religious truth was no longer reserved for the initiated few; it was now more and more brought powerfully, widely and intensely home to the general mind and feeling of the people. Even the so-called henotheism of the Vedic idea was prolonged and heightened in the larger and simpler worship of Vishnu or Shiva as the one universal and highest Godhead of whom all others are living forms and powers. The idea of the Divinity in man was popularised to an extraordinary extent, not only the occasional manifestation of the Divine in humanity which founded the worship of the Avatars, but the Presence

discoverable in the heart of every creature. The systems of Yoga developed themselves on the same common basis. All led or hoped to lead through many kinds of psycho-physical, inner vital, inner mental and psycho-spiritual methods to the common aim of all Indian spirituality, a greater consciousness and a more or less complete union with the One and Divine or else an immergence of the individual soul in the Absolute. The Purano-Tantric system was a wide, assured and many-sided endeavour, unparalleled in its power, insight, amplitude, to provide the race with a basis of generalised psycho-religious experience from which man could rise through knowledge, works or love or through any other fundamental power of his nature to some established supreme experience and highest absolute status.”²

(iv) The Third and the Last Stage

“This great effort and achievement which covered all the time between the Vedic age and the decline of Buddhism, was still not the last possibility of religious evolution open to Indian culture. The Vedic training of the physically-minded man made the development possible. But in its turn this raising of the basis of religion to the inner mind and life and psychic nature, this training and bringing out of the psychic man ought to make possible a still larger development and support a greater spiritual movement as the leading power of life. The first stage makes possible the preparation of the natural external man for spirituality; the second takes up his outward life into a deeper mental and psychical living and brings him more directly into contact with the spirit and divinity within him; the third should render him capable of taking up his whole mental, psychical, physical living into a first beginning at least of a generalised spiritual life. This endeavour has manifested itself in the evolution of Indian spirituality and is the significance of the latest philosophies, the great spiritual movements of the saints and bhaktas and an increasing resort to the various paths of Yoga. But unhappily it synchronised with a decline of Indian culture and an increasing collapse of its general power and knowledge,

and in these surroundings it could not bear its natural fruit; but at the same time it has done much to prepare such a possibility in the future. If Indian culture is to survive and keep its spiritual basis and innate character, it is in this direction, and not in a mere revival or prolongation of the Puranic system, that its evolution must turn, rising so towards the fulfilment of that which the Vedic seers saw as the aim of man and his life thousands of years ago and the Vedantic sages cast into the clear and immortal forms of their luminous revelation.

Even the psychic-emotional part of man's nature is not the inmost door to religious feeling, nor is his inner mind the highest witness to spiritual experience. There is behind the first the inmost soul of man, in that deepest secret heart, *hṛdaya guhyam*, in which the ancient seers saw the very tabernacle of the indwelling Godhead and there is above the second a luminous highest mind directly open to a truth of the Spirit to which man's normal nature has as yet only an occasional and momentary access. Religious evolution, spiritual experience can find their true native road only when they open to these hidden powers and make them their support for a lasting change, a divinisation of human life and nature. An effort of this kind was the very force behind the most luminous and vivid of the later movements of India's vast religious cycle. It is the secret of the most powerful forms of Vaishnavism and Tantra and Yoga. The labour of ascent from our half-animal human nature into the fresh purity of the spiritual consciousness needed to be followed and supplemented by a descent of the light and force of the spirit into man's members and the attempt to transform human into divine nature.

But it could not find its complete way or its fruit because it synchronised with a decline of the life force in India and a lowering of power and knowledge in her general civilisation and culture. Nevertheless here lies the destined force of her survival and renewal, this is the dynamic meaning of her future. A widest and highest spiritualising of life on earth is the last vision of all that

vast and unexampled seeking and experiment in a thousand ways of the soul's outermost and innermost experience which is the unique character of her past; this in the end is the mission for which she was born and the meaning of her existence."³

References:

- 1. Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.20, pp.205-08, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry**
- 2. Ibid., pp.208-11**
- 3. Ibid., pp.211-13**

SRIYUT RABINDRANATH TAGORE ON FREEDOM AND UTILITARIAN AMBITION

“... in the human world only a perfect arrangement of interdependence gives rise to freedom. ... The history of the growth of freedom is the history of the perfection of human relationship.

The strongest barrier against freedom in all departments of life is the selfishness of individuals or groups. Civilization, whose object is to afford humanity its greatest possible opportunity of complete manifestation, perishes when some selfish passion, in place of a moral ideal, is allowed to exploit its resources unopposed, for its own purposes. For the greed of acquisition and the living principle of creation are antagonistic to each other.

... the real tragedy does not lie in the destruction of our material security, it is in the obscuration of man himself in the human world. In his creative activities man makes his surroundings instinct with his own life and love. But in his utilitarian ambition he deforms and defiles it with the callous handling of his voracity.

... In the very first verse of the Isha, the injunction is given to us: *mā gṛdhaḥ; Thou shalt not covet*. But why should we not? Because greed, having no limit, smothers the rhythm of life – the rhythm which is expressive of the limitless.”

(Presidential Address to the Indian Philosophical Congress held in 1925, Mother India, November 2003, pp.950-52)