

# **The Resurgent India**

**A Monthly National Review**

July 2015



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

*- The Mother*

Year 6

Issue 4

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# THE RESURGENT INDIA

A Monthly National Review

July 2015



## SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

*Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella*

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

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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)

## THE FIRST FOURTEEN MONTHS OF THE NEW MODI GOVERNMENT

An article entitled 'The Forthcoming Parliamentary Elections' in the April 2014 issue of this magazine began with the following statement, "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' – 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."<sup>1</sup>

After a glowing and promising beginning, the new government is finding itself progressively forced into concentrating, almost exclusively, on the issues related to the surface material needs and concerns of the people. On this course, understandably, it is facing the hostility of the established egoistic forces in the political field which are now silently using the ever willing political and economical players as their tools. A bitter opposition from such forces and a sense of relative disappointment in a section of the masses impressed by the “secular” noise seems to sum up the present scenario.

In an article in the May 2014 issue of this magazine dealing with the question of what people expected from their new government it was observed, “How far Narendra Modi as the focus of the hopes of the people is able to fulfill these hopes remains to be seen. The task before him is extremely complex and challenging as the expectations seem to be diverse and often conflicting. But common to all or to begin with better governance is needed. An efficient administration based on the rule of law and plugging the holes made by corruption nurtured by politicians masquerading as secular leaders of the nation. The various arms of government – particularly the government administration, judiciary and financial system – mired in corruption and negligence have to be freed to fulfill their proper roles. It may need a certain degree of authoritarianism – for the day-to-day running of government cannot be done by popular vote which is simply a crude machinery evolved by nature to ensure at least the semblance of basic democratic structure. A fundamental democratic spirit and a basic loyalty to Truth which will result in a freedom from all ill-will in thought and action is all that can, at best, be demanded from a political leader who should otherwise be left free to move towards the desired ends using whatever methods are appropriate and needed to accomplish the task at hand. It is immaterial whether they appear democratic, undemocratic or even outright authoritarian to the gaze of some. (A democratic free-for-all may not always be the best way to achieve our goals and a skillful manager – while adhering to the strictest

moral imperatives – uses whatever methods are appropriate for the task in hand without binding himself to any one system.) Narendra Modi has the support of the people, they have voted for him and for his plans for India. For the first time in a long time a leader at the helm of the country has been given an overwhelming and unequivocal mandate. Drawing upon this support he should boldly but judiciously pull India out of the vicious grip of inefficient government.”<sup>2</sup>

So far, this has been achieved only to some extent but the direction is set in spite of the stiff opposition that the new government has been facing both from within and without from those who feel their self interests threatened by it. From within because the rising of the new star in the ruling party has set in a process in which the “old guard” of the party are getting increasingly sidelined – something that had become absolutely necessary because of the narrow concentration on one’s personal being and its cares that had come to characterize the leadership of the BJP (something entirely out of place in the nature of the work of national service that this party claims to have set itself to achieving) before the coming of the new wave. The opposition to Narendra Modi from without is entirely understandable because he – given his vales and utter dedication to the cause of the nation – seems to threaten the whole base of the vote-bank politics that the so called “secular” parties have been progressively indulging in during the last two decades.

It was observed in the May 2014 issue of this magazine that, “An efficient government can provide a framework in which a modicum of people’s wants and needs can be satisfied without extraordinary efforts. ...A greater sense of nationalism, a certain degree of material prosperity, are the first steps on the road...”<sup>3</sup>

On this front too, overall, a right course has been set and considering the very short time that the new government has been in power, a good deal has been achieved. Indians are increasingly able to take pride – in spite of the motivated mudslinging and the unmasking and coming into open of much that is most sickening in the national psyche – in their country and hope for better days ahead.

In the June 2014 issue of this magazine it was observed that, “the unambiguous message that has been radiating from all that the new government has been saying and doing, so far, may be summed up in the following fourfold formula: Sincere Dedication to the Nation, Hard Work, Harmony and Goodwill for All. ... a sincere spirit of dedication and harmony may enable the present leadership of the country to arrive at a psychological condition where it spontaneously feels and works for the true well being of the country.”<sup>4</sup>

We are happy to say that – in spite of the hostility of vested interests and a large section of the media which unabashedly serves these and labours to create the impression that people are unhappy with the present government – the above has come to pass and one can confidently look forward to better days ahead for the country.

*References:*

- 1. The Resurgent India Magazine, April, 2014, Page 7*
- 2. The Resurgent India Magazine, May, 2014, Pages 6-7*
- 3. The Resurgent India Magazine, May, 2014, Pages 7-8*
- 4. The Resurgent India Magazine, June, 2014, Pages 6-7*

## THE ROOTS OF RELIGIOUS CONVERSION IN INDIA, PART II: CONCLUSION

The previous issue described the historical expansion and the current status of Islam and Christianity in India. With the way their action is executed in the mankind, both the religions have crafted the script of their own imminent decline, unless they are reformed. Presently, in India, the raging issue of religious conversion – born out of a narrow sectarian mentality – should not be accorded more importance than is due to it, since it carries within itself the seeds of its own demise. For, religious conversion is an aberration that has nothing to do with the true spirit of religious following. In India, it can never present a threat to the national conception and role of religion, since the Indian ideal of religion transcends the narrow bounds of religion itself. It is based on the ideal of the Sanatana Dharma – the eternal religion. It is the nature of the Sanatana Dharma which has and continues to resist the proselytizing tendency of semetic religions and prevents them from gaining an upper hand in India and putting an end to its native civilisation and culture as they had done in Egypt, Persia and Greece among many others. The following are some selected excerpts from the writings of Sri Aurobindo on Indian religion and its spirit.

“There is a mighty law of life, a great principle of human evolution, a body of spiritual knowledge and experience of which India has always been destined to be guardian, exemplar and missionary. This is the *sanatana dharma*, the eternal religion.”<sup>1</sup>

The eternal religion is to realise God in our inner life and our outer existence, in society no less than in the individual. It is the basis, permanent and always inherent in India, of the shifting mutable and multiform thing we call Hinduism.

### HINDUISM – THE SANATANA DHARMA

“...the foundations of Hinduism are truth and manhood, *esha dharmah sanatanah*. Hinduism is no sect or dogmatic creed, no bundle of formulas, no set of social rules, but a mighty, eternal and universal truth. It has learned the secret of preparing man’s soul for the divine consummation of identity with the infinite existence of

God; rules of life and formulas of belief are only sacred and useful when they help that great preparation.”<sup>2</sup>

“The religious culture which now goes by the name of Hinduism not only fulfilled this purpose, but, unlike certain credal religions, it knew its purpose. It gave itself no name, because it set itself no sectarian limits; it claimed no universal adhesion, asserted no sole infallible dogma, set up no single narrow path or gate of salvation; it was less a creed or cult than a continuously enlarging tradition of the Godward endeavour of the human spirit. An immense many-sided many-staged provision for a spiritual self-building and self-finding, it had some right to speak of itself by the only name it knew, the eternal religion, *santana dharma*. It is only if we have a just and right appreciation of this sense and spirit of Indian religion that we can come to an understanding of the true sense and spirit of Indian culture.”<sup>3</sup>

“The inner principle of Hinduism, the most tolerant and receptive of religious systems, is not sharply exclusive like the religious spirit of Christianity or Islam; as far as that could be without loss of its own powerful idiosyncrasy and law of being, it has been synthetic, acquisitive, inclusive. Always it has taken in from every side and trusted to the power of assimilation that burns in its spiritual heart and in the white heat of its flaming centre to turn even the most unpromising material into forms for its spirit.”<sup>4</sup>

“The world moves through an indispensable interregnum of free thought and materialism to a new synthesis of religious thought and experience, a new religious world-life free from intolerance, yet full of faith and fervour, accepting all forms of religion because it has an unshakable faith in the One. The religion which embraces Science and faith, Theism, Christianity, Mahomedanism and Buddhism and yet is none of these, is that to which the World-Spirit moves. 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. It is in our inner spiritual experiences that we shall find the proof and source of the world's Scriptures, the law of knowledge, love and conduct, the basis and inspiration of Karmayoga.”<sup>5</sup>

### **DEBATE ON CONVERSION: A FUNDAMENTALLY FLAWED OUTLOOK**

In the light of Sri Aurobindo's above words on the Indian religion, it is evident that the current debate on religious conversion is basically superficial – as it only touches the surface of the whole thing. All this is not to dispute that from the point of view of organisations that have sprung up to protect the Indian religion, protesting against conversion is right and springs from a growing spirit of solidarity among the Hindus which is the one true foundation for the building up of the national character. However, to assume that conversion (either way) poses a real threat to the eternal springs of Indian religious consciousness of tolerance and inclusion and should be checked by enacting formal laws is to go too far and is likely to be counter productive to the native genius of India at a time when, more than ever before, the truth and wideness of the spirit of Sanatana Dharma has become a necessity for the survival of the human race. Any formal interference with the religious freedom – as is done in most orthodox Islamic countries – will be contrary to the spirit of the Sanatana Dharma.

*References:*

1. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo 08, p.24, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry*
2. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo 07, p.928, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry*
3. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo 20, p.179, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry*
4. *Ibid., pp.133-34*
5. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo 08, p.26, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry*

## HISTORY OF INDIA – THE VEDIC AGE (10)

### IV. THE UPANISHADS

“If it were asked by anyone what is this multitudinous, shifting, expanding, apparently amorphous or at all events multimorphous sea of religious thought, feeling, philosophy, spiritual experience we call Hinduism, what it is characteristically and essentially, we might answer in one word, the religion of Vedanta. And if it were asked what are the Hindus with their unique and persistent difference from all other races, we might again answer, the children of Vedanta. For at the root of all that we Hindus have done, thought and said through these thousands of years of our race-history, behind all we are and seek to be, there lies concealed, the fount of our philosophies, the bedrock of our religions, the kernel of our thought, the explanation of our ethics and society, the summary of our civilisation, the rivet of our nationality, this one marvellous inheritance of ours, the Vedanta. Nor is it only to Hindu streams that this great source has given of its life-giving waters. Buddhism, the teacher of one third of humanity, drank from its inspiration. Christianity, the offspring of Buddhism, derived its ethics and esoteric teaching at second-hand from the same source. Through Persia Vedanta put its stamp on Judaism, through Judaism, Christianity and Sufism on Islam, through Buddha on Confucianism...”<sup>1</sup>

“The Upanishads stand out from the dim background of Vedic antiquity like stupendous rock cathedrals of thought hewn out of the ancient hills by a race of giant builders the secret of whose inspiration and strength has passed away with them into the Supreme. They are at once Scripture, philosophy and seer-poetry; for even those of them that dispense with the metrical form, are prose poems of a rhythmically mystic thought. But whether as Scripture, philosophical theosophy or literature, there is nothing like them in ancient, mediaeval or modern, in Occidental or Oriental, in Egyptian, Chaldean, Semitic or Mongolian creation; they are unique in style, structure and motive, entirely *sui generis*. After them there were philosophic poems, aphorisms, verse and prose treatises in great number, Sutras,

Karikas, Gitas, their intellectual children; but these are a human progeny very different in type from their immortal ancestors. Pseudo-Upanishads there have been in plenty, a hundred or more of them; some have arrived at a passable aping of the more external features of the type, but always betray themselves by the pseudo-style, the artificial falsetto, the rasping creak of the machine; others are pastiches; others are fakes. The great Upanishads stand out always serene, grand, inimitable with their puissant and living breath, with that phrase which goes rolling out a thousand echoes, with that faultless spontaneous sureness of the inevitable expression, with that packed yet easy compression of wide and rich wisdom into a few revelatory syllables by which they justify their claim to be the divine word. Neither this inspiration nor this technique has been renewed or repeated in later human achievement.”<sup>2</sup>

“What are the Upanishads? They are the treasure-house of the deepest eternal Knowledge without beginning or end which is the root and foundation of the eternal dharma. We find the same knowledge in the Suktas of the four Vedas but covered over with metaphors which give an exoteric meaning to the hymns like that of the descriptive image of the ideal man. **The Upanishads unveil for us the supreme Knowledge, the naked limbs of the real man.** The poets of the Rigveda, the Rishis, expressed spiritual knowledge in divinely inspired words and rhythms; the Rishis of the Upanishads had direct vision of the true form of that Knowledge and expressed it in a few profound words. Not only Monism, but **all the philosophical thoughts and doctrines that have come into being in Europe and Asia – Rationalism, Realism, Nihilism, the Darwinian theory of evolution, the Positivism of Comte, the philosophy of Hegel, Kant, Spinoza and Schopenhauer, Utilitarianism, Hedonism, all were seen and expressed by the Rishis endowed with the direct vision.** But what has been elsewhere partially glimpsed, proclaimed as the integral truth in spite of its being only a fragment of the Truth – and given a distorted description with a mixture of truth and falsehood, has been recorded in its fullness and right perspective, in a pure and unmistakable manner....

The word 'Upanishad' means to enter into a secret place. The Rishis did not obtain the knowledge mentioned in the Upanishads by force of argument, extensive learning or from the flow of inspiration, but earned by Yoga the right of entry into the secrecy of the mind where hangs the key to the integral Knowledge, penetrated into the hidden chamber, took down the key and became sovereigns of vast realms of that infallible Knowledge. Unless the key can be secured, it is not possible to have access to the true significance of the Upanishads. Any attempt to discover the meaning of the Upanishads by argument alone is equivalent to investigating a dense forest with a lighted candle from high treetops. Direct vision is the sun-light which illumines the entire forest making it visible to the seeker. Direct vision can be attained only by Yoga."<sup>3</sup>

### **A. The Upanishads – An Overview**

“The Upanishads are the supreme work of the Indian mind, and that it should be so, that the highest self-expression of its genius, its sublimest poetry, its greatest creation of the thought and word should be not a literary or poetical masterpiece of the ordinary kind, but a large flood of spiritual revelation of this direct and profound character, is a significant fact, evidence of a unique mentality and unusual turn of spirit. The Upanishads are at once profound religious scriptures, – for they are a record of the deepest spiritual experiences, – documents of revelatory and intuitive philosophy of an inexhaustible light, power and largeness and, whether written in verse or cadenced prose, spiritual poems of an absolute, an unfailing inspiration inevitable in phrase, wonderful in rhythm and expression. **It is the expression of a mind in which philosophy and religion and poetry are made one, because this religion does not end with a cult nor is limited to a religio-ethical aspiration, but rises to an infinite discovery of God, of Self,** of our highest and whole reality of spirit and being and speaks out of an ecstasy of luminous knowledge and an ecstasy of moved and fulfilled experience, this philosophy is not an abstract intellectual speculation about Truth or a structure of the logical intelligence, but Truth seen, felt, lived, held by the inmost

mind and soul in the joy of utterance of an assured discovery and possession, and this poetry is the work of the aesthetic mind lifted up beyond its ordinary field to express the wonder and beauty of the rarest spiritual self-vision and the profoundest illumined truth of self and God and universe. Here the intuitive mind and intimate psychological experience of the Vedic seers passes into a supreme culmination in which the Spirit, as is said in a phrase of the Katha Upanishad, discloses its own very body, reveals the very word of its self-expression and **discovers to the mind the vibration of rhythms which repeating themselves within in the spiritual hearing seem to build up the soul** and set it satisfied and complete on the heights of self-knowledge.

This character of the Upanishads needs to be insisted upon with a strong emphasis, because it is ignored by foreign translators who seek to bring out the intellectual sense without feeling the life of thought vision and the ecstasy of spiritual experience which made the ancient verses appear then and still make them to those who can enter into the element in which these utterances move, a revelation not to the intellect alone, but to the soul and the whole being, make of them in the old expressive word not intellectual thought and phrase, but Sruti, spiritual audience, an inspired Scripture. The philosophical substance of the Upanishads demands at this day no farther stress of appreciation of its value; for even if the amplest acknowledgement by the greatest minds were wanting, the whole history of philosophy would be there to offer its evidence. The Upanishads have been the acknowledged source of numerous profound philosophies and religions that flowed from it in India like her great rivers from their Himalayan cradle fertilising the mind and life of the people and kept its soul alive through the long procession of the centuries, constantly returned to for light, never failing to give fresh illumination, a fountain of inexhaustible life-giving waters. Buddhism with all its developments was only a restatement, although from a new standpoint and with fresh terms of intellectual definition and reasoning, of one side of its experience and it carried it thus

changed in form but hardly in substance over all Asia and westward towards Europe. **The ideas of the Upanishads can be rediscovered in much of the thought of Pythagoras and Plato and form the profoundest part of Neo-platonism and Gnosticism with all their considerable consequences to the philosophical thinking of the West, and Sufism only repeats them in another religious language.** The larger part of German metaphysics is little more in substance than an intellectual development of great realities more spiritually seen in this ancient teaching, and modern thought is rapidly absorbing them with a closer, more living and intense receptiveness which promises a revolution both in philosophical and in religious thinking; here they are filtering in through many indirect influences, there slowly pouring through direct and open channels. There is hardly a main philosophical idea which cannot find an authority or a seed or indication in these antique writings – the speculations, according to a certain view, of thinkers who had no better past or background to their thought than a crude, barbaric, naturalistic and animistic ignorance. And even **the larger generalisations of Science are constantly found to apply to the truth of physical Nature formulas already discovered by the Indian sages in their original, their largest meaning in the deeper truth of the spirit.**

And yet these works are not philosophical speculations of the intellectual kind, a metaphysical analysis which labours to define notions, to select ideas and discriminate those that are true, to logicise truth or else to support the mind in its intellectual preferences by dialectical reasoning and is content to put forward an exclusive solution of existence in the light of this or that idea of the reason and see all things from that viewpoint, in that focus and determining perspective. The Upanishads could not have had so undying a vitality, exercised so unfailing an influence, produced such results or seen now their affirmations independently justified in other spheres of inquiry and by quite opposite methods, if they had been of that character. It is because these seers saw Truth rather than merely thought it, clothed it indeed with a strong body of intuitive

idea and disclosing image, but a body of ideal transparency through which we look into the illimitable, because they fathomed things in the light of self-existence and saw them with the eye of the Infinite, that their words remain always alive and immortal, of an inexhaustible significance, an inevitable authenticity, a satisfying finality that is at the same time an infinite commencement of truth, to which all our lines of investigation when they go through to their end arrive again and to which humanity constantly returns in its minds and its ages of greatest vision. The Upanishads are Vedanta, a book of knowledge in a higher degree even than the Vedas, but knowledge in the profounder Indian sense of the word, Jnana. Not a mere thinking and considering by the intelligence, the pursuit and grasping of a mental form of truth by the intellectual mind, but a seeing of it with the soul and a total living in it with the power of the inner being, a spiritual seizing by a kind of identification with the object of knowledge is Jnana. And because it is only by an integral knowing of the self that this kind of direct knowledge can be made complete, it was the self that the Vedantic sages sought to know, to live in and to be one with it by identity. And through this endeavour **they came easily to see that the self in us is one with the universal self of all things and that this self again is the same as God and Brahman, a transcendent Being or Existence**, and they beheld, felt, lived in the inmost truth of all things in the universe and the inmost truth of man's inner and outer existence by the light of this one and unifying vision. **The Upanishads are epic hymns of self-knowledge and world-knowledge and God-knowledge.** The great formulations of philosophic truth with which they abound are not abstract intellectual generalisations, things that may shine and enlighten the mind, but do not live and move the soul to ascension, but are ardours as well as lights of an intuitive and revelatory illumination, reachings as well as seeings of the one Existence, the transcendent Godhead, the divine and universal Self and discoveries of his relation with things and creatures in this great cosmic manifestation. Chants of inspired knowledge, they breathe like all hymns a tone of religious aspiration and ecstasy, not of the narrowly intense kind proper to a

lesser religious feeling, but raised beyond cult and special forms of devotion to the universal Ananda of the Divine which comes to us by approach to and oneness with the self-existent and universal spirit. And though mainly concerned with an inner vision and not directly with outward human action, all the highest ethics of Buddhism and later Hinduism are still emergences of the very life and significance of the truths to which they give expressive form and force, – and there is something greater than any ethical precept and mental rule of virtue, the supreme ideal of a spiritual action founded on oneness with God and all living beings. Therefore **even when the life of the forms of the Vedic cult had passed away, the Upanishads still remained alive and creative and could generate the great devotional religions and motive the persistent Indian idea of the Dharma.**"<sup>4</sup>

## **B. Veda and Vedanta**

“Veda & Vedanta are the inexhaustible fountains of Indian spirituality. With knowledge or without knowledge, every creed in India, sect, school of philosophy, outburst of religious life, great or petty, brilliant or obscure, draws its springs of life from these ancient and ever flowing waters. Conscious or unwitting each Indian religionist stirs to a vibration that reaches him from those far off ages. Darshana and Tantra and Purana, Shaivism & Vaishnavism, orthodoxy & heresy are merely so many imperfect understandings of Vedic truth & misunderstandings of each other; they are eager half-illuminated attempts to bring some ray of that great calm & perfect light into our lives & make of the stray beam an illumination on our path or a finger laid on the secret & distant goal of our seeking. Our greatest modern minds are mere tributaries of the old Rishis. Shankara, who seems to us a giant, had but a fragment of their knowledge. Buddha wandered away on a bypath in their universal kingdom. These compositions of an unknown antiquity are as the many breasts of the eternal Mother of Knowledge from which our succeeding ages have been fed & the imperishable life in us fostered. **The Vedas hold more of that knowledge than the Vedanta, hold**

**it more amply, practically and in detail; but they come to us in a language we have ceased to understand**, a vocabulary which often, by the change of meaning to ancient terms, misleads most where it seems most easy & familiar, a scheme of symbols of which the key has been taken from us. Indians do not understand the Vedas at all; Europeans have systematised a gross misunderstanding of them. The old knowledge in the Vedas is to us, therefore, as a river wandering in dark caverns inaccessible to the common tread. It is in the Upanishads that the stream first emerges into open country. It is there that it is most accessible to us. But even this stream flows through obscure forest & difficult mountain reaches and we only have it for our use at favourable points where the forest thins or the mountain opens. It is there that men have built their little artificial cities of metaphysical thought and spiritual practice, in each of which the inhabitants pretend to control the whole river. They call their dwelling places Vedanta or Sankhya, Adwaita or Dwaita, Shaivism or Vaishnavism, with a hundred names beside and boast that theirs is the way & theirs is the knowledge. But, in reality, **each of us can only command a little of the truth of the Sanatana Dharma, because none of us understands more than a little of the Upanishads.**"<sup>5</sup>

In the Sacred Book of the East series, Max Muller "...committed two serious errors of judgment; he imagined that by sitting in Oxford and evolving new meanings out of his own brilliant fancy he could understand the Upanishads better than Shankaracharya or any other Hindu of parts and learning; and he also imagined that what was important for Europe to know about the Upanishads was what he and other European scholars considered they ought to mean. This, however, is a matter of no importance to anybody but the scholars themselves. What it is really important for Europe to know is in the first place what the Upanishads really do mean, so far as their exoteric teaching extends, and in a less degree what philosophic Hinduism took them to mean. The latter knowledge may be gathered from the commentaries of Shankaracharya and other philosophers which may be studied in the original or in the translations which the Dravidian

Presidency, ignorantly called benighted by the materialists, has been issuing with a truly noble learning and high-minded enterprise. The former this book makes some attempt to convey.

But it may be asked, why these particular Upanishads alone, when there are so many others far larger in plan and of a not inferior importance? In answer I may quote a sentence from Professor Max Muller's Preface to the Sacred Books of the East. 'I confess' he says 'it has been for many years a problem to me, aye, and to a great extent is so still, how the Sacred Books of the East should, by the side of so much that is fresh, natural, simple, beautiful and true, contain so much that is not only unmeaning, artificial and silly, but even hideous and repellent.' Now I am myself only a poor coarseminded Oriental and therefore not disposed to deny the gross physical facts of life and nature or able to see why we should scuttle them out of sight and put on a smug, respectable expression which suggests while it affects to hide their existence. This perhaps is the reason why I am somewhat at a loss to imagine what the Professor found in the Upanishads that is hideous and repellent. Still I was brought up almost from my infancy in England and received an English education, so that sometimes I have glimmerings. But as to what he intends by the unmeaning, artificial and silly elements, there can be no doubt. Everything is unmeaning in the Upanishads which the Europeans cannot understand, everything is artificial which does not come within the circle of their mental experience and everything is silly which is not explicable by European science and wisdom. Now this attitude is almost inevitable on the part of an European, for we all judge according to our lights and those who keep their minds really open, who can realise that there may be lights which are not theirs and yet as illuminating or more illuminating than theirs, are in any nation a very small handful. **For the most part men are the slaves of their associations.**"<sup>6</sup>

### C. THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE UPANISHADS

The Universal nature of Brahman, the Eternal, is the beginning and the end of the Vedanta, "...if it is not accepted, nothing the

Vedanta says can have any value, as all its propositions either proceed from it or at least presuppose it; deprived of this central and highest truth, the Upanishads become what Mleccha scholars & philosophers think them to be, – a mass of incoherent though often sublime speculations; with this truth in your hand as a lamp to shed light on all the obscurest sayings of the Scriptures, you soon come to realise that the Upanishads are a grand harmonious and perfectly luminous whole, expressing in its various aspects the single and universal Truth; for under the myriad contradictions of phenomena (prapancha) there is one Truth and one only. All the Smritis, the Puranas, the Darshanas, the Dharmashastras, the writings of Shaktas, Shaivas, Vaishnavas, Sauras, as well as the whole of Buddhism and its Scriptures are merely so many explanations, comments and interpretations from different sides, of these various aspects of the one and only Truth. This Truth is the sole foundation on which all religions can rest as on a sure and impregnable rock; – and more than a rock, for a rock may perish but this endures for ever. Therefore is the religion of the Aryas called the Sanatana Dharma, the Law Sempiternal. Nor are the Hindus in error when they declare the Sruti to be eternal and without beginning and the Rishis who composed the hymns to be only the witnesses who saw the truth and put it in human language; for this seeing was not mental sight, but spiritual. Therefore the Vedas are justly called Sruti or revelation. Of these **the Rig, Yajur, Sama & Atharvan are the fertilising rain which gave the plant of the Truth nourishment and made it grow, the Brahmanas are the forest in which the plant is found, the Aranyakas are the soil in which it grows, the Upanishads are the plant itself, roots, stalk, leaves, calix and petals, and the flower which manifests itself once and for ever is the great saying So AHAM – I AM HE which is the culmination of the Upanishads.**<sup>7</sup>

“The philosophy of the Upanishads<sup>a</sup> is the basis of all Indian religion and morals and to a considerable extent of Hindu politics,

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<sup>a</sup> *Upanishad means inner knowledge, that which enters into the final Truth and settles in it.*

legislation and society. Its practical importance to [our] race is therefore immense. But it has also profoundly [affected] the thought of the West in many of the most critical stages of [its] development; at first through Pythagoras and other Greek philosophers, then through Buddhism working into Essene, Gnostic and Roman Christianity and once again in our own times through German metaphysics, Theosophy, and a hundred strange and irregular channels. One can open few books now at all in the latest stream of thought without seeing the old Vedantism busy at its work of moulding and broadening the European mind, sometimes by direct and conscious impact as a force, more often by an unacknowledged and impalpable pressure as an atmosphere. This potent influence [in] modern times of a way of thinking many thousands of years old, is due to [a] singular parallelism between the fundamental positions arrived [at by] ancient Vedantism and modern Science. Science in its [researches] amid matter has stumbled on the basal fact of the [Unity] of all things; the Unity of all things is the rock on which the Upanishads have been built. Evolution has been discovered and [analyzed] by Science; Evolution of a kind is implied at every turn by the Vedanta. Vedantism like Science, [but] after its own fashion, [is] severely conscientious in its logical processes and rigorously experimental; [Vedantism] **has mastered physical and psychical laws which Science [is] now beginning to handle.**

But the parallelism is no more than a parallelism, [there is] no real point of contact; for the Hindu or Southern Asiatic mind differs fundamentally in its processes from either [the] Teutonic or the Mediterranean. The former is diffuse and comprehensive; the latter compact and precise. **The Asiatic acquires a [deeper] and truer view of things in their totality, the European a more accurate and practically serviceable conception of their parts.** [The] European seizes on an aspect and takes it for the whole; he is [a] fanatic of single ideas and the preacher of the finite: the Asiatic passes at once to the whole and slurs rapidly over the aspects; he [is] eclectic, inveterately flexible and large-minded, the priest of [the Infinite]. The European is an analytical reasoner proceeding from

observations, the Asiatic a synthetic diviner, leaping to intuitions. Even [when] both analyze, the European prefers to dissect his observations, [the] Asiatic to distinguish his experiences: or when both [synthetize, the] European generalises and classifies what he has [observed,] the Asiatic masses into broad single truths what he [has seen] within. The one deals as a master with facts, but halts over [ideas and] having mastered an idea works round it in a circle; the other [masters ideas] unerringly [.....] but stumbles among facts and applications. The mind of the European is an Iliad or an Odyssey, fighting rudely but heroically forward, or, full of a rich curiosity, wandering as an accurate and vigorous observer in landlocked seas of thought; the mind of the Asiatic is a Ramayan or a Mahabharat, a gleaming infinity of splendid and inspiring imaginations and idealisms or else an universe of wide moral aspiration and ever varying and newly-grouped masses of thought. The mind of the Westerner is a Mediterranean full of small and fertile islands, studded with ports to which the owner, a private merchant, eagerly flees with his merchandise after a little dashing among the billows, and eagerly he disembarks and kisses his dear mother earth; the mind of the Eastern man is an Ocean, and its voyager an adventurer and discoverer, a Columbus sailing for months over an illimitable Ocean out of reach of land, and his ports of visit are few and far between, nor does he carry in his bottoms much merchandise you can traffick in; yet he opens for the trader new horizons, new worlds with new markets. By his intuitions and divinations he helps to widen the circles the European is always obstinately tracing. **The European is essentially scientific, artistic and commercial; the Asiatic is essentially a moralist, pietist and philosopher.** Of course the distinction is not rigid or absolute; there is much that is Asiatic in numbers of Europeans, and in particular races, notably the South Germans, the Celt and the Slav; there is much that is European in numbers of Asiatics, and in particular nations, notably the Arabs and the Japanese. But the fundamental divergence in speculative habits is very noticeable, for in the things of the mind the South imposes its law on the whole Continent.”<sup>8</sup>

The philosophy of the Upanishads is based on four grand truths or realisations. The first realisation through Yoga was, NITYO 'NITYÂNÂM, the One Eternal in many transient. The second realisation, again through Yoga, was CHÉTANAS CHÉTANÂNÂM, the One Consciousness in many Consciousnesses.

“Finally at the base of these two realisations was a third, the most important of all to our race, – that the Transcendent Self in individual man is as complete *because identically the same* as the Transcendent Self in the Universe; for the Transcendent is indivisible and the sense of separate individuality is only one of the fundamental seemings on which the manifestation of phenomenal existence perpetually depends. In this way **the Absolute which would otherwise be beyond knowledge, becomes knowable; and the man who knows his whole Self knows the whole Universe.** This stupendous truth is enshrined to us in the two famous formulae of Vedanta, SO 'HAM, He am I, and AHAM BRAHM' ÂSMI, I am Brahman the Eternal.

Based on these four grand truths, NITYO 'NITYÂNÂM, CHÉTANAS CHÉTANÂNÂM, SO 'HAM, AHAM BRAHM' ÂSMI, as upon four mighty pillars the lofty philosophy of the Upanishads raises its front among the distant stars.”<sup>9</sup>

“The answer to all philosophical problems hinges on the one question, What is myself? It is only by knowing man's real self that we can know God; for whatever we may think or know, the value of the thought and the knowledge must hinge upon the knower, the means of knowledge and the known.

Vedanta's final and single answer to all the questions of philosophy is contained in a single mighty and ever-memorable phrase, So 'ham. I am He or more explicitly or to the question of the inquirer अहं ब्रह्मास्मि, I am Brahman. Cutting through all tremors and hesitations, scorning all doubt or reserve it announces with a hardy and daring incisiveness the complete identity of man and God. **This is its gospel that the individual Self who seems so limited,**

**thwarted, befouled, shamed and obscured with the bonds and shackles**, the mud and stains of earthly life **and the pure, perfect and illimitable Being who possesses and supports all existence**, to Whom this vast and majestic Universe is but an inconsiderable corner of His mind and infinite Time cannot end and infinite Space cannot confine and the infinite net of cause and effect is powerless to trammel **are equal, are of one nature, power, splendour, bliss, are One**. It seems the very madness of megalomania, the very delirium of egoism. And yet if it be true?

And it is true. Reason can come to no other conclusion, Yoga ends in no less an experience, the voices of a hundred holy witnesses who have seen God face to face, bring to us no less wonderful a message.”<sup>10</sup>

*References:*

1. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.18, p.413, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry*
2. *Ibid, pp.433*
3. *Bengali Writings, pp.58-59, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry*
4. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.20, pp.329-33, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry*
5. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.17, pp.361-62, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry*
6. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.18, pp.163-65, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry*
7. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.17, pp.101-02, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry*
8. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.18, pp.345-47, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry*
9. *Ibid, p.357*
10. *Ibid, p.337*

## THE GREATNESS OF INDIA AND ITS CULTURE (9)

### 2. INDIAN CIVILISATION AND CULTURE

#### III. The Life-Value of Indian Culture – the Supreme Achievements of Indian Culture in Its Dealings with Life

##### *B. The High Value and Soundness of the Indian Conception of Life*

The value of the Indian conception of life must depend on the power and effectivity with which it connects its high conception and the distant perfection aimed at with man's normal living and present every day nature. "Put over against the latter without any connection or any gradations that lead up to it and make it possible, it would either be a high unattainable ideal or the detached remote passion of a few exceptional spirits. Or even it would discourage the springs of our natural life by the too great contrast between this spiritual being and our own poor imperfect nature. Something of the kind has happened in later times; the current Western impression about the exaggerated asceticism and otherworldliness of Indian religion and philosophy is founded on the growing gulf created by a later thought between man's spiritual possibilities and his terrestrial status. But we must not be misled by extreme tendencies or the overemphasis put upon them in a period of decline. If we would get at the real meaning of the Indian idea of life, we must go back to its best times. And we must not look at this or that school of philosophy or at some side of it as the whole of Indian thought; the totality of the ancient philosophical thinking, religion, literature, art, society must be our ground of enquiry. The Indian conception in its early soundness made no such mistake as to imagine that this great thing can or even ought to be done by some violent, intolerant, immediate leap from one pole of existence to its opposite. Even the most extreme philosophies do not go so far. The workings of the Spirit in the universe were a reality to one side of the Indian mind, to another only a half reality, a self-descriptive Lila or illusory Maya. To the one the world was an action of the Infinite Energy, Shakti, to the other a figment of some

secondary paradoxical consciousness in the Eternal, Maya: but life as an intermediate reality was never denied by any school of Indian thinking. Indian thought recognised that the normal life of man has to be passed through with a conscientious endeavour to fulfil its purpose: its powers must be developed with knowledge; its forms must be perused, interpreted and fathomed; its values must be worked out, possessed and lived; its enjoyments must be fully taken on their own level. Only afterwards can we go on to self-existence or a supra-existence. The spiritual perfection which opens before man is the crown of a long, patient, millennial outflowering of the spirit in life and nature. This belief in a gradual spiritual progress and evolution here is indeed the secret of the almost universal Indian acceptance of the truth of reincarnation. It is only by millions of lives in inferior forms that the secret soul in the universe, conscious even in the unconscious, *cetana acetane*  $\square$  *u*, has arrived at humanity: it is only by hundreds or thousands, perhaps even millions of human lives that man can grow into his divine self-existence. Every life is a step which he can take backward or forward; his action in life, his will in life, his thought and knowledge by which he governs and directs his life, determine what he is yet to be from the earliest stages to the last transcendence. *Yath*  $\square$  *karma yath*  $\square$  *rutam*.

This belief in a gradual soul evolution with a final perfection or divine transcendence and human life as its first direct means and often repeated opportunity, is the pivot of the Indian conception of existence. This gives to our life the figure of an ascent in spirals or circles; and the long period of the ascent has to be filled in with human knowledge and human action and human experience. There is room within it for all terrestrial aims, activities and aspirations; there is place in the ascent for all types of human character and nature. For the spirit in the world assumes hundreds of forms and follows many tendencies and gives many shapes to his play or  $\square$ . All are part of the total mass of our necessary experience; each has its justification, each has its natural or true law and reason of being, each has its utility in the play and the process. The claim of sense satisfaction was not ignored, it was given its just importance. The soul's need of labour and heroic action was not stifled, it was urged to its fullest action and freest scope. The hundred

forms of the pursuit of knowledge were given an absolute freedom of movement; the play of the emotions was allowed, refined, trained till they were fit for the divine levels; the demand of the aesthetic faculties was encouraged in its highest rarest forms and in life's commonest details. Indian culture did not deface nor impoverish the richness of the grand game of human life; it never depressed or mutilated the activities of our nature. On the contrary, subject to a certain principle of harmony and government, it allowed them their full, often their extreme value. Man was allowed to fathom on his way all experience, to give to his character and action a large rein and heroic proportions, and to fill in life opulently with colour and beauty and enjoyment. This life side of the Indian idea is stamped in strong relief over the epic and the classical literature. It is amazing indeed that anyone with an eye or a brain could have read the Ramayana, Mahabharata, the dramas, the literary epics, the romances, and the great abundance of gnomic and lyric poetry in Sanskrit and in the later tongues (to say nothing of the massive remains of other cultural work and social and political system and speculation), and yet failed to perceive this breadth, wealth and greatness. One must have read without eyes to see or without a mind to understand; most indeed of the adverse critics have not read or studied at all, but only flung about their preconceived notions with a violent or a high-browed ignorant assurance.

But while it is the generous office of culture to enrich, enlarge and encourage human life, it must also give the vital forces a guiding law, subject them to some moral and rational government and lead them beyond their first natural formulations, until it can find for life the clue to a spiritual freedom, perfection and greatness. The preeminent value of the ancient Indian civilisation lay in the power with which it did this work, the profound wisdom and high and subtle skill with which it based society and ordered the individual life, and encouraged and guided the propensities of human nature and finally turned them all towards the realisation of its master idea. The mind it was training, while not called away from its immediate aims, was never allowed to lose sight of the use of life as a discipline for spiritual perfection and a passage to the Infinite."<sup>1</sup>

### **(i) *The Two Main Truths of Human Existence***

The Indian mind kept always in sight two main truths of existence. First, man's being in its growth has stages through which it must pass. Second, life is complex and the nature of man is also complex; "...in each life man has to figure a certain sum of its complexity and put that into some kind of order. But the initial movement of life is that form of it which develops the powers of the natural ego in man; self-interest and hedonistic desire are the original human motives, – *kāma, artha*. Indian culture gave a large recognition to this primary turn of our nature. These powers have to be accepted and put in order; for the natural ego-life must be lived and the forces it evolves in the human being must be brought to fullness. But this element must be kept from making any too unbridled claim or heading furiously towards its satisfaction; only so can it get its full results without disaster and only so can it be inspired eventually to go beyond itself and turn in the end to a greater spiritual Good and Bliss. An internal or external anarchy cannot be the rule; a life governed in any absolute or excessive degree by self-will, passion, sense-attraction, self-interest and desire cannot be the natural whole of a human or a humane existence. The tempting imagination that it can and that this is the true law is a lure with which the Western mind has played in characteristic leanings or outbursts; but this turn unjustly called Paganism, – for the Greek or Pagan intelligence had a noble thought for law and harmony and self-rule, – is alien to the Indian spirit. India has felt the call of the senses not less than Greece, Rome or modern Europe; she perceived very well the possibility of a materialistic life and its attraction worked on certain minds and gave birth to the philosophy of the Charvakas: but this could not take full hold or establish even for a time any dominant empire. Even if we can see in it, when lived on a grand scale, a certain perverse greatness, still a colossal egoism indulgent of the sole life of the mind and the senses was regarded by her as the nature of the Asura and Rakshasa. It is the Titanic, gigantic or demoniac type of spirit, permitted in its own plane, but not the proper law for a human life. Another power claims man and overtops desire and self-interest and self-will, the power of the Dharma."<sup>2</sup>

**(ii) *The Workings of Dharma – the Religious Law of Action and the Deepest Law of Our Nature***

In the Indian conception, Dharma, "...is not, as in the Western idea, a creed, cult or ideal inspiring an ethical and social rule; it is the right law of functioning of our life in all its parts. The tendency of man to seek after a just and perfect law of his living finds its truth and its justification in the Dharma. Everything indeed has its dharma, its law of life imposed on it by its nature; but for man the dharma is the conscious imposition of a rule of ideal living on all his members. Dharma is fixed in its essence, but still it develops in our consciousness and evolves and has its stages; there are gradations of spiritual and ethical ascension in the search for the highest law of our nature. All men cannot follow in all things one common and invariable rule. Life is too complex to admit of the arbitrary ideal simplicity which the moralising theorist loves. Natures differ; the position, the work we have to do has its own claims and standards; the aim and bent, the call of life, the call of the spirit within is not the same for everyone: the degree and turn of development and the capacity, *adhikāra*, are not equal. Man lives in society and by society, and every society has its own general dharma, and the individual life must be fitted into this wider law of movement. But there too the individual's part in society and his nature and the needs of his capacity and temperament vary and have many kinds and degrees: the social law must make some room for this variety and would lose by being rigidly one for all. The man of knowledge, the man of power, the productive and acquisitive man, the priest, scholar, poet, artist, ruler, fighter, trader, tiller of the soil, craftsman, labourer, servant cannot usefully have the same training, cannot be shaped in the same pattern, cannot all follow the same way of living. All ought not to be put under the same tables of the law; for that would be a senseless geometric rigidity that would spoil the plastic truth of life. Each has his type of nature and there must be a rule for the perfection of that type; each has his own proper function and there must be a canon and ideal for the function. There must be in all things some wise and understanding standard of practice and idea of perfection and living rule, – that is the one thing needful for the Dharma. A lawless impulsion of desire and interest and propensity

cannot be allowed to lead human conduct; even in the frankest following of desire and interest and propensity there must be a governing and restraining and directing line, a guidance. There must be an ethic or a science, a restraint as well as a scope arising from the truth of the thing sought, a standard of perfection, an order. Differing with the type of the man and the type of the function these special dharmas would yet rise towards the greater law and truth that contains and overtops the others and is universally effective. This then was the Dharma, special for the special person, stage of development, pursuit of life or individual field of action, but universal too in the broad lines which all ought to pursue.

The universal embracing dharma in the Indian idea is a law of ideal perfection for the developing mind and soul of man; it compels him to grow in the power and force of certain high or large universal qualities which in their harmony build a highest type of manhood. In Indian thought and life this was the ideal of the best, the law of the good or noble man, the discipline laid down for the self-perfecting individual, *Ārya*, *Vṛ̥ṣṇha*, *sajjana*, *śūdhū*. This ideal was not a purely moral or ethical conception, although that element might predominate; it was also intellectual, religious, social, aesthetic, the flowering of the whole ideal man, the perfection of the total human nature. The most varied qualities met in the Indian conception of the best, *Vṛ̥ṣṇha*, the good and noble man, *Ārya*. In the heart benevolence, beneficence, love, compassion, altruism, long-suffering, liberality, kindness, patience; in the character courage, heroism, energy, loyalty, continence, truth, honour, justice, faith, obedience and reverence where these were due, but power too to govern and direct, a fine modesty and yet a strong independence and noble pride; in the mind wisdom and intelligence and love of learning, knowledge of all the best thought, an openness to poetry, art and beauty, an educated capacity and skill in works; in the inner being a strong religious sense, piety, love of God, seeking after the Highest, the spiritual turn; in social relations and conduct a strict observance of all the social dharmas, as father, son, husband, brother, kinsman, friend, ruler or subject, master or servant, priest or warrior or worker, king or sage, member of clan or caste: this was the total ideal of the *Ārya*, the man of high upbringing and noble nature. The ideal is clearly portrayed in the

written records of ancient India during two millenniums and it is the very life-breath of Hindu ethics. It was the creation of an at once ideal and rational mind, spirit-wise and worldly-wise, deeply religious, nobly ethical, firmly yet flexibly intellectual, scientific and aesthetic, patient and tolerant of life's difficulties and human weakness, but arduous in self-discipline. This was the mind that was at the base of the Indian civilisation and gave its characteristic stamp to all the culture."<sup>3</sup>

**(iii) *The Exceeding of Dharma – The Ideal of Moksha or Mukti***

“Indian culture raised the crude animal life of desire, self-interest and satisfied propensity beyond its first intention to a noble self-exceeding and shapeliness by infusing into it the order and high aims of the Dharma. But its profounder characteristic aim – and in this it was unique – was to raise this nobler life too of the self-perfecting human being beyond its own intention to a mightiest self-exceeding and freedom; it laboured to infuse into it the great aim of spiritual liberation and perfection, *mukti, mokṣa*. The Law and its observance are neither the beginning nor the end of man; there is beyond the field of the Law a larger realm of consciousness in which, climbing, he emerges into a great spiritual freedom. **Not a noble but ever death-bound manhood is the highest height of man's perfection: immortality, freedom, divinity are within his grasp. Ancient Indian culture held this highest aim constantly before the inner eye of the soul and insistently inspired with its prospect and light the whole conception of existence. The entire life of the individual was ennobled by this aim; the whole ordering of society was cast into a scale of graduated ascension towards this supreme summit.**

A well-governed system of the individual and communal existence must be always in the first instance an ordering of the three first powers recognised by Indian thought. The claim of the natural functionings must be recognised in it to the full; the pursuit of personal and communal interest and the satisfaction of human desires as of human needs must be amply admitted and there must be an understanding combination of knowledge and labour towards these ends. But all must be controlled,

uplifted and widened to greater aims by the ideal of the Dharma. And if, as India believes, there is a higher spiritual consciousness towards which man can rise, that ascent must be kept throughout in view as the supreme goal of life. The system of Indian culture at once indulged and controlled man's nature; it fitted him for his social role; it stamped on his mind the generous ideal of an accomplished humanity refined, harmonised in all its capacities, ennobled in all its members; but it placed before him too the theory and practice of a highest change, familiarised him with the conception of a spiritual existence and sowed in him a hunger for the divine and the infinite. The symbols of his religion were filled with suggestions which led towards it; at every step he was reminded of lives behind and in front and of worlds beyond the material existence; he was brought close to the nearness, even to the call and pressure of the Spirit who is greater than the life it informs, of the final goal, of a high possible immortality, freedom, God-consciousness, divine Nature. Man was not allowed to forget that he had in him a highest self beyond his little personal ego and that always he and all things live, move and have their being in God, in the Eternal, in the Spirit. There were ways and disciplines provided in number by which he could realise this liberating truth or could at least turn and follow at a distance this highest aim according to his capacity and nature, *adhikāra*. Around him he saw and revered the powerful practicers and the mighty masters of these disciplines. These men were in early times the teachers of his youth, the summits of his society, the inspirers and fountain-heads of his civilisation, the great lights of his culture. Spiritual freedom, spiritual perfection were not figured as a far-off intangible ideal, but presented as the highest human aim towards which all must grow in the end, and were made near and possible to his endeavour from a first practicable basis of life and the Dharma. The spiritual idea governed, enlightened and gathered towards itself all the other life-motives of a great civilised people."<sup>4</sup>

"These are the principal lines upon which the structure of Indian civilisation was founded and they constitute the power of its conception of life. I do not think it can be said that there is here any inferiority to other human cultures or to any established conception of life that has

ever held sway over the mind of man in historic times. There is nothing here that can be said to discourage life and its flowering or to deprive it of impetus and elevation and a great motive. On the contrary there is a full and frank recognition and examination of the whole of human existence in all its variety and range and power, there is a clear and wise and noble idea for its right government and there is an ideal tendency pointing it upward and a magnificent call to a highest possible perfection and greatness. These are the serious uses of culture, these are the things that raise the life of man above a crude, primitive barbarism. If a civilisation is to be judged by the power of its ideas, their power for these great uses, Indian civilisation was inferior to none. Certainly, it was not perfect or final or complete; for that can be alleged of no past or present cultural idea or system. Man is in his inmost self an infinite being, in his mind and life too he is continually growing, with whatever stumblings and long relapses, and he cannot be permanently bound in any one system of ideas or frame of living. The structures in which he lives are incomplete and provisional; even those which seem the most comprehensive lose their force to stand and are convicted by time of insufficiency and must be replaced or change. But **this at least can be said of the Indian idea that it seized with a remarkable depth and comprehensiveness on the main truths and needs of the whole human being, on his mind and life and body, his artistic and ethical and intellectual parts of nature, his soul and spirit, and gave them a subtle and liberal, a profoundly large and high and wise, a sympathetic and yet nobly arduous direction. More cannot be said for any past or any existing culture.**"<sup>5</sup>

*References:*

1. *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo, Vol.20, pp.158-61, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry*
2. *Ibid, pp.161-62*
3. *Ibid, pp.162-64*
4. *Ibid, pp.164-66*
5. *Ibid, pp.167-68*

“Sri Aurobindo always loved deeply his Motherland. But he wished her to be great, noble, pure and worthy of her big mission in the world. He refused to let her sink to the sordid and vulgar level of blind self-interests and ignorant prejudices. This is why, in full conformity to his will, we lift high the standard of truth, progress and transformation of mankind, without caring for those who, through ignorance, stupidity, envy or bad will, seek to soil it and drag it down into the mud. We carry it very high so that all who have a soul may see it and gather round it.”

– **The Mother**

*(Collected Works of the Mother, Vol.13, Page.123)*