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**THE PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS ON THE MOVEMENTS OF
AUROBINDO GHOSE AS A SPIRITUAL REFORMER**

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ABSTRACT

It was Sri Aurobindo's influence on the Indian National Congress, in the first decade of the century which made the organisation include Swadeshi, Boycott and National Education in its programme. He wrote editorial in the *Bande Mataram*, more than once, urging the party to give sufficient attention to education, which was divided in two groups. One favoured running a chain of national schools, parallel with the government schools and the other group was much more ambitious. It wanted its ideas to infiltrate all the government schools! The grotesque defects in the system of education that prevailed in India pained not only patriotic Indians, but also some Englishmen. For example, wrote W. W. Hunter, "Your State education is producing a revolt against three principles which, although they were pushed too far in ancient India, represent the deepest wants of human nature—the principle of discipline, the principle of religion, the principle of contentment." He said further, "What are you to do with this great clever class, forced up under a foreign system, without discipline, without contentment and without God?" In his well-known work, *Indian Unrest* (1910), Valentine Chirol observed: "The fundamental weakness of our Indian educational system is that the average Indian student cannot bring his education into any direct relation with the world in which, outside the class or lecture room, he continues to live. For that world is still the old Indian world of his forefathers, and it is as far removed as the poles asunder from the Western world which claims his education." This manuscript underlines different aspects and dimensions of Aurobindo Ghose as spiritual reformer.

Keywords - Aurobindo Ghose, Indian Nationalist Spiritual Reformer

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PREAMBLE

“In 1906, the National Council of Education was founded in Calcutta. The Bengal National College and School started its working career since August 15 at a rented house at 191/1, Bowbazar Street, with Aurobindo Ghose as its first Principal and Satis Chandra Mukherjee as its first Executive Head or the Superintendent... Aurobindo’s name alone proved a very valuable asset to the Bengal National College and added enormously to the prestige of the institution in public eyes. But as he soon became,—particularly since October 1906,—more and more involved in active politics and in the conduct of the famous Bande Mataram,—he could not turn up regularly in the college whose life-force was, in fact, Satis Chandra Mukherjee, the silent inspirer of Young Bengal [1].”

That was a turbulent time. The freedom movement was gathering momentum. The character of the Indian National Congress was to undergo a radical change at its historic Surat session in 1907, the nationalists meeting under the Presidentship of Sri Aurobindo and the government bringing the charge of sedition against the Bande Mataram and then arresting him in connection with the Alipore Conspiracy Case (1908) [2].

But the need for a greater experiment in national education continued to be felt by him. In the Bande Mataram of 24 February 1908 he wrote, under the title ‘A National University’: “The idea of a National University is one of the ideas which have formulated themselves in the national consciousness and become part of the immediate destiny of a people. It is a seed which is sown and must come to its fruition, because the future demands it and the heart of the nation is in accord with the demand. The processes of its increase may be rapid or it may be slow, and when the first beginnings are made, there may be many errors and false starts, but like a stream gathering volume as it flows, the movement will grow in force and certainty, the vision of those responsible for its execution will grow clearer, and their hands will be helped in unexpected ways until the purpose of God is worked out and the idea shapes itself into an accomplished reality. But it is necessary that those who are the custodians of the precious trust, should guard it with a jealous care and protect its purity and first high aim from being sullied or lowered [3].”

Sri Aurobindo, no wonder, could not give his time to the educational movement and the functioning of the College founded by the National Council seems to have deteriorated because of the people managing it trying to dissociate it from the general national fervour

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sweeping the country and making it purely academic in character. The anguish Sri Aurobindo felt found expression in an article entitled 'National Education', published in the Karmayogin (January 1, 1910), the weekly he edited after his acquittal in the Alipore Conspiracy Case and before leaving for Pondicherry : "National Education languishes because the active force has been withdrawn from it; it does not absolutely perish because a certain amount of Nationalist self-devotion has entrenched itself in this last stronghold and holds it against great odds and under the most discouraging circumstances. A certain amount only,—because part of the active enthusiasm and self-sacrifice which created the movement, has been deliberately extruded from it in obedience to fear or even baser motives, part has abandoned in disgust at the degeneration of the system in incapable hands and the rest is now finding its self-devotion baffled and deprived of the change of success by the same incapacity and weakness at headquarters [4].

"The National Council of Education, as it is at present composed, has convicted itself of entire incapacity whether to grasp the meaning of the movement or to preserve or create the conditions of its success. To the majority of the members it is merely an interesting academic experiment in which they can embody some of their pet hobbies or satisfy a general vague dissatisfaction with the established University system. To others the only valuable part of it is the technical instruction given in its workshops. The two or three who at all regard it as part of a great national movement, are unnerved by fear, scepticism and distrust... It is folly to expect that the nation at large will either pay heavily or make great sacrifices merely to support an interesting academic experiment, still less to allow a few learned men to spoil the intellectual development of the race by indulging their hobbies at the public expense... Unless this movement is carried on, as it was undertaken, as part of a great movement of national resurgence, unless it is made, visibly to all, a nursery of patriotism and a mighty instrument of national culture, it cannot succeed. It is foolish to expect men to make great sacrifices while discouraging their hope and enthusiasm. It is not intellectual recognition of duty that compels sustained self-sacrifice in masses of men; it is hope, it is the lofty ardour of a great cause, it is the enthusiasm of a noble and courageous effort. It is amazing that men calling themselves educated and presuming to dabble with public movements should be blind to the fact that the success or failure of National Education is intimately bound up with and, indeed, entirely depends upon the fortunes of the great resurgence which gave it birth. They seem to labour under the delusion that it was an academic and not a national impulse which induced men to support this great effort, and they seek to save the institution from a premature death by

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exiling from it the enthusiasm that made it possible. They cannot ignore the service done by that enthusiasm, but they regard it merely as the ladder by which they climbed and are busy trying to kick it down. They are really shutting off the steam, yet expect the locomotive to go on [5] [6].”

At Pondicherry, with the appearance of the monthly Arya, Sri Aurobindo’s vision and reflections on all the great issues of life and of Yoga and spirituality found a distinct medium for their serialised presentation. He wrote “A Preface on National Education” (1920-1921) in which he clearly analysed, in the backdrop of the 20th century, how a national outlook of education can be synthesised with the modern development [7]. He says “National education was not a mere change of control of the educational institutions, the authority passing from the hands of the Westerners to Indians. “I presume that it is something more profound, great and searching that we have in mind and that, whatever the difficulty of giving it shape, it is an education proper to the Indian soul and need and temperament and culture that we are in quest of, not indeed something faithful merely to the past, but to the developing soul of India, to her future need, to the greatness of her coming self-creation, to her eternal spirit [8].”

“There could be questions on the idea of a national education. Is it not true that the training of good citizenship is the same in the East or the West? Is it not true that man is same everywhere and his needs are common? Education should have a universal character and not limited by any concept. No nation can reject the discoveries or inventions in science because they were possible in another country. We cannot dismiss Galileo and Newton and stop with Bhaskara, Aryabhata and Varahamihira. We cannot revive the syllabus followed at Takshashila or Nalanda. After all we live in the twentieth century and cannot revive the India of Chandragupta or Akbar; we must keep abreast with the march of truth and knowledge, fit ourselves for existence under actual circumstances, and our education must be therefore upto date in form and substance and modern in life and spirit [9].”

To such possible observations, Sri Aurobindo’s answer was: “All these objections are only pertinent if directed against the travesty of the idea of national education which would make of it a means of an obscurantist retrogression to the past forms that were once a living frame of our culture but are now dead or dying things; but that is not the idea nor the endeavour. The living spirit of the demand for national education no more requires a return to the astronomy and mathematics of Bhaskara or the forms of the system of Nalanda than the living spirit of

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Swadeshi a return from railway and motor traction to the ancient chariot and the bullockcart. There is no doubt plenty of retrogressive sentimentalism about and there have been some queer violences on common sense and reason and disconcerting freaks that prejudice the real issue, but these inconsequent streaks of fantasy give a false hue to the matter [10]. It is the spirit, the living and vital issue that we have to do with, and there the question is not between modernism and antiquity, but between an imported civilization and the greater possibilities of the Indian mind and nature, not between the present and the past, but between the present and the future. It is not a return to the fifth century but an initiation of the centuries to come, not a reversion but a break forward away from a present artificial falsity to her own greater innate potentialities that is demanded by the soul, by the Shakti of India [11][12].”

That a policy of national education did not mean merely infusing in the student the spirit of the nation’s culture, aspirations and other qualities peculiar to it, but something more, to make the student a worthy unit of humanity, was emphasised in the next part of the essay : “It follows that that alone will be a true and living education which helps to bring out to full advantage, makes ready for the full purpose and scope of human life all that is in the individual man, and which at the same time helps him to enter into his right relation with the life, mind and soul of the people to which he belongs and with that great total life, mind and soul of humanity of which he himself is a unit and his people or nation a living, a separate and yet inseparable member. It is by considering the whole question in the light of this large and entire principle that we can best arrive at a clear idea of what we would have our education to be and what we shall strive to accomplish by a national education. Most is this largeness of view and foundation needed here and now in India, the whole energy of whose life purpose must be at this critical turning of her destinies directed to her one great need, to find and rebuild her true self in individual and in people and to take again, thus repossessed of her inner greatness, her due and natural portion and station in the life of the human race [13].”

If this were all—though this is profoundly ideal—then this could apply to the ideal system of education emanating from any culturally advanced country of the world. But making a good individual, a good citizen of the country and an ideal citizen of the world could not be the end for the perfect Indian vision of education [14]. Since times immemorial India has discovered as the final goal of life a point beyond the visible horizon of life. It has defined life not as a span of existence bracketed by birth and death, but as a spirit launched into the infinity, at the same time capable of experiencing the infinity in this world of finites assigned to him. A

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Nachiketa who demanded of the God of Death the power to unravel the mystery of death, a Markandeya who could totally identify himself with the Eternity so that the appointed time for his death came and passed without the powers concerned being able to locate him as a mortal individual, a Savitri who could alter the destiny of her husband by the dint of her love sharpened by askesis, an Arjuna taught to view things and happenings through his inner eye, from the point of view of his soul and thereby look upon as gross a situation as a battle as an opportunity for Yoga—are examples testifying to this attitude of ushering in the alchemy of infinity into the finite life [15].

It is this aspiration to know the hidden realities which gives the spirit of India, as reflected in its literature, philosophy and traditions, often distorted though, an exclusive feature. An education to be truly Indian must light in the consciousness of the student the flame of this quest [16].

Hence, said Sri Aurobindo: “India has seen always in man the individual a soul, a portion of the Divinity enwrapped in mind and body, a conscious manifestation in Nature of the universal self and spirit. Always she has distinguished and cultivated in him a mental, an intellectual, an ethical, dynamic and practical, an aesthetic and hedonistic, a vital and physical being, but all these have been seen as powers of a soul that manifests through them and grows with their growth, and yet they are not all the soul, because at the summit of its ascent it arises to something greater than them all, into a spiritual being, and it is in this fact that she has found the supreme manifestation of the soul of man and his ultimate divine manhood, his paramartha and highest purusartha [17]. And similarly India has not been understood by the nation or people as an organised State or an armed and efficient community well prepared for the struggle of life and putting all at the service of the national ego,—that is only the disguise of iron armour which masks and encumbers the national purusha,—but a great communal soul and life that has appeared in the whole and has manifested a nature of its own and a law of that nature, a Swabhava and Swadharma, and embodied it in its intellectual, aesthetic, ethical, dynamic, social and political forms and culture. And equally then our cultural conception of humanity must be in accordance with her ancient vision of the universal manifesting in the human race, evolving through life and mind but with a high ultimate spiritual aim,—it must be the idea of the spirit, the soul of humanity advancing through struggle and concert towards oneness, increasing its experience and maintaining a needed diversity through the varied culture and life motives of its many people, searching for perfection through the development

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of the powers of the individual and his progress towards a diviner being and life, but feeling out too though more slowly after a similar perfectability in the life of the race [18].”

SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

“Man cannot rest permanently until he reaches some highest good.”

“To fulfil God in life is man’s manhood.”

—Sri Aurobindo

There are two misconceptions about the term ‘Spiritual’ and both are too stubborn to give way to an objective explanation of the word. First, ‘spiritual’ and ‘spirituality’ are understood as synonyms of religious and religion. Second, ‘Spiritual’ is taken to be the opposite of material, pragmatic or practical, an idea that inspires in our minds the picture of other-worldliness and asceticism [19].

To confuse spirituality with religion, of course, is not always wrong, for much depends on what one understands by religion. Says Sri Aurobindo, “There are two aspects of religion— true religion and religionism. True religion is spiritual religion, that which seeks to live in the spirit, in what is beyond the intellect, beyond the aesthetic and ethical and practical being of man, and to inform and govern these members of our being by the higher light and law of the spirit. Religionism, on the contrary, entrenches itself in some narrow pietistic exaltation of the lower members or lays exclusive stress on intellectual dogmas, forms and ceremonies, on some fixed and rigid moral code, on some religio-political or religio-social system. Not that these things are altogether negligible or that they must be unworthy or unnecessary or that a spiritual religion need disdain the aid of forms, ceremonies, creeds or systems. On the contrary, they are needed by man because the lower members have to be exalted and raised before they can be fully spiritualised, before they can directly feel the spirit and obey its law. An intellectual formula is often needed by the thinking and reasoning mind, form or ceremony by the aesthetic temperament or other parts of the infrarational being, a set moral code by man’s vital nature in their turn towards the inner life. But these things are aids and supports, not the essence; precisely because they belong to the rational and infrarational parts, they can be nothing more and, if too blindly insisted on, may even hamper the suprarational light. Such as they are, they have to be offered to man and used by him, but not to be imposed on him as his sole law by a forced and inflexible domination. In the use of them toleration and free permission of variation is the first rule which should be observed. The spiritual essence of

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religion is alone the one thing supremely needful, the thing to which we have always to hold and subordinate to it every other element or motive.”

—The Human Cycle

Viewed in a comprehensive perspective, Materialism, the material science in particular, by exploring the mysteries of Nature and harnessing her powers for welfare and progress, has made man more and more conscious of his own potential capacity on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of the infinite possibilities and promises that are there in Nature. This increase or expansion of man’s knowledge of himself and of his environment can never be opposed to his spiritual quest. If spiritual quest leads man inward, makes him look for the inner splendours of his consciousness, the material quest helps him to understand the phenomenon outside and around him. It is the poverty of human mind and human perception which fails to recognise the harmony between Spirit and Matter, their secret intimacy and the fact that both owe their existence to a common source.

Matter itself is a form of Spirit in which consciousness remains asleep and involved. “Matter means the involution of the conscious delight of existence in self-oblivious force and in self-dividing, infinitesimally disaggregated form of substance”, says Sri Aurobindo

—(The Synthesis of Yoga)

It is our ignorance which does not allow us to get over the dichotomy between Matter and Spirit. But, says Sri Aurobindo, “The affirmation of a divine life upon earth and an immortal sense in mortal existence can have no base unless we recognise not only eternal Spirit as the inhabitant of this bodily mansion, the wearer of this mutable robe, but accept Matter of which it is made, as a fit and noble material out of which He weaves constantly His garbs, builds recurrently the unending series of His mansions.”

—The Life Divine

A spiritual education, in the light of Sri Aurobindo, would naturally help the seeker to view both Spirit and Matter in a new light. For him Spirituality is an adventure with matter for its basis. For him the material or the so-called mundane world is neither false, nor illusory, but a truth, a reality though shrouded in falsehood and illusion. One seeking for Truth must change one’s attitude to matter, “For this is the monstrous thing, the terrible and pitiless miracle of the material universe that out of this no-Mind a mind or, at least, minds emerge and find

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themselves struggling feebly for light, helpless individually, only less helpless when in self-defence they associate their individual feeblenesses in the midst of the giant Ignorance which is the law of the universe. Out of this heartless Inconscience and within its rigorous jurisdiction hearts have been born and aspire and are tortured and bleed under the weight of the blind and insentient cruelty of this iron existence, a cruelty which lays its law upon them and becomes sentient in their sentience, brutal, ferocious, horrible. But what after all, behind appearances, is this seeming mystery? We can see that it is the Consciousness which had lost itself returning again to itself, emerging out of its giant self-forgetfulness, slowly, painfully, as a Life that is would be sentient, half sentient, dimly sentient, wholly sentient and finally struggles to be more than sentient, to be again divinely self-conscious, free, infinite, immortal. But it works towards this under a law that is the opposite of all these things. Under the conditions of Matter, that is to say, against the grasp of the Ignorance. The movements it has to follow, the instruments it has to use are set and made for it by this brute and divided Matter and impose on it at every step ignorance and limitation.”

—“The Knot of Matter”, The Life Divine

A true spiritual education has to teach the students to recognise this relationship between Spirit and Matter, so that one neither looks down upon Matter and all the problems the material life presents, nor shuns Spirituality as a lesson in escapism. A spiritual education would prepare the student to face life armed with a greater faith and face with an outlook which is integral. His recognition of the problems of life will not depend entirely on their appearances; he will be able to delve deep into them and see the play of hidden forces behind them. He will be able to grow spiritually through tackling the hurdles, presented by life.

“All life is Yoga”, says Sri Aurobindo, giving a radically expansive definition to the concept of Yoga. The same can be said of education; all life is education. So far as the body is concerned, at least the present human body, it grows mechanically and grows old; so far as the growth of consciousness is concerned, it waits for man’s conscious aspiration and it never grows old!

In reply to a seeker’s query, the Mother said, “India has or rather had the knowledge of the Spirit, but she neglected matter and suffered for it. ”

“The West has the knowledge of matter but rejected the Spirit and suffered badly for it.

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“An integral education which could, with some variations, be adapted to all the nations of the world, must bring back the legitimate authority of the Spirit over a matter fully developed and utilised.” (Collected Works, Vol. 13)

Spirit, in a positive form, remained in man as the soul.

“.....each human being is a self-developing soul and the business of both parent and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being, not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material. It is not yet realised what this soul is or that the true secret, whether with child or man, is to help him to find his deeper self, the real psychic entity within. That, if we ever give it a chance to come forward, and still more if we call it into the foreground as ‘the leader of the march set in our front’, will itself take up most of the business of education out of our hands and develop the capacity of the psychological being towards a realisation of its potentialities of what our present mechanical view of life and man and external routine methods of dealing with them prevent us from having any experience or forming any conception.”

—Sri Aurobindo : The Human Cycle

The spiritual education is not a specific subject like history, geography or mathematics. It begins with the very formation of an individual’s consciousness. Today the proliferation of educational institutions and the phenomenal growth in student-population have made a personal relationship between the teacher and the pupil very difficult. The students feel harassed and they don’t mind harassing their educators in return.

“When the expanding youth generation comes to the academy, we expect it to master in a few years what the entire evolutionary adventure has accomplished so laboriously over all past ages. If the tasks of education were never easy, today they are bewilderingly more difficult than ever before. Too many students, alas: and too many loads of knowledge: and too meagre resources: and too little time at our disposal: and too much distraction to permit us to make really profitable use of even the available time! The aggregating situation is plainly impossible. Expansion seems already to have gone past the stage of profitable returns, and yet we feel helpless to arrest this growth, this madness, this headlong run towards racial suicide.”

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—Dr. K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar

Added to this situation are a hundred other factors, politics (by no means in a theoretical sense) making inroads into the campus, the influence of the irresponsible and anarchic explosion of vulgar entertainments through electronic and other media, etc. Where is the opportunity for spiritual education to claim their attention?

But, luckily, the key to ignite in the children a spiritual outlook is in the hands of those who have the sole monopoly of the child's attention and the sole hold on the child's time at the most important stage of the child's growth. Needless to say, they are the parents.

Next in importance, no doubt, is the teacher. Discussing with the teachers of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education the issue of teacher-student relationship and how a teacher can really exercise his or her influence on the students, the Mother said, "Teachers who are not perfectly calm, who do not have an endurance that never fails and a quietude which nothing can disturb, who have no self-respect... will get nowhere. One must be a saint and a hero to be a good teacher. One must have a perfect attitude to demand a perfect attitude from the students. You cannot ask anyone to do what you don't do yourself. That is a rule....

"... I have never asked anyone educated here to give lessons without seeing that this would be for him the best way of disciplining himself, of learning better what he is to teach and of reaching an inner perfection he would never have if he were not a teacher and had not this opportunity of disciplining himself, which is exceptionally severe. Those who succeed as teachers here—I don't mean an outer, artificial and superficial success, but becoming truly good teachers—this means that they are capable of making an inner progress of impersonalisation, of eliminating their egoism, controlling their movement, capable of a clear-sightedness, an understanding of others and a never-failing patience".

(Collected Works of the Mother, Vol. 8)

In a true system of education it is not the student alone who makes progress, but the teacher too does the same.

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INTEGRAL EDUCATION

Thoreau and Emerson, both alumni of Harvard, were once reminiscing over their alma mater, in the course of which Emerson is believed to have said that the University had by now all the branches of knowledge.

“Branches are fine”, Thoreau is believed to have commented. “But what about the roots?”

The primary purpose of education, if not forgotten, had remained ignored for long. Way back in 1909, Sri Aurobindo wrote in the *Karmayogin*. “The first necessity for the building up of a great intellectual superstructure is to provide a foundation strong enough to bear it. Those systems of education which start from an insufficient knowledge of man, think they have provided a satisfactory foundation when they have supplied the student with a large or well-selected mass of information on the various subjects which comprise the best part of human culture at the time. The school gives the materials, it is for the student to use them—this is the formula. But the error here is fundamental. Information cannot be the foundation of intelligence, it can only be part of the material out of which the knower builds knowledge, the starting-point, the nucleus of fresh discovery and enlarged creation. An education that confines itself to imparting knowledge, is not education. The various faculties of memory, judgement, imagination, perception, reasoning, which build the edifice of the thought and knowledge for the knower, must not only be equipped with their fit and sufficient tools and materials, but trained to bring fresh materials and use more skillfully those of which they are in possession. And the foundation of the structure they have to build, can only be the provision of a fund of force and energy sufficient to bear the demands of a continually growing activity of the memory, judgement and creative power.”

—The Brain of India

We find his concept of an ‘integral education’ already inherent in this passage, although the phrase was used much later by the Mother. In a series of articles published in the *Arya* in the second decade of the 20th century (subsequently compiled under the title *War and Self-Determination*), we find him laying emphasis on the child as a soul—a truth which any sound system of education must recognise, first and foremost, and then proceed to help its other faculties to develop.

“The child was in the ancient patriarchal idea the live property of the father; he was his creation, his production, his own reproduction of himself; the father, rather than God or the

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universal Life in place of God, stood as the author of the child's being; and the creator has every right over his creation, the producer over his manufacture. He had the right to make of him what he willed, and not what the being of the child really was within, to train and shape and cut him according to the parental ideas and not rear him according to his own nature's deepest needs, to bind him to the paternal career or the career chosen by the parent and not that to which his nature and capacity and inclination pointed, to fix for him all the critical turning-points of his life even after he had reached maturity. In education the child was regarded not as a soul meant to grow, but as brute psychological stuff to be shaped into a fixed mould by the teacher. We have travelled to another conception of the child as a soul with a being, a nature and capacities of his own who must be helped to find them, to find himself, to grow into their maturity, into a fullness of physical and vital energy and the utmost breadth, depth, and height of his emotional, his intellectual and his spiritual being."

Between the twenties and the thirties of the 20th century, Sri Aurobindo's seer-vision encompassed the entire range of human life—with all its activities, social, political, cultural, educational, etc., so much so that we do not know of any other savant in recorded history to have tackled so many subjects at so very lofty planes. His return to the issue of education again and again was unavoidable and again and again, in different contexts, he highlighted the unique role of the soul. Reflecting on the possible contribution of education to a divine life on earth, he says :

"But it has not been found in experience, whatever might have once been hoped, that education and intellectual training by itself can change man; it only provides the human individual and collective ego with better information and a more efficient machinery for its self-affirmation, but leaves it the same unchanged human ego. Nor can human mind and life be cut into perfection,—even into what is thought to be perfection, a constructed substitute,—by any kind of social machinery; matter can be so cut, thought can be so cut, but in our human existence matter and thought are only instruments for the soul and the life-force. Machinery cannot form the soul and life-force into standardised shapes; it can at best coerce them, make soul and mind inert and stationary and regulate the life's outward action; but if this is to be effectively done, coercion and compression of the mind and life are indispensable and that again spells either unprogressive stability or decadence. The reasoning mind with its logical practicality has no other way of getting the better of Nature's ambiguous and complex movements than a regulation and mechanisation of mind and life. If that is done, the soul of

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humanity will either have to recover its freedom and growth by a revolt and a destruction of the machine into whose grip it has been cast or escape by a withdrawal into itself and a rejection of life. Man's true way-out is to discover his soul and its self-force and instrumentation and replace by it both the mechanisation of mind and the ignorance and disorder of life-nature. But there would be little room and freedom for such a movement of self-discovery and self-effectuation in a closely regulated and mechanised social existence.”

—The Life Divine

Since Sri Aurobindo made this observation, mankind has witnessed several instances to corroborate it. Among many tumultuous events of the twentieth century is the World War II—revealing how fragile an assurance education and all the trappings of so-called civilized societies were against an upsurge of dark elements in man or against a hostile force taking possession of him—showing him as he is in his utter nakedness.

But when we meditate on the issue, we are most likely to arrive at an impasse. We stand convinced that the awakening of soul in man is the answer to the state of human predicament, but how to bring about the fulfilment of that condition?

There comes the relevance of Yoga.

But what is Yoga? While Yoga means union, union with the source of our being, people often understand by Yoga Hathayoga, practice of a system of physical postures, breath-control etc. to arrive at certain experience or to achieve certain powers. There are also other distinguished schools of Yoga: Rajayoga, which leads the seeker to various states of trance, Jnanayoga, a discipline to grow closer to the goal through Knowledge, Karmayoga and Bhaktiyoga which lead the seeker to the same goal through Action and Devotion respectively.

But Sri Aurobindo presents Yoga in a far more natural perspective. “In the right view of both life and Yoga, all life is either consciously or sub-consciously a Yoga”, he says and proceeds thus :

“For we mean by this term a methodised effort towards self-perfection by the expression of the potentialities latent in the being and a union of the human individual with the universal and transcendent Existence we see partially expressed in man and in the Cosmos. But all life,

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when we look behind its appearances, is a vast Yoga of Nature attempting to realise her perfection in an ever increasing expression of her potentialities and to unite herself with her own divine reality. In man, her thinker, she for the first time upon this Earth devises self-conscious means and willed arrangements of activity by which this great purpose may be more swiftly and puissantly attained. Yoga, as Swami Vivekananda has said, may be regarded as a means of compressing one's evolution into a single life or a few years or even a few months of bodily existence."

—"Life and Yoga", The Synthesis of Yoga

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