



Collaboration

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Man's road to spiritual supermanhood will be open when he declares boldly that all he has yet developed, including the intellect of which he is so rightly yet so vainly proud, are no longer sufficient for him, and that to uncase, discover, set free this greater Light within shall be henceforth his pervading occupation. Then will his philosophy, art, science, ethics, social existence, vital pursuits be no longer an exercise of mind and life, done for themselves, carried in a circle, but a means for the discovery of a greater Truth behind mind and life and for the bringing of its power into our human existence. We shall be on the right road to become ourselves, to find our true law of perfection, to live our true, satisfied existence in our real being and divine nature. ...Sri Aurobindo

Through *Collaboration* we hope to expand the scope of the work we have undertaken in providing information to and about those individuals and groups who are joined through their interest in the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother so that a greater communication can be established. Because we feel that one of the strongest links between those who have in some way been touched by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother is their writings, we will present extracts from their works in each issue.

We chose the passage from Sri Aurobindo, which we have titled "The Evolutionary Crisis," because it seemed very pertinent to the problems of today, when man is more and more faced with the question of the true meaning of his existence. Sri Aurobindo shows

Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics, all nationalities. The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity.

- *The Mother*

AUROVILLE ASSOCIATION

The meeting in early September of center representatives and individuals interested in helping Auroville and increasing coordination was attended by about 45 people, a far greater number than had been anticipated. A strong spirit of unity and harmony prevailed. Various aspects of the problems of aiding Auroville were discussed in small work groups and reports delivered to the full convocation. Some proposed actions of the meeting:

1. Publication of an Auroville newsletter, *AURA*, to be issued from the Auroville Association periodically to give news of Auroville and of work in North America in connection with and developments concerning Auroville (changes in passport and visa regulations, e.g.).

2. Making such meetings an annual event. Matagiri was proposed as a possible host for the next meeting (probably September 1975).

why all that has till now sustained man in his search is failing and he points the way to the establishment of the

divine life on earth.

The passage from the Mother, which we have called "Spiritual Truth and the Nature of Religion," brings the concepts expressed by Sri Aurobindo directly to bear on the life process.

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Readers are invited to send names and addresses of people they feel would like to receive copies of *Collaboration*.

We would welcome any pertinent news from our readers for inclusion in *Collaboration*.

3. A new Sri Aurobindo meditation and study group in the Bay area. Anyone interested in attending their weekly meetings may contact Ken and Marti Gilbert, 435 11th Ave., San Francisco, CA 94118.

4. The Auroville Association is also maintaining lists of urgent Auroville needs and names of people who are planning to visit Auroville and would be willing to take needed items with them.

For further information, write Auroville Association, 212 Farley Drive, Aptos, CA 95003.

AUROVILLE

An Auroville information and administration center has been established at Unity, an Auroville community, to coordinate, funds, skills, and information about projects, etc. (From *AURA*.)

Work on the Matrimandir is proceeding slowly because of a cement shortage.

SRI AUROBINDO SOCIETY

The Sri Aurobindo Society has now opened an International Section to serve Sri Aurobindo and Auroville centers outside India. This section will provide films, tapes, slides, etc., to centers, disseminate information about their activities and assist in their development. Suggestions are welcome: International Section, Sri Aurobindo Society, Pondicherry, India 605002.

NEWS OF CENTERS

Matagiri: Muriel and Joseph Spanier have begun to schedule a slide presentation on Auroville. They are planning a trip through the Southern states between January 6 and February 17, 1975 and through the

•Midwest and Southwest between April 21 and June 7 and will be happy to make this presentation to any interested groups. Please write to Matagiri for further information.

East-West Cultural Center (2865 West Ninth St., Los Angeles, CA 90006): Ongoing classes for gifted children, classes in Sanskrit and Sri Aurobindo, regular meetings. Dr. Judith Tyberg, founder of the center, will conduct courses in Sanskrit, Hinduism and Indian philosophy under the auspices of the College of Oriental Studies, an accredited graduate school.

SriAurobindo Society, Washington branch (% Naren Raichura, 657 Huston Ave., Tacoma Park, MD 20012): Study group on Integral Yoga and Transformation.

Future Chiki (Box 1419, Salmon Arm, B.C., Canada): "An international center of information and materials for the (physical, vital, mental, spiritual) development of the child of tite future. A project unobtrusively but centrally guided by the philosophy and spirit of Sri Aurobindo." The center, which will be developing education and educational toys, films and film strips, is operated by Horst and Dorothy Bohme, puppeteers and filmmakers for 20 years. This is a residential community and interested workers are invited to communicate with them.

California Institute of Asian Studies (3494 21st St.,

San Francisco, CA 94110) has established the Integral Counseling Program, whose primary focus is the contribution of Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga and its relationship to recent innovations in humanistic and transpersonal therapies. This doctoral and postdoctoral program concentrates on training competent counseling psychologists for careers in higher education, community agencies, and private and group practice of Integral Therapy. Interested students should write to the Registrar at the Institute.

GENERAL NEWS

Sri Aurobindo or The Adventure of Consciousness by Satprem was published in the United States on 13 November by Harper & Row in conjunction with the Lindisfarne Association, in both a cloth and a paperback edition. (See New Titles listing enclosed.)

Dr. Vasant V. Merchant (Box 6031, Humanities Department, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ 86001) arranged 2 displays recently: one on Sri Aurobindo's views on art, in August; and one on Aurovifie, in November. Miss Merchant also conducts a study group in the works of Sri Aurobindo.

A Pilgrim's Guide to Planet Earth, recently published by Spiritual Community Publications, contains a paragraph on Auroville as well as a brief entry on the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, with a photo of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, and quotations from each. The book is a guide to spiritual centers and locales throughout the world.

***** THE EVOLUTIONARY CRISIS Sri Aurobindo

The individual is indeed the key of the evolutionary movement; for it is the individual who finds himself, who becomes conscious of the Reality. The movement of the collectivity is a largely subconscious mass-movement; it has to formulate and express itself through the individuals to become conscious:

its general mass-consciousness is always less evolved than the consciousness of its most developed individuals, and it progresses in so far as it accepts their impress or develops what they develop. The individual does not owe his ultimate allegiance either to the State which is a machine or to the community which is a part of life and not the whole of life: his allegiance must be to the Truth, the Self, the Spirit, the Divine which is in him and in all; not to subordinate or lose himself in the mass, but to find and express that truth of being in himself and help the community and humanity in its seeking for its own truth and fullness of being must be his real object of existence. But the extent to which the power of the individual life or the spiritual Reality within it becomes operative, depends on his own development: so long as he is undeveloped, he has to subordinate in many ways his undeveloped self to whatever is greater than it. As he develops, he moves towards a spiritual freedom, but this freedom is not something entirely separate from all-existence; it has a solidarity with it because that too is the Self, the same Spirit. As he moves towards spiritual freedom, he moves also towards spiritual oneness. The spiritually realised, the liberated man is preoccupied, says the Gita, with the good of

all beings; Buddha discovering the way of Nirvana must turn back to open that way to those who are still under the delusion of their constructive instead of their real being, – or non-being; Vivekananda, drawn by the Absolute, feels also the call of the disguised Godhead in humanity and most the call of the fallen and the suffering, the call of the self to the self in the obscure body of the universe. For the awakened individual the realisation of his truth of being and his inner liberation and perfection must be his primary seeking, – first, because that is the call of the Spirit within him, but also because it is only by liberation and perfection and realisation of the truth of being that man can arrive at truth of living. A perfected community also can exist only by the perfection of its individuals, and perfection can come only by the discovery and affirmation in life by each of his own spiritual being and the discovery by all of their spiritual unity and a resultant life-unity. There can be no real perfection for us except by our inner self and truth of spiritual existence taking up all truth of the instrumental existence into itself and giving to it oneness, integration, harmony. As our only real freedom is the discovery and disengagement of the spiritual Reality within us, so our only means of true perfection is the sovereignty and self-effectuation of the spiritual Reality in all the elements of our nature.

Our nature is complex and we have to find a key to some perfect unity and fullness of its complexity. Its first evolutionary basis is the material life: Nature began with that and

man also has to begin with it; he has first to affirm his material and vital existence. But if he stops there, there can be for him no evolution; his next and greater preoccupation must be to find himself as a mental being in a material life, – both individual and social, – as perfected as possible. This was the direction which the Hellenic idea gave to European civilisation, and the Roman reinforced, – or weakened, – it with the ideal of organised power: the cult of reason, the interpretation of life by an intellectual thought critical, utilitarian, organising and constructive, the government of life by Science are the last outcome of this inspiration. But in ancient times the higher creative and dynamic element was the pursuit of an ideal truth, good and beauty and the moulding of mind, life and body into perfection and harmony by this ideal. Beyond and above this preoccupation, as soon as mind is sufficiently developed, there awakes in man the spiritual preoccupation, the discovery of a self and inmost truth of being and the release of man's mind and life into the truth of the Spirit, its perfection by the power of the Spirit, the solidarity, unity mutuality of all beings in the Spirit. This was the Eastern ideal carried by Buddhism and other ancient disciplines to the coasts of Asia and Egypt and from there poured by Christianity into Europe. But these motives, burning for a time like dim torchlights in the confusion and darkness created by the barbaric flood that had submerged the old civilisations, have been abandoned by the modern spirit which has found another light, the light of Science. What the modern spirit has sought for is the economic social ultimate, – an ideal material organisation of civilisation and comfort, the use of reason and science and education for the generalisation of a utilitarian rationality which will make the individual a perfected social being in a perfected economic society. What remained from the spiritual ideal was, – for a time, – a mentalised and moralised humanitarianism relieved of all religious colouring and a social ethicism which was deemed all-sufficient to take the place of a religious and individual ethic. It was so far that the race had reached when it found itself hurried forward by its own momentum into a subjective chaos and a chaos of its life in which all received values were overthrown and all firm ground seemed to disappear from its social organisation, its conduct and its culture.

For this ideal, this conscious stress on the material and economic life was in fact a civilised reversion to the first state of man, his early barbaric state and its preoccupation with life and matter, a spiritual retrogression with the resources of the mind of a developed humanity and a fully evolved Science at its disposal. As an element in the total complexity of human life this stress on a perfected economic and material existence has its place in the whole: as a sole or predominant stress it is for humanity itself, for the evolution itself full of danger. The first danger is a resurgence of the old vital and material primitive barbarian in a civilised form; the means Science has put at our disposal eliminates the peril of the subversion and destruction of an effete civilisation by stronger primitive peoples, but it is the resurgence of the barbarian in ourselves, in civilised man, that is the peril, and this we see all around us. For that is bound to come if there is no high and strenuous mental and moral ideal controlling and uplifting the vital and physical man in us and no spiritual ideal liberating him from himself into his inner being. Even if this relapse is escaped, there is another

danger, – for a cessation of the evolutionary urge, a crystallisation into a stable comfortable mechanised social living without ideal or outlook is another possible outcome. Reason by itself cannot long maintain the race in its progress; it can do so only if it is a mediator between the life and body and something higher and greater within him; for it is the inner spiritual necessity, the push from what is there yet unrealised within him that maintains in him, once he has attained to mind, the evolutionary stress, the spiritual *nisus*. That renounced, he must either relapse and begin all over again or disappear like other forms of life before him as an evolutionary failure, through incapacity to maintain or to serve the evolutionary urge. At the best he will remain arrested in some kind of mediary typical perfection, like other animal kinds, while Nature pursues her way beyond him to a greater creation.

At present mankind is undergoing an evolutionary crisis in which is concealed a choice of its destiny; for a stage has been reached in which the human mind has achieved in certain directions an enormous development while in others it stands arrested and bewildered and can no longer find its way. A structure of the external life has been raised up by man's ever-active mind and life-will, a structure of an unmanageable hugeness and complexity, for the service of his mental, vital, physical claims and urges, a complex political, social, administrative, economic, cultural machinery, an organised collective means for his intellectual, sensational, aesthetic and material satisfaction. Man has created a system of civilisation which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilise and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blundering ego and its appetites. For no greater seeing mind, no intuitive soul of knowledge has yet come to his surface of consciousness which could make this basic fullness of life a condition for the free growth of something that exceeded it. This new fullness of the means of life might be, by its power for a release from the incessant unsatisfied stress of his economic and physical needs, an opportunity for the full pursuit of other and greater aims surpassing the material existence, for the discovery of a higher truth and good and beauty, for the discovery of a greater and diviner spirit which would intervene and use life for a higher perfection of the being: but it is being used instead for the multiplication of new wants and an aggressive expansion of the collective ego. At the same time Science has put at his disposal many potencies of the universal Force and has made the life of humanity materially one; but what uses this universal Force is a little human individual or communal ego with nothing universal in its light of knowledge or its movements, no inner sense or power which would create in this physical drawing together of the human world a true life-unity, a mental unity or a spiritual oneness. All that is there is a chaos of clashing mental ideas, urges of individual and collective physical want and need, vital claims and desires, impulses of an ignorant life-push, hungers and calls for life satisfaction of individuals, classes, nations, a rich fungus of political and social and economic nostrums and notions, a hustling medley of slogans and panaceas for which men are ready to oppress and be oppressed, to kill and be killed, to impose them somehow or other by the immense and too formidable means placed at his disposal, in the belief that this is his way out to something ideal.

The evolution of human mind and life must necessarily lead towards an increasing universality; but on a basis of ego and segmenting and dividing mind this opening to the universal can only create a vast pullulation of unaccorded ideas and impulses, a surge of enormous powers and desires, a chaotic mass of unassimilated and intermixed mental, vital and physical material of a larger existence which, because it is not taken up by a creative harmonising light of the Spirit, must welter in a universalised confusion and discord out of which it is impossible to build a greater harmonic life. Man has harmonised life in the past by organised ideation and limitation; he has created societies based on fixed ideas or fixed customs, a fixed cultural system or an organic life-system, each with its own order; the throwing of all these into the melting-pot of a more and more intermingling life and a pouring in of ever new ideas and motives and facts and possibilities call for a new, a greater consciousness to meet and master the increasing potentialities of existence and harmonise them. Reason and Science can only help by standardising, by fixing everything into an artificially arranged and mechanised unity of material life. A greater whole-being, whole-knowledge, whole-power is needed to weld all into a greater unity of whole-life.

A life of unity, mutuality and harmony born of a deeper and wider truth of our being is the only truth of life that can successfully replace the imperfect mental constructions of the past which were a combination of association and regulated conflict, an accommodation of egos and interests grouped or dovetailed into each other to form a society, a consolidation by common general life-motives, a unification by need and the pressure of struggle with outside forces. It is such a change and such a reshaping of life for which humanity is blindly beginning to seek, now more and more with a sense that its very existence depends upon finding the way. The evolution of Mind working upon Life has developed an organisation of the activity of Mind and use of Matter which can no longer be supported by human capacity without an inner change. An accommodation of the egocentric human individuality, separative even in association, to a system of living which demands unity, perfect mutuality, harmony, is imperative. But because the burden which is being laid on mankind is too great for the present littleness of the human personality and its petty mind and small life-instincts, because it cannot operate the needed change, because it is using this new apparatus and organisation to serve the old infraspirtual and infrarational life-self of humanity, the destiny of the race seems to be heading dangerously, as if impatiently and in spite of itself, under the drive of the vital ego seized by colossal forces which are on the same scale as the huge mechanical organisation of life and scientific knowledge which it has evolved, a scale too large for its reason and will to handle, into a prolonged confusion and perilous crisis and darkness of violent shifting incertitude. Even if this turns out to be a passing phase or appearance and a tolerable structural accommodation is found which will enable mankind to proceed less catastrophically on its uncertain journey, this can only be a respite. For the problem is fundamental and in putting it evolutionary Nature in man is confronting herself with a critical choice which must one day be solved in the true sense if the race is to arrive or even to survive. The evolutionary nisus is pushing towards a development of the cosmic Force in terrestrial life which needs a larger mental

and vital being to support it, a wider Mind, a greater wider more conscious unanimitised Life-Soul, Aninia, and that again needs an unveiling of the supporting Soul and spiritual Self within to maintain it.

A rational and scientific formula of the vitalistic and materialistic human being and his life, a search for a perfected economic society and the democratic cultus of the average man are all that the modern mind presents us in this crisis as a light for its solution. Whatever the truth supporting these ideas, this is clearly not enough to meet the need of a humanity which is missioned to evolve beyond itself or, at any rate, if it is to live, must evolve far beyond anything that it at present is. A life-instinct in the race and in the average man himself has felt the inadequacy and has been driving towards a reversal of values or a discovery of new values and a transfer of life to a new foundation. This has taken the form of an attempt to find a simple and ready-made basis of unity, mutuality, harmony for the common life, to enforce it by a suppression of the competitive clash of egos and so to arrive at a life of identity for the community in place of a life of difference. But to realise these desirable ends the means adopted have been the forcible and successful materialisation of a few restricted ideas or slogans enthroned to the exclusion of all other thought, the suppression of the mind of the individual, a mechanised compression of the elements of life, a mechanised unity and drive of the life-force, a coercion of man by the State, the substitution of the communal for the individual ego. The communal ego is idealised as the soul of the nation, the race, the community; but this is a colossal and may turn out to be a fatal error. A forced and imposed unanimity of mind, life, action raised to their highest tension under the drive of something which is thought to be greater, the collective soul, the collective life, is the formula found. But this obscure collective being is not the soul or self of the community; it is a life-force that rises from the subconscious and, if denied the light of guidance by the reason, can be driven only by dark massive forces which are powerful but dangerous for the race because they are alien to the conscious evolution of which man is the trustee and bearer. It is not in this direction that evolutionary Nature has pointed mankind; this is a reversion towards something that she had left behind her.

Another solution that is attempted reposes still on the materialistic reason and a unified organisation of the economic life of the race; but the method that is being employed is the same, a forced compression and imposed unanimity of mind and life and a mechanical organisation of the communal existence. A unanimity of this kind can only be maintained by a compression of all freedom of thought and life, and that must bring about either the efficient stability of a termite civilisation or a drying up of the springs of life and a swift or slow decadence. It is through the growth of consciousness that the collective soul and its life can become aware of itself and develop; the free play of mind and life is essential for the growth of consciousness: for mind and life are the soul's only instrumentation until a higher instrumentation develops; they must not be inhibited in their action or rendered rigid, unpiastic and unprogressive. The difficulties or disorders engendered by the growth of the individual mind and life cannot be healthily removed by the suppression of the individual; the true cure can only be achieved by his progression to a greater consciousness in which he is fulfilled and perfected.

An alternative solution is the development of an enlightened reason and will of the normal man consenting to a new socialised life in which he will subordinate his ego for the sake of the right arrangement of the life of the community. If we inquire how this radical change is to be brought about, two agencies seem to be suggested, the agency of a greater and better mental knowledge, right ideas, right information, right training of the social and civic individual and the agency of a new social machinery which will solve everything by the magic of the social machine cutting humanity into a better pattern. 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 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

SPIRITUAL TRUTH AND THE NATURE OF RELIGION

The Mother

Religion belongs to the higher mind of humanity. It is the effort of man's higher mind to approach, as far as lies in its power, something beyond it, something to which humanity gives the name God or Spirit or Truth or Faith or Knowledge or the Infinite, some kind of Absolute, which the human mind cannot reach and yet tries to reach. Religion may be divine in its ultimate origin; in its actual nature it is not divine but human. In truth we should speak rather of religions than of religion; for the religions made by man are many. These different religions, even when they had not the same origin, have most of them been made in the same way. We know how the Christian religion came into existence. It was certainly not Jesus who made what is known as Christianity, but some learned and very clever men put their heads together and built it up into the thing we see. There was nothing divine in the way in which it was formed, and there is nothing divine either in the way in which it functions. And yet the excuse or occasion for the formation was undoubtedly some revelation from what one could call a Divine Being, a Being who came from elsewhere bringing down with him from a higher plane a certain Knowledge and Truth for the earth. He came and suffered for his Truth; but very few understood what he said,

would be little room and freedom for such a movement of self-discovery and self-effectuation in a closely regulated and mechanised social existence.

There is the possibility that in the swing back from a mechanistic idea of life and society the human mind may seek refuge in a return to the religious idea and a society governed or sanctioned by religion. But organised religion, though it can provide a means of inner uplift for the individual and preserve in it or behind it a way for his opening to spiritual experience, has not changed human life and society; it could not do so because, in governing society, it had to compromise with the lower parts of life and could not insist on the inner change of the whole being; it could insist only on a credal adherence, a formal acceptance of its ethical standards and a conformity to institution, ceremony and ritual. Religion so conceived can give a religio-ethical colour or surface tinge, – sometimes, if it maintains a strong kernel of inner experience, it can generalise to some extent an incomplete spiritual tendency; but it does not transform the race, it cannot create a new principle of the human existence. A total spiritual direction given to the whole life and the whole nature can alone lift humanity beyond itself. Another possible conception akin to the religious solution is the guidance of society by men of spiritual attainment, the brotherhood or unity of all in the faith or in the discipline, the spiritualisation of life and society by the taking up of the old machinery of life into such a unification or inventing a new machinery. This too has been attempted before without success; it was the original founding idea of more than one religion: but the human ego and vital nature were too strong for a religious idea working on the mind and by the mind to overcome its resistance. It is only the full emergence of the soul, the full descent of the native light and power of the Spirit and the consequent replacement or transformation and uplifting of our insufficient mental and vital nature by a spiritual and supramental Supernature that can effect this evolutionary miracle.

The Life Divine

few cared to find and hold to the Truth for which he suffered. Buddha retired from the world, sat down in meditation and discovered a way out of earthly suffering and misery, out of all this illness and death and desire and sin and hunger. He saw a Truth which he endeavoured to express and communicate to the disciples and followers who gathered around him. But even before he was dead, his teaching had already begun to be twisted and distorted. It was only after his disappearance that Buddhism as a full-fledged religion reared its head founded upon what the Buddha is supposed to have said and on the supposed significance of these reported sayings. But soon too, because the disciples and the disciples' disciples, could not agree on what the Master had said or what he meant by his utterances, there grew up a host of sects and, sub-sects in the body of the parent religion — a Southern Path, a Northern Path, a Far Eastern Path, each of them claiming to be the only, the original, the undefiled doctrine of the Buddha. The same fate overtook the teaching of the Christ; that too came to be made in the same way into a set and organised religion. It is often said that, if Jesus came back, he would not be able to recognise what he taught in the

forms that have been imposed on it, and if Buddha were to come back and see what has been made of his teaching, he would immediately run back discouraged to Nirvana! All religions have each the same story to tell. The occasion for its birth is the coming of a great Teacher of the world. He comes and reveals and is the incarnation of a Divine Truth. But men seize upon it, trade upon it, make an almost political organisation out of it. The religion is equipped by them with a government and policy and laws, with its creeds and dogmas, its rules and regulations, its rites and ceremonies, all binding upon its adherents, all absolute and inviolable. Like the State, it too administers rewards to the loyal and assigns punishments for those that revolt or go astray, for the heretic and the renegade.

The first and principal article of these established and formal religions runs always, "Mine is the supreme, the only truth, all others are in falsehood or inferior." For without this fundamental dogma, established credal religions could not have existed. If you do not believe and proclaim that you alone possess the one or the highest truth, you will not be able to impress people and make them flock to you.

This attitude is natural to the religious mind; but it is just that which makes religion stand in the way of the spiritual life. The articles and dogmas of a religion are mind-made things and, if you cling to them and shut yourself up in a code of life made out for you, you do not know and cannot know the truth of the spirit that lies beyond all codes and dogmas, wide and large and free. When you stop at a religious creed and tie yourself in it, taking it for the only truth in the world, you stop the advance and widening of your inner soul. But if you look at religion from another angle, it 'need not always be an obstacle to all men. If you regard it as one of the higher activities of humanity and if you can see in it the aspirations of man without ignoring the imperfection of all man-made things, it may well be a kind of help for you to approach the spiritual life. Taking it up in a serious and earnest spirit, you can try to find out what truth is there, what aspiration lies hidden in it, what divine inspiration has undergone transformation and deformation here by the human mind and a human organisation, and with an appropriate mental stand you can get religion even as it is to throw some light on your way and to lend some support to your spiritual endeavour.

In all religions we find invariably a certain number of people who possess a great emotional capacity and are full of a real and ardent aspiration, but have a very simple mind and do not feel the need of approaching the Divine through knowledge. For such natures religion has a use and it is even necessary for them; for, through external forms, like the ceremonies of the Church, it offers a kind of support and help to their inner spiritual aspiration. In every religion there are some who have evolved a high spiritual life. But it is not the religion that gave them their spirituality; it is they who have put their spirituality into the religion. Put anywhere else, born into any other cult, they would have found there and lived there the same spiritual life. It is their own capacity, it is some power of their inner being and not the religion they profess that has made them what they are. This power in their nature is such that religion to them does not become a slavery or a bondage. Only as they have not a strong, clear and active mind, they need to believe in this or that creed as absolutely

true and to give themselves up to it without any disturbing question or doubt. I have met in all religions people of this kind and it would be a crime to disturb their faith. For them religion is not an obstacle. An obstacle for those 'who can go farther, it may be a help for those who cannot, but are yet able to travel a certain distance on the paths of the Spirit. Religion has been an impulse to the worst things and the best; if the fiercest wars have been waged and the most hideous persecutions carried on in its name, it has stimulated too supreme heroism and self-sacrifice in its cause. Along with philosophy it marks the limit the human mind has reached in its highest activities. It is an impediment and a chain if you are a slave to its outer body; if you know how to use its inner substance, it can be your jumping-board into the realm of the Spirit.

One who holds a particular faith or who has found out some truth, is disposed to think that he alone has found the Truth, whole and entire. This is human nature. A mixture of falsehood seems necessary for human beings to stand on their legs and move on their way. If the vision of the Truth were suddenly given to them they would be crushed under the weight.

Each time that something of the Divine Truth and the Divine Force comes down to manifest upon earth, some change is effected in the earth's atmosphere. In the descent, those who are receptive are awakened to some inspiration from it, some touch, some beginning of sight. If they were capable of holding and expressing rightly what they receive, they would say, "A great force has come down; I am in contact with it and what I understand of it, I will tell you." But most of them are not capable of that, because they have small minds. They get illumined, possessed, as it were, and cry, "I have the Divine Truth, I possess it whole and entire." There are now upon earth at least two dozen Christs, if not as many Buddhas; India alone can supply any number of Avatars, not to speak of minor manifestations. But in this way, the whole thing begins to look grotesque; but if you see what is behind, it is not so stupid as it seems at the first glance. The truth is that the human personality' has come in contact with some Being, some Power, and under the influence of education ..and tradition calls it Buddha or Christ or by any other familiar name. It is difficult to affirm that it was Buddha himself or the very Christ with whom there was the contact, but none can assert either that the inspiration did not come from that which inspired the Christ or the Buddha. These human vessels may very well have received the inspiration from some such source. If they were modest and simple, they would be content to say that much and no more; they would say, "I have received this inspiration from such and such a Great One," but instead they proclaim, "I am that Great One." I knew one who affirmed that he was both Christ and Buddha! He had received something, had experienced a truth, had seen the Divine Presence in himself and in others. But the experience was too strong for him, the truth too great. He became half crazy and the next day went out into the streets, proclaiming that in him Christ and Buddha had become one.

One Divine Consciousness is here working through all these beings, preparing its way through all these manifestations. At this day it is here at work upon earth more power-

fully than it has ever been before. There are some who receive its touch in some way, or to some degree; but what they receive they distort, they make their own thing out of it. Others feel the touch but cannot bear the force and go mad under the pressure. But some have the capacity to receive and the strength to bear, and it is they who will become the vessels of the full knowledge, the chosen instruments and agents.

If you want to appraise the real value of the religion in which you are born or brought up or to have 'a correct perspective of the country or society to which you belong by birth, if you want to find out how relative a thing the particular environment is into which you happened to be thrown and confined, you have only to go round the earth and see that what you think good is looked upon as bad elsewhere and what is considered as bad in one place is welcomed as good in another. All countries and all religions are built up out of a mass of traditions. In all of them you will meet saints and heroes and great and mighty personalities as well as small and wicked people. You will then perceive what a mockery it is to say, "Because I am brought up in this religion, therefore it is the only true religion; because I am born in this country, therefore it is the best of all countries." One might as well make the same claim for his family,

- 'Because I come of this family that has lived in the same place for so many years or so many centuries, therefore I am bound by its traditions; they alone are the ideal.'

Things have an inner value and become real to you only when you have acquired them by the exercise of your free choice, not when they have been imposed upon you. If you want to be sure of your religion, you must choose it; if you want to be sure of your country, you must choose it; if you want to be sure of your family, even that you must choose. If you accept without question what has been given you by Chance, you can never be sure whether it is good or bad for you, whether it is the true thing for your life. Step back from all that forms your natural environment or inheritance, made up and forced upon you by Nature's blind mechanical process; draw within and look quietly and dispassionately at things. Appraise them, choose freely. Then you can say with an inner truth, "This is my family, this my country, this my religion."

If we go a little way within ourselves, we shall discover that there is in each of us a consciousness that has been living throughout the ages and manifesting in a multitude of forms. Each of us has been born in many different countries, belonged to many different nations, followed many different religions. Why must we accept the last one as the best? The experiences gathered by us in all these many lives in different countries and varying religions, are stored up in that inner continuity of our consciousness which persists through all births. There are multiple personalities there created by these past experiences, and when we become aware of this multitude within us, it becomes impossible to speak of one particular form of truth as the only truth, one country as our only country, one religion as the only true religion. There are people who have been born into one country, although the leading elements of their consciousness obviously belong to another. I have met some born in Europe who were evidently

Indians; I have met others born in Indian bodies who were as evidently Europeans. In Japan I have met some who were Indian, others who were European. And if any of them goes to the country or enters into the civilisation to which he has affinity, he finds himself there perfectly at home.

If your aim is to be free, in the freedom of the Spirit, you must get rid of all the tics that are not the inner truth of your being, but come from subconscious habits. If you wish to consecrate yourself entirely, absolutely and exclusively to the Divine, you must do it in all completeness; you must not leave bits of yourself tied here and there. You may object that it is not easy to cut away altogether from one's moorings. But have you never looked back and observed the changes that have taken place in you in the course of a few years? When you do that, almost always you ask yourself how it was that you could have felt in the way you felt and acted as you did act in certain circumstances; at times, even, you can no longer recognise yourself in the person you were only ten years ago. How can you then bind yourself to what was or to what is or how can you fix beforehand what may or may not be in the future?

All your relations must be newly built upon an inner freedom of choice. The traditions in which you live or are brought up have been imposed on you by the pressure of the environment or by the general mind or by the choice of others. There is an element of compulsion in your acquiescence. Religion itself has been imposed on men; it is often supported by a suggestion of religious fear or by some spiritual or other menace. There can be no such imposition in your relation with the Divine; it must be free, your own mind's and heart's choice, taken up with enthusiasm and joy. What union can that be in which one trembles and says, "I am compelled, I cannot do otherwise"? Truth is self-evident and has not to be imposed upon the world. It does not feel the need of being accepted by men. For it is self-existent; it does not live by what people say of it or on their adherence. But one who is founding a religion needs to have many followers. The strength and greatness of religion is adjudged by men according to the number of those that follow it, although the real greatness is not there. The greatness of spiritual truth is not in numbers. I knew the head of a new religion, the son of its founder, and heard him say once that such and such a religion took so many hundreds of years to be built up, and such another so many hundreds of years, but they within fifty years had already over four million followers. "And so you see," he added, "what a great religion is ours!" Religions may reckon their greatness by the number of their believers, but Truth would still be Truth if it had not even a single follower. The average man is drawn towards those who make great pretensions; he does not go where Truth is quietly manifesting. Those who make great pretensions need to proclaim loudly and to advertise; for otherwise they would not attract great numbers of people. The work that is done with no care for what people think of it is not so well-known, does not so easily draw multitudes. But Truth requires no advertisement; it does not hide itself but it does not proclaim itself either. It is content to manifest, regardless of results, not seeking approbation or shunning disapprobation, not attracted or troubled by the world's acceptance or denial.

When you come to the Yoga, you must be ready to have all your mental buildings and all your vital scaffoldings

shattered to pieces. You must be prepared to be suspended in the air with nothing to support you except your faith. You will have to forget your past self and its clings altogether, to pluck it out of your consciousness and be born anew, free from every kind of bondage. Think not of what

you were, but of what you aspire to be; be altogether in what you want to realise. Turn from your dead past and look straight towards the future. Your religion, country, family lie there; it is the DIVINE.

Conversations

EVOLUTION

Sri Aurobindo

ALL is not finished in the Unseen's decree!
A mind beyond our mind demands our ken;
A life of unimagined harmony
Awaits, concealed, the grasp of unborn men.

The crude beginnings of the lifeless earth
And mindless stirrings of the plant and tree
Prepared our thought; thought for a godlike birth
Broadens the mould of our mortality.

A might no human will or force could gain,
A knowledge seated in eternity,
A joy beyond our struggle and our pain
Is this earth-hampered creature's destiny.

O Thou who climbedst to mind from the dull stone,
Turn to the miracled summits yet unwon.



Collaboration

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