

THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF WORLD CULTURE

Basavanagudi, Bangalore - 4.

India and the New Millennium

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Transaction - 104

Prof. N.A. Nikam Memorial Lecture

on 9 October 2001 Tuesday 6.15 p.m.

The Indian Institute of World Culture

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The Weight of Mediaevalism

India is a land of plenty. She is rich in every respect. She is Bankim Chandra's land of hurrying streams and bright orchard gleams, *sujalam-suphalam*. Here flourished great kingdoms, here flourished arts and sciences and crafts, grew industry, commerce, trade. From here spread wisdom and knowledge all over the world.

Even today India is rich in every respect. Indians may be poor but India is not poor. The soul of the country is as bright as the sun in a clear cloudless sky. But it is unfortunate that we do not live in it. We do not live in the bright splendor of its day. We do not know our own souls. We have lost contact with our inner being. We are sleeping the sleep of mediaeval ages. The unfortunate history of the last thousand years is weighing heavily on our mind and heart and body, on our spirit. But the backlash of time must be removed. We must return to the foundational principles and values of our nation. We must see the causes where we failed. We must awake to the call of Vivekananda. Let us see what happened during the last couple of centuries. Emperor Shahjahan spent crores of rupees in seven years to get his famous peacock throne made. It was studded with some of the costliest precious stones, with rare diamonds and emeralds. But alas! It is no more there now. The raider Nadir Shah was attracted by it and took it away with him. Later the East India Company snatched it and shipped it to England. But it was not to reach there. The ship carrying it sank in the sea and the attempt to recover it proved futile.

And about Taj Mahal? The labour cost alone by today's wages comes to about Rs. 2000 crores. 20,000 workers toiled for years and 1000 elephants were employed to transport the construction material. No doubt here is a piece of wonder, enchanting in its lyricism. But then that is how the taxpayers' money was squandered.

The ancient Indian precepts of governance were different. They affirmed that the taxes collected from the citizens represent the wages of the king. These were paid to him for the performance of kingly duties, duties towards the people of the kingdom. He is expected to give them protection. He is expected to maintain law and order. He is expected to promote activities of trade and commerce. Indeed he must promote not only arts and sciences and industries but also culture. He stands for values and must unswervingly uphold these.

But during the period of recent history, of some thousand years, India slipped into a terrible abyss of darkness. Invasion after relentless invasion sucked away the vitality of the country. The bright days of abundant prosperity turned into the nights of spiritual and cultural destitution. When Europe was making giant strides in various walks of life, India remained covered under the tamas of the age. Foolish battles were fought and won for foolish gains. We were in deep sleep.

In the 1757 Battle of Plassey the Nawab of Bengal was defeated by Clive. Another dishonour was inflicted on the psyche of the country. Clive claimed from Mir Jafar £ 40 million and huge personal revenue of £ 30,000 a year. India was since then systematically plundered and reduced to a lifeless object. The land of rich hurrying streams and bright orchard gleams, *sujalam-suphalam* became a forlorn country, as if forsaken by the Goddess of Greatness.

"It is a country of inexhaustible riches and one which cannot fail to make its masters the richest corporation in the world."

This is what Clive wrote back home after arriving in India. Since then has been the systematic "transfer of poverty" to that country of inexhaustible riches. The last ten centuries

were the worst in Indian history.

But what about today? Are we awake? Maybe we are just emerging out of the distasteful sleep of history. But we have not yet shed dullness of the night which is still weighing pretty heavily on our souls. We have not recovered our true national identity. We are still slaves of habit that has no business to persist. In every field of our current activity we want to be a la mode by following ideas and manners of the industrially advanced societies. We are apish. We are, copyists, twice removed from reality; we are a copy of a copy.

Our brushes do not paint the noble goddess of the country. Our chords do not play the true music. The song of the soul is not to be heard. In our music the deeper echoes of life are absent. Most of the time our creations are but titillating creations. These can be hardly satisfying. These cannot lift us up to the worlds of truth and beauty and joy. We want secular art but it leaves no room for the spirit's expression.

Corrupt societies can never be creative. Imitative societies can never be taken seriously. None of them can be progressive. In fact sooner than later they will become slaves. They will become slaves to more powerful societies. Tamas will prevail. It shall dull the faculties of courage, stateliness, honour, free thought, sublimity of feeling, of will to be and will to improve and advance. The spirit of adventure, the spirit of climbing the mountains or crossing the dangerous seas or launching ourselves into the depths of starlit spaces will disappear.

But they shall prove the heroes who will steal the Promethean fire. We are looking for adventurers marching in celebration of the Truth. It is for them that the Lady of the Lake is holding in her uplifted hand the sword of triumph. Whence shall come such ones?

We do not have men "fit for the times". But there is the expectation that the soul of the country shall awake. It shall arise from the Yajna of the Tapasvins. It shall arise like a radiant goddess. The ancient Rishis lived in forests, but one-sixth of their tapasya went as a state tax for the welfare of the land. It is that which sustained every excellence of the society. We have to do that kind of national tapasya.

We are reminded of the story of Savitri narrated in the Mahabharata. She was a Tapasvini. She could argue with Yama. She told him a few precious things of the spirit in powerful mantric words. By these she could prevail over him. She told him that "it is by the Truth the saints lead the sun; it is by askesis the saints uphold the earth; all the three divisions of time, the past, present and future, find their refuge in the saints. Noble persons in the midst of the saints have never any grief. Yama as the Upholder of the Universal Law recognised the merit in her utterances and released the soul of her husband. In that merit alone can we make our country free from the deathful circumstance of life.

Unless such Tapasvins are born there is not much hope. But Tapasvins cannot be made to order. The obligation is on us. We have to discern our best faculties and promote them. Not imposition but freest expression should be the principle. Those who have nobility in them, those who cherish values of life, who aspire for the good of the society, they should be willing to uphold high ideals. They should be willing to sacrifice their immediate gains. Unmindful of the harshness of conditions we must dedicate ourselves to the cause. This should be done howsoever complex be the operative factors, whatever be the day-to-day problems. If we are willing to keep aside our little considerations then we will have served

the country. In that service we will have found the worthwhile meaning of our life. In it our arts, our literature, our sciences, our philosophies, our commerce, our sports, everything will have found an authentic assertion of our soul.

Once a young French student wrote: “The pyramids have been eroded by the desert wind, the marble broken by earthquakes, and gold stolen by the robbers. But the Veda is recited daily by an unbroken chain of generations.” No buffeting winds blow the Veda away. It weathers all the storms of time. We must hold on to it.

But today we have lost contact with the Veda. We are importing ideas from the Western masters. We are adopting their models. We are after the “winner’s version” of life. We have been looking outside India for everything—ideas, values, opportunities, jobs, comforts. We want to have food as prepared in the ‘advanced’ countries. It seems we wish to serve others at our own cost. The socio-political system we have embraced is not really our own. We need a Mountbatten to solve—or is it to create? — a Kashmir problem. We have mortgaged our thinking as if to please alien masters.

Take the example of the Ottoman Empire. It was breaking down at the end of the First World War. But in India it was seen as a blow to the prestige of Islam. Therefore, it became a part of political calculation to oppose the move. Thus was born the harmful Khilafat movement.

In the context of the freedom struggle Mahatma Gandhi writes about it as follows: “To the Musalmans Swaraj means, as it must, India’s ability to deal effectively with the Khilafat question.” He further adds: “It is impossible not to sympathise with this attitude... I would gladly ask for postponement of the Swaraj activity if we could advance the interest of the Khilafat.” What was in the Ottoman Empire that we should have sold ourselves for it? When the Western world was making tremendous strides in different branches of learning, in science, technology, industry, commerce, here was a decadent regime that had outlived its purpose. Khilafat cannot be more precious than Swaraj. In it India’s freedom had a lower priority. In it India was denied India’s nationhood. This was unfortunate, if not calamitous.

Sri Aurobindo saw the necessity of the freedom of India differently. For him India was not an inert piece of matter. He saw in her a mighty Shakti. He called that Shakti India. She was for him Bhavani Bharati. He knew her as the Mother and worshipped her so. How could he rest content if she remained chained? How could he postpone her freedom even for a day? He entered into politics to get into the mind of the people a settled will for freedom. When he saw that the freedom of India was an assured fact he moved on to greater issues, issues of existence itself. For that he attempted all and in the process achieved all. He invoked the supreme grace to descend and transform the lot of our mortality. The grace has come down to bestow on us the boons of her plenty and prosperity. We have to only open ourselves to her wonderful gifts of happiness. That is the expectation from us.

Today India is free. Her freedom was god-ordained. Exceptional souls had come here to make it a reality. They came and paid the price for winning it. They came and did national Tapasya. They have done their splendid bit and now we must attend to our duties. We must perform the duties in the greatness of our national spirit. The living spirit of the country will undoubtedly lead us to truer glories only if we go by it. Freedom has come but we have forgotten the Veda. We no longer remember the spirit that had inspired us to live and grow in the nobility of the nation. We are as yet slaves to others.

During the colonial days there was a set of people who thought that for them there should always be an England in India. Now there is a similar group which thinks that there should be for the neo-professionals and neo-elite an America in India. There should be for them American banks, American industries, American management, American institutions, even American restaurants and American food.

No wonder, we lack the spirit of authentic nationalism. No wonder we do not have our own programmes. We do not have our own priorities. No wonder that we do not have our own

science, our own literature, our own national life. There can be Indian life only when India recovers its Indianness. That is the imperative. When we Indians shall live according to the nation's *swabhava and swadharma*, then only will there be India's happy fulfillment.

The Social Foundations

If we read the history of civilisation we get a mixed feeling. There have been glorious moments. There have also been disappointments. Yet the best in man was ever driven by a secret urge. There was always an urge in him that spoke of the nobility of life. Whether he was aware of it or not, an impulse towards perfection ever pushed him towards loftier aims. The sculptures of Phidias, the caves of Ajanata, the Gopurams of the South Indian temples, the paintings of the Sistine Chapel have given to the soul of man a character of divinity. In him he possesses a sense of immortality. In his quest he is secretly guided by some authentic truth. Even today the study of Nature is taking him to occult domains which were unknown to him so far. Stepping into the vastness of space is undeniably a wondrous achievement of the modern man. Cycles of evolution in the past went through rough and difficult times, but mankind was always on the march.

As early as 1914 Sri Aurobindo saw a promising future for the human race. Not only that; he set himself to work out the deeper possibilities that wait for it. He brought those richer possibilities closer to us. They are now realizable certainties. He has established on earth heavenly foundations that Light, Freedom, Immortality, God may dwell here.

Man is a fourfold being. In him operates the fourfold force of the soul. He is a worker and a skilled craftsman; he is engaged in commerce; he is a warrior and a conqueror, he is also a seeker of knowledge and a savant. Through the occupations according to his nature is his search, the search of life in the affirmative spirit. Thus functions the order of society for man's authentic welfare. In it is assured his true progress.

In that progress man is the link between what must be and what is. He is the footbridge thrown across the abyss, as the Mother says.

Even in our present excessive materialistic mood we strive to exceed ourselves. A certain degree of solidity is the valuable gain of this endeavour. But we should also be on our guard. The dichotomy of spirit and matter seems to have deepened today. If the philosophy of yesteryears desubstantiated everything material, science has despirited human effort and human dignity. Our literature and art, our religion, our thought, everything is driven by vitalistic enjoyment. We are alienating ourselves from the sense of truth and beauty. We know not affection and aesthetic happiness so well cherished by a refined soul.

Today man of commerce is the supreme ruler. The world trade center is the symbol of our prosperity. Man of learning, man of art, man of strength, man of works, everyone is meant for the man of industry and business. Everything, every nut and bolt of the collective machinery is organised around him. Everyone has to participate in the economic enterprise. The state apparatus, legal system, wage structure, market mechanism, media, pressure groups, the entire system serves only his purpose. He is the wielder of political power. He is the shaper of even democracy. Our professional commitments have to be functional to meet his demands. In the process we have become efficient slaves. We have lost something precious. The integrality of man's personality is absent. In the harsh commercial buzz no voice of the soul is heard. Affluence has made us empty and superficial.

Is there a deeper relationship between economics and culture? If culture does not take note of poverty, then it is bound to disappear. But in the absence of culture, if we are to get economic crudity, our gain becomes a pathetic loss. The earlier dichotomy of spirit and

matter now gets transferred to the dichotomy of economics and culture.

The spectacle we witness today is the spectacle of what Sri Aurobindo calls “economic barbarism”. We are in service of the vital man, man of ambition and greed and lust. The successful capitalist and organiser of industry is the superman of the commercial age. Today the craving of this superman has grown on a ubiquitous scale. It is even argued that we are reaching the End of History. The days of petty battles are over and man can devote himself to the pursuits of life. This is the picture given to us by Fukuyama. In it globalised capitalism would usher in unending progress. But we are full of hubris and self-assertive arrogance. Another clash of a more subtle kind has entered into the world of inequalities. Conflict of civilizations is becoming acuter. We are unable to resolve the disharmonies that issue out from it. Values that make life warm and endearing are lacking in our money-based relationships. Life has become efficient sans enjoyment.

We must therefore ask the question whether India should follow the western model of a competitive economic system. We might acquire a certain discipline and organizational efficiency. We might become a nation like many other commercially prosperous nations. We might possess social, political, industrial, military system as powerful as of an advanced nation. But that would spell disaster if we are to lose our national character, our innate *swadharma and swabhava*. That would be a tragic irony, says Sri Aurobindo, if this is to happen. We will have failed in the world. Which also implies that we will have failed in our soul’s expectations of ourselves.

We study the ideas of Kenneth Arrow and James Buchanan and Amartya Sen. But we never ask if these are pertinent to us at all. The aspect of relationship between the individual and the society is rarely seen in the Indian context. The fact that we are also a product of an outstanding culture is not taken into account. Individual choices leading to collective decisions is one side of the coin, the pragmatic or the down-to-earth side. But there is the other side also, that of an enlightened society promoting the prospects of an individual. Both are complementary to each other. One cannot be severed from the other. But the unfortunate thing is that progress and economics become synonymous in the entire business of the day.

Money is undoubtedly a force of action and its role in the commerce of the world cannot be dismissed. It is necessary for the fullness of the outer life. But it cannot possess us. It is meant for a truer and more harmonious ordering of vital and physical existence.

In ancient India *vitta* included wealth, riches, prosperity, management, finance. It was given a pre-eminent position and formed a part of the national development. It was recognised that economic well-being does not depend only on the material resources. The entrepreneurial class, the Vaishya had a significant role to play in the organization of the society. The emphasis was not on consumption, on acquisition and possession. It was on spending, sharing, giving. Thus the Mahabharata advocates in unmistakable terms the patronage of commerce and trade. “The power of production in the Vaishya; should always be encouraged. They make the realm strong enhance agriculture, develop its trades... A wise king should be favourable to them. There is no greater wealth in the kingdom than its merchants.”

But in the ancient Indian wisdom economic development and wealth maximization were not the aims in their own right. Progressive socio-moral fitness and increasing commitment to the

Law of the Right were held as its culminating ideal. Dharma, Artha, Kama were not ends in themselves, but were a means to a nobler end. That end was Moksha, liberation from the

littleness of our mortality. The trader was also accompanied by the sage, the warrior, and the labourer.

The ancient Rishis recognised origin of the fourfold order of society in the wisdom of the spirit. The Vedic hymn describes the four limbs of the great Cosmic Being. The Avatar of the Gita asserts that it is he who created this division of quality. In its active functioning we have the truth of creative Organization itself. In fact everywhere and always was present this fourfold order. The *chaturvana* system is not a Hindu but a spiritual fact. It has been present in all epochs and all societies. There might be unacceptable imbalances. But they are a crudity, a distortion. Elimination of crudity and distortion is of course essential. But they cannot discredit the axiomatic truth of things. The fourfold organization of society is a dispensation of the Spirit. This means that all our actions are established in its nature. That is what the Gita tells us. It speaks of *niyatam karma*, ordained duty. The source of our action is in our *swabhava*. It is that which constitutes our true personality. Our prosperity, our happiness, our progress are assured in it. The Veda speaks of corn rich with milk. Let us eat and drink the milk of that richness.

Today we have made artificial divisions of several kinds. We have divisions between the haves and have-nots, between the capitalist and socialistic doctrines, between the corporate management and federated working classes. In India we have imported class struggle from the West. We do not accept any more the principle of regulated action, *niyatam karma*. We expect dividends without attending to our duties. This is alien to the Gita's doctrine of desire less work, *nishkama karma*

Society must organize itself around the living vision of the Rishi. It cannot be done in a mechanical manner. We must discover the creative springs of the truths that sustain it. In them is the effective social order and social harmony. Non-recognition of this basic principle of our life has already caused considerable damage to us. We should inquire as to where lies Indianness for the Indians.

The Socialist world got crushed under its own inadequacies. The Capitalist mode brought disaster to itself because of its arrogance and excessive self-assertiveness. We need not, and better not, go through that experience. In it the sight of our own identity and our own destiny are absent. Our social organizations never looked for opportunities elsewhere. Rather they generated them in their own folds.

But we have introduced ideas of socialistic economics, secularism, parliamentary democracy. We take these as infallible instruments of progress. This has resulted in the sponsorship of a state agenda. In all the walks of life, industry, trade, commerce, transport, education, art, literature, thought, science, sports everything has come under public ownership. The result is a stiff and unbending bureaucracy with lack of national commitment. It looks as though in the pursuit of ideas of secularism and democracy whatever was Indian had to go.

In a multi-religious and tradition-bound psychology secularism and democracy become operationally complicated. Failure of secularism is often taken as failure of democracy, as much as the other way around also. In it everything gets institutionalized. Freedom of the

individual, equality of opportunities, fundamental rights, sharing of the nation's wealth start coming under state enforcement. In our constitution all religions enjoy equal status. This is because theocratic democracy is a contradiction in terms. But that seems to be strange in

many respects. In it the division between religions gets hardened. It becomes difficult to apply the principle of *sarvadharmā samābhava*. Instead, what we have are legalistic-doctrinaire guarantees. As a result the practice of one's faith without state interference turns out to be impossible. The expression of true national spirit thus remains insecure.

Secularism assumes the state to be independent of faith or creed. This is perhaps understandable. Retrograde religious biases have done more harm to society than good. The traumatic experience of history is witness to it. But not to recognize the intrinsic character of human nature is also a severe limitation. Rationalized psychology of the age cannot be a substitute for the ills of fundamentalism. The measure that must be applied is the pursuit of perfection in the greatness of the human soul and human spirit.

According to St Augustine, God created man and left him free with justice and grace. But man has always sinned against God; he misused the gifts. In contrast to this, the Platonic freedom based itself upon the aspect of pure reason. In it free democracy becomes the glory of the state republican. We have in it transreligious seeds of secularism. But the Grecian emphasis is more on the socio-political aspects. It does not see the possibilities that are there beyond the republican thinking.

But perhaps to see the country as a personification of power occultly more significant. We must see the country as a goddess the giver of rich fruits. Identification with her is the only greatness that we should cherish and possess. In that identification will come to us everything, all the boons of life and thought and culture, the boons of the spirit itself. Thus on we become Indians.

Religion is not a state subject; nor is education, nor can be arts and literature and sports and advancement of knowledge Sponsorship of Art and Culture by a government office is laughable matter. Never will a dynamic society allow the things to happen. A government's concern should I governance. It is the society that has to build culture foundations. It has to put forward progressive social aims, has to generate awareness to fulfill its own longings. It must do things in the nobility of its expressive spirit. The foolish notion of human resources development by the state is dehumanising degradation. It is altogether non-India Academic excellence, arts, skills, vocative training, plannin professionalism; these are surely the concerns of the society. They cannot be the concerns of baboos and bureaucrats and careerists, least those of politicians. We should not hand over our freedom to the snatchers of freedom, to the slaves.

Sri Aurobindo is specific about our role in shaping the destiny of the world. We have to first discover our soul. We have known the truth of our being. We have to establish ourselves the greatness of values that sustained us even in our difficult days. Not that we should not assimilate what is noble a progressive in other societies. We speak of social rights a social obligation in the manner of Westerners. But we have forgotten ourselves. In *Bande Mataram* dated 16 March 1908

Sri Aurobindo wrote about these issues. He is forthright to say that the ideas of rights and duties are not our ideas, but are European ideas. In the Indian conception we think

differently. To us dharma is the foundation of every activity. In it there is no division between the worldly and the spiritual aspects of life. In it rights and duties lose their artificial antagonism. Dharma is the basis of democracy. Indeed we have to be ready to follow dharma.

Dharma here of course does not mean the credal prescriptions, rites and rituals, laws of social conduct, obeying the dicta of decadent Brahminical authority. But what is true and eternal, what is *sanatana*, what has the Foundation in the higher principles, it is that we have to comply with in our entire endeavour. Being driven by the inner urge is to live in dharma.

That is what India has to do. She must awake to her nature; she must live in the dynamism of her glowing spirit. That is nationalism. That is to be an Indian. Let us be so. Let us be Indians.

Indian Spirit and Progress

When we speak of dharma we also understand the nature of the battle that has to be waged in the thick of life. The Mahabharata war was fought on the ground of dharma. It was *dharmakshetra* where large warring armies had gathered. Deafening conchs were blown and the holiday of fight was about to begin.

Here was a perfect episode which presented itself in the context of right living. Even in the most adverse situation higher values had to be upheld. No price was thought to be too small to pay. The Teacher of the Gita exhorts us to follow our own dharma in every respect. He was not giving here a meditative spiritual injunction. He was not talking of *satyadharm*a of the Isha Upanishad. He was preparing the hero of the trophy to take up arms against a sea of insanity. He was focusing on the secular aspect of the worldly issues. In it Arjuna had to stand up and deliver the goods. He was told to follow what was innate to him, built into his individuality. In that alone was his assured victory. In that *dharmayudda* rested the order of society.

The thrust of the entire argument is that we have to rise to our best capabilities. We may not be aware of our soul and our spirit. But there is always something in us which is admirable. The magnificent and noble and worthy in our personality has to emerge and assert itself. In it is our true manhood, our valour, our meritorious celebration.

We often say that the Indian spirit has certain universality. But this spirit in its dharma-aspect is also specific. Each individual has his own dharma, *swadharm*a, to follow. He must discover it and live in it. To go by the dharma of others, *paradharm*a, forebodes evil. Of course dharma is not to be understood in its modern sense. Dharma is not what we call religion. It is the truth of one's own central being. It is dynamic. It is progressive. Its psychology is the operative basis of the spirit itself. The real freedom of the individual is reposed in the dharma alone. Its association is always with the higher fundamentals. The Western notion of dharma is restrictive. It lacks in its functioning the inner quality that must govern the action of an individual. It is not a creed, it is not a dogma-, it is not doctrinaire theology. The prevalent religion is not the avatar of dharma. When the action of an individual is based on dharma, then by that very virtue it also at once becomes universal. To live in dharma is therefore to live in perfect freedom. To live in it is to live in the nobility of life. Dharma fulfills.

Not that in India there were no sectarian wars and conflicts. There are present even today discriminatory social class customs. But these have nothing to do with dharma. Each individual has to discover his own law and act in its stateliness. Dharma is founded in reality which takes the individual on the path of progress. It is a reality that operates at all the three levels, individual-cosmic-transcendental. We have our own individual dharma. Each nation has its characteristic dharma. There is the earth dharma. There is also the dharma of the gods.

It is in that respect that India has done long and difficult spiritual tapasya. Even during her darkest period the inner flame remained alert and alive. Now the hour of God has come and in it the spiritual soul must get rekindled. Dharma must be the guide.

Mahabharata says in despair: "I raise my hands and call out to men but no one listens to me. Why should we not act in accord with dharma for the realisation of all that we desire?" Why we don't listen to dharma? If dharma is an efficacious means make progress, then why none

pays heed to it? That is indeed the question we have to answer. If dharma is a power to shape our lives in the values of the spirit, we have to also be receptive to receive the gifts of that power. It seems that we have to pass through another cycle of social evolution.

If we trace the history of human society we notice the four stages that marked the collective growth. We have gone through the symbolic age of the mystic-spiritual sense of higher life. Then came the mode of conventionalised living with sets of rules conduct. Soon began the period of reason and of the exploration of material nature. We are still under its sway with its gains and its problems. But if real progress is to be mad his too should pass away. The dharma of different epochs must advance into the dharma of the timeless truth. Soon *kala dharma* must become *kalatit dharma*. There must begin now the dharma the intuitive-perceptive greatness of man ready to step into the vastness of the spirit. That is the *sanatana dharma*.

But we cannot think of the Empiricism if we live in the darkness of the abyss. In spite of the tremendous strides made by civilisation we have the blood of time drenching our souls. During 1933-45 the Nazis under Hitler exterminated 6 million Jews, 1.5 million gypsies and millions of other undesirable Pol Pot in 1975 abolished private property, markets, banks currency, newspapers, schools, hospitals and religion a summarily executed 1.7 million people of Cambodia. In 1970s hundreds of thousands were killed in Uganda. Up to beginning of the twentieth century 40 million people were slayed in wars and 133 million in genocide. During the last hundred years some 37 million in wars and 170 million in genocide lost their lives.

This record is no different than the record of, say, Chengis Khan. When his son-in-law was shot dead by an unknown arrow there was a massacre of 1.75 million people. He and his successors down to Timur Lane slaughtered 30 million Chinese, Indians, Persians, Arabs, Russians, Europeans. Loot, murder, rape, terrorism only meant that some grey-bearded vital force was let lose in sanguinary destruction.

How is dharma going to stand against it? By summoning our best into action. The dharma of the individual, the dharma of each nation, the dharma of the world, each has to invoke that which sustains it. Painful is the path and full of danger. Long is the course and heavy the price. But there can neither be a shortcut. We have to invoke our best and act in sincerity by abiding in the dharma.

Take the American example. Its greatness flows directly from a deep source, a spirit of respect for the individual, a spirit of tolerance for differences of faith or politics, a respect for freedom of thought as the necessary foundation for all creativity and a spirit of unity that encompasses all kinds of differences. Only a society which worships freedom could constantly renew itself and its sources of power and wealth." This is what *New York Times* writes editorially on 2 October 2001 in connection with the rebuilding of America after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. That is the American dharma and it shall always prove rewarding if followed in all earnestness.

At times America may look like a "shining city atop a hill." It means that there can also be another kind of dharma. Gorbachev speaks of "Revolution from Above." According to it revolutionary changes will be initiated and implemented by the State authority. Perestroika is held to be such a revolution. Revolution means construction as well as destruction. Both are affected by the State. But howsoever an inverted pyramid it may look, perhaps the State as an instrument of social changes conveys to us a sense of another dharma.

But our affliction is of a different kind. Matthew Arnold complained about it long ago. It is the disease of epistemological disintegration of the intellectuals. The Western civilisation through Reason entered into the Age of Anguish, without any apparent remedy to cure it. Can the relentless wheel be halted? Can mankind be redeemed?

Pitirin A. Sorokin sees our way of life in a state of epochal transition. There is ruin all around. There is the thick atmosphere of gloom spread over us. But if mankind can avoid the catastrophe of world wars, there can be the hope of seeing the dawn of a new magnificent order. We are waiting to greet the coming generation of that dawn.

But the problem is not simple. To the proposition of Alexis Carrel's "Man the Unknown", Teilhard de Chardin adds "Man to be". This is certainly a great improvement. But that does not yet offer solution to the affliction we suffer from. We suffer from the Heideggerian angst. Modern Man is in a state of alienation. He has lost faith; he has lost belief in himself-, he has even lent himself to the Marxian sun under which there can exist no God.

From the age of rational thinking we have to move on to the age of intuition. Perhaps here the Indian soul can be the leader of the march.

A Vedic Rishi asked for horses and cows and sons. He wished to live for a hundred autumns. At the same time he lived in shining company of the gods of heaven. He won splendours of immortality upon earth. In the Upanishadic age Satyakama yearned for the knowledge of the Eternal. But he had to qualify himself to receive it. He was told to rear four hundred cows till they became one thousand. Then only could he be fit receive *brahmajnana*. Thus was prepared the soul through work in life to enjoy the heavenly fruit of immortality.

India must hearken to the call of her national dharma. She was alive, says Sri Aurobindo, to the greatness of material laws and force. She also saw the invisible that surrounds the visible. She knows that man has power to exceed himself. She saw the myriad gods beyond man, God beyond the gods, and beyond God his own ineffable eternity. Then with a calm audacity of her intuition she declared that man could become the spirit, become a god, become one with God, become the ineffable Brahman. Man's manhood lies in becoming godly.

This means that we must get back to the native power of the spirit. We must discover it and live in it. This is the great agenda for us to work. If spiritual unfolding is the hidden truth, then man as he is cannot be the last term of his evolution. His mind is capable of opening to what exceeds it. Therefore there is a possibility that man should arrive at supermanhood. This is what Sri Aurobindo asserts.

Thus we stand on the verge of the last definitive transformation. When it is achieved, the passage of the soul through the ignorance shall get terminated. Supramental Truth and Light and Force shall descend. This shall open out the way for the appearance of the gnostic life upon the earth. The epiphanic possibilities of the spirit shall become a part of the evolutionary growth and manifestation.

When the Avatar comes, he comes fundamentally with the intention of carrying forward the evolutionary march that in the terrestrial process may enter higher and higher grades of life and consciousness. That manifestation also makes his arrival meaningful.

In his arrival begins a new millennium. It means the coming of Nava Yuga. It means the

arrival of the everlasting day itself. In it

Nature shall live to manifest secret God,
The Spirit shall take up the human play,
This earthly life become the life divine.

But when Sri Aurobindo prophesied the life divine upon earth he also worked to make it a reality here. By his intense yogic sadhana, by making an unparalleled sacrifice in the Will of the Supreme, he “attempted all and achieved all” for us.

Now it is our task to prepare ourselves and receive the splendid gifts he has brought to us. Discovering the inner self living in the nobility of the spirit, aspiring to make our life an integral means are aspects which we will have to pursue in this fulfillment. In that pursuit shall be the beginning of mankind’s gnostic-spiritual dharma. That shall be the Dharma of the Future. Let us welcome that Future.