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Sanatan Dharma

There is a fire on the apex of the worlds,
There is a house of the Eternal's light,
There is an infinite truth, an absolute power.

Savitri p. 704

Sri Aurobindo

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Sanatan Dharma

Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face. — Sri Aurobindo

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Editorial: It is impossible to understand India in its widest and deepest sense without understanding Sanatan Dharma. In a certain sense, India was born with it, lives with it and rises and falls as Sanatan Dharma rises and falls in its collective psyche. But what really is Santana Dharma? Is it a belief system based on a book of revelation and a founder, or is it set of rules and regulations to govern life? Is it an aspiration towards a higher and greater Existence or, is it just a way of life as many presume? Is it a religion like many other religions or, is it a spiritual fire illumining the human night? Who could better answer these questions for us than Sri Aurobindo for whom Sanatan Dharma was a living Reality and not merely a petrified scholarly knowledge or a one-sided vision of a vast all-encompassing Truth. His is a vision that not only reveals to us what Sanatan Dharma is and has been but also what it yet shall be. For more than anything else Sanatan Dharma is a living and dynamic Truth that is unfolding Itself with passage of time. This is the subject of this issue which we shall discover with the help of Sri Aurobindo's Light.

Sanatan Dharma and Hinduism

What is the Hindu Religion

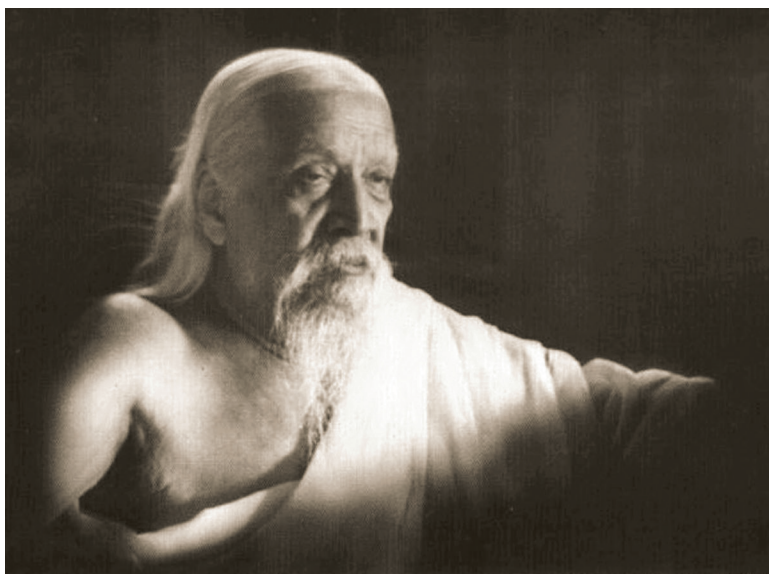
What is this religion which we call Sanatana, eternal? It is the Hindu religion only because the Hindu nation has kept it, because in this peninsula it grew up in the seclusion of the sea and the Himalayas, because in this sacred and ancient land it was given as a charge to the Aryan race to preserve through the ages. But it is not circumscribed by the confines of a single country, it does not belong peculiarly and for ever to a bounded part of the world. That which we call the Hindu religion is really the eternal religion, because it is the universal religion which embraces all others. If a religion is not universal, it cannot be eternal. A narrow religion, a sectarian religion, an exclusive religion can live only for a limited time and a limited purpose. This is the one religion that can triumph over materialism by including and anticipating the discoveries of science and the speculations of philosophy. It is the one religion which impresses on mankind the closeness of God to us and embraces in its compass all the possible means by which man can approach God. It is the one religion which insists every moment on the truth which all religions acknowledge, that He is in all men and all things and that in Him we move and have our being. It is the one religion which enables us not only to understand and believe this truth but to realise it with every part of our being. It is the one religion which shows the world what the world is, that it is the *lila* of Vasudeva. It is the one religion which shows us how we can best play our part in that *lila*, its subtlest laws and its noblest rules. It is the one religion which does not separate life in any smallest detail from religion, which knows what immortality is and has utterly removed from us the reality of death.

CWSA 8: 11-12

The two Hinduisms

There are two Hinduisms; one which takes its stand on the kitchen and seeks its Paradise by cleaning the body; another which seeks God, not through the cooking pot and the social convention, but in the soul. The latter is also Hinduism and it is a good deal older and more enduring than the other; it is the Hinduism of Bhishma and Srikrishna, of Shankara and Chaitanya, the Hinduism which exceeds Hindusthan, was from of old and will be for ever, because it grows eternally through the aeons. Its watchword is not *kriya*, but *karma*; not *shastra*, but *jnanam*; not *achar*, but *bhakti*. Yet it accepts *kriya*, *shastra* and *achar*, not as ends to be followed for their own sake, but as means to perfect *karma*, *jnanam* and *bhakti*. *Kriya* in the dictionary means every practice which helps the gaining of higher knowledge such as the mastering of the breath, the repetition of the mantra, the habitual use of the Name, the daily meditation on the idea. By *shastra* it means the knowledge which regulates *karma*, which fixes the *kartavyam* and the *akartavyam*, that which should be done and that which should not, and it recognises two sources of that knowledge, — the eternal wisdom, as distinct from the temporary injunctions, in our ancient books and the book that is written by God in the human heart, the eternal and *apaurusheya* Veda. By *achar* it understands all moral discipline by which the heart is purified and made a fit vessel for divine love. There are certain *kriyas*, certain rules of *shastra*, certain details of *achar*, which are for all time and of perpetual application; there are others which are temporary, changing with the variation of *desh*, *kal* and *patra*, time, place and the needs of humanity. Among the temporary laws the cooking-pot and the lustration had their place, but they are not for all, nor for ever. It was in a time of calamity, of contraction under external pressure that Hinduism fled from the inner temple and hid itself in the kitchen.

CWSA 1: 551



Indian religion cannot be described by any of the definitions known to the occidental intelligence. In its totality it has been a free and tolerant synthesis of all spiritual worship and experience. Observing the one Truth from all its many sides, it shut out none. It gave itself no specific name and bound itself by no limiting distinction. Allowing separative designations for its constituting cults and divisions, it remained itself nameless, formless, universal, infinite, like the Brahman of its agelong seeking. Although strikingly distinguished from other creeds by its traditional scriptures, cults and symbols, it is not in its essential character a credal religion at all but a vast and many-sided, an always unifying and always progressive and self-enlarging system of spiritual culture.

CWSA 20: 193

Sri Aurobindo

The higher and truer Hinduism

The higher and truer Hinduism is also of two kinds, sectarian and unsectarian, disruptive and synthetic, that which binds itself up in the aspect and that which seeks the All. The first is born of *rajasic* or *tamasic* attachment to an idea, an experience, an opinion or set of opinions, a temperament, an attitude, a particular guru, a chosen Avatar. This attachment is intolerant, arrogant, proud of a little knowledge, scornful of knowledge that is not its own. It is always talking of the *kusanskars*, superstitions, of others and is blind to its own; or it says, "My guru is the only guru and all others are either charlatans or inferior," or, "My temperament is the right temperament and those who do not follow my path are fools or pedants or insincere"; or "My Avatar is the real God Himself and all the others are only lesser revelations"; or "My ishta devata is God, the others are only His partial manifestations." When the soul rises higher, it follows by preference its own ideas, experiences, opinions, temperament, guru, ishta, but it does not turn an ignorant and exclusive eye upon others. "There are many paths," it cries, "and all lead equally to God. All men, even the sinner and the atheist, are my brothers in sadhana and the Beloved is drawing them each in His own way to the One without a second." But when the full knowledge dawns, I embrace all experiences in myself, I know all ideas to be true, all opinions useful, all experiences and attitudes means and stages in the acquisition of universal experience and completeness, all gurus imperfect channels or incarnations of the one and only Teacher, all ishtas and Avatars to be God Himself.....

The destruction of bondage, the realisation of freedom, the trampling upon our fetters, that is the first need of the future. It was to give mukti that Ramakrishna came, not to impose a new bondage. Therefore was Vivekananda His

Apostle to the Gentiles, a man who in all things asserted freedom. The soul of Hinduism languishes in an unfit body. Break the mould that the soul may live. Is it not the first teaching of Yoga to destroy the dehatmak buddhi, the blindness that identifies the soul with its temporary body? If the body were young, adaptable, fit, the liberated soul might use it, but it is decrepit, full of ill health and impurity. It must be changed, not by the spirit of Western iconoclasm which destroys the soul with the body, but by national Yoga.

CWSA 1: 551-53

An ignorant and mistaken view of Sanatan Dharma

To venerate the Scriptures without knowing them and to obey custom in their place; to reverence all Brahmins whether they are venerable or despicable; to eat nothing cooked by a social inferior; to marry one's daughter before puberty and one's son as soon as possible after it; to keep women ignorant and domestically useful; to bathe scrupulously and go through certain fixed ablutions; to eat on the floor and not at a table; to do one's devotions twice a day without understanding them; to observe a host of meaningless minutiae in one's daily conduct; to keep the Hindu holidays, when an image is set up, worshipped and thrown away, — this in India is the minimum of religion. This is glorified as Hinduism and the Sanatana Dharma. If, in addition, a man has emotional or ecstatic piety, he is a Bhakta; if he can talk fluently about the Veda, Upanishads, Darshanas & Puranas, he is a Jnani. If he puts on a yellow robe and does nothing, he is a tyagi or sannyasin. The latter is liberated from the ordinary dharma, but only if he does nothing but beg and vegetate. All work must be according to custom and the Brahmin. The one superiority of average Indian religion is that it does really reverence the genuine Bhakta or

Sannyasin provided he does not come with too strange a garb or too revolutionary an aspect. The European almost invariably sets him down as a charlatan, professional religionist, idle drone or religious maniac.

CWSA 1: 492-93

The need of Vichar or the thought-mind

The need of vichar is urgent in times of transition. Revolutionary times generate two sorts of mind who are *avichari*, without perception and deliberation, the mind which clings fiercely to the old because it is old and the mind which runs violently after the new because it is new. Between them rises the self-styled moderate man who says, Let us have something of the old and something of the new. The moderate man is no less *avichari* than the men of extremes. He swears by moderation as a formula and a fetish and runs after an impossible reconciliation. It was this kind of thought which Christ had in view when he said, You cannot put new wine into old bottles. Vichar never sets up a formula, never prejudices, but questions everything, weighs everything. If a man says, Alter your notions and habits on the lines of enlightened Europe, vichar answers, "Let me consider that. Why should I assume Europe to be enlightened, India barbarous? It is possible the people of Europe may be the real barbarians, Indian knowledge the true enlightenment. I must see." On the other hand if a man says, "Be an Indian and do as the Indians," vichar replies, "I am not sure that I ought to do as the Indians in order to be an Indian. It may be that the present men of the country have become something Indians were not intended to be. I must see what Indians have been in the various epochs of our civilisation and find out what is eternal in the civilisation and what is temporary. It may even be that the Europeans have certain things really Indian which we have lost." It is good to be Indian, but to be Indian because of knowledge, not because of prejudice. CWSA 1: 499-500

Jnanam or Knowledge

There are four operations in the Indian method of knowledge. First, the inquirer purifies his intellect by the stilling of passion, emotion, prejudice and old sanskaras or associations. Secondly, he subjects received knowledge to a rigid scrutiny by sceptical vichar, separating opinion from ascertained truth, mere conclusions from facts. Even the facts he takes as only provisionally true and is prepared to find his whole knowledge to be erroneous, misapplied or made up of half-truths. Thirdly, he experiments in order to get upalabdhi or personal experience. Fourthly, he again uses vichar in order to ascertain how far his experience really carries him and what he is or is not justified in concluding from it. Lastly, he turns the light of the vishuddha buddhi on the subject and by inspired discrimination arrives at jnanam. The conclusions of the vivek he does not question, because he knows by experience that it is a fine and accurate instrument. Only, he is on his guard against mistaking vichar for vivek, and is always prepared to balance and amplify his conclusions by fresh truths he had not considered and to find that there is another side to truth than the one with which he is familiar. He does not, like the European scientist, wed himself to previous generalisations and theories or consider every fresh enlargement of knowledge on new lines charlatantry and imposture.

CWSA 1: 501-02

Rites, ceremonies, system of cults and worship

The rites, ceremonies, system of cult and worship of Hinduism can only be understood if we remember its fundamental character. It is in the first place a non-dogmatic inclusive religion and would have taken even Islam and Christianity into itself, if they had tolerated the process. All

that it has met on its way it has taken into itself, content if it could put its forms into some valid relation with the truth of the supraphysical worlds and the truth of the Infinite. Again it has always known in its heart that religion, if it is to be a reality for the mass of men and not only for a few saints and thinkers, must address its appeal to the whole of our being, not only to the suprarational and the rational parts, but to all the others. The imagination, the emotions, the aesthetic sense, even the very instincts of the half subconscious parts must be taken into the influence. Religion must lead man towards the suprarational, the spiritual truth and it must take the aid of the illumined reason on the way, but it cannot afford to neglect to call Godwards the rest of our complex nature. And it must take too each man where he stands and spiritualise him through what he can feel and not at once force on him something which he cannot yet grasp as a true and living power. That is the sense and aim of all those parts of Hinduism which are specially stigmatised as irrational or antirational by the positivist intelligence.

CWSA 20: 147 – 148

The Hindu culture and civilisation

Morality is for the Western mind mostly a thing of outward conduct; but conduct for the Indian mind is only one means of expression and sign of a soul-state. Hinduism only incidentally strings together a number of commandments for observance, a table of moral laws; more deeply it enjoins a spiritual or ethical purity of the mind with action as one outward index. It says strongly enough, almost too strongly, "Thou shouldst not kill," but insists more firmly on the injunction, "Thou shalt not hate, thou shalt not yield to greed, anger or malice," for these are the roots of killing. And Hinduism admits relative standards, a wisdom too hard for the

European intelligence. Non-injuring is the very highest of its laws, *ahimsā paramo dharmah*; still it does not lay it down as a physical rule for the warrior, but insistently demands from him mercy, chivalry, respect for the non-belligerent, the weak, the unarmed, the vanquished, the prisoner, the wounded, the fugitive, and so escapes the unpracticality of a too absolutist rule for all life.

CWSA 20: 149

The Spiritual aim of Indian civilisation

The whole root of difference between Indian and European culture springs from the spiritual aim of Indian civilisation. It is the turn which this aim imposes on all the rich and luxuriant variety of its forms and rhythms that gives to it its unique character. For even what it has in common with other cultures gets from that turn a stamp of striking originality and solitary greatness. A spiritual aspiration was the governing force of this culture, its core of thought, its ruling passion. Not only did it make spirituality the highest aim of life, but it even tried, as far as that could be done in the past conditions of the human race, to turn the whole of life towards spirituality. But since religion is in the human mind the first native, if imperfect form of the spiritual impulse, the predominance of the spiritual idea, its endeavour to take hold of life, necessitated a casting of thought and action into the religious mould and a persistent filling of every circumstance of life with the religious sense; it demanded a pervadingly religio-philosophic culture. The highest spirituality indeed moves in a free and wide air far above that lower stage of seeking which is governed by religious form and dogma; it does not easily bear their limitations and, even when it admits, it transcends them; it lives in an experience which to the formal religious mind is unintelligible. But man

does not arrive immediately at that highest inner elevation and, if it were demanded from him at once, he would never arrive there. At first he needs lower supports and stages of ascent; he asks for some scaffolding of dogma, worship, image, sign, form, symbol, some indulgence and permission of mixed half-natural motive on which he can stand while he builds up in him the temple of the spirit. Only when the temple is completed, can the supports be removed, the scaffolding disappear. The religious culture which now goes by the name of Hinduism not only fulfilled this purpose, but, unlike certain credal religions, it knew its purpose. It gave itself no name, because it set itself no sectarian limits; it claimed no universal adhesion, asserted no sole infallible dogma, set up no single narrow path or gate of salvation; it was less a creed or cult than a continuously enlarging tradition of the Godward endeavour of the human spirit. An immense many-sided manystaged provision for a spiritual self-building and self-finding, it had some right to speak of itself by the only name it knew, the eternal religion, *sanātana dharma*. It is only if we have a just and right appreciation of this sense and spirit of Indian religion that we can come to an understanding of the true sense and spirit of Indian culture.

CWSA 20: 178-79

Sri Aurobindo



Scriptures of Sanatan Dharma

The universal nature of God

The Upanishad sets forth by pronouncing as the indispensable basis of its revelations the universal nature of God. This universal nature of Brahman the Eternal is the beginning and end of the Vedanta and if it is not accepted, nothing the Vedanta says can have any value, as all its propositions either proceed from it or at least presuppose it; deprived of this central and highest truth, the Upanishads become what Mleccha scholars & philosophers think them to be, — a mass of incoherent though often sublime speculations; with this truth in your hand as a lamp to shed light on all the obscurest sayings of the Scriptures, you soon come to realise that the Upanishads are a grand harmonious and perfectly luminous whole, expressing in its various aspects the single and universal Truth; for under the myriad contradictions of phenomena (prapancha) there is one Truth and one only. All the Smritis, the Puranas, the Darshanas, the Dharmashastras, the writings of Shaktas, Shaivas, Vaishnavas, Sauras, as well as the whole of Buddhism and its Scriptures are merely so many explanations, comments and interpretations from different sides, of these various aspects of the one and only Truth. This Truth is the sole foundation on which all religions can rest as on a sure and impregnable rock; — and more than a rock, for a rock may perish but this endures for ever. Therefore is the religion of the Aryas called the Sanatana Dharma, the Law Sempiternal. Nor are the Hindus in error when they declare the Sruti to be eternal and without beginning and the Rishis who composed the hymns to be only the witnesses who saw the truth and put it in human language; for this seeing was not mental sight, but spiritual. Therefore the Vedas are justly called Sruti or revelation. Of these the

Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharvan are the fertilising rain which gave the plant of the Truth nourishment and made it grow, the Brahmanas are the forest in which the plant is found, the Aranyakas are the soil in which it grows, the Upanishads are the plant itself, roots, stalk, leaves, calix and petals, and the flower which manifests itself once and for ever is the great saying SO AHAM—I AM HE which is the culmination of the Upanishads. Salutation to the SO AHAM. Salutation to the Eternal who is without place, time, cause or limit, Salutation to my Self who am the Eternal.

CWSA 17: 101-102

Veda and Vedanta

The Vedas hold more of that knowledge than the Vedanta, hold it more amply, practically and in detail; but they come to us in a language we have ceased to understand, a vocabulary which often, by the change of meaning to ancient terms, misleads most where it seems most easy & familiar, a scheme of symbols of which the key has been taken from us. Indians do not understand the Vedas at all; Europeans have systematised a gross misunderstanding of them. The old knowledge in the Vedas is to us, therefore, as a river wandering in dark caverns inaccessible to the common tread. It is in the Upanishads that the stream first emerges into open country. It is there that it is most accessible to us. But even this stream flows through obscure forest & difficult mountain reaches and we only have it for our use at favourable points where the forest thins or the mountain opens. It is there that men have built their little artificial cities of metaphysical thought and spiritual practice, in each of which the inhabitants pretend to control the whole river. They call their dwelling places Vedanta or Sankhya, Adwaita or Dwaita, Shaivism or Vaishnavism, with a hundred names beside

and boast that theirs is the way & theirs is the knowledge. But, in reality, each of us can only command a little of the truth of the Sanatana Dharma, because none of us understands more than a little of the Upanishads.

CWSA 17: 361 – 362

The Gita and Vedanta

In the Gita we find that Sri Krishna unites the Vedanta philosophy with the philosophy of Sankhya. Modern science denies that man has a soul. Science considers only the laws of nature. It regards nature as material, and man as merely a product of nature. It says man is a creation of natural forces. All his actions are results of fixed laws, and he has no freedom. According to the Sankhya, man has a soul and is essentially the Purusha and not matter. The spirit does not act. The soul is calm and motionless. Prakriti is always shifting and changing, and under her influence all actions take place. Prakriti acts.

Man can only free himself by recognising that he is the Purusha. Sri Krishna adopts this theory of Sankhya in the Gita, and he also adopts the philosophy of Vedanta. He says that man has an immortal soul, but there is also a universal soul. Man is merely part of God. He is merely a part of something that is eternal, infinite, omniscient and omnipotent. This eternal power is what really exists, and in all that we see, hear, feel, it is He alone who exists. It is He alone whom we feel and see. Parameshwara builds up this world by His *maya*. He is the master of the great illusion which we call *maya*. This He made to express Himself, the One. All these things around us are transitory. Within us is that which cannot change, which is eternally free and happy. If man feels himself miserable, it is because he in his ignorance allows himself to be dominated by egoism (*ahankara*).

He thinks that he is all. He does not realise that God is the master of this *lila*. He thinks that it is I who act, I who am the lord of my body, and because he thinks so, he is bound by his action. By these forces he is driven from birth to birth. The great illusion is that this body which he inhabits is himself; next he identifies himself with the mind and thinks it is I who think, see and feel. In reality, according to the Gita, God is within the heart of every creature.

CWSA 8: 48-49

Puranas and Tantras

It is to be observed that the Puranas and Tantras contain in themselves the highest spiritual and philosophical truths, not broken up and expressed in opposition to each other as in the debates of the thinkers, but synthetised by a fusion, relation or grouping in the way most congenial to the catholicity of the Indian mind and spirit. This is done sometimes expressly, but most often in a form which might carry something of it to the popular imagination and feeling by legend, tale, symbol, apologue, miracle and parable. An immense and complex body of psychospiritual experience is embodied in the Tantras, supported by visual images and systematised in forms of Yogic practice. This element is also found in the Puranas, but more loosely and cast out in a less strenuous sequence. This method is after all simply a prolongation, in another form and with a temperamental change, of the method of the Vedas. The Puranas construct a system of physical images and observances each with its psychical significance. Thus the sacredness of the confluence of the three rivers, Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati, is a figure of an inner confluence and points to a crucial experience in a psychophysical process of Yoga and it has too other significances, as is common in the economy of this kind of symbolism.

The so called fantastic geography of the Puranas, as we are expressly told in the Puranas themselves, is a rich poetic figure, a symbolic geography of the inner psychical universe. The cosmogony expressed sometimes in terms proper to the physical universe has, as in the Veda, a spiritual and psychological meaning and basis.

CWSA 20: 374

Itihasa : The Ramayana and the Mahabharata

The Itihasa was an ancient historical or legendary tradition turned to creative use as a significant mythus or tale expressive of some spiritual or religious or ethical or ideal meaning and thus formative of the mind of the people. The Mahabharata and Ramayana are Itihisas of this kind on a large scale and with a massive purpose. The poets who wrote and those who added to these great bodies of poetic writing did not intend merely to tell an ancient tale in a beautiful or noble manner or even to fashion a poem pregnant with much richness of interest and meaning, though they did both these things with a high success; they wrote with a sense of their function as architects and sculptors of life, creative exponents, fashioners of significant forms of the national thought and religion and ethics and culture. A profound stress of thought on life, a large and vital view of religion and society, a certain strain of philosophic idea runs through these poems and the whole ancient culture of India is embodied in them with a great force of intellectual conception and living presentation. The Mahabharata has been spoken of as a fifth Veda, it has been said of both these poems that they are not only great poems but Dharmashastras, the body of a large religious and ethical and social and political teaching, and their effect and hold on the mind and life of the people have been so great that they have been described as the bible of the Indian people. That is not quite an accurate analogy, for the

bible of the Indian people contains also the Veda and Upanishads, the Purana and Tantras and the Dharmashastras, not to speak of a large bulk of the religious poetry in the regional languages. The work of these epics was to popularise high philosophic and ethical idea and cultural practice; it was to throw out prominently and with a seizing relief and effect in a frame of great poetry and on a background of poetic story and around significant personalities that became to the people abiding national memories and representative figures all that was best in the soul and thought or true to the life or real to the creative imagination and ideal mind or characteristic and illuminative of the social, ethical, political and religious culture of India. All these things were brought together and disposed with artistic power and a telling effect in a poetic body given to traditions half legendary, half historic but cherished henceforth as deepest and most living truth and as a part of their religion by the people. Thus framed the Mahabharata and Ramayana, whether in the original Sanskrit or rewritten in the regional tongues, brought to the masses by Kathakas,—rhapsodists, reciters and exegetes,—became and remained one of the chief instruments of popular education and culture, moulded the thought, character, aesthetic and religious mind of the people and gave even to the illiterate some sufficient tincture of philosophy, ethics, social and political ideas, aesthetic emotion, poetry, fiction and romance. That which was for the cultured classes contained in Veda and Upanishad, shut into profound philosophical aphorism and treatise or inculcated in dharma-shastra and artha-shastra, was put here into creative and living figures, associated with familiar story and legend, fused into a vivid representation of life and thus made a near and living power that all could readily assimilate through the poetic word appealing at once to the soul and the imagination and the intelligence. *CWSA 20: 345-347*

Sri Aurobindo

Sanatan Dharma and Yoga

The essence of Yoga

Yoga is in its essence a passage from the ordinary consciousness in which we are aware only of appearances into a higher wider deeper consciousness in which we become aware of realities and of the one Reality. Not only do we become aware of it, but we can live in it and act from it and according to it instead of living in and according to the appearance of things. Yoga is a passage from ignorance to self-knowledge, from our apparent to our true being, from an outer phenomenal mental vital material life-existence to an inner spiritual existence and a spiritualised nature.

By Yoga we pass from the phenomenal to the real Man, from the consciousness of our own apparent outer nature to the consciousness of our real self, Atman, an inner and inmost man, Purusha, that which we truly and eternally are. This self or true being remains constant through all the changes of our phenomenal being, changes of the mind, life or body or changes of our apparent personality; it is permanent, perpetual and immortal, a portion or manifestation of the Eternal.

By Yoga we pass also from our consciousness of the phenomenal appearance or appearances of the cosmos or world around us to a consciousness of its truth and reality. We become aware of the world as a manifestation of or in universal being who is the true truth of all that we see, hear, experience. We become aware of a cosmic Consciousness which is the secret of the cosmic Energy, a cosmic Self or Spirit, the cosmic Divine, the universal Godhead.

But by Yoga we become aware also that our own Self or true being is one with the cosmic Self and Spirit, our nature a play of the cosmic Nature; the wall between ourselves and

the universe begins to disappear and vanishes altogether. We realise the selfsame Pantheos in ourselves, in others and in all universal existence.

But also by Yoga we become aware of something that is more than our individual being and more than the cosmic being, a transcendent Being or Existence which is not dependent on ours or the existence of the universe. Our existence is a manifestation of and in that Being, the cosmos also is a manifestation of and in that one Supreme Existence.

CWSA 12: 330–31

What is Yoga

What is *yoga*? Not a certain process. When we think of *yoga*, we think of a man who shuts himself up in a cave and subjects himself to certain practices. He frees himself from all bondage. But Srikrishna uses *yoga* in a different sense. He says: Do action in *yoga*. The first element is *samata*. *Samata* means you shall look with equal eyes upon happiness and misfortune, praise and blame, honour and dishonour, and success and failure. You shall regard none of these, but with a calm and unshaken mind you should proceed with the work which you are given to do, unshaken by the praise or censure of the world. The man who has this *samata* has no friends and no enemies. He looks upon all with equal feelings, because he has knowledge, because he has looked into himself, then out into the world. He finds himself everywhere and all in himself. He finds himself in all because God is in all. Whether he looks at the high or low, he sees no difference and sees that in every creature there is Narayana. He sees that he is only an *ansha* of one who is in every particle of matter. If there be any differences, they are only temporary and outward. He is only that through which Vasudeva carries on his *lila*. ...

Yoga means freedom from *dwandwa*. The Yogin is free from the bondage of pleasure and pain, of anger and hatred and attachment, of liking and disliking, because he looks with equal eyes on all. He does not shrink from misfortune or misery, happiness or unhappiness. He rises above the bondage of the body, because no man can give him pleasure or pain, because he has his own source of strength, of delight and happiness. This is the freedom which the Gita says the *yoga* gives, the freedom which we ordinarily mean by *mukti*. This is the freedom which the Gita promises. He says if you act in *yoga*, you rise above grief and pain, even above all things. You are free from fear or sin, because you do not act for yourself. You do not act because you will get pleasure, but for the sake of God; that is how you are to reach *yoga*. If you wish to be happy, you must give up all your works to God. You must do all your work for His sake, and therefore sin does not touch you. It is only because of selfishness that sin touches you. If you realise that Narayana is in all, it follows that you lose the smaller, the individual limited self. You look to wider things. You see yourself in the family, in the community, race, humanity, and all things in the world. You forget yourself altogether. You work for the race and others, for mankind. It is not God's work when you follow after your selfishness. The Gita says: "Your welfare is God's business." If you work for Him you have no fear, because God stretches out His hand of mercy to you. It is to that which the *yoga* leads. The teaching of the Gita, if it is followed, delivers you from all possibility of sin, of sorrow. He says: "Take refuge in me. I shall free you from all evil. Do everything as a sacrifice to me." That is the goal towards which you move. The name of Hari will free you from all evil.

CWSA 8: 50-52

Yoga Partial and Complete

Yoga means union and the whole object of Yoga is the union of the human soul with the supreme Being and of the present nature of humanity with the eternal, supreme or divine Nature.

The greater the union, the greater the Yoga, the more complete the union, the more complete the Yoga.

There are different conceptions of the supreme Being and to each conception corresponds a school of Yoga with its separate idea and discipline. But these are partial and not complete systems; or rather they are complete in themselves, but do not cover the whole human being and nature. Most of them lead away from life and are useful only to the few who are moved to turn away from human existence and seek the bliss of some other state of being. To humanity at large this kind of Yoga has no real message. The complete Yoga will be one which accepts God in the world and oneness with all beings and solidarity with the human kind, fills life and existence with the God-consciousness and not only raises man the individual but leads man the race towards a total perfection.

CWSA 12: 334 – 335

Sri Aurobindo

India is the country where the psychic law can and must rule and the time has come for that here. Besides, it is the only possible salvation for this country whose consciousness has unfortunately been distorted by the influence and domination of a foreign nation, but which, in spite of everything, possesses a unique spiritual heritage.

CWM 13: 370

The Mother

The Core Truths of Sanatan Dharma

The One Divine and the many gods

Indian religion founded itself on the conception of a timeless, nameless and formless Supreme, but it did not feel called upon, like the narrower and more ignorant monotheisms of the younger races, to deny or abolish all intermediary forms and names and powers and personalities of the Eternal and Infinite. A colourless monism or a pale vague transcendental Theism was not its beginning, its middle and its end. The one Godhead is worshipped as the All, for all in the universe is he or made out of his being or his nature. But Indian religion is not therefore pantheism; for beyond this universality it recognises the supracosmic Eternal. Indian polytheism is not the popular polytheism of ancient Europe; for here the worshipper of many gods still knows that all his divinities are forms, names, personalities and powers of the One; his gods proceed from the one Purusha, his goddesses are energies of the one divine Force. Those ways of Indian cult which most resemble a popular form of Theism, are still something more; for they do not exclude, but admit the many aspects of God. Indian image-worship is not the idolatry of a barbaric or undeveloped mind; for even the most ignorant know that the image is a symbol and support and can throw it away when its use is over.....

CWSA 20: 192

The Divine Form and the Formless are One Reality

Human conceptions of the Divine divide themselves first into the worship of the formed and the aspiration towards the formless, secondly, into the adoration of the Qualified and the urge of the rarest spirits towards the Unqualified, the Absolute. For all these stages the Tantric wor-

ship and discipline provides. How can the Formless invest Himself with form, asks the religious rationalist. The universe is there to reply. Hinduism worships Narayana in the stone, the tree, the animal, the human being. That which the intellectual and spiritual pride or severity of other religions scorns, it makes its pride and turns into its own form of logical severity. Stocks and stones, the quadruped and the human being, all these are equals in God, our brothers in the Divine, forms that the Omnipresent has not disdained to assume. But beyond the material forms there are others that are ideal and symbolic, but not less, if anything more real, more full of divine power than any actual physical manifestation. These are the mental images in which we worship God. The Hindu believes that to whatever form he brings his devotion, the love of God is bound to assume and vivify it, and we cannot say that the belief is irrational. For if there is a Consciousness in the universe and transcending it which answers to the yearning of all these creatures and perhaps Itself yearns towards them with the love of the Father, the Mother, the Friend, the Lover, and a love surpassing all these, then it is idle to suppose that It would assume or create for its own pleasure and glory the forms of the universe, but would disdain as an offence to Its dignity or purity those which the love of the worshipper offers to It and which after all Itself has formed in his heart or his imagination. To these mental forms mental worship may be offered, and this is the higher way; or we may give the material foundation, the *pratiṣṭhā*, of a statue or pictured image to form a physical nodus for a physical act of worship.

In the formless also we worship God, in His qualities, in His Love, Power, Bliss, Wisdom, in the great cosmic Principles by which He manifests Himself to the eye of knowledge. We worship Him as the Impersonality manifested in

these things or the Personality containing them. And we rise at the apex of the pinnacle into that which is not only formless, *arūpa*, but *nirguṇa*, qualityless, the indefinable, *anirdēśyam*, of the Gita. In our human ignorance, with our mental passion for degrees and distinctions, for superiorities and exclusions, we thus grade these things and say that this is superior, that is for ignorant and inferior souls. Do we know? The Theist looks down with reprobation on the form-adoring man-worshipping idolater and polytheist; the Adwaitin looks down with a calm and tolerant indulgence on the ignorance of the quality-adoring personality bemused Theist. But it seems to us that God scorns nothing, that the Soul of all things may take as much delight in the prayer of a little child or the offering of a flower or a leaf before a pictured image as in the philosopher's leap from the summit of thought into the indefinable and unknowable and that he does best who can rise and widen into the shoreless realisation and yet keep the heart of the little child and the capacity of the seer of forms.

CWSA 1: 572-73

Apara and Para Vidya (Lower and Higher Knowledge)

Whoever is still under the influence of intellectual pride, is shocked when people depreciate the reason as the supreme guide. He asks how is it possible for a man of culture to depreciate the reason and exalt some extraneous influence like that which people call God? But these doubters are under the influence of European materialism which tries to confine man to his material portion and deny him the possibility of a divine origin and a divine destiny. When Europe left Christianity to the monk and the ascetic and forgot the teachings of the Galilean, she exposed herself to a terrible fate which will yet overtake her. God in man is the

whole revelation and the whole of religion. What Christianity taught dimly, Hinduism made plain to the intellect in Vedanta. ...

If anyone thinks that we are merely intellectual beings, he is not a Hindu. Hinduism leaves the glorification of intellectuality to those who have never seen God. She is commissioned by Him to speak only of His greatness and majesty and she has so spoken for thousands of years. When we first received a European education, we allowed ourselves to be misled by the light of science. Science is a light within a limited room, not the sun which illumines the world. The *Apara Vidya* is the sum of science but there is a higher *Vidya*, a mightier knowledge. When we are under the influence of the lower knowledge, we imagine that we are doing everything and try to reason out the situation we find ourselves in, as if our intellect were sovereign and omnipotent. But this is an attitude of delusion and *Maya*. Whoever has once felt the glory of God within him can never again believe that the intellect is supreme. There is a higher voice, there is a more unfailing oracle. It is in the heart where God resides. He works through the brain, but the brain is only one of His instruments. Whatever the brain may plan, the heart knows first and whoever can go beyond the brain to the heart, will hear the voice of the Eternal.

CWSA 6-7: 891-92

Three fundamental ideas

It is necessary to emphasise this synthetic character and embracing unity of the Indian religious mind, because otherwise we miss the whole meaning of Indian life and the whole sense of Indian culture. It is only by recognising this broad and plastic character that we can understand its total effect on the life of the community and the life of

the individual. And if we are asked, "But after all what is Hinduism, what does it teach, what does it practise, what are its common factors?" we can answer that Indian religion is founded upon three basic ideas or rather three fundamentals of a highest and widest spiritual experience. First comes the idea of the One Existence of the Veda to whom sages give different names, the One without a second of the Upanishads who is all that is and beyond all that is, the Permanent of the Buddhists, the Absolute of the Illusionists, the supreme God or Purusha of the Theists who holds in his power the soul and Nature, — in a word the Eternal, the Infinite. This is the first common foundation; but it can be and is expressed in an endless variety of formulas by the human intelligence. To discover and closely approach and enter into whatever kind or degree of unity with this Permanent, this Infinite, this Eternal, is the highest height and last effort of its spiritual experience. That is the first universal *credo* of the religious mind of India.

Admit in whatever formula this foundation, follow this great spiritual aim by one of the thousand paths recognised in India or even any new path which branches off from them and you are at the core of the religion. For its second basic idea is the manifold way of man's approach to the Eternal and Infinite. The Infinite is full of many infinities and each of these infinities is itself the very Eternal. And here in the limitations of the cosmos God manifests himself and fulfils himself in the world in many ways, but each is the way of the Eternal. For in each finite we can discover and through all things as his forms and symbols we can approach the Infinite; all cosmic powers are manifestations, all forces are forces of the One. The gods behind the workings of Nature are to be seen and adored as powers, names and personalities of the one Godhead. An infinite Conscious-Force, exec-

utive Energy, Will or Law, Maya, Prakriti, Shakti or Karma, is behind all happenings, whether to us they seem good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable, fortunate or adverse. The Infinite creates and is Brahma; it preserves and is Vishnu; it destroys or takes to itself and is Rudra or Shiva. The supreme Energy beneficent in upholding and protection is or else formulates itself as the Mother of the worlds, Luxmi or Durga. Or beneficent even in the mask of destruction, it is Chandi or it is Kali, the dark Mother. The One Godhead manifests himself in the form of his qualities in various names and godheads. The God of divine love of the Vaishnava, the God of divine power of the Shakta appear as two different godheads; but in truth they are the one infinite Deity in different figures. One may approach the Supreme through any of these names and forms, with knowledge or in ignorance; for through them and beyond them we can proceed at last to the supreme experience. ...

The third idea of strongest consequence at the base of Indian religion is the most dynamic for the inner spiritual life. It is that while the Supreme or the Divine can be approached through a universal consciousness and by piercing through all inner and outer Nature, That or He can be met by each individual soul in itself, in its own spiritual part, because there is something in it that is intimately one or at least intimately related with the one divine Existence. The essence of Indian religion is to aim at so growing and so living that we can grow out of the Ignorance which veils this self-knowledge from our mind and life and become aware of the Divinity within us. These three things put together are the whole of Hindu religion, its essential sense and, if any credo is needed, its credo.

CWSA 20: 193 – 195

Four necessities of human life

Indian religion placed four necessities before human life. First, it imposed upon the mind a belief in a highest consciousness or state of existence universal and transcendent of the universe, from which all comes, in which all lives and moves without knowing it and of which all must one day grow aware, returning towards that which is perfect, eternal and infinite. Next, it laid upon the individual life the need of self-preparation by development and experience till man is ready for an effort to grow consciously into the truth of this greater existence. Thirdly, it provided it with a well-founded, well-explored, many-branching and always enlarging way of knowledge and of spiritual or religious discipline. Lastly, for those not yet ready for these higher steps it provided an organisation of the individual and collective life, a framework of personal and social discipline and conduct, of mental and moral and vital development by which they could move each in his own limits and according to his own nature in such a way as to become eventually ready for the greater existence. The first three of these elements are the most essential to any religion, but Hinduism has always attached to the last also a great importance; it has left out no part of life as a thing secular and foreign to the religious and spiritual life.

CWSA 20: 181

Four human interests

The ancient civilisation of India founded itself very expressly upon four human interests; first, desire and enjoyment, next, material, economic and other aims and needs of the mind and body, thirdly, ethical conduct and the right law of individual and social life, and, lastly spiritual liberation; *kāma*, *artha*, *dharma*, *mokṣa*. The business of culture and social organisation was to lead, to

satisfy, to support these things in man and to build some harmony of their forms and motives. Except in very rare cases the satisfaction of the three mundane objects must run before the other; fullness of life must precede the surpassing of life. The debt to the family, the community and the gods could not be scamped; earth must have her due and the relative its play, even if beyond it there was the glory of heaven or the peace of the Absolute. There was no preaching of a general rush to the cave and the hermitage.

CWSA 20: 125-26

The fourfold order of society

The ancient Chaturvarnya must not be judged by its later disintegrated degeneration and gross meaningless parody, the caste system. But neither was it precisely the system of the classes which we find in other civilisations, priesthood, nobility, merchant class and serfs or labourers. It may have had outwardly the same starting-point, but it was given a very different revealing significance. The ancient Indian idea was that man falls by his nature into four types. There are, first and highest, the man of learning and thought and knowledge; next, the man of power and action, ruler, warrior, leader, administrator; third in the scale, the economic man, producer and wealth-getter, the merchant, artisan, cultivator: these were the twice-born, who received the initiation, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya. Last came the more undeveloped human type, not yet fit for these steps of the scale, unintellectual, without force, incapable of creation or intelligent production, the man fit only for unskilled labour and menial service, the Shudra. The economic order of society was cast in the form and gradation of these four types. The Brahmin class was called upon to give the community its priests, thinkers, men of letters, legists, scholars, religious leaders and guides. The Kshatriya class gave it its

kings, warriors, governors and administrators. The Vaishya order supplied it with its producers, agriculturists, craftsmen, artisans, merchants and traders. The Shudra class ministered to its need of menials and servants. As far as this went, there was nothing peculiar in the system except its extraordinary durability and, perhaps, the supreme position given to religion, thought and learning, not only at the top of the scale, — for that can be paralleled from one or two other civilisations, — but as the dominant power. The Indian idea in its purity fixed the status of a man in this order not by his birth, but by his capacities and his inner nature, and, if this rule had been strictly observed, that would have been a very clear mark of distinctness, a superiority of a unique kind. But even the best society is always something of a machine and gravitates towards the material sign and standard, and to found truly the social order upon this finer psychological basis would have been in those times a difficult and vain endeavour. In practice we find that birth became the basis of the Varna. It is elsewhere that we must look for the strong distinguishing mark which has made of this social structure a thing apart and sole in its type.

CWSA 20: 170-71

Supreme Truth alone is of capital importance

Indian religion never considered intellectual or theological conceptions about the supreme Truth to be the one thing of central importance. To pursue that Truth under whatever conception or whatever form, to attain to it by inner experience, to live in it in consciousness, this it held to be the sole thing needful. One school or sect might consider the real self of man to be indivisibly one with the universal Self or the supreme Spirit. Another might regard man as one with the Divine in essence but different from him in Nature. A third might hold God, Nature and the individual soul in

man to be three eternally different powers of being. But for all the truth of Self held with equal force; for even to the Indian dualist God is the supreme self and reality in whom and by whom Nature and man live, move and have their being and, if you eliminate God from his view of things, Nature and man would lose for him all their meaning and importance. The Spirit, universal Nature (whether called Maya, Prakriti or Shakti) and the soul in living beings, Jiva, are the three truths which are universally admitted by all the many religious sects and conflicting religious philosophies of India. Universal also is the admission that the discovery of the inner spiritual self in man, the divine soul in him, and some kind of living and uniting contact or absolute unity of the soul in man with God or supreme Self or eternal Brahman is the condition of spiritual perfection. It is open to us to conceive and have experience of the Divine as an impersonal Absolute and Infinite or to approach and know and feel Him as a transcendent and universal sempiternal Person: but whatever be our way of reaching him, the one important truth of spiritual experience is that he is in the heart and centre of all existence and all existence is in him and to find him is the great self-finding. Differences of credal belief are to the Indian mind nothing more than various ways of seeing the one Self and Godhead in all. Self-realisation is the one thing needful; to open to the inner Spirit, to live in the Infinite, to seek after and discover the Eternal, to be in union with God, that is the common idea and aim of religion, that is the sense of spiritual salvation, that is the living Truth that fulfils and releases. This dynamic following after the highest spiritual truth and the highest spiritual aim are the uniting bond of Indian religion and, behind all its thousand forms, its one common essence.

CWSA 20: 183-84

Sri Aurobindo

Sanatan Dharma and Humanity

Human being in the Hindu conception

The Shastras use the same word for man and the one divine and universal Being — Purusha — as if to lay stress upon the oneness of humanity with God. Nara and Narayana are the eternal couple, who, though they are two, are one, eternally different, eternally the same. Narayana, say the scholiasts, is he who dwells in the waters, but I rather think it means he who is the essence and sum of all humanity. Wherever there is a man, there there is Narayana; for the two cannot be separated. I think sometimes that when Christ spoke of himself as the Son of Man, he really meant the son of the Purusha, and almost find myself imagining that *anthropos* is only the clumsy Greek equivalent, the literal and ignorant translation of some Syrian word which corresponded to our Purusha.

Be that as it may, there can be no doubt that man is full of divine possibilities — he is not merely a term in physical evolution, but himself the field of a spiritual evolution which with him began and in him will end. It was only when man was made, that the gods were satisfied — they who had rejected the animal forms, — and cried सुकृतमेव, Man indeed is well and wonderfully made; the higher evolution can now begin. He is like God, the sum of all other types and creatures from the animal to the god, infinitely variable where they are fixed, dynamic where they, even the highest, are static, and, therefore, although in the present and in his attainment a little lower than the angels, yet in the eventuality and in his culmination considerably higher than the gods. The other or fixed types, animals, gods, giants, Titans, demi-gods, can rise to a higher development than their own, but they must use the human body and the terrestrial birth to effect the transition.

CWSA 12: 7

Dharma: The law of human action

Dharma is a word which has an ethical and practical, a natural and philosophical and a religious and spiritual significance, and it may be used in any of these senses exclusive of the others, in a purely ethical, a purely philosophical or a purely religious sense. Ethically it means the law of righteousness, the moral rule of conduct, or in a still more outward and practical significance social and political justice, or even simply the observation of the social law....

Dharma in the Indian conception is not merely the good, the right, morality and justice, ethics; it is the whole government of all the relations of man with other beings, with Nature, with God, considered from the point of view of a divine principle working itself out in forms and laws of action, forms of the inner and the outer life, orderings of relations of every kind in the world. Dharma is both that which we hold to and that which holds together our inner and outer activities. In its primary sense it means a fundamental law of our nature which secretly conditions all our activities, and in this sense each being, type, species, individual, group has its own dharma. Secondly, there is the divine nature which has to develop and manifest in us, and in this sense dharma is the law of the inner workings by which that grows in our being. Thirdly, there is the law by which we govern our outgoing thought and action and our relations with each other so as to help best both our own growth and that of the human race towards the divine ideal.

Dharma is generally spoken of as something eternal and unchanging, and so it is in the fundamental principle, in the ideal, but in its forms it is continually changing and evolving, because man does not already possess the ideal or live in it, but aspires more or less perfectly towards it, is growing towards its knowledge and practice. And in this growth

dharma is all that helps us to grow into the divine purity, largeness, light, freedom, power, strength, joy, love, good, unity, beauty, and against it stands its shadow and denial, all that resists its growth and has not undergone its law, all that has not yielded up and does not will to yield up its secret of divine values, but presents a front of perversion and contradiction, of impurity, narrowness, bondage, darkness, weakness, vileness, discord and suffering and division, and the hideous and the crude, all that man has to leave behind in his progress. This is the *adharmā*, not dharma, which strives with and seeks to overcome the dharma, to draw backward and downward, the reactionary force which makes for evil, ignorance and darkness. Between the two there is perpetual battle and struggle, oscillation of victory and defeat in which sometimes the upward and sometimes the downward forces prevail.

CWSA 19: 169-72

Arya: The ideal of a perfect human being

If Arya were a purely racial term, a more probable derivation would be *ar*, meaning strength or valour, from *ar*, to fight, whence we have the name of the Greek war-god Ares, *areios*, brave or warlike, perhaps even *aretē*, virtue, signifying, like the Latin *virtus*, first, physical strength and courage and then moral force and elevation. This sense of the word also we may accept. "We fight to win sublime Wisdom, therefore men call us warriors." For Wisdom implies the choice as well as the knowledge of that which is best, noblest, most luminous, most divine. Certainly, it means also the knowledge of all things and charity and reverence for all things, even the most apparently mean, ugly or dark, for the sake of the universal Deity who chooses to dwell equally in all. But, also, the law of right action is a

choice, the preference of that which expresses the godhead to that which conceals it. And the choice entails a battle, a struggle. It is not easily made, it is not easily enforced.

Whoever makes that choice, whoever seeks to climb from level to level up the hill of the divine, fearing nothing, deterred by no retardation or defeat, shrinking from no vastness because it is too vast for his intelligence, no height because it is too high for his spirit, no greatness because it is too great for his force and courage, he is the Aryan, the divine fighter and victor, the noble man, *aristos*, best, the *śreṣṭha* of the Gita.

Intrinsically, in its most fundamental sense, Arya means an effort or an uprising and overcoming. The Aryan is he who strives and overcomes all outside him and within him that stands opposed to the human advance. Self-conquest is the first law of his nature. He overcomes earth and the body and does not consent like ordinary men to their dullness, inertia, dead routine and tamasic limitations. He overcomes life and its energies and refuses to be dominated by their hungers and cravings or enslaved by their rajasic passions. He overcomes the mind and its habits, he does not live in a shell of ignorance, inherited prejudices, customary ideas, pleasant opinions, but knows how to seek and choose, to be large and flexible in intelligence even as he is firm and strong in his will. For in everything he seeks truth, in everything right, in everything height and freedom.

Self-perfection is the aim of his self-conquest. Therefore what he conquers he does not destroy, but ennobles and fulfils. He knows that the body, life and mind are given him in order to attain to something higher than they; therefore they must be transcended and overcome, their limitations denied, the absorption of their gratifications rejected. But he knows also that the Highest is something which is no

nullity in the world, but increasingly expresses itself here, —a divine Will, Consciousness, Love, Beatitude which pours itself out, when found, through the terms of the lower life on the finder and on all in his environment that is capable of receiving it. Of that he is the servant, lover and seeker. When it is attained, he pours it forth in work, love, joy and knowledge upon mankind. For always the Aryan is a worker and warrior. He spares himself no labour of mind or body whether to seek the Highest or to serve it. He avoids no difficulty, he accepts no cessation from fatigue. Always he fights for the coming of that kingdom within himself and in the world.

CWSA 13: 442–43

Moksha or Inner freedom: The Goal of man

The pessimists have made moksha synonymous with annihilation or dissolution, but its true meaning is freedom. He who is free from bondage, is free, is mukta. But the last bondage is the passion for liberation itself which must be renounced before the soul can be perfectly free, and the last knowledge is the realisation that there is none bound, none desirous of freedom, but the soul is for ever and perfectly free, that bondage is an illusion and the liberation from bondage is an illusion. Not only are we bound but in play, the mimic knots are of such a nature that we ourselves can at our pleasure undo them.

Nevertheless the bonds are many and intricate. The most difficult of all their knots is egoism, the delusion that we have an individual existence sufficient in itself, separate from the universal and only being, ekamevadwitiyam, who is one not only beyond Time, Space and Causality. Not only are we all Brahman in our nature and being, waves of one sea, but we are each of us Brahman in His entirety, for that

which differentiates and limits us, nama and rupa, exists only in play and for the sake of the world-drama.

Whence then comes this delusion of egoism, if there is no separate existence and only Brahman is? We answer that there is separate existence but only in manifestation not in reality. It is as if one actor could play different parts not in succession but at one and the same moment; each part is He Himself, one and indivisible, but each part is different from the other. Brahman extends Himself in Time, Space & Causality which do not condition Him but exist in Him and can at any time be changed or abolished, and in Time, Space & Causality He attaches Himself to many *namarupas* which are merely existences in His universal being. They are real in manifestation, unreal outside manifestation.

CWSA 12: 6

Sri Aurobindo

...human action is based on reactions. Divine action, on the other hand, spontaneously stems from the vision through identity of the necessity of the "dharma" of each thing and each being. It is a constant perception, spontaneous, effortless, through identity, of the dharma of each being (I use the word "dharma" because it's neither "law" nor "truth," but both together). In order for this being to go by the shortest way to his goal, here is the curve of the most favorable circumstances; consequently the action will always be modeled on that curve. The result is that in seemingly similar circumstances, the action of the divine Wisdom will sometimes be completely different, at times even opposite. But then, how do you explain this to the ordinary consciousness?... In one case, the Master "loves" this person, while in the other he doesn't "love" him – it's easy!

The Mother: Conversations with a disciple, July 22, 1964

Sanatan dharma is to realise God in our Life

In the changes of the future the Hindu society must take the lead towards the establishment of a new universal standard. Yet being Hindus we must seek it through that which is particular to ourselves. We have one standard that is at once universal and particular, the eternal religion, which is the basis, permanent and always inherent in India, of the shifting, mutable and multiform thing we call Hinduism. Sticking fast where you are like a limpet is not the dharma, neither is leaping without looking the dharma. The eternal religion is to realise God in our inner life and our outer existence, in society not less than in the individual. *Esha dharmah sanatanah*. God is not antiquity nor novelty: He is not the Manava Dharmashastra, nor Vidyaranya, nor Raghunandan; neither is He an European. God who is essentially Sacchidananda, is in manifestation *Satyam, Prema, Shakti*,—Truth, Strength and Love. Whatever is consistent with the truth and principle of things, whatever increases love among men, whatever makes for the strength of the individual, the nation and the race, is divine, it is the law of Vaivaswata Manu, it is the *sanatana dharma* and the Hindu shastra. Only, God is the triple harmony, He is not one-sided. Our love must not make us weak, blind or unwise; our strength must not make us hard and furious; our principles must not make us fanatical or sentimental. Let us think calmly, patiently, impartially; let us love wholly and intensely but wisely; let us act with strength, nobility and force. If even then we make mistakes, yet God makes none. We decide and act; He determines the fruit, and whatever He determines is good.

CWSA 12: 53 – 54

Sri Aurobindo

Sri Aurobindo, India and the Sanatan Dharma

Realising the truths of the Hindu religion

What happened to me during that period I am not impelled to say, but only this that day after day, He showed me His wonders and made me realise the utter truth of the Hindu religion. I had had many doubts before. I was brought up in England amongst foreign ideas and an atmosphere entirely foreign. About many things in Hinduism I had once been inclined to believe that it was all imagination; that there was much of dream in it, much that was delusion and *maya*. But now day after day I realised in the mind, I realised in the heart, I realised in the body the truths of the Hindu religion. They became living experiences to me, and things were opened to me which no material science could explain. When I first approached Him, it was not entirely in the spirit of the Bhakta, it was not entirely in the spirit of the Jnani. I came to Him long ago in Baroda some years before the Swadeshi began and I was drawn into the public field.

When I approached God at that time, I hardly had a living faith in Him. The agnostic was in me, the atheist was in me, the sceptic was in me and I was not absolutely sure that there was a God at all. I did not feel His presence. Yet something drew me to the truth of the Vedas, the truth of the Gita, the truth of the Hindu religion. I felt there must be a mighty truth somewhere in this Yoga, a mighty truth in this religion based on the Vedanta. So when I turned to the Yoga and resolved to practise it and find out if my idea was right, I did it in this spirit and with this prayer to Him, "If Thou art, then Thou knowest my heart. Thou knowest that I do not ask for Mukti, I do not ask for anything which others ask for. I ask only for strength to uplift this nation, I ask only to be allowed to live and work for this people

whom I love and to whom I pray that I may devote my life." I strove long for the realisation of Yoga and at last to some extent I had it, but in what I most desired, I was not satisfied.

CWSA 8: 9 – 10

The rise of India is the rise of Sanatan Dharma

It is this religion that I am raising up before the world, it is this that I have perfected and developed through the *rishis*, saints and *avatars*, and now it is going forth to do my work among the nations. I am raising up this nation to send forth my word. This is the Sanatana Dharma, this is the eternal religion which you did not really know before, but which I have now revealed to you. The agnostic and the sceptic in you have been answered, for I have given you proofs within and without you, physical and subjective, which have satisfied you. When you go forth, speak to your nation always this word that it is for the Sanatana Dharma that they arise, it is for the world and not for themselves that they arise. I am giving them freedom for the service of the world. When therefore it is said that India shall rise, it is the Sanatana Dharma that shall rise. When it is said that India shall be great, it is the Sanatana Dharma that shall be great. When it is said that India shall expand and extend herself, it is the Sanatana Dharma that shall expand and extend itself over the world. It is for the *dharma* and by the *dharma* that India exists. To magnify the religion means to magnify the country. I have shown you that I am everywhere and in all men and in all things, that I am in this movement and I am not only working in those who are striving for the country but I am working also in those who oppose them and stand in their path. I am working in everybody and whatever men may think or do they can do nothing but help on my pur-

pose. They also are doing my work; they are not my enemies but my instruments. In all your actions you are moving forward without knowing which way you move. You mean to do one thing and you do another. You aim at a result and your efforts subserve one that is different or contrary. It is Shakti that has gone forth and entered into the people. Since long ago I have been preparing this uprising and now the time has come and it is I who will lead it to its fulfilment.”

CWSA 8: 10-11

India was born with the Sanatan Dharma

I spoke once before with this force in me and I said then that this movement is not a political movement and that nationalism is not politics but a religion, a creed, a faith. I say it again today, but I put it in another way. I say no longer that nationalism is a creed, a religion, a faith; I say that it is the Sanatana Dharma which for us is nationalism. This Hindu nation was born with the Sanatana Dharma, with it it moves and with it it grows. When the Sanatana Dharma declines, then the nation declines, and if the Sanatana Dharma were capable of perishing, with the Sanatana Dharma it would perish. The Sanatana Dharma, that is nationalism. This is the message that I have to speak to you.

CWSA 8: 12

Religion is nothing if it is not lived

The task we set before ourselves is not mechanical but moral and spiritual. We aim not at the alteration of a form of government but at the building up of a nation. Of that task politics is a part, but only a part. We shall devote ourselves not to politics alone, nor to social questions alone, nor to theology or philosophy or literature or science by themselves, but we include all these in one entity which we believe to

be all-important, the *dharma*, the national religion which we also believe to be universal. There is a mighty law of life, a great principle of human evolution, a body of spiritual knowledge and experience of which India has always been destined to be guardian, exemplar and missionary. This is the *sanatana dharma*, the eternal religion. Under the stress of alien impacts she has largely lost hold not of the structure of that *dharma*, but of its living reality. For the religion of India is nothing if it is not lived. It has to be applied not only to life, but to the whole of life; its spirit has to enter into and mould our society, our politics, our literature, our science, our individual character, affections and aspirations. To understand the heart of this *dharma*, to experience it as a truth, to feel the high emotions to which it rises and to express and execute it in life is what we understand by Karmayoga. We believe that it is to make the *yoga* the ideal of human life that India rises today; by the *yoga* she will get the strength to realise her freedom, unity and greatness, by the *yoga* she will keep the strength to preserve it. It is a spiritual revolution we foresee and the material is only its shadow and reflex.

CWSA 8: 24

It is the spirit alone that saves

We do not believe that by changing the machinery so as to make our society the ape of Europe we shall effect social renovation. Widow-remarriage, substitution of class for caste, adult marriage, intermarriages, interdining and the other nostrums of the social reformer are mechanical changes which, whatever their merits or demerits, cannot by themselves save the soul of the nation alive or stay the course of degradation and decline. It is the spirit alone that saves, and only by becoming great and free in heart can we

become socially and politically great and free.

We do not believe that by multiplying new sects limited within the narrower and inferior ideas of religion imported from the West or by creating organisations for the perpetuation of the mere dress and body of Hinduism we can recover our spiritual health, energy and greatness. The world moves through an indispensable interregnum of free thought and materialism to a new synthesis of religious thought and experience, a new religious world-life free from intolerance, yet full of faith and fervour, accepting all forms of religion because it has an unshakable faith in the One. The religion which embraces Science and faith, Theism, Christianity, Mahomedanism and Buddhism and yet is none of these, is that to which the World-Spirit moves. In our own, which is the most sceptical and the most believing of all, the most sceptical because it has questioned and experimented the most, the most believing because it has the deepest experience and the most varied and positive spiritual knowledge,— that wider Hinduism which is not a dogma or combination of dogmas but a law of life, which is not a social framework but the spirit of a past and future social evolution, which rejects nothing but insists on testing and experiencing everything and when tested and experienced turning it to the soul's uses, in this Hinduism we find the basis of the future world-religion. This *sanatana dharma* has many scriptures, Veda, Vedanta, Gita, Upanishad, Darshana, Purana, Tantra, nor could it reject the Bible or the Koran; but its real, most authoritative scripture is in the heart in which the Eternal has His dwelling. It is in our inner spiritual experiences that we shall find the proof and source of the world's Scriptures, the law of knowledge, love and conduct, the basis and inspiration of Karmayoga.

CWSA 8: 25-26



... the relation which exists between the Mother here and X (and between the Mother and all who accept her), is a psychic and spiritual motherhood. It is a far greater relation than that of the physical mother to her child; it gives all that human motherhood can give, but in a much higher way, and it contains in itself infinitely more.

CWSA 32: 108

Sri Aurobindo

The aim and the task before us

Our aim will therefore be to help in building up India for the sake of humanity — this is the spirit of the Nationalism which we profess and follow. We say to humanity, “The time has come when you must take the great step and rise out of a material existence into the higher, deeper and wider life towards which humanity moves. The problems which have troubled mankind can only be solved by conquering the kingdom within, not by harnessing the forces of Nature to the service of comfort and luxury, but by mastering the forces of the intellect and the spirit, by vindicating the freedom of man within as well as without and by conquering from within external Nature. For that work the resurgence of Asia is necessary, therefore Asia rises. For that work the freedom and greatness of India is essential, therefore she claims her destined freedom and greatness, and it is to the interest of all humanity, not excluding England, that she should wholly establish her claim.”

We say to the nation, “It is God’s will that we should be ourselves and not Europe. We have sought to regain life by following the law of another being than our own. We must return and seek the sources of life and strength within ourselves. We must know our past and recover it for the purposes of our future. Our business is to realise ourselves first and to mould everything to the law of India’s eternal life and nature. It will therefore be the object of the *Karmayogin* to read the heart of our religion, our society, our philosophy, politics, literature, art, jurisprudence, science, thought, everything that was and is ours, so that we may be able to say to ourselves and our nation, ‘This is our *dharma*.’ We shall review European civilisation entirely from the standpoint of Indian thought and knowledge

and seek to throw off from us the dominating stamp of the Occident; what we have to take from the West we shall take as Indians. And the *dharma* once discovered we shall strive our utmost not only to profess but to live, in our individual actions, in our social life, in our political endeavours."

CWSA 8: 26-27

The triple message of India

We have here, very briefly put, the triple message of India, psychical, spiritual and moral. India believes in and has the key to a psychical world within man and without him which is the source and basis of the material. This it is which Europe is beginning dimly to discover. She has caught glimpses of the world beyond the gates, her hands are fumbling for the key but she has not yet found it. Immortality proved and admitted, it becomes easier to believe in God. The spiritual message is that the universal self is one and that our souls are not only brothers, not only of one substance and nature, but live in and move towards an essential oneness. It follows that Love is the highest law and that to which evolution must move. Ananda, joy and delight, are the object of the *lila* and the fulfilment of love is the height of joy and delight. Self-sacrifice is therefore the fundamental law. Sacrifice, says the Gita, is the law by which the Father of all in the beginning conditioned the world, and all ethics, all conduct, all life is a sacrifice willed or unconscious. The beginning of ethical knowledge is to realise this and make the conscious sacrifice of one's own individual desires. It is an inferior and semi-savage morality which gives up only to gain and makes selfishness the basis of ethics. To give up one's small individual self and find the larger self in others, in the nation, in humanity, in

God, that is the law of Vedanta. That is India's message. Only she must not be content with sending it, she must rise up and live it before all the world so that it may be proved a possible law of conduct both for men and nations.

CWSA 8: 55

Recover the Aryan thought, the Aryan character

We say to the individual and especially to the young who are now arising to do India's work, the world's work, God's work, "You cannot cherish these ideals, still less can you fulfil them if you subject your minds to European ideas or look at life from the material standpoint. Materially you are nothing, spiritually you are everything. It is only the Indian who can believe everything, dare everything, sacrifice everything. First therefore become Indians. Recover the patrimony of your forefathers. Recover the Aryan thought, the Aryan discipline, the Aryan character, the Aryan life. Recover the Vedanta, the Gita, the Yoga. Recover them not only in intellect or sentiment but in your lives. Live them and you will be great and strong, mighty, invincible and fearless. Neither life nor death will have any terrors for you. Difficulty and impossibility will vanish from your vocabularies. For it is in the spirit that strength is eternal and you must win back the kingdom of yourselves, the inner Swaraj, before you can win back your outer empire. There the Mother dwells and She waits for worship that She may give strength. Believe in Her, serve Her, lose your wills in Hers, your egoism in the greater ego of the country, your separate selfishness in the service of humanity. Recover the source of all strength in yourselves and all else will be added to you, social soundness, intellectual preeminence, political freedom, the mastery of human thought, the hegemony of the world."

CWSA 8: 27-28

Sri Aurobindo

An Announcement

Sri Aurobindo Divine Life Education Centre, Jhunjhunu (Rajasthan)

The basic object of this centre established by Sri Aurobindo society is to work for the realisation of a divine life upon earth as envisioned by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. It aspires to create a community of spiritual aspirants who seek this goal.

This education centre has been functioning since 15th August 1994. The new academic session begins every year from 15th August for children aged between 6 to 12 years. It is a residential school with English as the medium of instruction. The education is completely free. There are no tuition fees, nor any charges for lodging and boarding.

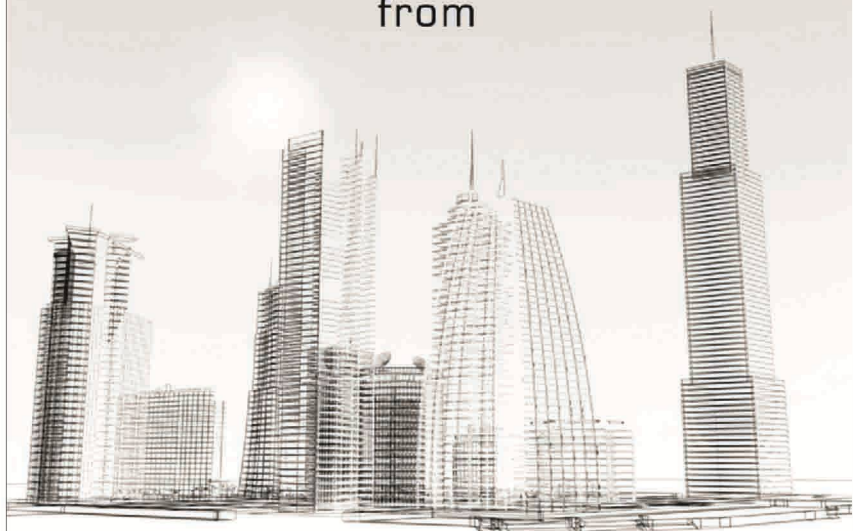
The centre aspires to provide an integral education and to offer scope for the full development of the being. Parents who are not interested in degrees and diplomas or Government recognised certificates for their children, but who simply aspire for the better growth of their children's consciousness and total personality, and wish to admit them in this school, may write to the organisers. at the earliest. Admissions are open throughout the year.

Also are invited the seekers of divine life who would like to stay at the centre, pursue a life of sadhana and dedicate their lives for this cause. For details please write to:

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