

The Best of
Sri Aurobindo Circle



Revisiting some of the timeless writings from the vast archives of
Sri Aurobindo Circle, an annual journal published from
1945 to 1998.

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EDITORIAL

Beloo Mehra

Greetings for this special month of August!

On the upcoming birthday of Sri Aurobindo, the Maharishi, the Mahayogi, the Avatar who is guiding the onward march of Earth-consciousness to its inevitable destiny, we offer at His Lotus Feet Volume 2 of *The Best of Sri Aurobindo Circle*, our bi-annual periodical which brings for readers in a novel way gems selected from the vast archives of *Sri Aurobindo Circle*.

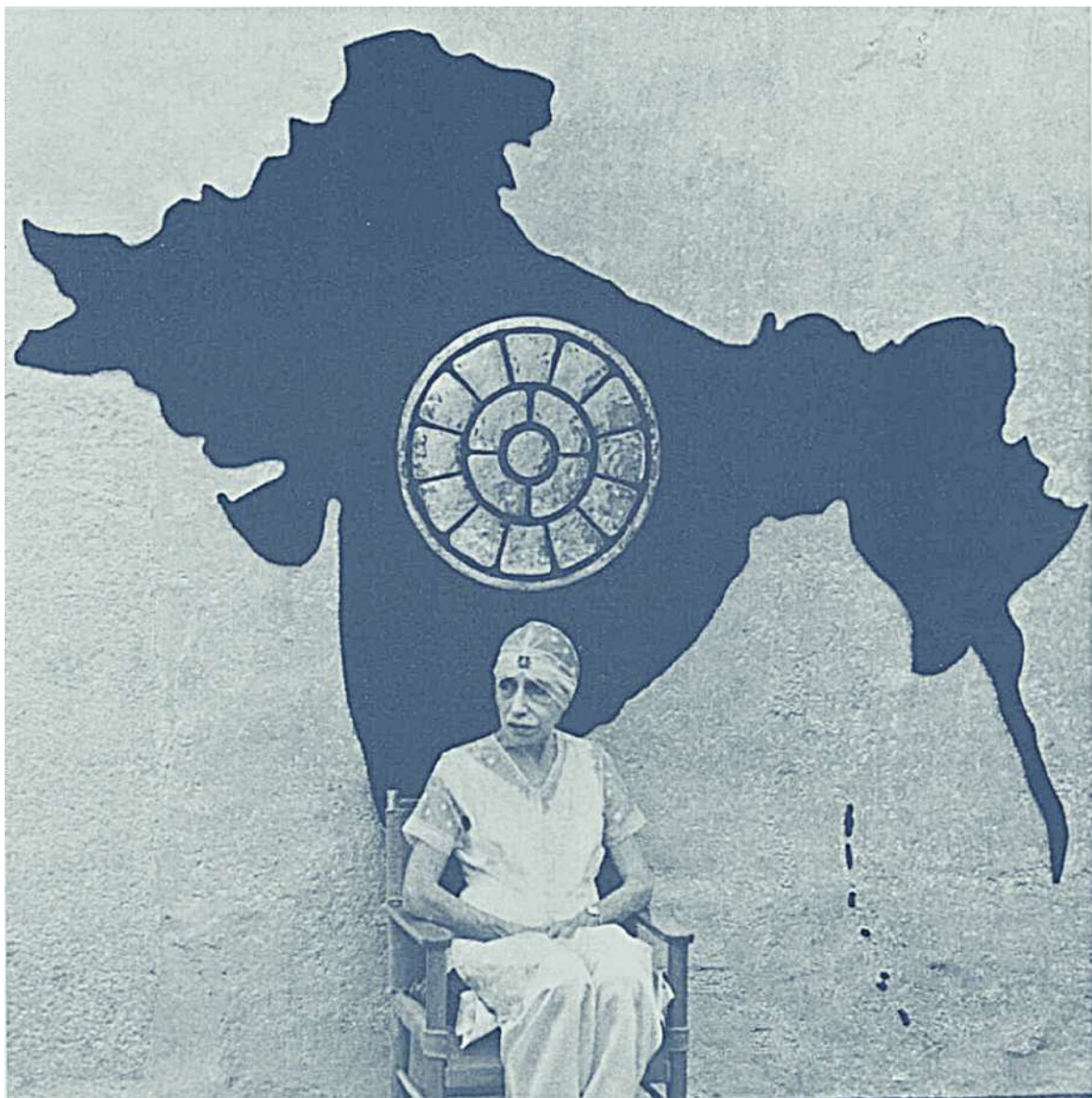
The root cause of all major problems we face today as human race can be broadly traced back to two opposing lines of thought and practice. On one side we have an approach to life which looks at the existence only from a materialistic-utilitarian perspective. For such a mindset, what is physically seen is the only reality. Also, this reality can be manipulated for making human life more pleasurable and comfortable by the use of scientific or rational mind. In one of its extreme expressions, this led to the rejection of all religion and religious impulse. And in another way, the same mindset became the driving force for all colonial or imperialistic campaigns of Europe. This is typically considered a practical, future-oriented approach, generally identified with the Western-industrial-rational model of development and progress.

On the other side, we have a conventional and conservative mindset typically stuck in the ways of the past. It is keener on preserving the form rather than the essential spirit of the past. In its extreme forms such a way of thinking may refuse to see value in any outer material progress, especially when an ascetic tendency becomes stronger. Such an approach is also prone to perversion and distortion. And it can very quickly open itself to tendencies of religious obscurantism, fundamentalism, even mindless use of violence for conflict-resolution. The risk is stronger when the religion gets hijacked by lowest impulses of human nature such as greed, lust for power, and ambition.

In their own ways, both such approaches are responsible for the conflicts we see in the world today. Neither can offer a solution from within their narrow ideological cages. Sri Aurobindo could foresee such an impasse as far back as in 1916 when he wrote:

For the most vital issue of the age is whether the future progress of humanity is to be governed by the modern economic and materialistic mind of the West or by a nobler pragmatism guided, uplifted and enlightened by spiritual culture and knowledge.¹

Once the West more or less rejected religion and religious impulse, it almost exclusively turned to fulfilling external desires and impulses. As a result, its life became governed by political and economic ideals and necessities. Even when there has been some reawakening of the religious mind and a growing interest and curiosity regarding spiritual and psychical



¹ CWSA, 13: 137

seeking, the West's tendency has been to address matters of the world by "mechanical methods and as the thinking political and economic animal, simply because it knows no other standpoint and is accustomed to no other method." (ibid.)

At the same time, the alternative of going back to a religious mould of life focused more on the outer forms and practices, the outer shell of the religion with not much regard for its inner true kernel, is no longer going to be acceptable to the rational and questioning mind of humanity. The solution is to be found in a spiritual view of life and living.

The evolutionary crisis faced by humanity today expresses itself at all levels, individual, communal, national and global. It can be adequately addressed only by going beyond the mental consciousness which necessitates an inward and upward movement. Sri Aurobindo's cosmic and comprehensive seer-vision points the way to a new creation. This new creation would necessitate a new world culture which must base itself on Spirit as the centre and build its forms the way a spiritual culture would do. This issue of Best of Sri Aurobindo Circle explores a fundamental question in this regard - will the new creation be preceded by a destruction of the old?

As always, we offer this work at the Lotus Feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Ever in gratitude.

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Will the New Creation be Preceded by Destruction?

Kishor Gandhi

Editor's Note: This essay was first published in the 1966 issue of *Sri Aurobindo Circle*. We are presenting here in 4 parts, with a few minor formatting revisions for the ease of reading. References to Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's works have all been updated.



Barringtonia asiatica, Kye-bin

Spiritual significance given by the Mother: Supramental Action

Destruction: The First Condition of Progress

Part 1

Now that the Supramental Truth which will create a New Age in human evolution is increasingly pressing to manifest in the external life of the world, the question naturally arises as to how it will deal with those elements in the life and consciousness of humanity which still obstinately resist its advent and which blindly or deliberately side with the forces of Falsehood which vehemently seek to prevent its reign upon earth. Or, since the supramental Truth directly manifests the Will of God, how will God deal with these obstructing elements in humanity? Will He destroy them?

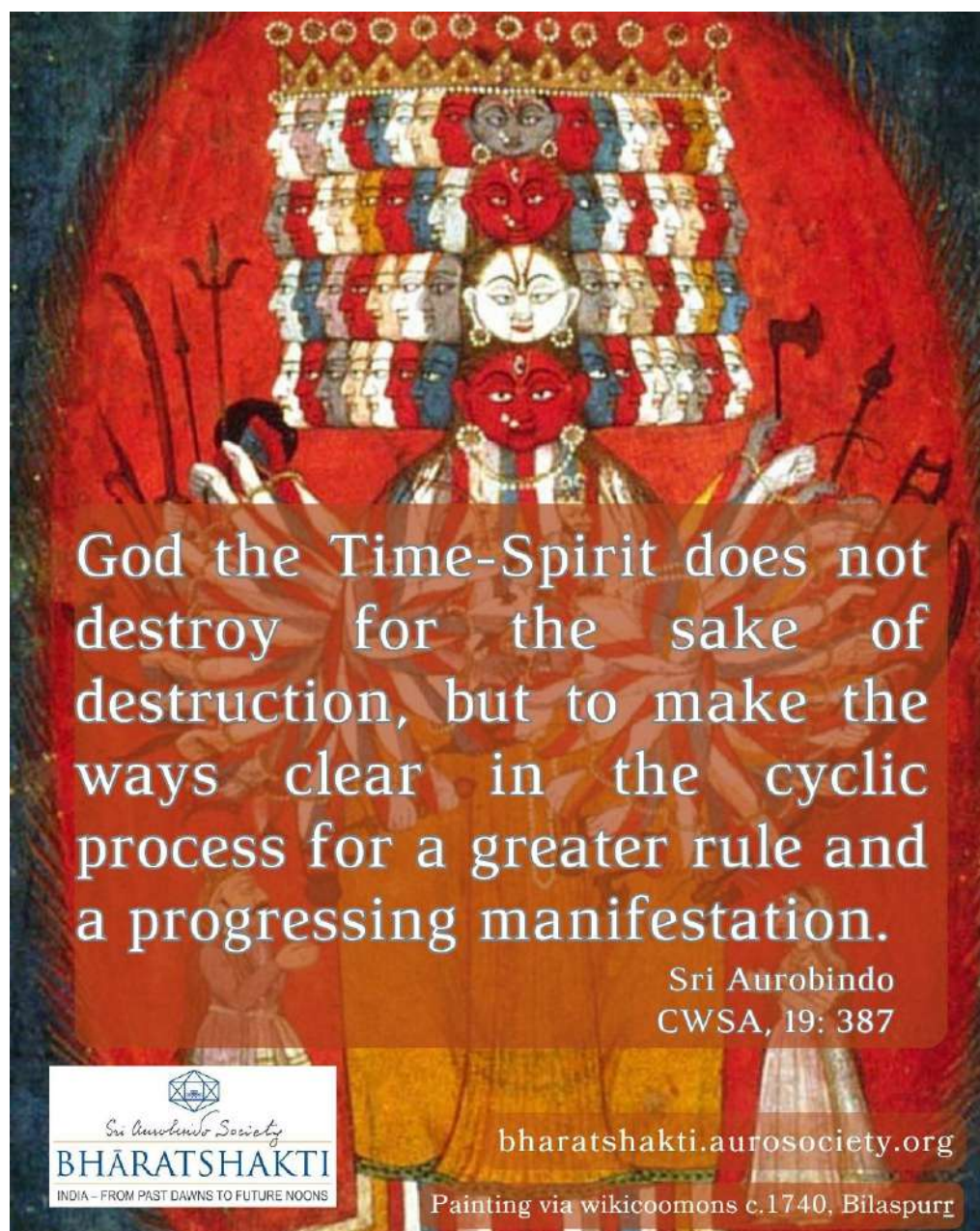
The majority of men conceive of God as God of Love and Mercy. To them the idea of God as destroyer seems too shocking and horrible. But a more clear-sighted and courageous vision of existence ought to make it clear that destruction is as necessary a part of the cosmic process as creation and preservation and that without it any new progress would become impossible in the present state of life. As Sri Aurobindo says:

Destruction is always a simultaneous or alternate element which keeps pace with creation and it is by destroying and renewing that the Master of Life does his long work of preservation. More, destruction is the first condition of progress. Inwardly, the man who does not destroy his lower self-formations, cannot rise to a greater existence. Outwardly also, the nation or community or race which shrinks too long from destroying and replacing its past forms of life, is itself destroyed, rots and perishes and out of its debris other nations, communities and races are formed. By destruction of the old giant occupants man made himself a place upon earth. By destruction of the Titans the gods maintain the continuity of the divine Law in the cosmos. Whoever prematurely attempts to get rid of this law of battle and destruction, strives vainly against the greater will of the World-Spirit. Whoever turns from it in the weakness of his lower members...is showing not true virtue, but a want of spiritual courage to face the sterner truths of Nature and of action and existence.²

² CWSA, 19: 384

This is Gita's conception of God as the Time-Spirit who speaks of himself: "I am Time the Destroyer of beings." But the Gita also makes it clear that this action of God as the Destroyer is not the whole essence or the complete truth of His cosmic working. It is a transitional necessity in the lower stages of evolution in which man lives in his egoistic consciousness enveloped in the Ignorance and blindly driven by forces of the lower nature.

In this condition he is not always sufficiently responsive to the progressive will of the Time-Spirit in the universe. Not only so, but he often becomes an instrument in the hands of the Asuric forces of Falsehood which are opposed to the increasing manifestation of the Divine



Truth in the world. So long as there is this obstruction and opposition in man the necessity of destruction also remains. It can be dispensed with only when man consciously begins to respond to and side with God's progressive will in the cosmos. More and more he does so, less and less becomes the necessity of destruction. God does not delight in destruction for destruction's sake; He uses it only as a means for a greater creation because man in his lower egoistic nature refuses to move forward by the smoother and harmonious process of consenting to His Will. As Sri Aurobindo says. "God the Time-Spirit does not destroy for the sake of destruction, but to make the ways clear in the cyclic process for a greater rule and a progressing manifestation".³

But when urged by the call of the higher nature man begins to consent to God's Will, then God also changes his manner of dealing with him. The fierce and terrible face of the Destroyer changes into the face of the Friend. It is for this reason that Sri Aurobindo, while admitting that the law of progress through strife and destruction is not the best way of progress, also points out that it cannot be replaced by the higher law of harmony and peace and love until man is truly ready for it. He says:

It is self-evident that in the actual life of man intellectual, social, political, moral we can make no real step forward without a struggle, a battle between what exists and lives and what seeks to exist and live and between all that stands behind either. It is impossible, at least as men and things are, to advance, to grow, to fulfill and still to observe really and utterly that principle of harmlessness which is yet placed before us as the highest and best law of conduct.⁴

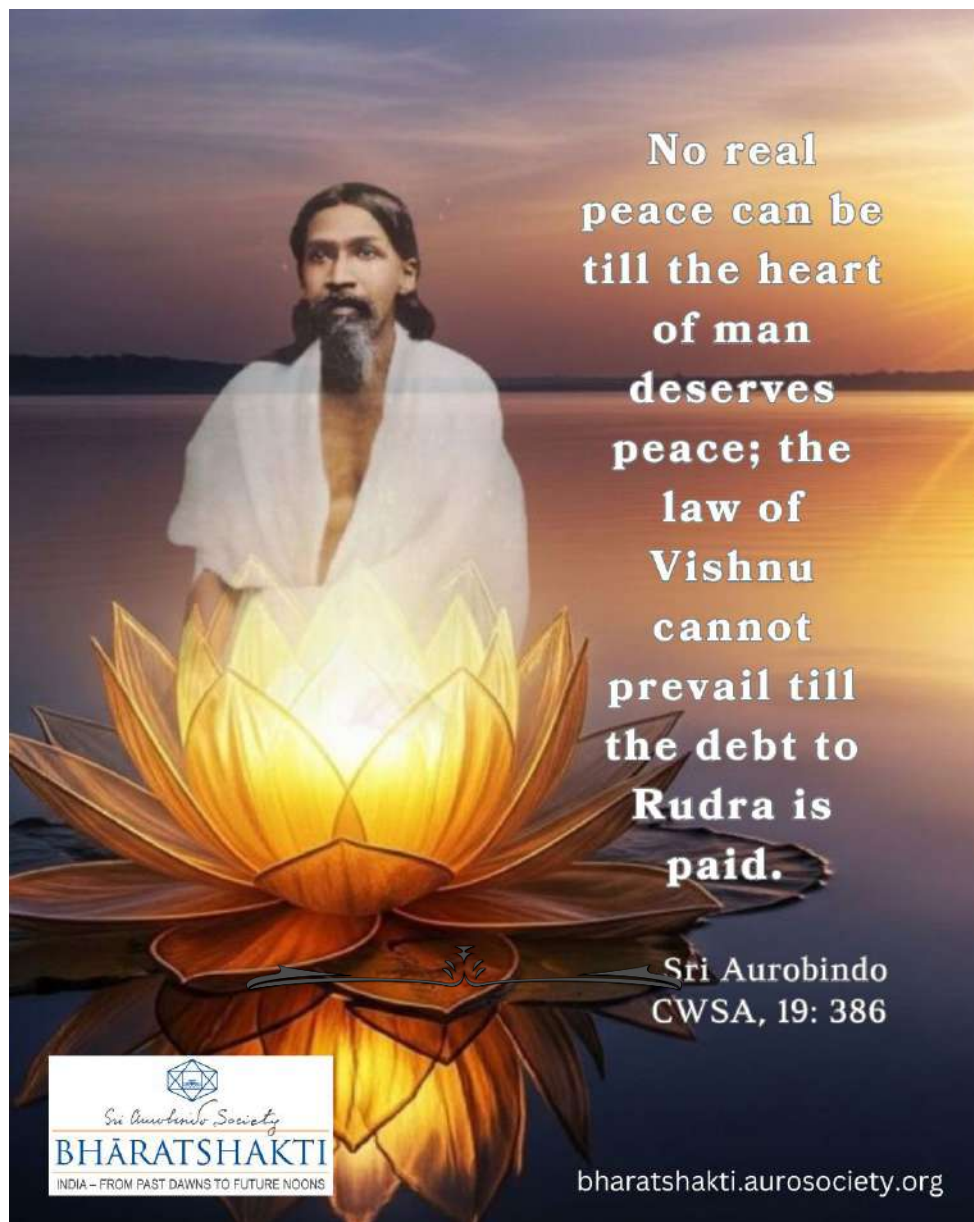
God's higher law of peace and love can prevail in the world only when man outgrows his present egoistic consciousness sufficiently to deserve it and not before. Any premature rejection of the necessity of destruction would only result in setting back the forward march of humanity's progress:

No real peace can be till the heart of man deserves peace; the law of Vishnu cannot prevail till the debt to Rudra is paid. To turn aside then and preach to a still unevolved mankind the law of love and oneness? Teachers of the law of love and

³ CWSA, 19: 387

⁴ CWSA, 19: 42

oneness there must be, for by that way must come the ultimate salvation. But not till the Time-Spirit in man is ready, can the inner and ultimate prevail over the outer and immediate reality. Christ and Buddha have come and gone, but it is Rudra who still holds the world in the hollow of his hand. And meanwhile the fierce forward labour of mankind tormented and oppressed by the Powers that are profiteers of egoistic force and their servants cries for the sword of the Hero of the struggle and the word of its prophet.⁵



⁵ CWSA, Vol. 19, p. 386

True Meaning of the Destroyer Aspect of the Divine

Part 2

This Gita's conception of God as the Time-Spirit in the aspect of the Destroyer should not be identified with the crude Semitic religious idea of God as a stern and wrathful almighty Creator and Judge who punishes the sinners and casts them into an eternal hell.

The Jews who brought forward most prominently this idea and from whom it overspread a great part of the world, could believe in a God of righteousness who was exclusive, arbitrary, wrathful, jealous, often cruel and even wantonly sanguinary. But, according to Sri Aurobindo, this idea “even apart from these extravagances of a childish religious belief, ... is a crude and imperfect idea of the Divine, when taken by itself, because it takes an inferior and an external truth for the main truth and it tends to prevent a higher approach to a more intimate reality. It exaggerates the importance of the sense of sin and thereby prolongs and increases the soul's fear and self-distrust and weakness.”⁶

What the Gita points at is an aspect of the Divine which is as essential to world-action as the aspect of Love. As Sri Aurobindo says:

In the divine no less than in ordinary human character and action there are always two strands, sweetness and strength, mildness and force, saumya *and* raudra, the force that bears and harmonises, the force that imposes itself and compels, Vishnu and Ishana, Shiva and Rudra. The two are equally necessary to a perfect world-action.⁷

But even though we may speak of this Rudra aspect of the Divine as “fierce” and “terrible” and “wrathful”, we must remember that these are only human images of divine qualities which disfigure their true nature. **God who has created all is equal to all and is not moved by the blind passions of wrath, hatred or disgust even though he has to**

⁶ CWSA, 24: 561

⁷ CWSA, 24: 736

destroy at times with a shattering vehemence what needs to be destroyed in the progressive march of the universe. As Sri Aurobindo explains:

The Divine is equal to all, an impartial sustainer of his universe, who views all with equal eyes, assents to the law of developing being which he has brought out of the depths of his existence, tolerates what has to be tolerated, depresses what has to be depressed, raises what has to be raised, creates, sustains and destroys with a perfect and equal understanding of all causes and results and working out of the spiritual and pragmatic meaning of all phenomena. **God does not create in obedience to any troubled passion of desire or maintain and preserve through an attachment of partial preference or destroy in a fury of wrath, disgust or aversion.**⁸

We have therefore to look at this Rudra aspect of God and its destructive action as a part of the total process of God's working in the world. We have to courageously admit its necessity in the earlier stages of the evolutionary movement through Ignorance where every step forward often requires the destruction of the old formations which oppose God's progressive will in the world.

It is only in the higher stages of evolution when this opposition changes into willing acceptance of God's Will that this necessity of destruction ceases and God begins to deal with us by his gentler method of love and harmony. This issue assumes a special significance and intensity during those critical periods in the world's history which arrive at the turning-points in its evolutionary development and which Sri Aurobindo has called the Hours of God. Whether the forward step in evolution at these points will be taken under the law of strife and destruction or the law of love and harmony depends altogether on the condition of humanity at these times.

At the present moment humanity is passing through one of these critical periods which is of supreme importance to its future destiny. A new Truth, the supramental Truth, which is the next principle to emerge in the terrestrial evolution after Mind, has manifested in the inner atmosphere of the earth and from there is pressing to emerge in the external life of humanity.

⁸ CWSA, 24: 700

But simultaneously with the manifestation of this Truth there has also occurred a precipitation of very dark and dangerous forces of Falsehood trying with all their vehemence and fury to obstruct and destroy that Truth. They are engaged in a dire battle with it because they know that when it succeeds in establishing itself upon earth their days would be ended. Fearing their destruction they are fighting a crucial battle to retain their grip over earth and humanity. This invisible opposition to the advent of Truth on the inner plane is projected in the external life of the world through the human instruments, individual and collective, of these adverse forces.



The victory of the supramental Truth over these opposing forces of Falsehood is absolutely certain because that Truth is empowered with the omnipotent Divine Will. But whether humanity will receive that Truth in a harmonious evolutionary mutation or after undergoing a catastrophic destruction will depend upon its readiness to receive it. If it willingly consents to change its consciousness to receive the Truth, then its evolutionary development will work itself out smoothly and harmoniously. But if it persists in its present egoistic consciousness and blindly sides with the obstructing forces of Falsehood then it will not be able to avert destruction.

The Two Choices Before Humanity

Part 3

These are the two alternatives facing humanity from which it will have to make its choice. The Mother has drawn our pointed attention to this choice in a recent message:

“The Future of the Earth depends on a Change of Consciousness.

“The only hope for the future is in a change of man’s consciousness and the change is bound to come.

“But it is left to men to decide if they will collaborate for this change or it will have to be enforced upon them by the power of crashing circumstances.”⁹

Sri Aurobindo has also pointed out the same choice in the following words:

No system indeed by its own force can bring about the change that humanity really needs; for that can only come by its growth into the firmly realised possibilities of its own higher nature, and this growth depends on an inner and not an outer change. But outer changes may at least prepare favourable conditions for that more real amelioration,— or on the contrary they may lead to such conditions that the sword of Kalki can alone purify the earth from the burden of an obstinately Asuric humanity. **The choice lies with the race itself; for as it sows, so shall it reap the fruit of its Karma.**¹⁰

If, therefore, the coming New Creation will have to be preceded by a violent destruction, by “the death-dance of Kali”, it will not be because of God’s choice. It will only be because the present humanity has not as yet inwardly changed enough to be fit for God’s gentler and kindlier handling. If instead of opening to the new Truth and allowing it to re-create its life, it yields to the promptings of Falsehood, then it is certain that it is still the same crude recalcitrant stuff which can be changed only by a severe and drastic method. In Sri Aurobindo’s vivid words:

⁹ CWM, 15: 60

¹⁰ CWSA, 25: 661-662

Wherefore God hammers so fiercely at his world, tramples and kneads it like dough, casts it so often into the blood-bath and the red hell-heat of the furnace? **Because humanity in the mass is still a hard, crude and vile ore which will not otherwise be smelted and shaped; as is his material, so is his method.** Let it help to transmute itself into nobler and purer metal, his ways with it will be gentler and sweeter, much loftier and fairer its uses.¹¹



This method of changing humanity by a fierce hammering or by giving “a good drubbing”¹² as the Mother puts it, is extremely distressing and wasteful. Nevertheless, the Divine has to use it so long as the consciousness of humanity does not improve. The Divine always likes to act in peace and harmony; He prefers to change the world by love. But if humanity is not ready for it, what can He do?

¹¹ CWSA, 13: 210

¹² Bulletin of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, August 1965, p. 92

Furthering the Evolutionary Transition

Part 4

Therefore whether at the present moment the manifestation of the supramental Truth will or will not be preceded by destruction will depend upon the choice that humanity makes. It may, however, be argued that ultimately it is not the human choice but the Divine Grace that decides everything; so in the present crisis also the final decision will rest in the Divine's hands. This is no doubt true, but it is also necessary to remember that in the actual workings of the world the human will and choice are not irrelevant factors. As Sri Aurobindo explains:

If everything depends on the Divine intervention, then man is only a puppet and there is no use of sadhana, and there are no conditions, no law of things—therefore no universe, but only the Divine rolling things about at his pleasure. No doubt in the last resort all can be said to be the Divine cosmic working, but it is through persons, through forces that it works—under the conditions of Nature. Special intervention there can be and is, but all cannot be special intervention.¹³

In all the world-movements, therefore, the human will is a factor that counts, even though it is relative and cannot be the ultimate determinant of world-events. The Divine Will, even though it is absolute and unconditioned, does not altogether overrule the human will but works through it. And as man exercises his will, he has to take the consequences. In all evolutionary transitions there is a selective process. Those that are fit for the new mutation survive and are lifted up to the higher evolutionary status, while those that are unfit are destroyed and eliminated. This principle, operating in the biological evolution, has its parallel in the psychological and spiritual evolution also.

In the evolutionary transition through which we are passing at the present moment and which is of most momentous consequence in earth's evolutionary history, there will therefore be a similar selective process for both the individuals and the nations. Those who will prove their fitness by answering the present call of the Time-Spirit, by collaborating

¹³ CWSA, 29: 171

with the manifestation of the supramental Truth, will be lifted up to the higher evolutionary status, while those who not only obstinately refuse to answer that call by remaining stuck up in the blind grooves of their ego's perversity, but even side with the forces of Falsehood which are opposed to the advent of Truth, will only invite on their head the blow of the Terrible Rudra. Here is the warning uttered by the Master of Truth in unequivocal terms:

Unhappy is the man or the nation which, when the divine moment arrives, is found sleeping or unprepared to use it, because the lamp has not been kept trimmed for the welcome and the ears are sealed to the call. But thrice woe to them who are strong and ready, yet waste the force or misuse the moment; for them is irreparable loss or a great destruction.¹⁴

¹⁴ CWSA, 12: 140

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