



Sri Aurobindo's action

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*The golden chain must be broken
no less than the leaden fetters.*

SRI AUROBINDO

CONTENTS

From the Editor's Desk	<i>Shyam Sunder</i>	2
The Mother on National Education		3
Future of Religion – III		
Rational Reformation of Religion	<i>M.S. Srinivasan</i>	4
In Memoriam	<i>Aju Mukhopadhyay</i>	6
Photograph	<i>Maria Netto</i>	6
Humanitarianism/Philanthropy and the malady called man	<i>Alok Pandey</i>	6
A picture and a poem	<i>Aju Mukhopadhyay</i>	8
The Macabre Dance of Nescience	<i>Manoj Das</i>	9
Sanskrit's Millennium of Opulent Maturity – (7)	<i>Prema Nandakumar</i>	10
Every Town Our Home Town, Everyone Our Kith and Kin	<i>R. Ganapathy</i>	11
A Poetic View of Nature	<i>Dr. Murali Sivaramakrishnan</i>	11
The Truth	<i>D C Chambial</i>	12
Santiniketan Diary (2)	<i>Goutam Ghosal</i>	13
A Professor's Notes	<i>C. Subbian</i>	13
Symbols and their significance	<i>Sadhu Charan Patnaik</i>	14
A Cultural History of Pondicherry		
Ch. 20: The Counterfeit Yajur Veda-IV	<i>Rita Nath Keshari</i>	15
A Story	<i>Web</i>	16

The Macabre Dance of Nescience

Rarely had I heard a voice so sincere and serious as that of this young man from Vadodara: "My heart burnt with wrath and hatred against those slaves of Satan who put fire to the train at Godhra and ignited the communal passion in Gujarat. Then came Ahmedabad. My heart grew dark with anger and guilt, for I was a Hindu. Ahmedabad could be only a nemesis for Godhra, an example of the most macabre brutality man is capable of perpetrating. But many of the villains of Godhra would probably remain at large. Must the innocent suffer as their proxy?"

The arsonists of Godhra and the marauders elsewhere, both, had fallen prey only to the forces of — as mysticism terms it — the lower Nature, the Nescience. While they must have felt that they were the performers, the forces of darkness must be indulging in a sinister laughter. These forces are entities in their own right. There is nothing as a Hindu hatred or a Muslim hatred. Such destructive passions lurk behind human ignorance and their pressure makes their prey hit upon a cause. Alas, the strategy for their infiltration is so subtle that what comes first — the destructive passion or the cause — can remain debatable even for the sensible, while for the deluded average, the cause comes first and handy as an argument.

Once a young seeker met an enlightened teacher. "Master, I have a fat lot of anger in me." The Master did not seem to hear. They talked on other issues and then the master suddenly asked, "Wouldn't you show me whatever you have?"

The young man brought out his purse and his handkerchief. "But don't you have something else with you?" demanded the master. The young man showed him a pocket comb. "But didn't you say that you had something more — in plenty?" asked the master again.

"Oh, Master, I spoke of my anger."

"Wouldn't you show me your anger?"

"Well, Master, I cannot show it to you because it comes from time to time."

"Why not call it?"

"Well, it does not come at my calling, but of its own accord," said the seeker.

The master smiled. "So, you see, it is not yours; it is not there in you. It is elsewhere — in Nature. It comes. But it cannot come in if you decide to shut the door of your consciousness on it."

Needless to say, it is easier said than done. But spirituality assures us that man can rise above these tricks of Nature which make him think that it is he who is angry, he who hates, he who

loves. All the usual lovers had had the same thrill over all the generations past; each one feeling that never, never before had anyone known love so wonderfully as he or she knew. The same with all the stock emotions and passions.

Spirituality tells us that man indeed can live in his inner self instead of the superficial one, the latter being the perpetual stage for the play of such forces, and man can do so without breaking away from his normal action. But, alas, we are so fond of our little ego-self!

Years ago this author was invited to give a series of four talks on Sri Aurobindo's *Essays on the Gita* under an endowment run by the University of Bombay. On the last day, I was just about to begin when I could observe some commotion in the first row of the auditorium. A very important man had arrived and several were eager to offer him his or her seat.

After my talk I was formally introduced to the gentleman who complimented me and said, "My son informed me of this programme and advised me to attend the whole series, for he knew of my great interest in the Gita. I too had set aside the four evenings for this. But on the first evening my Sambandhi, who lives in the States, arrived and I had to keep him company. The next evening I was about to start when my wife reminded me of the wedding of our Party President's daughter and she hijacked me to buy a gift. Yesterday I was alerted about a call expected from the Prime Minister's, coinciding with your talk. Today my son phoned me demanding why he does not see me here. I promised to come and here at last I am! But, I cannot agree with you on one issue. You said that the highest wisdom lies in one's surrendering oneself to the Divine. If I did so, I would be reduced to a cipher!"

"Dear Sir, who am I to say so? It was Krishna's injunction to his faithful disciple, Arjuna. But I would like to say something else to you."

As it invariably happens in India, a crowd surrounded the VIP. I gently led him away to a corner and obtained his sanction to be blunt. "You willed to attend this series all the evenings. But on the first evening you surrendered your will to your Sambandhi's; on the second you surrendered it to your wife's; on the third you did so to the Prime Minister's and today you did so to your son's. Is it not strange that while you never became a cipher in all this, you should become so only when it comes to surrendering to the Divine?" I asked.

He admitted that he had not looked at the situation from this angle.

"None of us does," I told him. "But a surrender to the Divine does not result in one losing one's identity; but in discovering one's true identity."

Indeed, that is the only insurance against our falling prey to the adverse forces.