

The Sunlit Path



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Editorial

My dear friends,

I am happy to bring to you the **15 January 2024** issue of The Sunlit Path.

This is 201st issue of the e-magazine.

This issue contains a short conversation by The Mother on the Avatar, which is preceded by a passage from the chapter entitled “The Evolution of the Spiritual Man” from The Life Divine.

There are several compilations from Sri Aurobindo’s writings about Lord Rama, Ramayana, and a poetry on Ayodhya.

I do hope that you will find the contents deeply meaningful and inspiring.

Dr Bhalendu Vaishnav



Evolution of the Spiritual Man and The Avatar Sri Aurobindo, The Mother

It is quite true that to a surface view life seems only an operation of Matter, mind an activity of life, and it might seem to follow that what we call the soul or spirit is only a power of mentality, soul a fine form of mind, spirituality a high activity of the embodied mental being. But this is a superficial view of things due to the thought's concentrating on the appearance and process and not looking at what lies behind the process.

One might as well on the same lines have concluded that electricity is only a product or operation of water and cloud matter, because it is in such a field that lightning emerges; but a deeper inquiry has shown that both cloud and water have, on the contrary, the energy of electricity as their foundation, their constituent power or energy-substance: that which seems to be a result is — in its reality, though not in its form — the origin; the effect is in the essence pre-existent to the apparent cause, the principle of the emergent activity precedent to its present field of action.

So it is throughout evolutionary Nature; Matter could not have become animate if the principle of life had not been there constituting Matter and emerging as a phenomenon of life-in-matter; life-in-matter could not have begun to feel, perceive, think, reason, if the principle of mind had not been there behind life and substance, constituting it as its field of operation and emergent in the phenomenon of a thinking life and body: so too spirituality emerging in mind is the sign of a power which itself has founded and constituted life, mind and body and is now emerging as a spiritual being in a living and thinking body.

How far this emergence will go, whether it will become dominant and transform its instrument, is a subsequent question; but what is necessary first to posit is the existence of spirit as something else than mind and greater than mind, spirituality as something other than mentality and the spiritual being therefore as something distinct from the mental being: spirit

is a final evolutionary emergence because it is the original involutory element and factor.

Evolution is an inverse action of the involution: what is an ultimate and last derivation in the involution is the first to appear in the evolution; what was original and primal in the involution is in the evolution the last and supreme emergence.

Sri Aurobindo

The Avatar The Mother

“Today I have been asked to speak to you about the Avatar.

The first thing I have to say is that Sri Aurobindo has written on this subject and the person who has asked me the question would do well to begin by reading what Sri Aurobindo has written.

I shall not speak to you about that, for it is better to read it for yourself.

But I could speak to you of a very old tradition, more ancient than the two known lines of spiritual and occult tradition, that is, the Vedic and Chaldean lines; a tradition which seems to have been at the origin of these two known traditions, in which it is said that when, as a result of the action of the adverse forces — known in the Hindu tradition as the Asuras — the world, instead of developing according to its law of Light and inherent consciousness, was plunged into the darkness, inconscience and ignorance that we know, the Creative Power implored the Supreme Origin, asking him for a special intervention which could save this corrupted universe; and in reply to this prayer there was emanated from the Supreme Origin a special Entity, of Love and Consciousness, who cast himself directly into the most inconscient matter to begin there the work of awakening it to the original Consciousness and Love.

In the old narratives this Being is described as stretched out in a deep sleep at the bottom of a very dark cave, and in his sleep there emanated from him prismatic rays of light which gradually spread into the Inconscience and embedded themselves in all the elements of this Inconscience to begin there the

work of Awakening.

If one consciously enters into this Inconscient, one can still see there this same marvellous Being, still in deep sleep, continuing his work of emanation, spreading his Light; and he will continue to do it until the Inconscience is no longer inconscient, until Darkness disappears from the world — and the whole creation awakens to the Supramental Consciousness.

And it is remarkable that this wonderful Being strangely resembles the one whom I saw in vision one day, the Being who is at the other extremity, at the confines of form and the Formless. But that one was in a golden, crimson glory, whereas in his sleep the other Being was of a shining diamond whiteness emanating opalescent rays.

In fact, this is the origin of all Avatars. He is, so to say, the first universal Avatar who, gradually, has assumed more and more conscious bodies and finally manifested in a kind of recognised line of Beings who have descended directly from the Supreme to perfect this work of preparing the universe so that, through a continuous progression, it may become ready to receive and manifest the supramental Light in its entirety.

In every country, every tradition, the event has been presented in a special way, with different limitations, different details, particular features, but truly speaking, the origin of all these stories is the same, and that is what we could call a direct,

conscious intervention of the Supreme in the darkest matter, without going through all the intermediaries, in order to awaken this Matter to the receptivity of the Divine Forces.

The intervals separating these various incarnations seem to become shorter and shorter, as if, to the extent that Matter became more and more ready, the action could accelerate and become more and more rapid in its movement, more and more conscious too, more and more effective and decisive.

And it will go on multiplying and intensifying until the entire universe becomes the total Avatar of the Supreme.

**The Mother
(1)**

Rama: The Avatar - A Realiser Sri Aurobindo

No, certainly not—an Avatar is not at all bound to be a spiritual prophet—he is never in fact merely a prophet, he is a realiser, an establisher—not of outward things only, though he does realize something in the outward also, but, as I have said, of something essential and radical needed for the terrestrial evolution which is the evolution of the embodied spirit through successive stages towards the Divine.

It was not at all Rama's business to establish the spiritual stage of that evolution—so he did not at all concern himself with that. His business was to destroy Ravana and to establish the Ramarajya—in other words, to fix for the future the possibility of an order proper to the sattwic civilised human being who governs his life by the reason, the finer emotions, morality or at least moral ideals, such as truth, obedience, cooperation and harmony, the sense of humour, the sense of domestic and public order, to establish this in a world still occupied by anarchic forces, the Animal Mind and the powers of the vital Ego making its own satisfaction the rule of life, in other words, the Vanara and the Rakshasa.

This is the meaning of Rama and his life-work and it is according as he fulfilled it or not that he must be judged as Avatar or no Avatar. It was not his business to play the comedy of the chivalrous Kshatriya with the formidable brute beast that was Bali, it was his business to kill him and get the Animal Mind under his control.

It was his business to be not necessarily a perfect, but a largely representative sattwic Man, a faithful husband and lover, a loving and obedient son, a tender and perfect brother, father, friend—he is friend of all kinds of people, friend of the outcaste Guhaka, friend of the Animal leaders, Sugriva, Hanuman, friend of the vulture Jatayu, friend even of the Rakshasa Vibhishan.

All that he was in a brilliant, striking but above all spontaneous and inevitable way, not with a forcing of this note or that like Harishchandra or Shivi, but with

a certain harmonious completeness.

But most of all, it was his business to typify and establish the things on which the social idea and its stability depend, truth and honour, the sense of the Dharma, public spirit and the sense of order.

To the first, to truth and honour, much more even than to his filial love and obedience to his father — though to that also — he sacrificed his personal rights as the elect of the King and the Assembly and fourteen of the best years of his life and went into exile in the forests.

To his public spirit and his sense of public order (the great and supreme civic virtue in the eyes of the ancient Indians, Greeks, Romans, for at that time the maintenance of the ordered community, not the separate development and satisfaction of the individual was the pressing need of human evolution) he sacrificed his own happiness and domestic life and the happiness of Sita.

In that he was at one with the moral sense of all the antique races, though at variance with the later romantic individualistic sentimental morality of the modern man who can afford to have that less stern morality just because the ancients sacrificed the individual in order to make the world safe for the spirit of social order.

Finally it was Rama's business to make the world safe for the ideal of the sattwic human being by destroying the sovereignty of Ravana, the Rakshasa menace.

All this he did with such a divine afflatus in his personality and action that his figure has been stamped for more than two millenniums on the mind of Indian culture and what he stood for has dominated the reason and idealising mind of man in all countries — and in spite of the constant revolt of the human vital is likely to continue to do so until a greater Ideal arises.

And you say in spite of all this that he was no Avatar? If you like — but at any rate he stands among the few greatest of the great Vibhutis. You may dethrone him now — for man is no longer satisfied with the sattwic ideal and is seeking for something more — **but his work and meaning remain stamped on the past of the earth's evolving race. (2)**

Ramayana Sri Aurobindo

The pure literature of the period is represented by the two great epics, the Mahabharata, which gathered into its vast structure the greater part of the poetic activity of the Indian mind during several centuries, and the Ramayana.

These two poems are epical in their motive and spirit, but they are not like any other two epics in the world, but are entirely of their own kind and subtly different from others in their principle. It is not only that although they contain an early heroic story and a transmutation of many primitive elements, their form belongs to a period of highly developed intellectual, ethical and social culture, is enriched with a body of mature thought and uplifted by a ripe nobility and refined gravity of ethical tone and therefore these poems are quite different from primitive edda and saga and greater in breadth of view and substance and height of motive — I do not speak now of aesthetic quality and poetic perfection — than the Homeric poems, while at the same time there is still an early breath, a direct and straightforward vigour, a freshness and greatness and pulse of life, a simplicity of strength and beauty that makes of them quite another kind than the elaborately constructed literary epics of Virgil or Milton, Firdausi or Kalidasa.

This peculiar blending of the natural breath of an early, heroic, swift and vigorous force of life with a strong development and activity of the ethical, the intellectual, even the philosophic mind is indeed a remarkable feature; **these poems are the voice of the youth of a people, but a youth not only fresh and fine and buoyant, but also great and accomplished, wise and noble.** This however is only a temperamental distinction: there is another that is more far-reaching, a difference in the whole conception, function and structure. (3)

The Ramayana is a work of the same essential kind as the Mahabharata; it differs only by a greater simplicity of plan, a more delicate ideal temperament and a finer glow of poetic warmth and colour. The main bulk of the poem in spite of much accretion is evidently by a single hand and has a less complex and more obvious unity of structure. There is less of the philosophic, more of the purely

poetic mind, more of the artist, less of the builder. The whole story is from beginning to end of one piece and there is no deviation from the stream of the narrative. At the same time there is a like vastness of vision, an even more wide-winged flight of epic sublimity in the conception and sustained richness of minute execution in the detail. The structural power, strong workmanship and method of disposition of the Mahabharata remind one of the art of the Indian builders, the grandeur and boldness of outline and wealth of colour and minute decorative execution of the Ramayana suggest rather a transcript into literature of the spirit and style of Indian painting. (4)

The Ramayana embodied for the Indian imagination its highest and tenderest human ideals of character, made strength and courage and gentleness and purity and fidelity and self-sacrifice familiar to it in the suavest and most harmonious forms coloured so as to attract the emotion and the aesthetic sense, stripped morals of all repellent austerity on one side or on the other of mere commonness and lent a certain high divineness to the ordinary things of life, conjugal and filial and maternal and fraternal feeling, the duty of the prince and leader and the loyalty of follower and subject, the greatness of the great and the truth and worth of the simple, toning things ethical to the beauty of a more psychical meaning by the glow of its ideal hues.

The work of Valmiki has been an agent of almost incalculable power in the moulding of the cultural mind of India: it has presented to it to be loved and imitated in figures like Rama and Sita, made so divinely and with such a revelation of reality as to become objects of enduring cult and worship, or like Hanuman, Lakshmana, Bharata the living human image of its ethical ideals; it has fashioned much of what is best and sweetest in the national character, and it has evoked and fixed in it those finer and exquisite yet firm soul tones and that more delicate humanity of temperament which are a more valuable thing than the formal outsides of virtue and conduct.

The poetical manner of these epics is not inferior to the greatness of their substance. The style and the verse in which they are written have always a noble epic quality, a lucid classical simplicity and directness rich in expression but stripped of superfluous ornament, a swift, vigorous, flexible and fluid verse constantly sure of the epic cadence. (5)

And in the Ramayana we have an idealised picture of such a Dharmarajya, a settled universal empire.

Here too it is not an autocratic despotism but a universal monarchy supported by a free assembly of the city and provinces and of all the classes that is held up as the ideal, an enlargement of the monarchical state synthetising the communal autonomies of the Indian system and maintaining the law and constitution of the Dharma.

The ideal of conquest held up is not a destructive and predatory invasion annihilating the organic freedom and the political and social institutions and exploiting the economic resources of the conquered peoples, but a sacrificial progression bringing with it a trial of military strength of which the result was easily accepted because defeat entailed neither humiliation nor servitude and suffering but merely a strengthening adhesion to a suzerain power concerned only with establishing the visible unity of the nation and the Dharma.

The ideal of the ancient Rishis is clear and their purpose: it is evident that they saw the military and political utility and necessity of a unification of the divided and warring peoples of the land, but they saw also that it ought not to be secured at the expense of the free life of the regional peoples or of the communal liberties and not therefore by a centralised monarchy or a rigidly unitarian imperial State. (6)



An Aryan City: Ayodhya Sri Aurobindo

An Aryan City
Coshala by the Soroyou, a land
Smiling at heaven, of riches measureless
And corn abounding glad; in that great country
Ayodhya was, the city world-renowned,
Ayodhya by King Manou built, immense.

Twelve yojans long the mighty city lay
Grandiose and wide three yojans. Grandly-spaced
Ayodhya's streets were and the long high-road
Ran through it spaciouly with sweet cool flowers
Hourly new-paved and hourly watered wide.

Dussaruth in Ayodhya, as in heaven
Its natural lord, abode, those massive walls
Ruling, and a great people in his name
Felt greater, — door and wall and ponderous arch
And market-places huge. Of every craft
Engines mechanical and tools there thronged
And craftsmen of each guild and manner. High rang
With heralds and sonorous eulogists
The beautiful bright city imperial.

High were her bannered edifices reared,
With theatres and dancing-halls for joy
Of her bright daughters, and sweet-scented parks
Were round and gardens cool. High circling all
The city with disastrous engines stored
In hundreds, the great ramparts like a zone
Of iron spanned in her moated girth immense
Threatening with forts the ancient sky. Defiant
Ayodhya stood, armed, impregnable, `
Inviolable in her virgin walls.

And in her streets was ever large turmoil,
 Passing of elephants, the steed and ox,
 Mules and rich-laden camels. And through them drove
 The powerful barons of the land, great wardens
 Of taxes, and from countries near and far
 The splendid merchants came much marvelling
 To see those orgulous high-builed homes
 With jewels curiously fretted, topped
 With summer-houses for the joy of girls,
 Like some proud city in heaven. Without a gap
 On either side as far as eye could reach
 Mass upon serried mass the houses rose,
 Seven-storied architectures metrical
 Upon a level base and made sublime
 Splendid Ayodhya octagonally built,
 The mother of beautiful women and of gems
 A world. Large granaries of rice unhusked
 She had and husked rice for the fire, and sweet
 Her water, like the cane's delightful juice,
 Cool down the throat. And a great voice throbbed of drums,
 The tabour and the tambourine, while ever
 The lyre with softer rumours intervened.

Nor only was she grandiosely built,
 A city without earthly peer, — her sons
 Were noble, warriors whose arrows scorned to pierce
 The isolated man from friends cut off
 Or guided by a sound to smite the alarmed

And crouching fugitive; but with sharp steel
 Sought out the lion in his den or grappling
 Unarmed they murdered with their mighty hands
 The tiger roaring in his trackless woods
 Or the mad tusked boar. Even such strong arms
 Of heroes kept that city and in her midst
 Regnant King Dussaruth the nations ruled. (7)





Acknowledgements

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4. Sri Aurobindo, CWSA 20, 349
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