



THE CENTRE'S ACTIVITIES: 1998

If we take a panoramic view of the activities of the Centre this year, we come upon the following:

1. Spiritual and Cultural Heritage of India Talks at Colleges and Institutions
2. The beginning of short courses at the International Centre for Integral Studies
3. The beginning of workshops with teacher-students
4. Children's and other awareness workshops
5. Study Circles and Meditations
6. Focus on the themes of Money and Harmony in collective work through introspections, meditations and discussions

On Search of the Soul of India

THE SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF INDIA TALKS SERIES

Sponsored by Life Positive and Organised by The Gnostic Centre

As the last two decades have seen in India a cultural renaissance, an awakening and interest in Indian classical dance, music and other arts, mostly due to the efforts of Spic Macay, who spearheaded this awareness in the students and youth of India, we see the next two decades as heralding a spiritual renaissance and awakening amongst the youth. And in this respect, the idea behind the talks was to contribute our mite to this cause.

POWER OF ATTITUDE

**Venues: Indian Institute of Technology, 14th Oct.
Miranda House Hostel, 10th Nov.**

Speaker: Ameeta Mehra

THINK of one person who is your idol. What makes him or her outstanding? What are some of the most important qualities that all great people share? The three most important ones are:

* They live for a purpose greater than themselves and their own egos.

* A belief in something greater than themselves guides them. Therefore, they can perform *Nishkama Karma* - i.e. do their best and leave the result to that higher power. It is because we are unable to practise *Nishkama Karma* that when we meet failure, we lose faith, we lose hope, we become cynical, we become losers. *Nishkama Karma* is even more relevant today due to the complexity that life is taking on.

* Calm and Equality - whatever the outer storm, there is an inner *samata*, an inner calm which is not swayed and this is what enables them to take decisions wisely, to be in possession of oneself at each moment - for, only when you are calm you know what to do and you do the right thing at the right time in the right way.

Note: The series began on 3rd August, 1998. A report on the Aug-Sep talks is in the Sep-Oct'98 issue of *The Awakening Ray*.)



Miranda House Hostel: Power of Attitude talk

There is a subtle and important relationship between outer perfection and inner mastery. Power, harmony - these depend on the inner attitude, even at the physical level. Normally people think that it can be done only on a mental plane, not on a physical level. [An example was narrated of a true incident about a young man - a practitioner of the spiritual path - who, when confronted with two attackers in a lone forest, experienced a great sense of immobility, an absence of all fear or emotion. His attitude of complete and true silence

had such a powerful impact on his would-be killers that they threw away their knives and fled in panic.]

There are three practical ways, based on the writings of The Mother, to develop a positive attitude, a winning attitude that attracts to you good fortune, good luck and good thoughts:

* Concentrate exclusively on what you want to be, forget as entirely as you can what you do not want to be. A mental imagination, visualisation is the first step. We do not spend enough time on ourselves - who we want to be, who we are. As you visualise, you forget your negatives. This creates a magnetic field (psychologically) around you - attracts those kind of circumstances, knowledge, people to you. But first, begin with something higher.

* The Mind is a monkey - it jumps up and down. It is you - the will, the self, who has to be the driver. There are two faculties in you which you can use - Imagination and Positive Thinking. Pessimistic thoughts will steal your faith, your strength. As a student, your mind is your strength. Think positively.

* Meditation - Through meditation, one can begin to experience what is silence, inner power, true self. We are not only the body and mind - there is a source of inner light and power deep within each one of us which we tap into through meditation. Meditation need not only be done with eyes closed, in fact, there are many kinds of meditation - what The Mother calls dynamic meditation, which can be done with eyes open, a meditation in action and life.

Another thing that is helpful in developing the power of attitude is reading of good books that elevate you, give you knowledge. [The talk closed with a brief meditation to call down peace into the body and mind.]

Questions asked by the Students

At IIT

- How does one define self-actualisation?
- When we are trying to succeed, we naturally worry. How can we be calm?
- We should maintain internal silence, but what about the external silence? How to overcome external noise?
- What motivates you to work?
- If we start neglecting our negative points, won't we get over-confident?
- Should one enjoy the present or should one try for a target?
- Should we not think of the consequences of an action?
- What is the criteria to decide which is the right book, the right thing [for one's progress]?

- Should we rely on the inner voice or should we rely on the scriptures?
- How to do Dynamic Meditation?
- How do you define character?
- What is the difference between controlling anger and bottling it up?
- Can these methods [presented during the talk] improve character?
- How can one keep peace in face of crisis - does it mean surrender?

At Miranda

- Thoughts, mental noise is a major hindrance to inner peace. How does one deal with it?
- How do we do away with fear?



- You spoke of Nishkama Karma, but half my motivation comes from thinking about results?
- Books on philosophy are very boring, slow. Which books to read [for self-development]?
- Is belief in god [as in temples etc.] only a 'nautanki' [drama, show]?
- Questions come - who am I, what is the divine - should one not resolve these first, only then peace will come?
- How will we know when we have attained the power of attitude - what are the symptoms?
- How to cut down ego - even if I know I am wrong?



Miranda House Hostel: Ameeta with students, after the talk



Indian Institute of Technology: Book Sales after Power of Attitude talk

- Is the feeling of revenge bad?
- I forgive people very easily - people take me for granted. How do I manage it so that people don't take me for granted?
- Is there anything wrong in desiring things?
- Jesus Christ forgave all - isn't that greater than discriminating who to forgive?
- Should one apologise even if one is not wrong?
- If after getting back at someone, I feel peaceful - isn't that negative?

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Venue: Lady Irwin College, 6th Nov.

Speaker: Ameeta Mehra

WE are now towards the dawning of a new age. What is so significant about the 21st century? Why have so many people prophesied that something very important will happen in the next century? What is the 21st century and why is it significant? The last 100-150 years have been a period of wars, of antagonism. And yet if we look at the last few years, there has never been such an ardent hope awakened in the hearts of the people. All of us are looking for a period of more justice, more beauty, harmonious goodwill, fraternity - and this seems in complete contradiction with what we see around us. But we all know that never is the night so dark as before the dawn and therefore may not this darkness be the sign of an approaching dawn?

The period that is ending now was based on the power of the Mind - in the 20th century our god has been Science and not religion, and Science uses the power of the mind and it is this that has been dealing with life and matter. There is a perception that in the coming century other powers of the human being, along with the mind, will come forth - the power of intuition, the power of the spirit.

In this context of the new millennium, how does one see the role of women - our own role? There are 2 or 3 main obstacles in understanding this role. The first is to do with the origin of man and woman. Both have come from the same source (each is a counterpart) but take on different functions. By and large it is seen that the man is the *Purusha* - the witness, one that envisions and conceives and the woman is the *Shakti* or the executive force, that which executes. This is a traditional point of view - one may not subscribe to it but that is what has come down to us.



There has been a subtle conflict between the sense of equality that a woman wants and the man's need to dominate and be the master. It is either a movement towards inferiority or its opposite, superiority and both are unbalanced, unless one begins to appreciate that there is something that needs to be bridged so that both man and woman can take an equal role. But in the life of the future - which I am sure already you feel somewhere in you, for all of us carry this seed - in the life of the future there shall be no more room for this kind of division, this kind of disequilibrium between man and woman, the sense of opposition, the sense of one-upmanship.

The true relation of the two sexes will go towards a more equal footing of mutual help and close collaboration. We will see (as in the last 10 years) that women will come up and take their rightful position in society - in the whole gamut of life.

For women to best fulfil this role in the coming years, it is of utmost importance to understand and recognise our own strengths and our weaknesses. What are the women's strengths? They have a great store of physical energy and a great power of endurance. They have exceptional gifts for organisation - to materialise a vision, an idea, to put things in their place (the creative, executive force) - and this terrible imbalance in the society today is because this has not been recognised, not brought into public life - and so everywhere it is all talk, talk, talk and very little action. Another strength of women is their tendency towards disinterestedness (many are involved in social work, teaching - a work higher than their own personal motives).

One of the major weaknesses of woman is her need to broaden her horizons - we do not take sufficient intellectual time and effort to broaden our minds and views, to look at things from different points of view, to understand them - instead we tend to get sentimental and emotional and quickly jump to conclusions. This rational detached viewing of things, ability to see things in their perspective you will find over and over again in men. A second weakness is a lack of a reasoning calm that makes women partisan - to take sides. And then there is this sense of inequality, of inferiority that one experiences - and that one has to root out.

If these are the strengths and weaknesses, in general, that we as women experience, then what is our role in the coming century and how are we to fulfil it? In the coming century there will be a need to look at things not only from a purely rational point of view, but also from a higher intuitional point of view. If the coming age will be more subjective, then the faculty of inner development, spiritual development will play a significant role. Nowadays this need for understanding oneself is becoming widespread - prolific growth in self-development workshops, courses in reiki, pranic healing etc. - to develop the inherent latent powers within.

Women are by nature very intuitive and therefore this ability to grow inward, to tune in to a higher faculty will come more naturally to women. Therefore her role in the 21st century would be to become a fit instrument and overcome the weaknesses of emotionality and sentimentality and instead have the qualities of calm, intuitive clarity, calm mental knowledge, a sound physical body and a clear discernment of who she is and what she wants to do. She will be called more and more to realise her true source of genius and strength - her ability to organise and execute, to put into shape and to form a true collaboration with men in public administration. Because of this understanding of the origin of both man and woman - true role as complements, not as contradictions - and therefore the elimination of these inequalities of both inferiority and superiority, she will be able to take part as an equal partner, bringing out her qualities and her true genius in all aspects of life.

To end with - a call to the young women here to take time and find out and work upon what you see as your weaknesses and to recognise and to give much more importance to your strengths - concentrate on what you want to be, develop yourself fully and integrally - don't leave any dimension of life unexplored.



Lady Irwin College: The Role of Women in the 21st Century



Questions asked by the Students

- Why not let women come on their own merit - why the need for reservation?
- Unless a woman is sentimental, how can she be a mother or feel for the baby?
- Isn't it important to give boys/men sessions which will clear their mental dirt?
- Women play many roles and are drained out by the end of the day - how to attain a calm mental being?

THE INDIAN GENIUS AND THE ROLE AND MISSION OF INDIA

Venue: Apeejay School, Sheikh Sarai, 10th Nov.

Speaker: Prof. Kittu Reddy

WHAT is the Indian-ness of India? If you look at any great nation, you will see that there are certain characteristics which stand out and make that nation unique. We in India are groping - at least in modern times, to find out what that Indian-ness of India is. It is a very complex problem. Think about it - this is the only country in the world where all religions exist - not just in theory, but in practice. There are also many who do not believe in god - and, all co-exist. Well, we have had our problems, but whatever problems and religious conflicts have taken place have happened only in the last 100 years - after the British came and deliberately followed the policy of Divide and Rule - well, we fell into the trap unfortunately. But before that there has never been a religious riot in this country at all. Now you see this makes it a land of tremendous diversity.

This country has at least 14 well developed languages. When is a language well-developed? It is not only a means of communicating. It becomes a real language when it is capable of expressing the higher thoughts of a people. If you look at India you will find there is a range of literature. So, this gives the country a tremendous diversity, a wideness which is unparalleled and in all this diversity you have to find something which makes you say this is common to all of us. And if you can't find that something you will be at each other's throats - as sometimes unfortunately we are, but it is because we cannot find that something which makes India India.

Now I am going to use a word which has unfortunately become a very dirty word today. But I am going to use it - one has to be very clear about it that the Indian-ness of India lies in its spirituality - let there be no doubt about it, let there be no hesitation about it. If India is different from the rest of the world, it is because India has made spirituality the central, fundamental theme, hallmark of its driving force.

Unfortunately, spirituality is often linked with religion and then the word 'secularism' comes in and secularism has 100 meanings for a 100 people - it has become a dividing factor instead of a uniting factor. So it is important to understand what is this thing called spirituality?

First of all you must have a conception of the human being. In modern Europe, when you think of a human being, you think of a body, a life energy (these two we share with the animal), but there is another characteristic - that is, the mind. The essential capacity of the mind is the Reason. Europe stops there - Reason is the highest faculty and by its power one can arrive at a total, complete knowledge. It has done a lot of good to Europe - to get out of the narrowness which the church had brought in.

But in India we always believed that there is another faculty somewhere in the human being - the soul, the spirit, and it is possible by a certain discipline to come into contact with it. These methods are known as the yoga systems. Yoga simply means 'union' of the supreme divine consciousness which is within us and the external parts - the body, life and mind. This discipline can be of the actions, of the mind, of the heart.

If this is the truth of the being, and if there is a system by which it is possible to arrive into contact with that, it means that the soul is at a higher level than the mind. So reason cannot



Prof. Kittu Reddy at Sardar Patel Vidyalaya

give you whole of knowledge - it can give only a part. All systems, 'isms' are only a part of the truth. Once this concept is understood you cannot attach yourself with intensity to any one ideal. You will see there is a truth in everything.

These are some concepts which make India different from the rest of the world:

* A belief in the existence of something beyond mind which ultimately you will have to tap and try to get hold of - which is called the soul. Seeking for that soul is called spirituality. If you look at Indian culture, anything great that we have achieved (in literature, music, architecture),

you will see that each one of these great artists has also been one who has come into contact with what is called the inner being.

* The Mind is not an absolute instrument of knowledge - it is a partial instrument. And that is why you will find that this is the only country in the world where all kinds of political systems co-exist. So, all those who would like to seek for the highest instrument of knowledge are automatically compelled or impelled from within to follow that discipline called yoga systems by which one arrives at a contact with the deeper being.

* There is a principle of graduality. In Indian culture the ultimate aim of life is a union with the divine and this manifests in our day to day life. If you go into a house anywhere in India, you will find that either there is a *puja* room or photos of saints or gods and everybody keeps that as the most sacred thing. In times of crises, people seek out a saint or a realised person. By the millions people go on pilgrimage. Everyone knows that the man who is worthy of respect is one who has come in contact with the deeper, the higher being. But India has taken care to see that it is not given to you prematurely. Therefore the ancient India has created a system of the 4 *ashramas* - *brahmacharya*, *grihastha*, *vanaprastha*, *sannyasa* - enabling the human being to progress gradually from one stage of life to another.

But the first stage must be fulfilled first - and for you as students, this is the time for gaining knowledge - about the world, and more importantly, about yourself. This is not a time for pandering to your desires.

* The fourth most important aspect for the Indian is that true knowledge is self-knowledge. True power lies not in mastery over others, but in self-mastery. He who wants to be the *samrat* (emperor, leader) - but who cannot control himself, can never command respect. If you want to master the world, first master yourself. Determine yourself where you are going, how you are going and go that way.

[Many practical methods were suggested to enable the development of faculties, overcoming weaknesses in oneself, developing the will and self-discipline as tools for self-control and self-mastery.]

So, these are the fundamentals of Indian culture. Spirituality is not the monopoly of India but no other culture has given it so much importance as India has done. We have to be ourselves, but in that return upon ourselves we don't have to be narrow. If you are asked what is the essence of Indian religion (not Hindu religion), there are 3 basics:

* There is a higher power which has created the universe and that consciousness is involved in everything.

* It is possible to come into contact with that consciousness and there are as many ways as there are human beings.

* This divinity is there in the heart of every human being.

These are not exclusively Indian values. The only difference is that India has given them greater importance and that makes India different from the rest of the world.



EDUCATION FOR THE FUTURE

Venue: Central Institute of Education, 11th Nov.

Speaker: Prof. Kittu Reddy

ANY system of education is based on the goals of education which are based on our concept of the human being. The Greeks believed in a healthy mind in a healthy body. Modern Europe places a little more stress on utility - on being useful to society. Both Greeks and modern Europe view man as a body, life (vital energy) and mind - reason as the highest faculty. Inevitably, education would mean the development of body, life energy and the mental faculty.

The Indian concept is different - man is a body, life and mind, but behind the three there is another faculty - the soul - which, if given a chance to come into play, can play a different, an important, the primary role in our life. If this is the fact, then all these four aspects have to be brought into play.

There are four fundamental principles which should be at the basis of all education:

* Education has to be integral. Body is an integral part of the human being and physical education must be given an important place. We have to accept that if there is a soul, we must get in touch with that and to tap it - and help the child to tap it.

* Every child has something divine within him which he alone can express. It is the business of the educator to find out that something and help him to develop it. We are on earth as human beings to express that something, to fulfil our own *swadharma*, our own purpose. Help the child to find out that thing. If we do this, the basic attitude will change. You will not ask him to compete with others, but with himself. There will be no place for force or coercion.

* Nothing can be taught - knowledge is enclosed in the human being. Education must be child oriented, not teacher oriented. Follow the child - the child must be consulted in his own growth. He must be given the core of knowledge - of language, of maths. But during school hours there must be some time where the child is free to do what he likes - not just running about, but exposed to a large number of activities - and then you observe him, help to bring out what is already within the child.

* Proceed from the near to the far - illustrate with examples from his own environment. This does not mean that one will have a narrow mentality, but a gradual expansion is suggested.

The following are certain important aspects [of education]:

* An organised Physical education (minimum of one hour daily; medical check-ups).

* Life or Vital education - This has two aspects: development of character and the aesthetic sense. Character cannot be developed through moral education, but through setting an example, an influence - in the field of life, not in the field of books. Exposure to the lives of great men, great deeds - stories of heroism, courage, nobility, from everywhere - this is important. A child must be taught to examine his own weaknesses and strengths. The aesthetic sense can be developed through art, poetry, literature, music - a beauty of environment, and more importantly, beauty of feelings, beauty of thoughts and sentiments. Teach him to avoid ugly thoughts, ugly reactions (inner more than outer) - for the outer behaviour is a product of the inner condition. And, develop the senses.

* Mental development - Developing a set of faculties - power of concentration, observation (of sight, sound, smell), expression, imagination, analysis.

* Spiritual education - It cannot be taught in a mechanical fashion. True spirituality has to come from the deeper levels of our being. Most children are spiritual - deep in their being they know what is right and what is wrong (long before they are taught morals). This should be encouraged - don't teach too many morals - to follow that something deep within which makes you feel comfortable within yourself when you do something. Spirituality cannot be formalised or mechanised.



But, do not be in a hurry to be spiritual. The first step is to obey reason and refuse to be a slave of one's instincts - this must be the basic education. The reign of reason must come to an end only with the advent of the psychic law which manifests the divine will - we are quite far off from that - so first become reasonable. One is bound to culminate in spirituality - spirituality is a natural outflowing of the higher movements of the human being.

Questions asked by the Teacher-Students

- How to go from the near to far?
- What does 'internal' mean?
- Not to compete with others but with one-self - can it be done in today's world?
- All this [principles of integral education] require individual attention for every child. But in a class of 40, 50, 60 students, with 30 minutes of curriculum, how to do it?
- If we give freedom to the child, won't the child get lost?



Central Institute of Education: Education for the Future

DEMOCRACY: AN INDIAN VIEWPOINT

Venues: Lady Shri Ram College, 12th Nov.

Sardar Patel Vidyalaya, 13th Nov.

Speaker: Prof. Kittu Reddy

THE concept and practice of Democracy existed in India. It was based on the concept of *Dharma* and *Swadharma*: i.e. each individual has a purpose, why he is born; create the physical and psychological conditions through which you can fulfil your individual swadharma.

All of us form groups based on natural affinities. Today the largest living group is a nation. Every nation has a personality which it would like to express through its art, culture, through its society, politics. According to the Indian concept, if the conditions are created - both physically and psychologically, by which the individual and the community can fulfil their swadharma, then you have an ideal society. But, unfortunately, in the present state of mankind, there is so much distortion and imitation, we lose our swadharma. Therefore, we need a state. But the business of the state, in the Indian concept, is to interfere as little as possible. Its job is not to make laws, not to direct, its job is to regulate, to harmonise the different tendencies.

[Two instances were given - the first one of Auroville - trying to arrive at a society where nobody is in charge, there is no authority - the true authority is within oneself - to grow into one's true nature. The second instance was of Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education where at a higher stage, the students choose not only what they will learn and how, but also from whom - they choose their own teachers. The reason this freedom does not exist at younger levels is because the children are not ready for self-determinism.]

A child of 12 does not yet have a developed mind or the ability to discern what is good for him, how will he move ahead - he lacks discrimination and is at the mercy of the lower nature - his vital being, his ethical being has not yet developed. But if we start in schools right from the beginning - that by the age of 14 you must take responsibility for your own education - once this habit is formed, the basis of democracy is well-laid. Just as in a family that is harmonious and well-run, there is no need to have a state - someone telling you at every step what needs to be done - only to bring about harmony between different pulls, different desires, demands and needs - nothing more needs to be done.

The state should not interfere at every step to decide what is good for us. A joint family is small and the person at the top knows everything. When handling a large mass, decision



making must be decentralised - not only at the top, but right down till the village. In India this was ensured by the *panchayati* system - it was not a democratically elective system. Five elders were chosen from the village who were respected by all communities in the village and were given money and the power to ensure what was for the good of all.

There must be a conscious method by which the laws are made by the people themselves - they must be involved in the decisions at their own level, in those decisions which directly affect them.

Democracy is impossible without responsibility. If no-one is watching us, how many things we will do which we do not do. All our so-called 'goodness' is really the product of public opinion. Look carefully, analyse yourself - for until then democracy cannot come. It is said all of us have a soul - whether it is active is another matter. But those in whom it is active, something in them stops them from doing certain things. In the absence of soul personality, there is a moral-ethical personality which does not allow you to do certain things. In the absence of that there is public opinion. For some even this is not active. Then the fourth element comes in - the threat of law. Unfortunately, for some even this does not work - then, only the threat of severe punishment is the answer.

In a society where the last two are the dominating factors, you can forget democracy. That is the *kaliyuga* - where all that is in the lower nature comes out and there is nothing in you to check it. So we have to create the psychological conditions by which the minimum element - public opinion - keeps a check. Ideally, at least the second (ethical law) - absolutely ideally the first (soul personality) - but that is rare.

Democracy is impossible unless the psychological conditions are created where one knows how to take responsibility of one's life and one arrives at a certain psychological development. Encourage this right from childhood - then you are preparing citizens who are ready for democracy.

Since we are all in a community, we cannot fulfil desires without cooperation and collaboration of others. One has to learn to live together - all desires have to be meshed in. These ideas have to be thrown in loudly and clearly - by the media and in the system of education - otherwise there is no chance for democracy. It is not the form that matters - there is no one system. Every system has a truth in it, yet one particular system has to be chosen. The Indians believe that there is a soul behind the body, life and mind. The mind is not the only instrument of truth - it gives only a partial truth. Democracy means seeing the truth in every viewpoint - it respects diversity and gives freedom to co-exist. There is no sense of 'I versus you' in a democracy. The genius of a nation, of an individual lies in absorption and assimilation - to absorb the essence, reject the rest.

Questions asked by the students

At LSR

- Our Constitution gives Freedom of Speech. What is your comment on the play on Nathuram Godse?
- Is there some way a system of education to give freedom can be evolved for schools?
- Given the present system of education, what measures would you suggest to the youth?

At SPV

- Isn't the Indian society too immature - like a little child - to take democracy?
 - Isn't democracy a very idealistic institution? What are your views on dictatorship?
- How was ancient India democratic?
 - People in the villages are illiterate, they are not rational. So, how can we have democracy without literacy in the whole country?
 - On a scale of 1 to 10, where would you rate India?
 - Lenin's government was not democratic, but it was popular. Why?
 - Isn't democracy a universal concept? What is an Indian concept [of democracy]?
 - Each individual's attempt to realise own potential - might it not come in the way of other individuals?
 - Leaders of the country are not moving out fast enough for the younger generation to move in. What can we do about it?

- Greek city states were small. India has one billion people and has democracy. Now we

are facing anarchy. How can such a huge country have democracy?

ASPECTS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

Venue: Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, 26th Nov.

Speaker: Prof. Supriyo Bhattacharya

THE CURRENT PROBLEMS OF INDIA

Venues: Dept. of Social Work,
Delhi University, 27th Nov.
Hindu College, 1st Dec.

Speaker: Prof. Supriyo Bhattacharya



Hindu College: Prof. Supriyo Bhattacharya with students, after the talk

A gist of the talks:

SRI AUROBINDO was the first seer who gave the call for a complete independence of India. Freedom from all kinds of restraints was his *mantra*. He has said that previously he rebelled against the British, and now he rebels against the human nature.

Why speak of Sri Aurobindo? He wanted a divinisation of life, a greater art of life - not a flight to the distant summits. It was his way to accept and embrace all aspects of life and change it in the light of the spirit. He has not left any systematic work on economics, but one can glean something from his writings.

In the Mahabharata the practice of *Rajasuya*, *Asvamedha* is mentioned. There was a genuine control at the top. The king asked the lesser kings to accept his authority or to fight and submit. The conquering king told the other that for strategic purposes they were united and mutual exchange would be there - both will add to each other, but the other will be free to move in his own region according to his own law - the centre will not interfere. So, there was control at the top, but autonomy at the regional levels.

India has unity in diversity - Sri Aurobindo has said that this diversity is an asset, though it can be a danger. Why are there so many secessionist movements? It is because India has lost this vision - you have to respect the law of the being, the *swadharma* of each individual, each community, each state. A uniform model will spell disaster. [Unity must not be confused with uniformity.]

[Through the instances of Jharkhand movement and the situation in Kashmir, it was explained how a disrespect for the central vision of India - freedom for the individual diversity and *swadharma* - has resulted in these two (and many more) problems. In both cases, the culture of the people, their unique identity has not been acknowledged or nurtured and this has resulted in division.]

These days it is a phase of economic reforms. The positive aspect is that if a person with a sound education comes into the market, and the market is undeveloped or he has no access to finance, he will not be able to take advantage of the opportunity. Therefore the economic reforms are good. There is freedom for the entrepreneur. But is that enough? All experience shows that man must have freedom to make mistakes, to grow - but the task is to illuminate the entrepreneur's creative impulse through the light of the spirit, without destroying it.

Spirituality is freedom from all kinds of slavery and bondage and is itself fulfilled by that freedom. It does not reject anything because it has the inner resources to transform it. One must accept from outside whatever is good for one's growth and reject what is harmful - be true to one's own law of being. We, in India, must also stick to our own law of being - we fail to distinguish between judicious modernisation and a mindless westernisation.

The reality is that with 50% illiterates, how can we have participatory globalisation. People feed the poor, satisfy their conscience, but what happens later? The cause of poverty has



to be removed. It is not difficult - give proper education (to develop the faculties, the growth of culture, a flowering of potentialities). We talk of learning from the world - but India has also to learn from herself. [Kerala's instance where the depressed classes rebelled for change, for education.]

Sri Aurobindo and The Mother have talked about how to develop one's being, how to develop the faculties, what is one's real need, how to live, what is the truth of one's being. Spirituality is to live in one's highest truth.

Questions asked by the Students & Faculty

At IIFT

- Everyone knows the problems, but what is it that we require today? What is my role as an individual? What should India tackle first?
- Today there is an Eklavya syndrome - confining education to a few. Until psychological transformation takes place - those who possess knowledge must share. What we profess we never implement. How to do it?

At DSW

- What is the difference between psychic and spiritual education?
- How is diversity a danger and an asset?

At Hindu

- How is diversity an asset? Hasn't it been a danger?
- What is the way out for India out of economic recession, particularly in the light of Amartya Sen's economic philosophy?
- Is literacy the only means of knowledge?
- Once you open imports, what is the judiciousness to decide what is right to import and what not?

THE FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN CULTURE

Dr. Makarand Paranjape spoke on this theme at Sardar Patel Vidyalaya, on 23rd October. The gist of the talk was carried in the Sept-Oct'98 issue of The Awakening Ray. The students (from classes 9th to 11th) asked the following questions:

- What has changed today - why is modern life so different? Have we lost the spiritual component?
- We generally blame chance, luck if things go wrong. Is that the spiritual belief?
- How can spirituality be connected to any one nation (India) - isn't that contradictory?
- Spirituality and Philosophy - are these two different things?
- You said what we do today decides tomorrow [with reference to Karma]. But today we are alive, tomorrow we will die - how do these two connect?
- The book 'Celestine Prophecy' talks of influences on Western culture - first, the church, then science, and materialism. Now the preoccupation with materialism is becoming such an obsession. Is the theory of a growing consciousness true? How can consciousness be so widespread?
- If we integrate spirituality in life, the whole purpose of life is over then - why go on?
- Is Karma what you carry on to next life - an unfulfilled purpose?
- Indians have been slaves for 1000 years. Are we delving too much into spirituality? Are we backward looking?
- You said Indian culture is spiritualistic [with reference to the example of people going on pilgrimages]. In US too people change frequent jobs, go off from one place to another in search of new avenues. Isn't that too a kind of pilgrimage?