



BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY 130

SRI AUROBINDO
SOME ASPECTS
OF HIS VISION
A. B. Purani

GENERAL EDITORS

K. M. MUNSHI

R. R. DIWAKAR



BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY

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What

Bharatiya Vidya Stands for

Bharatiya Shiksha must ensure that no promising young Indian of character having faith in Bharat and her culture Bharatiya Vidya should be left without modern educational equipment by reason merely of want of funds.

2. Bharatiya Shiksha must be formative more than informative, and cannot have for its end mere acquisition of knowledge. Its legitimate sphere is not only to develop natural talents but so to shape them as to enable them to absorb and express the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya.

3. Bharatiya Shiksha must take into account not only the full growth of a student's personality but the totality of his relations and lead him to the highest self-fulfilment of which he is capable.

4. Bharatiya Shiksha must involve at some stage or other an intensive study of Sanskrit or Sanskritic languages and their literature, without excluding, if so desired, the study of other languages and literature. ancient and modern.

8

5. The re-integration of Bharatiya Vidya, which is the primary object of Bharatiya Shiksha, can only be attained through a study of forces, movements, motives, ideas, forms and art of creative life-energy through which it has expressed itself in different ages as a single continuous process.

6. Bharatiya Shiksha must stimulate the student's power of expression, both written and oral, at every stage in accordance with the highest ideals attained by the great literary masters in the intellectual and moral spheres.

7. The technique of Bharatiya Shiksha must involve—

(a) the adoption by the teacher of the *Guru* attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student; inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies; entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles; and creating in him a spirit of consecration; and

(b) the adoption by the student of the *Shishya* attitude by the development of—

(i) respect for the teacher,

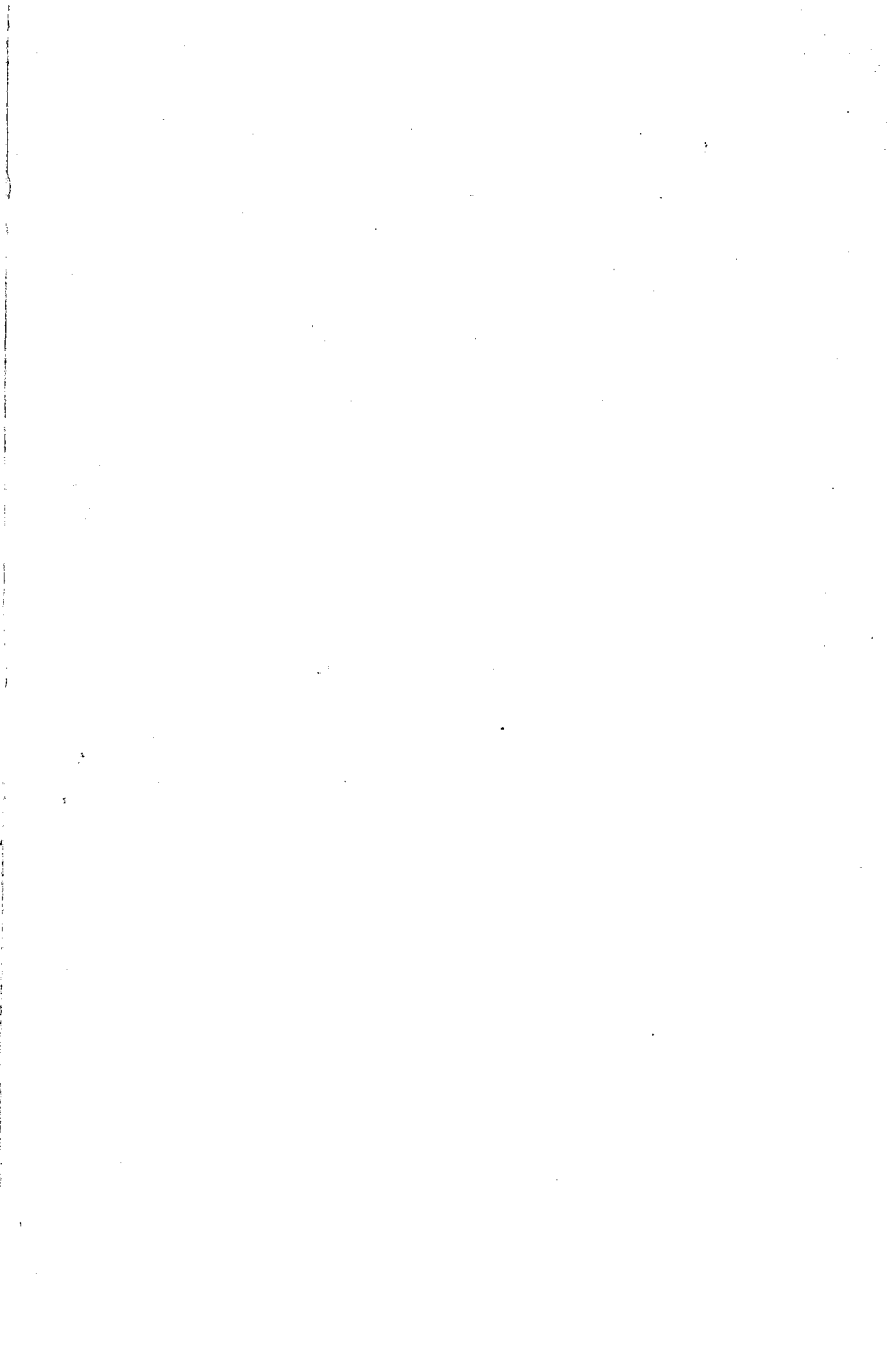
(ii) a spirit of inquiry,

(iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharat and Bharatiya Vidya.

8. The ultimate aim of Bharatiya Shiksha is to teach the younger generation to appreciate and live up to the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya which flowing from the supreme art of creative life-energy as represented by Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Vyasa, Buddha and Mahavira have expressed themselves in modern times in the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi.

9. Bharatiya Shiksha while equipping the student with every kind of scientific and technical training must teach the student, not to sacrifice an ancient form or attitude to an unreasoning passion for change; not to retain a form or attitude which in the light of modern times can be replaced by another form or attitude which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya; and to capture the spirit afresh for each generation to present it to the world





आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side.

—Rigveda, I-89-i

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BY

A. B. PURANI

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BY
A. B. PURANI



1966

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN
CHOWPATTY ; BOMBAY-7

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First Edition, July 1966

PC
181.49
A.P.P./P.V.P.

Price Rs. 2.50

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B69
7/4/75
S.Rg

PRINTED IN INDIA

By V. N. Patwardhan, at Sadhana Press, 430-31 Shanwar Peth, Poona 2
and Published by S. Ramakrishnan, Executive Secretary,
Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay 7.

GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulses of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs. 2.50.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the re-integration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit.

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the framework of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are

progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita* by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita*, which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of

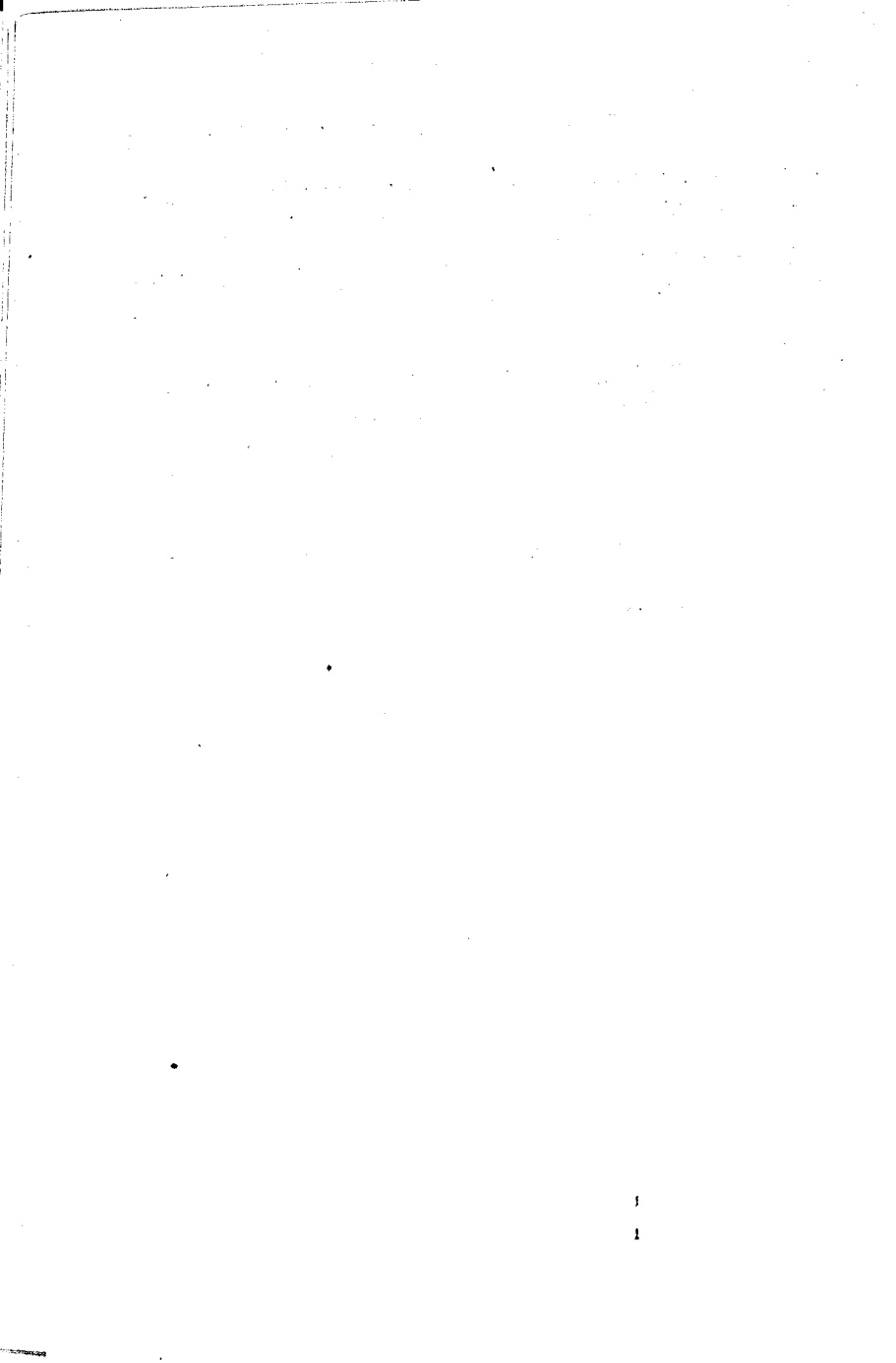
scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

1, QUEEN VICTORIA ROAD,
NEW DELHI,
3rd October 1951

K. M. MUNSHI



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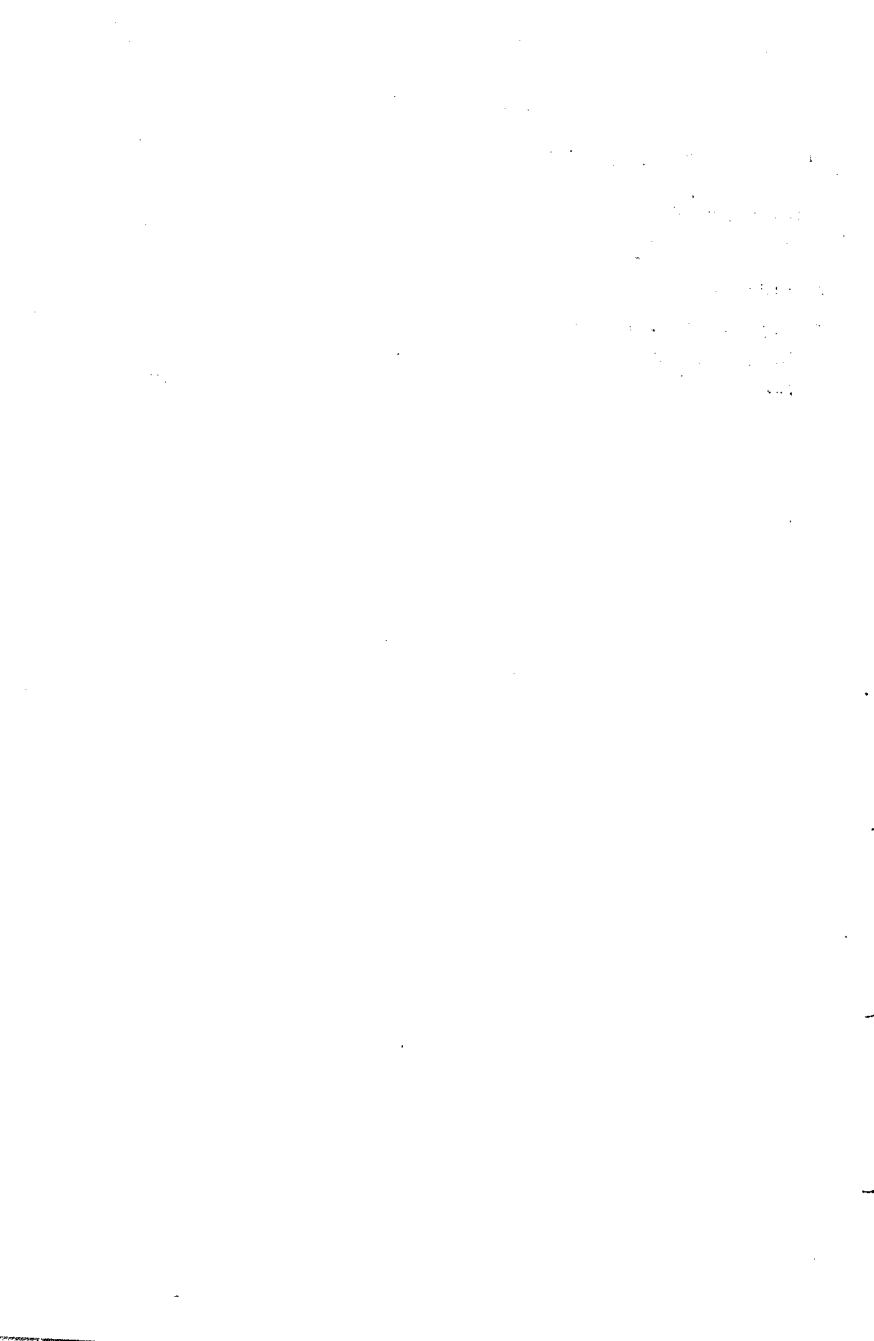
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PART I

THE LIFE DIVINE : SOME ASPECTS

“ Sri Aurobindo is both a poet and speculative thinker. The same is true of Rabindranath Tagore, but the thought of Sri Aurobindo appears to me more comprehensive and systematic than that of Tagore.”¹—G. H. LANGLEY (*Sri Aurobindo : Indian Poet, Philosopher, Mystic* ” Royal India Pakistan Ceylon Society, David Marlowe Ltd.,)

“ ..I have never known a philosopher so all-embracing in his metaphysical structure as Sri Aurobindo, none before him had the same vision....

“ I can foresee the day when the teachings which are already making headway of the greatest spiritual voice of India, Sri Aurobindo, will be known all over America and be a vast power of illumination... ” (Prof. Fredric Spiegelberg of Stanford University, California, U. S. A.)

“ Resurgent India has in *The Life Divine* a world-view worthy of its glories past and formative of a more glorious future ” (Chandra shekharan)

DAWN OF A NEW AGE

I should like to begin by giving some historical background. In the last decade of the last century there was a profound stirring of the spirit of India, Bharat Shakti.

1 I am inclined to give these quotations because we in India have hesitation and are slow in recognising greatness in our midst. Tagore got his place in our country after he won the Nobel Prize. But greatness does not depend upon its recognition : it is those who recognise it that stand to gain.

2 Doubt has been expressed in some academic quarters as to whether “ The Life Divine ” is a philosophy. After all what is in a name ?

IV

SOME CONTRIBUTION OF SRI AUROBINDO
TO PSYCHOLOGY

“ Psychology is necessarily a subjective science and one must proceed in it from the knowledge of oneself to the knowledge of others. ”

—*Sri Aurobindo*

“ The material universe is only the facade of an immense building which has other structures behind it, and it is only if one knows the whole that one can have some knowledge of the truth of the material universe. There are vital, mental and spiritual ranges behind which give the material its significance. If earth is the only field of the spiritual evolution in Matter, (assuming that) then it must be a part of the total design. The idea that all the rest must be a waste is a human idea which would not trouble the vast Cosmic Spirit whose consciousness and life are everywhere in the slime and dust as much as the human intelligence. For us it is the development of the spiritual consciousness in the human body that matters. ”¹

(A)

SOME ERRORS CORRECTED

“ St. Augustine was a man of God and a great saint, but great saints are not always, or often, great psychologists or great thinkers. The Psychology here is that of the most superficial schools, if not that of the man in the street;... I am aware that these errors are practically universal, for

¹ On Yoga II, Tome One, P. 230

PART III

THE PROBLEM OF COLLECTIVE LIFE

UNITY OF MANKIND, A SPIRITUAL NECESSITY

The subject may be fittingly begun by referring to one or two facts which have hitherto escaped the public notice. The term "Co-existence" which is now extensively used in international politics was first used by Sri Aurobindo in the postscript chapter to his book "The Ideal of Human Unity." He wrote : " If much of the unease, the sense of inevitable struggle, the difficulty of mutual toleration and economic accommodation still exists, it is rather because the idea of using the ideological struggle as a means for world domination is there and keeps the nations in a position of mutual apprehension and preparation for armed defence and of attack than because the coexistence of the two ideologies is impossible." ¹

The second point to which the attention of the reader may be drawn is the possibility of Chinese aggression about which he wrote in 1949 when, probably, the visit of Chou-En-lai and the Panchashila declaration made almost everyone feel that a new era of co-operation had dawned between India and China after practical isolation of fifteen hundred years. He wrote :

" In Asia a more perilous situation has arisen, standing sharply across the way to any possibility of a continental unity of the peoples of this part of the world, in the emergence of communist China. This creates a gigantic block which could easily englobe the whole of Northern Asia in a combination between two enormous communist Powers, Russia and China, and would over-shadow with a threat of absorption

¹ The Ideal of Human Unity, P. 387

PART IV

ON ART AND BEAUTY : THE LADDER OF AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

“ Art is discovery and revelation of beauty.
The aim of Art is to embody beauty and give delight. ”¹

Sri Aurobindo, the great Yogi, besides being a great artist, is a great aesthete. He unhesitatingly gave a higher place to Beauty and Delight than even to Knowledge. He wrote : “The day when we get back to the ancient worship of Delight and Beauty will be our day of Salvation.” He knew that the present age was rather far from the worship of beauty and delight. Art today is isolated from life. The modern European culture that dominates the world is “economic and utilitarian.” The modern mind is complex and divided, it is governed by “practical reason.” Sri Aurobindo warns : “Without it (the worship of beauty and delight) there could be no assured nobility and sweetness in Art; no satisfied dignity and fullness of life nor harmonious perfection of the spirit.” And he adds : “Beauty and Delight are also the very soul and origin of art and poetry.”²

The question may arise : what has spirituality to do with Art—with beauty and delight ? From the Indian point of view, spirituality is akin to Art. In fact, in ancient times, religion, philosophy and art were collateral activities and poetry, dance and music were allied to sculpture and painting. Religion affirms a supracosmic Reality, a Creator of the universe, and lays down rules to govern man’s relation with

¹ Future Poetry, Sri Aurobindo.

² Ibid.

PART V

PSYCHOLOGY

“ While Tagore awakened the latent music in me, another Indian, Sri Aurobindo, brought me to religion. He opened the way to my religious consecration. Indeed, my debt to India is very great, and is due in part to Tagore and in part to Sri Aurobindo.”¹

Gabrid Mistme

“ Psychology is necessarily a subjective science and one must proceed in it from the knowledge of oneself to the knowledge of others.”²

Sri Aurobindo

I

MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

Plea for a new approach

Man's awakening to the need of self-knowledge must have been due to various causes external as well as internal. It is possible that the round of animal desires proved insufficient to yield any real or lasting joy to man. The feeling and realization of his own imperfection and ignorance of the outer and inner world may have made him aspire for more and more knowledge of himself and the world. The want of harmony felt within himself and an intuitive need of it may have also contributed to man's spiritual awakening. To these negative motives must be added as an incentive to self-knowledge, the eternal and irrepressible aspiration for

¹ Aryan Path, February 1947. Mr. Gabriel Mistral

² Sri Aurobindo

PART VI

VEDA, UPANISHADS AND GITA

[*NOTE* : The series was begun with this subject : “the Veda, Upanishads and the Gita”, on the 4th of December 1961. It was the day on which Sri Aurobindo withdrew from the body. So, the series was begun with salutation to him in the words of the late C. R. Reddy, the Vice Chancellor of Andhra University.

“In all humility and devotion I hail Sri Aurobindo as the sole sufficing genius of the age. He is more than the hero of the nation. He is amongst the saviours of humanity, who belong to all ages and all nations, the Sanatanas, who leaven our existence with their eternal presence, whether we are aware of it or not.”]

Agni : Agni is said to be all the other gods, he is the One that becomes all; at the same time he is said to contain all the gods in himself as the nave of a wheel contains the spokes, he is the One that contains all; and yet as Agni he is described as a separate deity, One who helps all the others, exceeds them in force and knowledge, yet is inferior to them in Cosmic position and is employed by them as messenger, priest and worker – the creator of the world and father, he is yet the son born of our works, he is, that is to say, the original and manifested indwelling Self or Divine, the One that inhabits all.¹

VEDA

It is not possible to deal with the three subjects at length; for each of them might easily require a life-time for study.

¹ The Life Divine, P. 145

MUMBADEVI SANSKRIT MAHAVIDYALAYA

An Oriental College teaching Sanskrit and Shastras by traditional methods for Shastri and Acharya (recognised as equivalent to B.A. & M.A. respectively) and for Vachaspati (research).

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Department of Easy Sanskrit Examinations for Prarambh, Pravesh, Parichay and Kovid Examinations

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An Academy for the study of Indian Culture with special reference to the Bhagavad Gita.

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A Post-graduate and Research Institute recognised by the University of Bombay coaching students for the degrees of M.A. and Ph.D.

BHARATIYA ITIHASA VIBHAG

One of the major schemes of the Bhavan is the publication of the HISTORY AND CULTURE OF THE INDIAN PEOPLE in 10 volumes. So far seven volumes have been published viz., (1) The Vedic Age (2) The Age of Imperial Unity (3) Classical Age (4) The Age of Imperial Kanauj (5) The Struggle for Empire (6) The Delhi Sultanate and (7) British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance. The remaining volumes will follow at an interval of 8-10 months. This is considered to be the first successful attempt at re-writing the History of India by her own sons on a very exhaustive basis.

MUNSHI SARASWATI MANDIR

An Institute of Culture with a Library consisting of over 65,000 volumes including many Indological volumes, Museum consisting of old and valuable palm leaf manuscripts, coins, paintings etc.

VALLABHJI RAMJI BALPUSTAKALAYA

A Library for Children with facilities for indoor games, educational films etc.

BHARATIYA KALA KENDRA

The Kala Kendra is devoted to the development of Drama, Dance and Music. The Kala Kendra produces dramas and dance ballets in English as well as in Hindi, Gujarati and Marathi to encourage amateur talents. An Inter-Collegiate Dramatic competition, in several languages, is also sponsored by it every year for the same purpose. Ideal facilities for these activities are provided in the Bhavan's auditorium—the Kanji Khetsey Sabhagriha.

BHARATIYA SANGIT SHIKSHAPITH

An Academy of Indian Classical Music, affiliated to the Bhatkhande Sangit Vidya-pith, Lucknow, which is recognised by the Central Government for courses leading to the Bachelor of Music Degree.

BHARATIYA NARTAN SHIKSHAPITH

An Academy of Dance for teaching the four systems of Indian dancing, viz. Manipuri, Kathak, Kathakali and Bharata Natyam.

BOOK UNIVERSITY

Publishes books, ancient and modern, at low price (Rs. 2.50 each) to make available the best literature and classics of India and the world to the common man in an easily understandable form. So far 115 titles have been published and over 10,00,000 copies have in all been sold. Some of the books have also been published in Hindi, Marathi, Bengali and Tamil. A new one-rupee Series has also been started.

PRAKASHAN MANDIR

Apart from our **HISTORY and BOOK UNIVERSITY SERIES**, this department also publishes the results of the research and other activities of the various Mandirs of the Bhavan and books of cultural value. Its publications include:

Bharatiya Vidya Series: Critical editions of texts, translations and original works of research in Indology—in Sanskrit and English. Published volumes 22.

Singhi Jain Series: Critical editions of ancient works and manuscripts connected with Jain religion and literature. Published volumes 52.

The Glory that was Gurjaradesa: A comprehensive study of Gujarat in 7 volumes. Published volumes 2.

Munshi Sahitya: Social novels, historical plays, biographical works of Munshi and Smt. Lilavati Munshi in Gujarati and English, the copyright whereof has been kindly gifted by them to the Bhavan. Published volumes 80.

JOURNALS

Bharatiya Vidya: An Indological research quarterly in English started in 1943. Published volume 22.

Bhavan's Journal: English Fortnightly devoted to life, literature and culture started in A. Present circulation 200 copies. Annual Subscription Rs. 6.50.

Bharatiya Samarpan: Annual Subscription Rs. 6.50.

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THE AUTHOR

Born at Surat in 1893, Sri Ambubhai Purani had his early education in Bombay, from where he graduated in 1913. Together with his illustrious brother Sri Chhotubhai Purani, he pioneered the gymnastic movement in Gujarat. It was at this time that he came under the spell of Sri Aurobindo and yearned to seek the path of God-realization through Yoga, as preached by the great saint of Pondicherry. He migrated to Pondicherry in 1923 in order to practise *Sadhana* for Poorna Yoga at the feet of the Master. There he had the unique advantage of initiation in Yoga by Sri Aurobindo himself. He remained in the Ashram as a *Sa lhaka* till his demise on December 11, 1965.

It was as an exponent of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy that Sri Purani attained international eminence. His masterly exposition on the life and teachings of Sri Aurobindo ranks as a standard publication on the subject. His English rendering of the Saint's epic *Savitri* stands in a class by itself. He has to his credit 50 books in Gujarati, including the translations of Sri Aurobindo's *Atmasiddhi Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, *Jnana Yoga*, *Vijnana Yoga*, *Karma Yoga* and the essays on *Bhagavad Gita*.