

Life of the Buddha Śākyamuni

He is not a court poet and there is no effort to please or praise any patron. Even then, his style is attractive and popular. Neither does he yearn for praise; rather he spurns it, but nevertheless earns it. Bhartṛhari is a poet with a mission, which is to raise a society that is slipping into sterile worldliness, to soul-satisfying heights.

(KVS)

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Bhartṛprapañca

a pre-Śāṅkara Vedāntin whose views are criticized by Śāṅkara.

His works have not come down to us and hence his theories have to be gleaned only from the criticism by philosophers like Śāṅkara.

Bhartṛprapañca advocates the combined discipline of *jñāna* (knowledge) and *karma* (ritualistic action) to achieve deliverance, in contrast with Śāṅkara, who thinks that *jñāna* is the only means to *mokṣa* (liberation from the cycle of birth and death) and that it cannot be combined with *karma*. Bhartṛprapañca seems to think, on the contrary, that *jñāna* knowledge and *karma* are not opposed to each other and have equal power to bring about deliverance.

Bhartṛprapañca argues that the two broad sections of Vedas, namely, *karma* and *jñāna* are equally valid and authoritative. Ritualistic portions of Vedas presuppose difference between the acts and the agent of those acts along with their results. The portions dealing with *jñāna*, called Upaniṣads, speak of the oneness of all, particularly of the individual soul and Brahman (the Ultimate Reality). So, argues Bhartṛprapañca, Vedic scriptures as a whole declare *bheda* (difference) and *abheda* (oneness) as equally real.

Another interesting feature of Bhartṛprapañca's Vedānta is that Brahman transforms itself into the world of plurality, though it does not thereby lose its unity and self-identity. This means that Brahman and the world are real.

This is made plausible by Bhartṛprapañca holding that Brahman has a two-fold nature: general and specific. In its general aspect it is identical with the world of objects and individual souls, while in its specific aspect it distinguishes itself from them. Thus identity-in-difference is the relation among all categories. This can be illustrated by the tree and its branches, the sea

and its waves, and the like, which exhibit identity-in-difference in their mutual relation.

Bhartṛprapañca insists that the individual should, without fail or flaw, perform the obligatory duties cast on him by the scripture. He should also refrain from doing wicked deeds prohibited by the scripture and acts prompted by selfish motives.

(BRS)

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Bhārūḍa of Ekanātha

well known devotional compositions of saint-poet Ekanātha of Maharashtra.

The saint poets of Maharashtra inaugurated a new era of *bhakti yoga* of the *Bhāgavata*. Ekanātha carried further the work of the great saint Jñāneśvara in the 16th century C.E. He used many literary devices to popularize *bhākti yoga* or the *Bhāgavata* philosophy. All these saint-poets used Marathi as an effective medium. Ekanātha went a step further and adopted certain folk methods in his compositions, among which *pada*, *gaulaṇa* and *bhārūḍa* became famous. *Bhārūḍa* is lyrical and dramatic in structure. This type abounds in contemporary thoughts. It expresses, and sometimes symbolizes the deeper aspects of human and divine experiences. Ekanātha used this novel form of poetry only to enlighten the people spiritually and awaken in them thoughts of devotion or *bhakti*.

'*Bhārūḍa*' is a word of controversial origin and meaning. Efforts have been made to associate the word with Karnataka and derive it differently but without much success. In general, it is a type of folk-song. The *bhārūḍa*-s of Ekanātha, indirectly or symbolically, deal with social evils, worldly life, various games, birds and animals, the *jogavā* (alms) of the Goddess, the *johar*-s (salutations) of *mahara*-s (*śūdra*-s), etc. They convey certain spiritual truths in common language. Worldly afflictions are conveyed symbolically through an elaborate description of a married woman bitten by a serpent. Ekanātha's *bhārūḍa*-s reflect the saint's true self, full of devotion to God and free from prejudices of any kind. All men were equal in his eye. There are many episodes in his life that illustrate his sense of equality. His whole life was a living example of his intrinsic goodness. Ekanātha lived up to his own definition of a saint: one who suffers the slanders of others without anger and never feels hurt, because he has established his oneness with the universe.

(PGL)



Bhartṛhari's works show that he is a fine poet of ideas. His verses are lively, racy, noble and elegant.

– Bhartṛhari (poet)

The Swaminarayan Akshardham Temple complex in Delhi
(see page 127)



combines in his vision the alacrity of the West with the illumination of the East. To study his writings is to enlarge the boundaries of one's knowledge. Like Coleridge and Lenin, he displays a piercing and almost instantaneous insight into the heart of the subject. He knows that a man be right, but not wise. He treats each word of his as though it were a drop of elixir. In all this he is unique – at least in modern India”.

Drawing on the harmony of the higher spheres, Aurobindo has recovered for us the joy and knowledge of the unbounded experience of the cosmic self that lives within us “by ourselves unseen”. He has established poetry where it belongs – in the self. Aurobindo himself claimed that he was first and foremost a poet. He was a poet who aspired to live poetry as well as write it, wearing the garb of a *r̥ṣi*.

(VS)

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Auroville

a township built in the city of Pondicherry (now Puducherry) reflecting the vision of Aurobindo Ghosh (1872–1950).

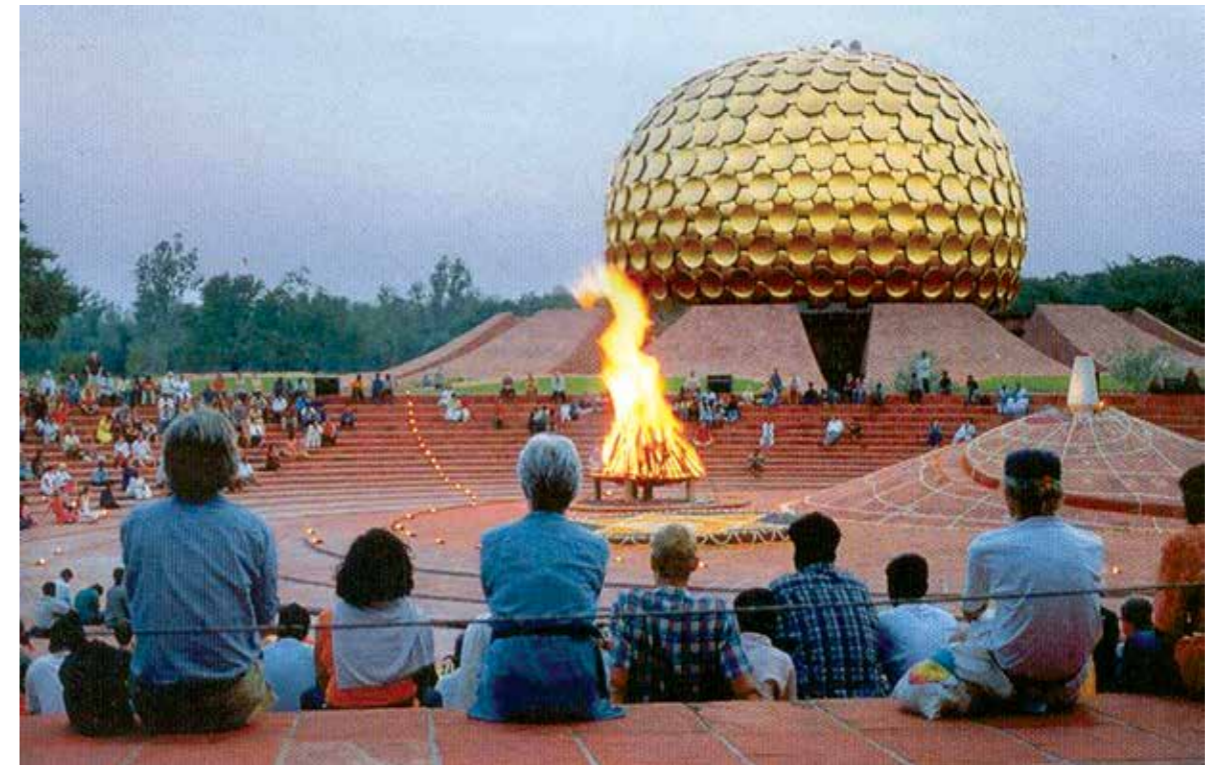
Auroville signifies “city of light” as well as the “city of Aurobindo”. Aurobindo was a unique figure in Indian history: a brilliant scholar, educated almost exclusively in the West, he became the fiery leader of Indian nationalism during the turbulent period of agitation against the partition of Bengal in 1905–10. He subsequently retired to Pondicherry in South India where he lived for forty years and developed what is generally considered to be one of the most powerful and original structures of philosophy in the 20th century. His collaborator and co-worker, Mirra Alfasa, worked with him and came to be known as the Mother of the Aurobindo Ashram.

Aurobindo envisaged the steady evolution of consciousness on this planet from unicellular matter through mineral, plant, animal and human levels, and held that this evolution would continue

until what he called the supramental consciousness was established on earth. For him, man is an intermediary creature, and his destiny is to collaborate with the evolutionary force so as to hasten and telescope the hitherto prolonged natural process. In his own words, “This ideal can be as yet only a little seed and the life that embodies it a small nucleus, but it is our fixed hope that the seed will grow into a great tree and the nucleus be the heart of an ever-extending formation . . . a transformation of the mind and life and very body is indeed the change to which our evolution is secretly moving and without this transformation the entire fullness of a divine life on earth cannot emerge. A divine life in a divine body is the formula of the ideal that we envisage”.

After the death of Aurobindo in 1950, the Mother continued his work and envisaged a city of the future called Auroville. Auroville was consecrated on February 28, 1968 when handfuls of earth brought by young men and women from 124 countries and all the Indian states were placed in an urn to symbolize that this was to be a city of the future, a unique experiment in inter-national, inter-racial, inter-religious and inter-cultural living.

On the day of its inauguration, the Mother proclaimed the Auroville Charter: “Auroville belongs to nobody in particular. Auroville belongs to humanity as a whole. But to live in Auroville one must be a willing servitor of the Divine Consciousness. Auroville will be the place of an unending education, of constant progress and a youth that never ages. Auroville wants to be the bridge between the past and the future. Taking advantage of all discoveries from without and within, Auroville will boldly spring towards future realizations. Auroville will be a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual Human Unity”. Originally established by the Aurobindo Society, Auroville functioned smoothly until the Mother's passing away in 1973. Thereafter a dispute arose between the Aurovilians and the Society, which impelled the Government of India to take over its administration in 1980 under the Auroville (Emergency Provisions) Act. In 1988, the Indian Parliament passed the Auroville Foundation Act setting up a special structure for this institution. The Act came into effect from January 1991 with Karan Singh as the first Chairman of the Governing Board and eight others as Board members. The Act also set up a Residents' Assembly including all adult Aurovilians, a seven-member Working Committee and a five-member International Advisory Council, which consists of



Auroville

eminent persons from all over the world.

Auroville's primary location is in the South Indian State of Tamil Nadu, with a small extension into the Union Territory of Pondicherry. Since its inception, it has developed into an international township and by the end of 1995 had reached almost 1,200 residents drawn from India and twenty-five countries around the world. Auroville now occupies about a thousand hectares of land, and is attempting to consolidate additional land for further growth and development.

The city's overall planning was envisaged by the French architect, Roger Anger, under the guidance and vision of the Mother. It has been divided into four zones – International, Cultural, Residential and Industrial. A broad spectrum of activities has been undertaken including environmental regeneration, organic farming, educational research, health care, alternative energy, and appropriate building technology. Auroville has received international acclaim for converting a virtual desert into a green belt. Over two million saplings have been planted and the wasteland has been transformed into an oasis of color and vegetation.

The most important single project in Auroville

is the Matrimandir, the temple of the Mother. Its unique architecture envisages a glittering golden sphere settling into the earth, symbolizing the descent of the supramental force into the terrestrial consciousness. The completion of the unique inner chamber of Matrimandir with its huge crystal globe, seventy centimeters in diameter, and twelve mystic pillars on February 28, 1933, was an event of deep significance, representing a creative synergy between many individual and collective efforts. This huge chamber, twenty-four meters in diameter and over fifteen meters in height, is finished in pure white Indian marble. The completion of the entire project including twelve gardens around the temple is scheduled for the end of the twentieth century.

Auroville is essentially an experiment in many fields, an attempt to build a sort of spiritual commune where commercial, agricultural, educational and other human services would all take place, while at the same time subordinated to an overriding commitment to the higher consciousness.

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