

# TOWARDS A NEW RENAISSANCE: CULTIVATING SOUL-VALUES

BELOO MEHRA



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**BELOO MEHRA**



*Sri Aurobindo Society*

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**AUROPUBLICATIONS**

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POWERFUL THOUGHTS, INSPIRING VISION

# **TOWARDS A NEW RENAISSANCE: CULTIVATING SOUL-VALUES**

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AN OFFERING  
to  
THE MOTHER AND SRI AUROBINDO

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# INTRODUCTION

There are several books already available which carry inspiring compilations of the words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on twelve attributes or twelve qualities that are symbolised by the twelve petals in the Mother's symbol. We can ask what is new about this eBook? First, this is not a compilation of Their Words. It weaves together selected insights from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on these twelve qualities and presents them in the context of original write-ups by the author. These write-ups were first composed as editorials for twelve issues of Renaissance, the monthly online journal of Sri Aurobindo Society.

August 15, 2021 marked the beginning of the celebrations of Sri Aurobindo's 150th birth anniversary and 75th anniversary of India's political independence. At *Renaissance*, we marked this special occasion by dedicating 12 issues from August 2021 to July 2022 to an exploration of twelve attributes which Sri Aurobindo has spoken of as necessary for the full manifestation of the Mother's Work.

These are,

Sincerity | Humility | Gratitude | Perseverance | Aspiration |  
Receptivity | Progress | Courage | Goodness | Generosity | Equality |  
Peace



- Sincerity
- Peace
- Equality
- Generosity
- Goodness
- Courage
- Progress
- Receptivity
- Aspiration
- Perseverance
- Gratitude
- Humility

## Mother's Symbol

The central circle represents the Divine Consciousness.  
 The four petals represent the four powers of the Mother.  
 The twelve petals represent the twelve powers of the Mother manifested for Her work.

## About Renaissance

The online journal, Renaissance ([renaissance.aurosociety.org](http://renaissance.aurosociety.org)) began with a vision to highlight numerous forms in which the eternal spirit of India is being reborn and renewed. It features articles, essays, stories, videos, reflections and accounts of India and her creative genius manifesting in various domains – spiritual, artistic, literary, philosophic, scientific, aesthetic.

Since inception, the highlight of each issue remains selections from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother which are carefully

curated according to the month's special theme or focus. These selections are organised in sub-themes and presented in a way appropriate for digital presentation, one that would appeal to the modern mind with limited attention span.

Speaking of the vaster and deeper significance of a new rebirth of India, Sri Aurobindo wrote more than a hundred years ago:

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“This Renaissance, this new birth in India,... must become a thing of immense importance both to herself and the world, to herself because of all that is meant for her in the recovery or the change of her time-old spirit and national ideals, to the world because of the possibilities involved in the rearing of a force that is in many respects unlike any other and its genius very different from the mentality and spirit that have hitherto governed the modern idea in mankind, although not so far away perhaps from that which is preparing to govern the future.”

(Sri Aurobindo, Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo [CWSA],  
Vol. 20, p. 3)

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Taking inspiration from these words, the journal brings for the readers thought-provoking ideas, insightful voices, and fresh perspectives on diverse topics and issues concerning India – her past, present, but most importantly, her future.

One of the objectives of *Renaissance* online journal is to bring to light selected writings of some of the early *sādhaka*-s and scholars of Integral Yoga and Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's vision and work. In every issue we feature one or more selected writings which

were published earlier in journals such as *Sri Aurobindo Circle*, *Mother India* and other publications of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Sri Aurobindo Society and like-minded institutions.

We also feature selections from various compilations of talks and correspondences. The longer essays are presented in easy-to-access multiple parts. We hope that this effort will help the gems gifted to us by the early *sādhaka*-s of Integral Yoga reach a whole new set of audience.

## **Renaissance and 12 Attributes**

What do these attributes have to do with the renaissance of India?  
We find an answer in these words of the Mother:

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“Sri Aurobindo always loved deeply his Motherland. But he wished her to be great, noble, pure and worthy of her big mission in the world. He refused to let her sink to the sordid and vulgar level of blind self-interests and ignorant prejudices. This is why, in full conformity to his will, we lift high the standard of truth, progress and transformation of mankind, without caring for those who, through ignorance, stupidity, envy or bad will, seek to soil it and drag it down into the mud. We carry it very high so that all who have a soul may see it and gather round it.”

(Collected Works of the Mother [CWM], Vol. 13, p. 123)

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Sri Aurobindo belongs to the future. He shows us the way to follow in order to hasten the realisation of a glorious future fashioned by the Divine Will. As the Mother reminds us: “All those who want to collaborate for the progress of humanity and for India’s luminous destiny must unite in a clairvoyant aspiration and in an illumined work” (CWM, Vol. 13, p. 14).

The Mother had once said that the number one problem for India is to rediscover and manifest her soul. When someone asked her – “How to find back India’s soul”, her reply was profound:

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“Become conscious of your psychic being. Let your psychic being become intensely interested in India’s Soul and aspire towards it, with an attitude of service; and if you are sincere you will succeed.”

(The Mother, CWM, Vol. 13, p. 370)

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This is the essential work the Mother asks us to do for our beloved motherland, for India, our Mother. As we walk the path to a deeper knowledge of the truer self within, we must cultivate in us these 12 qualities if we aspire to become sincere servitors of the Truth, courageous children of Mother India, aspiring children of Divine Mother.

For the *Renaissance* issues on 12 attributes (August 2021-July 2022), our goal was not to bring out an exhaustive compilation of all that Mother and Sri Aurobindo have said on these twelve attributes. Rather, the aspiration was to highlight varied dimensions of each of these soul-qualities, with an aim to highlight its significance for a deeper, inner progress of the individual.

This inner progress can then become the enduring means to sustainable outer progress leading to a rebirth and renaissance in the collective. Our inner work, in this way, becomes our means to gain greater harmony in our outer lives – as individuals and as part of a society or nation.

## **Bringing twelve issues together in one eBook**

This eBook collates all the twelve issues of *Renaissance* by compiling their editorials and at the same time, listing out all the content published in each of the issues. With just a single click on the title the reader will be able to access the relevant feature on the *Renaissance* website. This will help readers get a better appreciation of how we explored each of the twelve attributes as a means for inner and outer growth at individual and collective levels. Readers will also get to see the richness of the offerings of this online journal.

The original editorial has been appropriately revised by the author. It is followed by a list of all content featured in the specific issue. The whole organisation of the book has been done considering the ease of exploration for the interested reader.

This eBook would not have been possible without the immense contribution and assistance of several people at Sri Aurobindo Society. The work began with the ever-present encouragement and support of Vijay bhai.

Uttam Mondal designed the template for the publication, provided the necessary guidance on formatting of text and pictures and made

available for readers the final eBook version. Biswajita Mohapatra worked on the initial layout and formatting of the eBook. She also designed most of the graphics which feature selected words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Shahla Sayeed designed the flower images for nine of twelve qualities, the images for Courage, Equality and Peace were designed by Biswajita Mohapatra. The photographs of flowers in the 'Peace' chapter were taken by the author herself in her home garden. The beautiful cover design was done by Raamkumar. Gayatri Majumdar gave a close editorial check and suggested necessary corrections. Raamkumar did all the final corrections before the eBook was published.

Like all work at *Renaissance*, this eBook is a humble expression of our love and reverence for Mother India and is lovingly offered at the feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

~ In gratitude,  
Beloo Mehra (Author and Editor, Renaissance)

March 2023  
Pondicherry



“It is only by a change of consciousness  
that the true basis of life can be discovered.”

Sri Aurobindo  
CWSA, 35: 194



# SINCERITY

**“All That is True and Sincere Will Always be Kept”**



*Spiritual significance: Sincerity in the vital; the sure way to realisation*

We started with Sincerity for the August 2021 issue which was released on August 15.

The Mother had once given an assurance that in the measure in which our “need” for Her is sincere and genuine, it will be fulfilled (CWM, Vol. 13, p. 69). With sincere hearts, we offered our work at the feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and prayed that She may grant us more and more of this sincere need to grow in our love for Her and to progress towards Her.

In 1971, when someone asked the Mother on how to best celebrate the Birth Centenary of Sri Aurobindo, Her reply was, “Aspire and be sincere and obstinate in your endeavour,” and to “make an effort to progress in understanding.” (CWM, Vol. 13, p. 14). These words were our inspiration and guide as we worked on the issue on Sincerity.

As the entire nation and the world celebrated the commencement of the 150th birth anniversary of Sri Aurobindo, August 15, 2021 also marked the beginning of a special year in India’s political history. Sri Aurobindo’s was the first voice raised to demand complete independence (*pūrna swarāj*) from the British. His unparalleled work for India’s freedom, while concentrated over a short period, gave the right turning and direction to the independence movement at the right time.

At the time when India’s political leaders were busy petitioning and appealing to the British colonial masters for minor concessions, Sri Aurobindo walked in the scene and awakened the Indians to the path of courage and boldness, and struggle and sacrifice for freedom. As

he remarked in one of his writings in *Bande Mataram*, politics is the work of Kshatriya, and it is the virtues of Kshatriya that must be developed if India wants to win and protect her freedom.

Sri Aurobindo, the revolutionary nationalist, arrived in the little French colony of Pondicherry on April 4, 1910, following a divine command. It was an *ādes̄h* to prepare India and Indians, the world and the humanity for a new freedom that can only come with a change of consciousness. India's political freedom was assured – it was Sri Krishna who in Alipore jail had assured Sri Aurobindo of this – and now the work that lay ahead was even bigger. It was a work to be done for the earth, to bring down a new consciousness which will chart a new course of evolution itself.

India got her political freedom on August 15, 1947, but along with the independence came her partition. A little over a month before that, with his characteristic wit and humour, Sri Aurobindo had written to a disciple that the spiritual force he had been putting on human affairs was the Overmind force, “and that when it acts in the material world it is so inextricably mixed up in the tangle of the lower world forces that its results, however strong or however adequate for the immediate object, must necessarily be partial. That is why I am getting a birthday present of a free India on August 15, but complicated by its being presented in two packets as two free Indias: this is a generosity I could have done without, one free India would have been enough for me if offered as an unbroken whole.” (CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 368). As is well-known, Sri Aurobindo in his August 15, 1947 message had spoken of his “dream” that this partition will and must go.

At Pondicherry, his cave of *tapasyā*, Sri Aurobindo, the mahayogi, was inwardly battling the dark forces of inconscient and subconscious planes to prepare the earth for the Supramental descent, and outwardly also keeping a close eye on the world-forces and applying his Overmental force as and when required to guide the direction of major world-events.

His was the God's labour to bring down the Supramental Consciousness. And at the same time in his Divine Compassion as a Guru and Friend, he was also lovingly guiding those near him on the path of *sādhana*, helping them to turn their energies towards the one change needed – change of consciousness. As he said in a letter:

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“ . . . our attitude is that humanity cannot grow out of its limitations by the ordinary means adopted by the human mind, politics, social reform, philanthropy, etc., — these can only be temporary or local palliatives. The only true escape is a change of consciousness, a change into a greater, wider and purer way of being, and a life and action based upon that change. It is therefore to that that the energies must be turned, once the spiritual orientation is complete.”

(Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 29, p. 43)

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Sincerity marks the beginning of all aspiration for a change of consciousness – sincerity in intention, in our effort and in our offering of the effort to the Divine. As the Mother once said, sincerity is the need of the hour.

To progressively become more sincere instruments of the Divine’s work, we must constantly invoke Her help with a child-like trust and candidness. There should be no pretension, no hypocrisy, no duplicity of any kind. Life gives us countless reminders of the need to constantly become aware of those countless little, pesky flaws in our nature that stand in the way of making the inner aspiration more sincere and true and complete.



In sincerity is the certitude of victory.

(The Mother, CWM, 14: 66)

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INDIA'S FIRST DANCE TO FUTURE HOURS

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The supremely compassionate Sri Aurobindo once wrote in a letter that for a true *sādhaka*, all outward struggles, troubles, calamities are

only a means of surmounting ego and rajasic desire and attaining to complete surrender. All these are opportunities for us to grow by experiencing the consequence of our every little insincerity. These are moments life offers us to grow in sincerity.

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“Be absolutely convinced that everything that happens, happens in order to give us precisely the lesson we needed, and if we are sincere in the “sadhana”, the lesson should be accepted with joy and gratitude.

“For one who aspires to the divine life, what can the actions of a blind and ignorant humanity matter to him?”

(The Mother, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 219)

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Whether it is traversing the inner or the outer paths of our journeys, sincerity is the biggest safeguard if we seek true progress. As Sri Aurobindo reminds us – what is true of the individual, is also true of the nation. August 15 is a day when we must reflect on how sincere we are as a nation – sincere in our work for the nation, sincere in our thoughts toward the nation, sincere in our effort to identify with the nation-soul of India.

We argue and debate on nation and nationalism and their relevance in our times of globalism, but do we truly and most dispassionately reflect on what is unique about the nation that is India, the Bharat? What is the Indian view of nation and nationalism? How are we teaching our young about the past of India, the present of India and the future of India? All our work bears the shadow of our mental

preferences, our favoured ideologies, our narrow perceptions, our inadequate analyses, our incomplete knowledge, our limited capacities.

In short, all this is insincerity.

The only safeguards are sincerity, honesty and straightforwardness. But none of these are easy to acquire given the admixture of truth and falsehood that are our world and life. Only a pure, intense flame of aspiration within can help us grow in sincerity.

To start off our exploration of Sincerity in our Guiding Light section, we highlighted a few Words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. They have insisted so much on sincerity as the biggest safeguard in all inner and outer effort for progress that it was rather difficult to decide which of their passages to leave out when editing a slender issue. We made a small attempt by categorising and organising some of their words on Sincerity in different pieces in the issue.

In addition to exploring the place of sincerity in sādhana, we included separate pieces on the significance and ways of inculcating sincerity in children, and also on sincerity in the realm of social-political domain. We also highlighted a few stories told by the Mother on this very important quality of sincerity, since stories are the best way to bring to light the subtleties of the truth.

Besides, we also started a ‘Flower Meditation’ series with the Sincerity issue. A meditative piece by Sheeba Naaz on Italian Aster, the flower symbolising sincerity, was the first one in the series.

The issue also included two more pieces by aspiring children of the Mother, Charan Singh and Sanjeev Patra, which speak of the prime importance of sincerity in the path of Integral Yoga and how one may constantly grow in sincerity. An American educator, Maureen Hall, shared her reflections on sincerity as a means for self-development as she looked back at the time she spent at Sri Aurobindo Ashram, ten years ago.

...be sincere  
and you will be helped.

(Mother's Agenda, 1: 83)



Half way through our work on this issue, a very helpful compilation on Sincerity was generously shared with us from the offices

of *Mother India: Monthly Review of Culture*. Going through that exhaustive compilation inspired us to present some of the gems on Sincerity in a more creative manner, resulting in some digital exhibits on Sincerity.

Our regular feature Insightful Conversations helped us explore Sincerity in another way. We spoke with two educators, Pranjali Garg and Neha Singh, who teach Indian History at the university level. Our aim was to explore how we may begin to sincerely rethink the ways in which the subject of Indian History is presented to our youth in classrooms. This conversation takes us beyond the ordinary ideological and political debates that have plagued the discipline of Indian History and Historiography since long, and invites us to explore a more integral approach to learning and teaching of History.

In our Book of the Month feature, we continued with this theme of sincerity in history. We featured excerpts from a couple of introductory chapters from a book authored by Prof. Kittu Reddy, a long-time resident of Sri Aurobindo Ashram and teacher of Indian History and Culture at Sri Aurobindo International Center of Education. The book, as the author states, is an attempt to interpret the events of Indian history from a subjective point of view. This does not mean that external events are any less important; rather they gain greater significance when seen in the light of the inner psychological vision and deeper forces behind them.

As editor, I felt that the only way I could close my editorial for the August 15, 2021 issue was by recalling an important guidance given by the Mother. Her words highlight the importance of sincerity for all our written and spoken expressions.

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“If we allow a falsehood, however small, to express itself through our mouth or our pen, how can we hope to become perfect messengers of Truth? A perfect servant of Truth should abstain even from the slightest inexactitude, exaggeration or deformation.”

(The Mother, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 202)

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## Explore the ‘Sincerity’ issue

(Clickable links)

- Sri Aurobindo – Glimpses of His Life (Film – in English and Sanskrit)
- The Life of Nationalism: When Sri Aurobindo Invoked Sri Krishna
- August 15 – Its World-Significance (Amal Kiran)
- “Let Your Sincerity and Surrender be Genuine and Entire” (Guiding Light)
- Inculcating Sincerity in Children: Guidance for Parents and Teachers
- Of Animals, Kings, Pundits & Rishis: Sincerity Stories as Told by the Mother
- Sincerity: The Bedrock of Sadhana (Charan Singh Kedarkhandi)
- Growing in Sincerity on the Path of Integral Yoga (Sanjeev Patra)
- Of the Michaelmas Daisy, Winters and Sincerity (Sheeba Naaz)
- Sincerity as Clear Vision and Self-Development: Reflections of an American Educator in Pondicherry (Maureen Hall)
- Sincerity in Social-Political Life: Some Words of the Mother



# HUMILITY

**The Absolutely Perfect,  
the Absolutely Humble Divine**



Dropseed (*Agrostis nebulosa*)

*Spiritual significance: Humility; adorable in its simplicity*

The Rāmāyana begins with Rishi Vālmiki asking Nārad Muni if he knew someone on the earth who is endowed with all the great qualities of a perfect man. Nārad Muni then tells him of Rāma of Ikshwāku clan and recounts his various qualities. Rāma is truthful, always does what is right and true, is just, courageous, firm in resolve, highly learned, wise, eloquent, handsome, extremely patient, free from all envy and pettiness, friend and protector of all but when fighting for the truth, can strike terror into the hearts of the bravest of men and even the *devatas*. The muni adds that while it is almost impossible to find all these qualities in one individual, Sri Rāma not only possesses all these qualities and more, but he is also an epitome of true humility.

This rarest of rare combination is what has made Sri Rāma's appeal truly timeless and universal in the religio-spiritual history of Indian, nay human civilisation. The Indian mind speaks of Sri Rama as an *avatār* of the Supreme, a conscious descent of the Divine in an earthly form to open a new path for humanity's and earth's evolution.

Sri Aurobindo explains that Rāma was the avatār of the *sāttwic* mind – mental, emotional, moral. His avatāric work was to fix for the future the possibility of an order proper to the sāttwic civilised human being who governs his life by the reason, the finer emotions, morality, or at least moral ideals, such as truth, obedience, co-operation and harmony, the sense of domestic and public order. And he established this possibility 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. This work naturally required the avatār to perfectly embody the highest kind of humility and nobility,

qualities which over time have been strongly stamped as the epitome of the highest Aryan character.

We find this Aryan character described beautifully by Sri Aurobindo:

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“Knowledge, devotion and non-attached activity are the root of an Aryan education; liberality, love, courage, energy, modesty are signs of the Aryan character.”

(Sri Aurobindo, Bengali Writings, *Dharma*, August 1909)

---

Only the Divine, the One who is Absolute Perfection, can be Absolutely Humble, said the Mother. She spoke of this Perfect Divine Humility in a remarkable passage when she said that the very possibility of transformation of Matter is indicative of the perfect humility of the Divine. Only the Divine Will and Grace can transform the most undivine into its most divine form, and yet the Divine stays humbly hidden behind all the limitations and falsehoods and stumblings of Mind, Life and Matter.

And if one were to really grasp the essence of Divine Humility, one could simply meditate on this most beautiful little poem of Sri Aurobindo, simply titled ‘God.’ I need not say anything about the poem. Read it with a quiet heart and mind, and you will feel its truth reverberating within.

---

## GOD

Thou who pervadest all the worlds below,  
    Yet sitst above,  
Master of all who work and rule and know,  
    Servant of Love!

Thou who disdainest not the worm to be  
    Nor even the clod,  
Therefore we know by that humility  
    That thou art God.

(Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 218)

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“Therefore we know by that humility, That thou art God.” One can simply meditate on this one line for hours. Absolutely beautiful in its force and power, in its perfect description of the nature of Divine.

And yet, one may not grow at all in humility if one is not willing to take a sincere look at oneself. Sincerity and humility go together; they are our biggest safeguards, the Mother reminds us.

We live in the times of social media when a person’s social status (or professional status in some cases) is often determined by how many ‘likes,’ ‘comments,’ and ‘shares’ he or she garners on his or her ‘status update’. Or by the number of followers one has on Instagram and Twitter. Racing to be more ‘liked’ or ‘re-tweeted’, one could eventually end up spending much precious time and energy figuring out how to become more popular, more successful and a bigger ‘influencer’ on social media. All this keeps building up one’s ego – individual ego, and also collective ego of the ‘followers’ of the

‘influencer’ whose words are directly or indirectly shaping the collective thought-process of that particular group.



The greater beings are always  
the most simple and modest.

(The Mother, CWM, 14: 151)



INDIA FROM PAST DARKS TO FUTURE HOOPS  
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Obviously, there is much good that can and does result from social media, but this is not the place to go into a discussion on the good, the bad and the ugly of the social media. Suffice to say that as long as one’s actions are driven by any pull or push or desire or craving or impulse of the ego, regardless of whether it is done for promoting oneself or one’s favourite cause — howsoever altruistic, noble and

worthy the ‘cause’ may appear — the action remains mixed with falsehood and so is its outcome. The working of ego is highly subtle, and we may go deeper and deeper into its grip if we fail to recognise the myriad forms in which it continues to assert and express itself.

In his divine compassion, Sri Aurobindo has elaborated on the various forms egoism can and does take in several of his letters on Yoga. At one place he speaks of the “disguised forms of egoism” which can also be reflected in a thought such as – ‘I am working for the Mother.’ An aspiration to become an ‘instrument of the Divine’ can also very quickly become an egoistic pursuit.

Sri Aurobindo also speaks of humility having its own ego, like any other virtue. If we aspire to walk the path to a deeper, truer inner transformation, we must with all sincerity and honesty look within and become conscious of the myriad forms through which the ego exerts its power and influence, including pride, vanity, ambition and so many other subtle ways.

In India, for millennia, modesty or humility has been considered the most noble virtue, one that is the ornament of all virtues. Today, when self-promotion is not only an acceptable practice but has actually become a highly sophisticated skill that one must master if one wants to be ‘successful’, humility often takes a backseat.

But if we step back for a moment and reflect carefully, we may find that it is exactly in times like these that we must examine what is meant by true humility. And more importantly, how it is related to our inner journeys, our growth as conscious individuals with an

aspiration to grow inwardly and walk the path that takes us closer to our highest Self within.

For the September 2021 issue, we curated some profound explanations and thought-provoking passages from the writings and conversations of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo on the true nature of humility. As I went through my research and curation work, I tried to stay as mindful as I could of the truth that humility, quietude and receptivity are some of the fundamental qualities we all need when approaching the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.



**Blessed indeed is he who  
perceiving Narayana  
everywhere is humble,  
tolerant and full  
of forgiveness.**

~ Sri Aurobindo, Bengali writings



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We explored the deeper meaning and significance of this virtue in realms spanning from the spiritual (“True Humility is Humility Towards the Divine”) to social (Of Woman, Man and Humility; and Of Caste, Hierarchy and Humility). We also included one Bengali writing of Sri Aurobindo from *Dharma*, titled *Ahankāra*, which explores the sattvic, rajasic and tamasic ego. Also featured was an excerpt from one of his conversations which highlights how an outward exhibition of humility is not what is meant by true humility, which is an inner quality of the soul.

In a delightful talk, titled ‘Sri Aurobindo, the Perfect Gentleman,’ given on June 12, 1970 at Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education and later published in *Mother India*, Nirodbaran masterfully brought out two most adorable qualities of the magnificent personality of Sri Aurobindo – the most divine nobility and a perfectly sincere humility. We featured this talk in two parts in the Humility issue. Also featured is a small but profound essay by Nolini Kanta Gupta which emphasises that true humility is “unreservedly humble, as it envisages the immensity of the labour the Divine has undertaken, sees the Grace, infinite and inscrutable, working miracles every moment: and it is full of gratitude and thanksgiving and quiet trust and hopefulness.”

In the Tales and Stories section, we featured a delightful story told by the Mother titled, Japanese Flower-artist. This story highlighting the gentlest practice of modesty was presented in English as well as a few Indian languages.

Another story told by Swami Sivananda, Parable of the Snake and the Rat, highlighted the value of vigilance, which as the Mother also

reminds us, is indispensable for all true progress. Vigilance against flattery and ignorant praise are essential if one wants to cultivate true humility. One is reminded of the words of the Mother:

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“. . . the compliments paid by creatures on the same level of ignorance as oneself are really worth nothing, they are just as worthless as the criticisms levelled at one. No matter from what pretentious source they derive, they are futile and empty.”

(The Mother, CWM, Vol. 3, p. 137)

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In the flower meditation series, Sheeba Naaz wrote a piece on the humble dropseed flower which has been given the spiritual significance ‘Humility’ by the Mother. She included a story and a bit of guidance from one of the yogasutras by Patanjali to help deepen the reader’s awareness of humility.

As part of our Insightful Conversations we brought a fascinating conversation with Madhu Jagdhish, a heritage photography enthusiast, with extensive experience in documenting the rich Indian heritage of temple sculptures. A thoughtful exposure of our culture’s artistic heritage and an overall development of aesthetic sensibility and artistic appreciation are important parts of any meaningful education. In this age of smartphones with photography becoming available at fingertips, it is key that youngsters interested in exploring photography as an art-form and a possible vocation are shown this possibility that photography can also become a great medium to go deeper into one’s cultural roots and in the process discover and reveal (for oneself and for others) the rich artistic and

aesthetic traditions that we have inherited. In this regard, Madhu Jagdish's work makes a significant contribution.

After spending even a little bit of time with the marvels of the great Indian artistic heritage, one of the noticeable features is the absence of the names of sculptors or artists. The Indian virtue of humility in action, it seems! When art was created as an offering for the Divine, where was the need to put the artist's signature on the artwork?

As I reflected on this remarkable feature of the Indian artistic tradition, among many others, it seemed appropriate to bring for our readers a few insights on Indian Art from Sri Aurobindo's vast writings on the topic. A small digital exhibit was put together to give our readers a deeper flavour of Madhu Jagdish's photographic work, which has been enhanced in its significance by selected passages from Sri Aurobindo on the inner beauty and significance of Indian Art.

September 14 is celebrated as Hindi Diwas, so for our Book of the Month feature in the September 2021 issue, it was befitting to feature the work of one of our most celebrated Hindi poets, Maithilisharan Gupt. I selected excerpts from his most famous work, Bhārat Bhārati, which stirred deep nationalist emotions among Indians when it was first published in 1912. Today when the Indian mind is trying to rediscover true Indian-ness, the attacks from all kinds of falsehoods are also becoming intense. It is important to recall the kind of emotional fervour with which Indians had fought against the oppressive forces.

The enemy today is mostly within, yet the battle is very real. A deep introspective journey is critical to identify what true Indian-ness is

and how we may imbibe that in us, for that is our true weapon in the current battle against falsehood. Maithilisharan Gupt's poem gives us a waking call, so to speak, which is just as relevant today as it was during the freedom struggle.

Poetry seemed to be the flavour of *Renaissance* September 2021 month at Renaissance. From the submissions received on the theme of Humility, we selected three poems for publication. Each of these young poets – Harvinder Pal Kaur, Sushrut Badhe and Imran Ali Namazi – expressed three different shades of humility in their verses.

In one of the Mother's prayers we find her praying to the Divine on behalf of all aspiring humanity and asking for a boon to dispel all the darkness and shadows within, so that one may grow in true humility and true spirit of serving the Divine. With these words reverberating within, our Humility issue was offered at the lotus feet of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

## Explore the ‘Humility’ issue

(Clickable links)

- “True Humility is Humility towards the Divine” (Guiding Light)
- Sri Aurobindo – The Perfect Gentleman (Nirodbaran)
- True Humility (Nolini Kanta Gupta)
- Sri Aurobindo on Outward Humility
- Of Woman, Man and Humility: Guidance from the Mother
- *Ahankāra* – Sri Aurobindo on Tamasic, Rajasic, Sattvic Ego and More
- Parable of the Snake and Rat (Swami Sivananda)
- Of Caste, Hierarchy and Humility: Sri Aurobindo Responds to the Gandhian View
- Humility in a Dropseed (Sheeba Naaz)
- Simplicity (Sushrut Badhe)
- A Humble Offering (Harvinder Pal Kaur)
- To Be Humble (Imran Ali Namazi)



# GRATITUDE

## A Deep, Intense, Constant and Total Gratitude



Morning Glory (*Ipomoea carnea*)

*Spiritual significance: Gratitude: It is you who open all the closed doors and allow the saving Grace to enter.*

“To Thee Our Infinite Gratitude. . .”

The Mother’s words dated December 9th, 1950, which are engraved on the Samadhi at Sri Aurobindo Ashram are the most sublime, most perfect words to express our deepest Gratitude to Sri Aurobindo. We could not think of any other way to open our issue on Gratitude but with a sincere contemplation on these words:

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“To Thee who hast been the material envelope of our Master, to Thee our infinite gratitude. Before Thee who hast done so much for us, who hast worked, struggled, suffered, hoped, endured so much, before Thee who hast willed all, attempted all, prepared, achieved all for us, before Thee we bow down and implore that we may never forget, even for a moment, all we owe to Thee.”

(The Mother, CWM, Vol. 13, p. 7)

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Some years back, while listening to a beautiful composition of Sant Tulsidās in the melodious voice of Pandit Jasraj, I became keenly aware of a remarkable and distinguishing aspect of the religio-spiritual culture of India – one of the many aspects which are unique to Sanātana Dharma, the foundation of all Indian spirituality.

We have all seen and heard of devotees and faithful adoring, praising and glorifying the Lord. But in India alone we will find a bhakta-poet like Sant Tulsidās who has ‘seen’ and sung of his beloved Lord Sri Rāma praising his *param-bhakta*, his supreme devotee, Hanumān.

This *bhajan* opens with the line – “भरत भाई! कपि से उरिन हम नाही...” It brings in front of our eyes a remarkable scene in which Sri Rāma in a deeply moving manner tells his younger brother Bharat that he could never ever repay the debt he owes to Hanumān. As the *bhajan* continues, Sri Rāma recounts for his brother, one by one, some of the many great deeds Hanumān has done for him. He recalls how during the great battle with Rāvana and his army, Hanumān had saved Lakshmana’s life. Rāma is forever indebted to Hanumān, the Lord repeats.



*Artist: Bindu Popli*

Such intense love of the Lord for his devotee, such adoration of the devotee by the Divine, this is only conceivable in this civilisation, this land where the Gods also long to be born. It is the deep spiritual core of our culture which makes a *bhakta-kavi* like Sant Tulsidās paint for us this picture of Sri Rāma, the *avatāra* so fully expressing his life-long gratitude for his devotee.

Over the years as I have heard the bhajan again and again, I realised that the underlying feeling here is actually more, much more than gratitude. It is not about repaying Hanumān for all that he has done for Rāma, it is certainly not merely admiring or recognising him for his prowess.

There is a beautiful completeness of emotion here which comes only when devotion is accompanied by gratitude – whether it is devotion of Sri Rāma for Hanumān or that of Hanumān for Sri Rāma. This is why Hanumān constantly wished to serve his Lord in any and every way he could. The realisation also reminded me of something the Mother once said, “devotion without gratitude is quite incomplete, gratitude must come with devotion” (CWM, Vol. 8, p. 40).

In this age of instant gratification and instant nirvana, we have gratitude journals and gratitude jars – practices which could be perhaps helpful for some in initially cultivating a habit of remembering all that for which one must be grateful. But often in this zeal to come up with and engage in outward practices, one may miss out on the deeper meaning and essence of gratitude, which, like compassion, the Mother reminds us, is a quality of the soul or the psychic entity within, not a mental formula.

As long as we are primarily led by the mind and vital, generally a distortion enters which converts the psychic movement of gratitude into a wish to repay; and over time it may change into the capacity to recognise and admire. The Mother explains that it is only when the psychic being within begins to take active part in our life, we begin to experience true gratitude for all that manifests the divine presence and grace, in whatever form. That is luminous gratitude in its purity, a source of unparalleled joy.

Tulsidās' bhajan also speaks perfectly of the perfect nobility of Sri Rāma. As the Mother reminds – “The nobility of a being is measured by its capacity of gratitude.” (CWM, Vol. 14, p. 155). But it is not only through her words that She, the Supreme Mother, guides us. She embodies this nobility in her Being. And we see a perfect example of that when we read her meditation dated March 3rd, 1914.

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“As the day of departure draws near, I enter into a kind of self-communion; I turn with a fond solemnity towards all those thousand little nothings around us which have silently, for so many years, played their role of faithful friends; I thank them gratefully for all the charm they were able to give to the outer side of our life; I wish that if they are destined to pass into other hands than ours for any length of time, these hands may be gentle to them and know all the respect that is due to what Thy divine Love, O Lord, has brought out from the dark inconscience of chaos. . .”

(The Mother, CWM, Vol. 1, p. 87)

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This was the time when she was getting ready to leave for India. In this meditation, the Divine Mother is expressing her deep, intense and total gratitude for all the material objects that have served her.

This is how the Mother shows her children the path of gratitude. Like Sri Rāma did earlier in Tulsidās' bhajan. She reminds us that we must develop in us a conscious sense of gratefulness towards all the objects, moments and experiences which have served us in any way, big or small, which have been our companions and guides of our progress. May we remember to be grateful because behind all, it is the Divine Presence hiding and guiding.

It is only our limitation, our ego-self which prevents us from 'seeing' and 'experiencing' that divine presence in each and every creature, object, moment and experience. Cultivating a truly grateful heart can be a good practice to work on one's ego.

For our Guiding Light feature, we selected passages from writings and conversations of the Mother which present a rich variety of the various hues of the soul-quality that is Gratitude: gratitude that helps us connect with the Divine; that is a humble recognition of all that the Divine has done and is doing for us; that helps us cure our egoism; gratitude as the movement that can bring us unalloyed joy. And most importantly, gratitude that is only a slightly coloured hue of the essential vibration of Love.

Highlighting the connection between Humility and Gratitude, the featured conversation of the Mother in the Sunlit Path section reminded us that in order to accept Divine's Grace with a pure feeling of gratitude, one must have a certain inner humility which makes one recognise one's helplessness without the Divine Grace. She also points out that for most people, blows in life are needed to

know to the very depths that there is no entity without the Divine Consciousness and the Grace.



**The nobility of a being is measured by  
its capacity of gratitude.**

(The Mother, CWM, 14: 155)



[renaissance.aurosociety.org](http://renaissance.aurosociety.org)

Sheeba Naaz shared a heartfelt meditation on the varied Colours of Gratitude. Reflecting on her own experience and a few other gratitude stories heard and witnessed around her, the author reminds us that it is not really happiness which makes us feel grateful but on the contrary, it is gratefulness that makes us happy. The Mother's 'handkerchief' story also finds a special place of honour in this exquisite piece.

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“There is no better way to show one’s gratefulness to the Divine than to be quietly happy.”

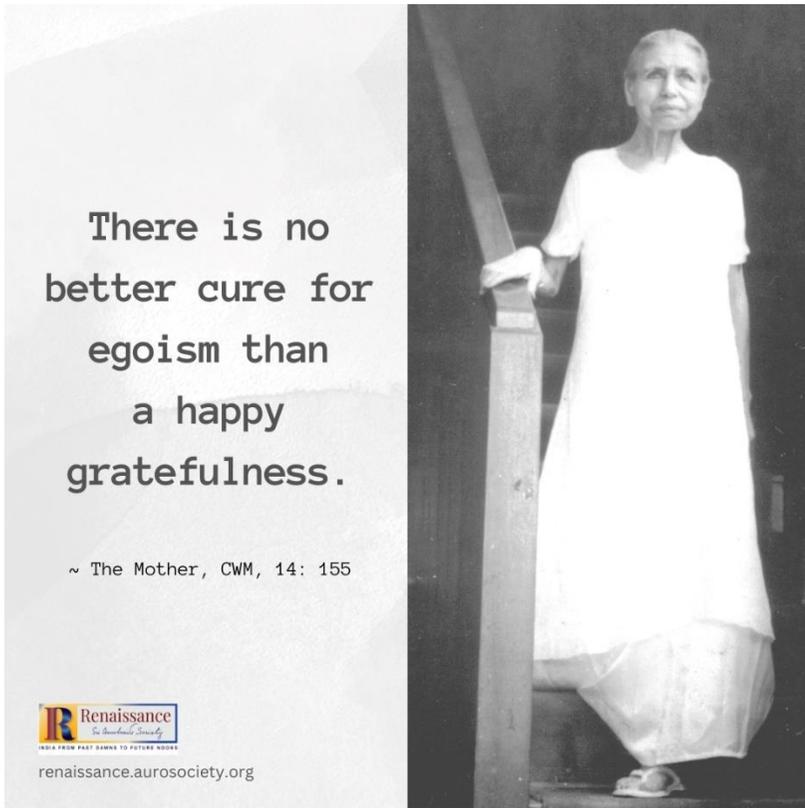
(The Mother, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 155)

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A small but equally beautiful reflection by Shiva Kumar, titled ‘I had a dream...’ makes the reader feel grateful for witnessing through his words an experience of the Divine Friend whispering of Love and life as a means to seek that Love.

In our Tales and Stories section we featured two Gratitude-related stories. One was a beautiful story told by the Mother, titled simply ‘The Virtues’. Written by the Mother in French sometime between 1893 and 1912, this story helps us recognise how gratitude is generally the most neglected virtue. The second was an interesting fable from the Panchatantra, illustrating the spontaneous gratefulness of an animal often found missing in a human being.

The issue also featured a fascinating conversation with a three-member team from Bengaluru-based Creative School. Inspired by the Integral Education teachings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo and other spiritual masters who have guided the founding team, this institution is described by its members as a conscious community and holistic school for children, parents and teachers. Readers interested in Integral Education will benefit much from listening to the co-founders and the principal of the school speak about how they diligently and sincerely work to bring sacredness to their work as learners, teachers and mentors.



## **Navaratri and More**

This issue also featured several special posts to celebrate the festivals of Durga Pujā, Vijayadashami and Navarātri, invoking Navadurga.

Every year Durga Pujā is celebrated to mark the victory of the great Goddess Durga over the demon Mahishāsura and his cohorts. Though outwardly it seems to be symbolic of the victory of Truth over falsehood, which it certainly is, the deeper symbolism of the

festival helps us understand the process of individual and cosmic evolution. We highlighted an essay by Dr. Alok Pandey which presents some deep insights into the inner meaning of the festival of Devi and the work of the Divine Shakti.

Our second offering for the festival of the Divine Shakti ‘The Mother Indeed is Always Present’ carried this theme of inner significance further. It featured two excerpts from M.P. Pandit’s book titled, *Commentaries on the Mother’s Ministry, Vol. 1* (1983), published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Reading these passages soulfully reminds us that for all those who have turned to Her, meditating on who the Mother is, opening oneself to Her Force, giving oneself to Her entirely so that She may make of us what She wills – this is truly the *pujā* to be offered at Her Lotus Feet.

Every year Mother Durgā comes to slay the *asura*, and the *asura* rises again creating another havoc, another turmoil. This is true for the individual and for the nation. While there is an important spiritual and occult truth behind this ongoing battle between Truth and Falsehood – truth that goes back to the beginning of all creation or manifestation, – the Mother helps us understand one more psychological-spiritual truth as to why it continues.

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“You know the story of Durga, don’t you? Durga who every year has to destroy her asura; and always she is compelled to begin again. It goes on in this way till the end of the reign allotted to the titans. When they will be banished from this world, it will not be thus any longer. But till then, that is as long as they are useful. . . for intensifying the aspiration, clarifying the

consciousness, for putting to the test the sincerity of people, they will be there. The day the test will not be needed, the day the sincerity will be pure and self-existent they will disappear. Then that day, Durga will no longer need to begin her battle over again every year.”

(The Mother, CWM, Vol. 5, pp. 96-97)

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An honest look at the world within and around us will tell us that the humanity is nowhere near the point when it is no longer necessary for Mā Durgā to continue her battle against the *asura*. Many more turmoils are yet in store for the humanity, because we haven't yet learned to completely surrender to the Divine Power, the Divine Shakti which creates, executes and rules over all. We run after the little powers that are all rooted in individual or collective egos and fail to see the work of Divine Providence behind the outer phenomena. So the Mother returns again, to remind us, to wake us from our slumber.

Because humanity was not ready to receive the Complete Force of Divine Mother, in an earlier age Mother Sitā had to be banished by Sri Rāma, sent to live in a hermitage away from the crude mentality of the ordinary public which was (and is) closed to higher Truth. Mā Sita, an embodiment of Divine Mother and a daughter of Mother Earth had to conceal herself back in the Earth, and wait till Her children are ready for all Her Power and Force. Sitā's banishment, as depicted in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśam* was the subject in our 'Book of the Month' feature.

Dussehra or Vijayadashami marks another significant event in India's religio-spiritual history, one that has deeply impacted the cultural mind of India. The decisive victory of the divine man Rāma over the *rākshasa* Rāvana is a reminder that the anarchic, vitalistic-animalistic temperament which is excessive, dominating and violently egoistic, must eventually lose to a temperament that is harmonising, *sāttvic* and gentle.

This is the essence of the story of the Ramayana, a work which Sri Aurobindo says has had an incalculable power in moulding the cultural mind of India. We incorporated two features that speak of the significance of the Ramayana in the light of Sri Aurobindo – a short video on the theme The Rāmāyana and the Cultural Mind of India and an article titled Rām-kathā, a Living Tradition of India.

The issue on gratitude was released in October 2021, a month which also marks Gandhi Jayanti. In 1949, K.D. Sethna (who was given the name Amal Kiran by Sri Aurobindo) had written an article titled 'The Real Gandhi - An Impartial Assessment of his Greatness'. This article was first published in *Mother India: Monthly Review of Culture*, a journal of Sri Aurobindo Ashram which was edited by Amal Kiran for more than 50 years. All the editorials and articles which had any political theme or connection with the politics of the time were reviewed and approved by Sri Aurobindo himself. So was this essay by Amal Kiran.

Given that our national mind now seems ready to evaluate and understand the role played by some of the leading personalities in shaping the post-Independence India, revisiting this article written in 1949, which has the approval of the Maharishi of our times, is highly

necessary and relevant today. One may even say that it is a pressing demand of the time spirit.

In keeping with the Aurobindonian approach based on a higher spiritual principle, intellectually balanced, nonpartisan, and eschewing all forms of dogma and sectarianism, the editorials and essays in the *Mother India* journal maintained an objective but not neutral stance in its critical assessment of events and circumstances. We find the same approach in this assessment of Gandhi and his role in nation-building. We featured this article in the October 2021 issue of *Renaissance* in two parts.

In closing, let us bring to our awareness that only when we begin to live in our inmost being, the psychic entity within, we begin to live in a constant, complete and true gratitude.

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“The ego thinks of what it wants and has not. This is its constant preoccupation.

“The soul is aware of what it is given and lives in endless gratitude.”

(The Mother, CWM, 14: 257)

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# Explore the ‘Gratitude’ Issue

(Clickable links)

- Gratitude, a Hue of the Essential Vibration of Love (Guiding Light)
- Grace and Gratitude – Words of the Mother
- Morning Glory and the Varied Colours of Gratitude (Sheeba Naaz)
- The Virtues – A Gratitude Story Told by the Mother
- The Grateful Beasts & the Ungrateful Man – A Fable from the *Panchatantra*
- “I Had a Dream...” – See That Smile Behind the Whisper (Shivakumar)

## Special Features on Navaratri and Durga Puja

- Goddess Durga and the Festival of Delhi: An Inner Meaning (Alok Pandey)
- The Rāmāyana and the Cultural Mind of India (Video – Beloo Mehra)
- Rām-kathā, a Living Tradition of India (Beloo Mehra)
- Sītā’s Banishment by Rāma in Kālidāsa’s *Raghuvamśam* (Kireet Joshi)
- The Real Gandhi: An Impartial Estimate of His Greatness (Amal Kiran)



# PERSEVERANCE

**Needed: A Great Patience and Steadfastness**



Common marigold, Pot marigold (*Calendula officinalis*)

*Spiritual significance: Perseverance: The decision to go to the very end.*

We all have our favourite lines and passages from the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's vast works to which we keep visiting again and again whenever we seek renewed assurance and hope, a fresh dose of energy whenever we feel dragged down by the vicissitudes of life. I recall one of my many such favourite passages:

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“Persevere in your aspiration and effort, do not allow yourself to be discouraged by setbacks. This always happens in the beginning. But if you continue to fight without paying any attention to them, a day will come when the resistances give way and the difficulties vanish. My help is always with you, but you must learn to use it and to rely on it rather than on your own resources.”

(The Mother, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 62)

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It is the last part of this passage that is most assuring. Her help is always with us, if we only learn how to use it, if we could only rely on it rather than our own insufficient and imperfect resources. For everything, we need Her help.

Before writing the editorial for the Perseverance issue, as I prayed to Her for guidance, a particular morning – an ordinary morning – from many years back flashed in my mind. That day I had learned an important lesson in endurance, with the Mother's help, of course. This lesson came in the form of a simple phrase – Wash, Rinse, Repeat.

I use the word ‘ordinary’ to describe that morning because it had started off like any other morning. Only what happened later made it

extraordinary for me, in terms of what I learned. And I use the word 'simple' for the phrase because 'Wash, Rinse, Repeat' is a commonly seen phrase on shampoo and soap bottles as an advice for thorough cleaning. That morning, out of the blue, these three words – wash, rinse, repeat – seemed to me as just the right formula for a constant, conscious and regular practice for purification of one's mind and heart. I immediately started typing in my laptop different keywords and thoughts that kept shaping up. One thought led to another as I kept writing. But it was only later that afternoon when I was reading something from the vast writings of the Mother, I realised the significance of the phrase much more deeply.

Our minds and hearts regularly need good, thorough cleansing, like our hands and hair. The dirt and dust left over from small, medium and big stresses, the dryness and dullness resulting from all sorts of repetitive and mundane thinking, the stickiness and roughness created by old and obsolete cobweb-like patterns of the mechanical mind – all these must be regularly cleansed off for seeking and creating a new order, a new harmony within.

The cleansing agent varies for individuals. Also, different ones are helpful at different times. For some, it may be a good book or perhaps a special poem. For others, it is some special music or an old favourite film. Sometimes a walk in the nature does wonders; at others, cleaning and organising one's living space is the right cleanser. A little getaway to a special place is the right thing for some, while for another all it may take is a quiet hour in the balcony at home with a nice cup of tea. Some offer prayers at a temple while others retreat to the temple within. Some pursue fun, enjoyable hobbies while others seek solace in a quiet, relaxing nap.

I have discovered that I respond better when I bring in some variety in my heart-mind cleansers. I have used all the above listed mind-heart cleansers (and some others). That particular day, a passage from one of Mother's conversations in *Agenda* did the perfect job.

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"It's all right, it's all right.

"We must endure. The victory belongs to the most enduring.

"There are times when one is disgusted, and that's just when one should remember this. Now, your disgust may have reasons of its own (!) But you have only to endure. You know, there is one thing... as soon as you have a difficulty, dissatisfaction, revolt, disgust—anything—fatigue, tension, discomfort, all, all that negative side (there are lots and lots and lots of such things, they take on all kinds of different colours), the immediate movement—immediate—of calling the Lord and saying, "It's up to You." As long as you try (instinctively you try to arrange things with your best light, your best consciousness, your best knowledge...), it's stupid, because that prolongs the struggle, and ultimately it's not very effective. There is only one effective thing, that's to step back from what's still called "me" and... with or without words, it doesn't matter, but above all with the flame of aspiration, this (gesture to the heart), and something perfectly, perfectly sincere: "Lord, it's You; and only You can do it, You alone can do it, I can't..." It's

excellent, you can't imagine how excellent! For instance, someone comes and deluges you with impossible problems, wants you to make instant decisions; you have to write, you have to answer, you have to say—all of it—and it's like truckloads of darkness and stupidity and wrong movements and all that being dumped on you; and it's dumped and dumped and dumped—you are almost stoned to death with all that. You begin to stiffen, you get tense; then, immediately (*gesture of stepping back*): "O Lord..." You stay quiet, take a little step back (*gesture of offering*): "It's up to you.""

(*Agenda*, Vol. 4, pp. 386-388)

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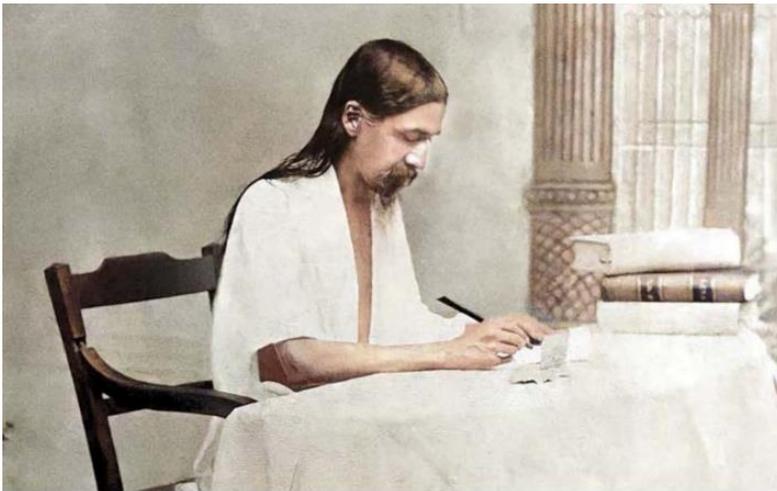
The moment I came across this passage I could feel that the Divine Mother was giving me exactly what I needed. An Assurance and a Support. A Light and a Guidance. Not only for that day, but for all the days to come.

Her words helped me wash away some dusty cobwebs of my mind and heart. They made me conscious of some old sticky habits of forgetting to "call the Lord in there," especially when "things resist or grate or howl inside there." They gave me the strength and determination I needed to slowly and patiently remove and rinse off the obsolete patterns of mind obstructing the path. They continue to do so whenever I think of that afternoon and these words.

Sitting silently with Her words resonating within, I began to feel a renewed strength. I realised why this cleansing must be practiced patiently, persistently, constantly repeated as part of inner practice.

Because only a regular practice of ‘*remembering to call*’ can indeed make this a living truth for me.

So, I must Wash, Rinse, Repeat. And I must Remember to Call. This remembering to call builds endurance. This constant remembrance requires persistence and an ever-renewing surrender. Only through constant practice we grow in persistence; and only through persistence we grow in our practice. We must endure and restart every time we forget or fall off the path. We must persevere every time the haziness of dark clouds and hard resistance from our old nature block our progress. We must call with even greater strength and wait for the light to pierce through the clouds. And the Divine surely helps.



**‘It is so with all things in the path of  
sadhana- One must persist however  
long it takes so only one can achieve.**

-Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, 29:114

Someone had once written to Sri Aurobindo: “I am overwhelmed at the patience and compassion with which you put up with our insincerities, disobediences and loosenesses.” Sri Aurobindo wrote back a deeply loving and compassionate reply:

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“Human nature is like that in its very grain; so if we are not patient, there would be little hope of its changing. But there is something else in the human being which is sincere and can be a force for the change. The difficulty in people. . . is to get at that something (it is so covered up) and get it to act.”

(CWSA, Vol 32, pp. 120-121)

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Perseverance is one of the core twelve soul-qualities that the Mother has emphasised for all those aspiring to walk on the Sunlit Path. Our November 2021 issue was dedicated to exploring a few aspects of Perseverance.

The Guiding Light section featured selected words of Sri Aurobindo that speak of the immense importance of persistence and patience in the path of Integral Yoga. The two articles in our Sunlit Path section highlighted selected words of the Mother where she speaks of endurance in the immensely important work of purification and transformation of our vital nature. These passages offer great practical advice on how to work with our stubborn vital and help it learn how to endure.

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“One who fears monotony and wants something new would not be able to do Yoga or at least this Yoga

which needs an inexhaustible perseverance and patience.”

(Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 29, p. 116)

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The Mother’s extremely pragmatic guidance also comes to us through some of the interesting Perseverance tales she told in her classes. We also featured an essay titled ‘Yogic Initiation and Aptitude’ by Nolini Kanta Gupta which emphasises the significance of call, *adhikāra* and endurance in spiritual life.



**Sincerity, humility, perseverance and insatiable thirst for progress are essential for a happy and fruitful life.**

(The Mother, CWM, Vol. 16, p. 431)



renaissance.aurosociety.org

In the flower meditation series, Sheeba Naaz wrote about an episode from her life which helped her grow in endurance. It not only opened up a deeper dimension for her yogāsana practice but also helped her develop greater emotional maturity and equanimity – qualities which she feels have profoundly transformed her life.

Another life-lesson in endurance and equanimity is highlighted by Aditi Banerjee Malakar, a US-based author and speaker on topics related to Sanatana Dharma and sādhana. She submitted deeply moving reflections on how patiently and persistently pursuing one’s inner work helps one not only grow in endurance, but also develop a deeper sense of gratitude and equanimity.

## **Siddhi Day**

November 24 is known as *Siddhi Day* in the Ashram, the day of descent of Sri Krishna in Sri Aurobindo’s physical consciousness. To mark this special day, part of the Renaissance issue of November 2021 was dedicated to Sri Krishna.

Explaining the significance of the spiritual realisation of November 24, 1926, the Mother had emphasised that this realisation was “truly important FOR THE CREATION. While the realisation made no difference for Sri Aurobindo personally, the event was significant because this kind of complete descent of the Supreme from the past creation, Overmind, was now consenting to participate in the new manifestation” (*Agenda*, Vol. 2, pp. 299-301). We featured the complete conversation of the Mother along with a descriptive selection from Nirodbaran’s writing which presents the unfolding events in the Ashram on that special day of November 24, 1926.

Continuing with our Krishna theme, for our Insightful Conversation series, we spoke with Bhawana Badhe and Sushrut Badhe on their experience of taking the wisdom of Bhagavad Gita to children and youth through Krishna's Butter Project which is based out of Puducherry. Our guests shared with us the inspiration behind the project, its pedagogical approach and its unique focus. The conversation also explored other relevant questions including: the significance of Bhagavad Gita as a scripture for practical spirituality that helps one evolve and heal; and the resistance of formal educational institutions in introducing such practical insights from our scriptures in the overall curriculum.

Another important dimension in which we explored the theme of perseverance was that of nations and civilisations which endure and gain immortality. Nolini Kanta Gupta's insightful essay is a reading not to be missed by those interested in understanding the psycho-spiritual essence of a group-soul that forms the core of a nation.

Only in the land of Bhārata we have a well-preserved collective memory of the long search for true immortality by mystics and seers. The spiritual riches gained through such explorations in the world of spirit have, in essence, made the Indian nation immortal. Veda is the earliest record available to humankind of such spiritual explorations and realisations. With this in mind, for our Book of the Month series, we featured a few excerpts from Sushrut Badhe's book, Rhythm of the Veda-Know your Devas.

## Explore the ‘Perseverance’ Issue

(Clickable links)

- [A Yoga like this Needs Patience \(Guiding Light\)](#)
- [Let Endurance be Your Watchword](#)
- [The Long Road to Transforming the Vital](#)
- [Of Ceramics, Sannyasa and More: Tales of Perseverance as Told by the Mother](#)
- [The Little Clock Calendula, Herb of the Sun \(Sheeba Naaz\)](#)
- [Yogic Initiation and Aptitude – No Free Pass \(Nolini Kanta Gupta\)](#)
- [Stick to the Practice and Let the Gratitude Flow \(Aditi Banerjee Malakar\)](#)
- [What Makes a Nation Immortal? \(Nolini Kanta Gupta\)](#)

### On Siddhi Day

- [Siddhi Day: The Descent of the Overmind God \(Nirodbaran\)](#)



# ASPIRATION

**Aspire Intensely but Without Impatience**



Night Jasmine, Parijat (*Nyctanthes arbor-tristis*)

*Spiritual significance: Aspiration: Innumerable, obstinate, repeating itself tirelessly.*

I have a small parijat tree in my little garden at home. In fact, one of the selling points of this house, for me at least, was this tree which was just a tiny plant at the time. Over the years the tree has suffered some harsh blows, including some cyclonic storms – it barely survived cyclone Thane! But it perseveres and continues to thrive with some tender love and care.

For the first few years after it started to blossom and shower its fragrant flowers every dawn, I used to gather the flowers for a specific practice I had developed for myself. I named the practice – Patience through Parijat.

The gracious parijat tree, a sacred tree also known as wish-granting tree, offers to the Earth its most precious gift in the form of beautiful and delicate flowers. And I, a child of this Mother Earth, wanting to grow in my aspiration to become more patient, would gather some of these flowers and bring them indoors for my practice. Arranging these tiny and fragrant flowers slowly so that each flower stands white-creamy side up on its tiny orange foot was my simple practice.

The first impulse was to gather these flowers in my palm and just immerse myself for a few seconds in their divine fragrance. Having done that, the blossoms which were somewhat soiled by the wet earth needed to be tenderly cleaned making sure that neither their small white-creamy petals nor their tiny orange centres broke. As they would dry out for a bit, I would choose the appropriate *urli* or bowl in which to do the arrangement.

Then would start the most favourite task of picking up and arranging these tiny flowers, one by one, white side up, orange side down. My

most preferred way was to float these flowers in water. Sometimes for the sake of contrast, I also alternated and put in a few blossoms upside down, but that was very rare. There is something so beautiful about the way the tiny orange centre shines through the middle of the white-creamy petals.

The flowers stayed fresh for two to three days, and interestingly even when they began to wither away, they just took on a darker creamy shade and didn't really look so bad. At least to my eyes they didn't! And when I was ready to give the old flowers and the used water back to the Mother Earth (by way of either putting them in a compost bin or simply sprinkling the flowers and the water under some plant or bush in the ground or in a pot), I would admire this beautiful yellow-orangish coloured water which had absorbed the vibrant, fiery colour from the flowers.

The orange or saffron centre of this sacred flower represents the fire in the heart, the source of all our energy, the fire that purifies, the fire of aspiration, will and perseverance. It is said that the dye produced from the central part of Parijat flowers was used to colour the robes of monks and ascetics in olden times. And in our times too, we find that the Mother has given to this sacred Parijat flower a most appropriate spiritual significance – Aspiration (Innumerable, obstinate, repeating itself tirelessly).

On days when I had just a little patience or wanted my practice session to be really small, I gathered only a small bunch of flowers so that I could do only a small arrangement. There were also those days when I did not feel like doing my lessons. Though on such occasions I would pretend to myself about not having much time, but

honestly it was the patience that I lacked or the aspiration or will to practice my lesson in patience.



After a few years, this practice somehow stopped with some unavoidable change in my personal routine. But even today I remember clearly that the very act of gathering these tiny flowers one by one from the ground and spending the next half hour or so cleaning and arranging them made me forget whatever pressing demands there were on my time. And in those few minutes there was no hurry, no rush-rush to finish up the task at hand and move on to other things.

There was simply a quiet joy of being with the sacred flowers. It was a joy of giving myself to the moment, a self-giving. And as the Mother tells us, from a purely psychological point of view, aspiration is a movement of self-giving. Such is the power of flowers. Such is the power of aspiration. Such is the power of the flowers called aspiration!

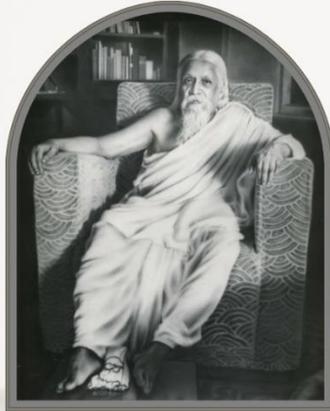
Sri Aurobindo once said, “the power of aspiration of the heart, the force of the will, the concentration of the mind, the perseverance and determination of the applied energy” are the measure of the intensity of the turning, the force which directs the soul inward (CWSA, Vol. 23, p. 58). This inward turning of the human soul, away from the egoistic state of consciousness which is constantly absorbed in the outward appearances and attractions towards a higher state of consciousness, to a seeking of *that* which is beyond and behind the outer appearances, *that* which can connect one to the Truth and to one’s true Self is the starting point of all Yoga.

The fierier and clearer the aspiration, the greater is the force and power of this inward turn. Aspiration is like an arrow, or like a flame rising upward. But it has to be tended, constantly rekindled. Its direction also needs to be reset when it tends to go here and there. It has to be purified so that no desire or demand gets mixed up with it. Its goal has to be kept in front, always. And what happens when it goes into hiding somewhere? How to light the fire again? And what about the Grace? Will Divine Grace help me rekindle my aspiration?

These and many other questions were explored in the rich variety of selections we featured in the ‘Aspiration’ issue. Selections from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother included in our Guiding Light feature focused on a few fundamentals: what is the movement of aspiration; how is it different from desire; is one born with an aspiration or can it be developed; what is meant by the intensity of aspiration; and how does Grace respond to the sadhak’s aspiration.

In the Sunlit Path, we highlighted a few more gems from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother which offer practical guidance for the

aspirant on the path of Integral Yoga. Another set of selections focused on the Mother's explanation of what it means to become conscious of one's psychic being, and how the contact with psychic consciousness gives intensity and joy to the aspiration.



**There are TWO POWERS that alone can effect in their conjunction the great and difficult thing which is the aim of our endeavour, a fixed and unfailing ASPIRATION that calls from below and a supreme GRACE from above that answers.**

~ Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, 32: 3



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The psychic fire of aspiration, the divine will-force working in man, is symbolised by Agni in the Veda and Upanishads. We featured selections from Sri Aurobindo's *The Secret of the Veda* which give us a magnificent description of Agni, the flaming godhead. These selections also address: what is the work of Agni? How does it lead

the aspirant's inner journey to Truth? How is it born? What are the images given in the Veda which speak of this Divine Will-force?

Excerpts from an essay titled *Upanishadic Symbolism*, in which Nolini Kanta Gupta presents a marvellous summary of the Triple Agni as described in several Upanishads were also featured. This was followed by the Mother's explanation of the triple aspiration. Another essay by Nolini Kanta Gupta gives us the symbolism of a Rig Vedic parable about Agni hiding in the Inconscience and only emerging when gods descend from above.

The first chapter of Sri Aurobindo's *The Life Divine* is appropriately titled 'The Human Aspiration.' In the Book of the Month, we featured Ananda Reddy's deliberations on this chapter excerpted from the first volume of his multi-volume series '*Deliberations on The Life Divine*'. A beautiful artwork submitted by Navaja Llope on the Aspiration theme inspired our selection of the Mother's words for the Sādhana feature.

We also highlighted the Mother's words describing the ardent aspiration seen in nature — in trees, animals and particularly the flowers. The flower meditation feature explored whether the story of Sri Krishna bringing down to earth the heavenly tree of Parijat connects in some way with the spiritual significance of this divinely fragrant flower.

Also featured were three poems in three different languages. We featured Dr. Murlidhar Chandniwala's Hindi poem inspired by RV 2.1, a *sukta* of 16 mantras to Agni which was revealed to Rishi Gṛtsamada Bhārgava Saunaka. A second poem in the issue spoke of

an aspiration for a divine life on earth, a dream of a new world based on a new consciousness of unity, harmony, bliss and progress. And the third expressed an aspiration to feel and see and experience the Divine Presence in all and everything around and within.

The issue also included concluding part of the series – Sri Aurobindo on Isha Upanishad by M.P. Pandit. In perfect tuning with the Aspiration theme, the concluding part of the essay spoke of the last two verses of Isha Upanishad which are a Rishi’s powerful invocations to Gods Surya and Agni who alone can uplift him and open still higher vistas of Light and Power leading to the final goal of Immortality while still living on earth for a full span of life.

I closed with two passages which always gives a new boost to my aspiration. Every time I read these passages, gratitude fills my being and the flame within gets a fresh dose of necessary food. The first one is by the Mother who in her Divine Straightforwardness reminds us “not to give up the game.” She tells us:

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“ . . . if the aspiration is there in you, if the will is there in you, it is absolutely certain that sooner or later you will succeed. And I am saying this for people who live in very ordinary circumstances, less favourable perhaps than yours, but who can, even so, learn to know themselves and conquer themselves, master themselves, control themselves. Therefore, if the conditions are favourable you have a much greater chance of succeeding. One thing is always necessary, not to give up the game for it is a great

game—and the result is worth the trouble of playing it through.”

(The Mother, CWM, Vol. 12, p. 53)

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The other passage is a surprisingly simple and profound formula given by Sri Aurobindo in a correspondence with Nirodbaran. In a way, here he summarises the whole Yoga so perfectly, so beautifully. Many people feel that Sri Aurobindo is difficult to understand, but if only they had come across this one exchange, everything else would be so simple!

This is how the conversation goes:

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*Sri Aurobindo*: “. . . within there is a soul and above there is Grace. This is all you know or need to know. . .”

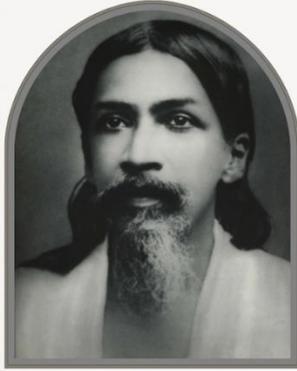
*Disciple*: “Is that all, really?”

*Sri Aurobindo*: “For anyone who wants the spiritual life, yes, it is enough.”

(Nirodbaran, Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo, Complete Set, 2001, Vol. 1, p. 465)

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What is left unsaid here is that the soul must aspire!



*Souls that do not aspire are God's failures; but Nature is pleased and loves to multiply them because they assure her of stability and prolong her empire...Those who are poor, ignorant, ill-born or ill-bred are not the common herd; the common herd are all who are satisfied with pettiness and an average humanity.*



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~ Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, 13: 208

## Explore the ‘Aspiration’ issue

(Clickable links)

- [Aspiration is to be Developed, Tended, Kept Awake and Living](#)
- [Be Conscious of Your Inner Flame](#)
- [Aspiration and the Psychic Being](#)
- [Parijat, the Kalpavriksha \(Sheeba Naaz\)](#)
- [Agni, the Divine Will-Force, the Priest of the Sacrifice](#)
- [The Triple Agni in the Upanishads and the Triple Aspiration](#)
- [Where is Agni? — The Colloquy of Agni and the Gods \(Nolini Kanta Gupta\)](#)
- [Nature Aspires Too – Words of the Mother](#)
- [Sādhanā: “That Flame is Indispensable”](#)
- [A Vedic Hymn to Agni, in Hindi Poetry \(Murlidhar Chandniwala\)](#)
- [I Dream of a Better World \(Imran Ali Namazi\)](#)
- [Only Thou Art \(Harvinder Pal Kaur\)](#)



# RECEPTIVITY

**Be Open Like a Flower and Receive the Light**



Garden gladiolus (*Gladiolus Xhortulanus*)

*Spiritual significance: Receptivity: Conscious of the Divine Will and surrendered to it.*

For the first issue of the year 2022, we focused on Receptivity – the next attribute in the 12 soul-qualities that the Mother said are necessary for full manifestation of Her Work.

Two things instantly come to mind whenever I think of ‘Receptivity.’ One is Grace and the other is that tiny pink flower I saw one late afternoon 14 years ago.

I remember that moment as if it was yesterday, when I noticed that little deep pink flower on the roadside while walking home. On any other day I might have missed it, like many others walking by that road probably did. But certainly, some special Grace was blessing me that day with the necessary receptivity so that I would pay attention and learn what I must from that tiny flower.

What caught my attention was the way the tiny flower was gracefully revealing its head from within a thick pile of construction rubble on a street corner. Can anything so delicate grow out of such dark and hard material? Indeed. That flower was the proof!

The resilience with which this flower was blooming in such harsh physical surroundings made me think of the power of opening and receptivity. Within the hard shell of cement, brick and stone debris, perhaps there was some little spot which opened itself to the Light and Force of the Mighty Mother Nature and *voilà*, Life was born! A flower was born.

### **Opening Ourselves to Light and Force**

How can we open ourselves more and more to the Light and Force?  
How do we develop within us a greater receptivity to receive this Light and Force?

The Great Masters everywhere have emphasised several ways; foremost among them are: sincere and patient one-pointed aspiration, genuine humility, unyielding faith and complete trust in the Divine, elimination of ego-insistence in all forms and self-offering and surrender to the Divine.



Flowers are extremely receptive.

-The Mother, CWM, 6:229

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Eliminating ego-insistence takes immense *tapasya*, but becoming more conscious of when we resist to something because of our egos can gradually help us become more open. We close ourselves to the Force when we fill ourselves tightly with ego and its countless

demands. We carry too much burden and weight of our egos which leaves little open space within for the Light and Force from Above to enter. True and sincere humility implies going to the Divine in all our nakedness, without hiding any of our imperfections and mistakes, without deluding ourselves in any way, and without any sense of pride at any little progress we might have made on the path.

Be humble, be sincere, be receptive – this is the key. Like that little pink flower that was happily and humbly growing in the middle of a construction dump, opening itself to the Light above and receiving the Force to help grow and spread its self-existent beauty and joy, even when no one was looking.

### **Aspiration, Receptivity and Grace**

Receptivity also activates the working of Divine Protection and Grace, even though they are always there. It is only we who step out of Her Protection and Grace.

Indian spiritual tradition proclaims that all existence is a gradual self-expression, a progressive manifestation of the Divine. But without the vision to experience the world – and everything and everyone in the world – as a manifestation of the Divine, and more importantly, without the experience of our own self as a manifestation and as a portion of the Divine, we continue to be in Ignorance and separated from the omnipresence of the Divine.

Only with a sincere, one-pointed aspiration and the Divine Grace, the many layers of the veil are gradually removed and a *sādhaka* is blessed with the deeper, inner vision that sees the Divine within and all around. Such intense *sādhanā* includes rejection of all that obstructs the path of aspiration, and surrender of one's entire being

and all the movements within – the act of aspiration and the rejection included – as an offering to the Divine so that He may decide the course of one's *sāadhanā* and its outcome.

While the Divine Grace is there all the time, its action in an individual's life is dependent upon how ready one is for its working. This readiness is a matter of several things – one's aspiration, surrender, faith, sincerity and one's receptivity. As long as one's lower nature is the primary driving force behind one's actions – which is generally a very long time – one may never fully or even partially get to sense the working of this Grace. The more the veil of Ignorance is lifted, bit by little bit, the more one is able to see how even from behind this veil, the Divine in His Vast, Compassionate Grace has been the protector amidst the dark chambers of the Ignorance and a guide towards brighter and brighter Light.

The mysterious working of this Grace then becomes more and more real for the *sādhaka*, though as the Mother tells us even then this sense of Grace's working may be very partial and inexact. Yet, the deepening of the trust that the Grace is behind everything, is, by itself, a big step towards a more complete surrender. It also helps in elimination of the ego-insistence. And even when periods of darkness arise, which they must, the *sādhaka* begins to see that this too is the working of the Grace because through this darkness, he is being prepared for a brighter Light that is just beyond the corner.

### **To Give Full Assent**

Speaking of the all-powerful and omnipotent quality of Divine Grace, Sri Aurobindo once said that to learn to give full assent to the working of the Grace is *sāadhanā*. I have come to realise that there

can truly be no better definition of *sāadhanā*! As long as my assent is lacking in any small way, I am not fully ready to receive the full power and effectiveness of the Divine Grace. The more my assent becomes complete and unreserved, the more completely and effectively the Divine showers His Grace upon me. So my task is to keep practicing this art of full assent, which includes a triple labour of aspiration, rejection and surrender.



Receptivity is the capacity of admitting and retaining the Divine Workings.

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- The Mother, CWM 14:146

It is said that even the initial turn of the heart and mind to the Divine's Call is itself a working of the Grace. So, while one's

personal effort is essential, even the will and capacity to make this personal effort are the blessings of the Divine Grace. As the *sāadhanā* deepens, as the aspiration gets more intense and purified, as the *śraddhā* gets more fixed and surrender more complete and sincere, the Divine responds with His Grace and the *sādhaka*'s steps begin to become sure and steady on the path.

This special action of the Grace is in response to the *sādhaka*'s aspiration, faith and receptivity. Yet this Grace was always there working for the *sādhaka*, except that he or she did not have the faculties to “see” it. Once something within awakens to the call of the inner truth, one begins to sense an aspiring flame within, which if tended well, grows in intensity. As this aspiration grows, so does one's opening and receptivity which determine the ability to ‘feel’ the Grace which was always working in numerous hidden and mysterious ways.

Think of the rains. Every monsoon season the Grace-full rains pour down from the skies above – everywhere, all around, for everyone. But only those who have developed a system for rainwater harvesting can access this bounty for further specific use. In a larger sense the rain is helpful for all and everything in the creation. We all enjoy and derive the benefit from this seasonal gift of the Mother Nature, like we do from other seasons. But if we could harvest the rainwater, we would purposefully and in a focused, directed way ‘draw’ the bounty of rain (Grace) towards us, in response to our ‘call’ for the rainwater (Grace).

Or think of what it takes to receive and channel the light from the Sun using the right apparatus to use it as a source of energy. In the

same way, while the Divine Grace is omnipresent and omnipotent, it is through our sincere aspiration and steadfast faith that we ‘draw’ it towards us in response to our call. But to invoke the Grace is not to pull it or force it. It is about making a quiet and sincere call to the all-powerful Divine, and open oneself to receive it. As Sri Aurobindo reminds us, “aspiration, sincerity and the quietude of the mind are the three best conditions for opening” (CWSA, Vol. 29, p. 105).

The working of the Grace will not always be obvious, in fact many times it will take the *sādhaka* through a period of darkness, yet with a purpose behind it. This mysterious working of the Grace that is not comprehensible by human reason is one sure indication that it is, in fact, the Grace of the Divine, of the One Supreme that is beyond all comprehension.

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The issue on Receptivity explored several of the themes hinted at in the reflections shared above. And we also explored several other dimensions through our careful curation.

In addition, the month of January gave us another occasion to remember an unsung hero of the Indian Freedom Movement. January 5 is the birthday of Barindra Kumar Ghose, Sri Aurobindo’s younger brother, and a great revolutionary in the Swadeshi movement in early 20th century. He became a national hero because of the role he played in the *Jugantar* movement and the Alipore Bomb case. But it is unfortunate that his name somehow remains ignored in the annals of history of the Indian freedom movement. As India completes 75 years of her independence from the British colonialism, it is crucial that more and more Indians learn about

these unsung heroes. This is why in the January 2022 issue's book of the month section, we featured last chapter of his book *The Tale of My Exile: Twelve Years in Andamans*.

# Explore the ‘Receptivity’ Issue

(Clickable links)

- On Receptivity, Aspiration and Progress (Guiding Light)
- Receptivity to the Force for Work: Words of Sri Aurobindo
- How to be Receptive – From Champaklal’s Treasures
- “Only One Force Acting in the World” – Words of Sri Aurobindo
- “Wherever there is a receptivity, the Force acts” – A Prisoner’s Transformation
- The Force that Made Poets: Selected Letters of Sri Aurobindo
- “It isn’t the forces that are limited, it is the receptivity” – Words of the Mother
- Receptivity of flowers, stones, and ornaments
- How to receive the Mother’s force and universal energies
- Of Force, Receptivity and Laughs
- The Sword-Lily: Of Gladiators and Receptivity (Sheeba Naaz)
- Sri Aurobindo’s and the Mother’s Force for Healing
- A Little Girl and Her Big Brother – Stories of a Personal Relation with the Divine (Pratyasha Nithin)



# PROGRESS

**Always Stay Open to a New Progress**



Madagascar periwinkle, Rose periwinkle (*Catharanthus roseus*)

*Spiritual significance: Progress; this is why we are on earth.*

The *Renaissance* issue released on February 21, 2022, the 144th birthday of our Sweet Mother, focused on the soul-quality of Progress. The month of February also sees Auroville's Foundation Day. This city of dawn is the Divine's Dream, a living experiment in Human Unity. Inspired by these special events, we explored the attribute of 'Progress' in this special issue.

The 12 attributes represent the soul-qualities we must progressively cultivate within as we aspire for a deeper, wider and higher consciousness. This is the progress we all must constantly strive for, if we aspire to be true servitors of the Truth and sincere children of the Divine Mother. But how do we begin? The all-compassionate Mother gives us a clear guidance.

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“. . . begin with the work which is given to you, that is to say, realise what you have to do and do not concern yourself with what others do, because, after all, it is not your business. And the best way to the true attitude is simply to say, “All those around me, all the circumstances of my life, all the people near me, are a mirror held up to me by the Divine Consciousness to show me the progress I must make. Everything that shocks me in others means a work I have to do in myself.”

(The Mother, CWM, Vol, 10, p. 23)

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## **What is Progress?**

Like many other words these days, the word ‘Progress’ too has often been narrowly or even wrongly used, misused or misunderstood. While it is true that essentially everything is progressing towards its hitherto-unknown but its inevitable destiny, this progress is not generally in a straight line. It is full of pauses, detours and phases of what may appear as movement in the reverse direction. But that is the way of Life and Nature.

A certain turn of intellect with its eye glued only towards the future considers progress as the only truth, and has its own definition and ideas of what progress looks like. Another turn of the intellect is mesmerised by all that was glorious in the past and wants to conserve and preserve all of that, even when recognising that change is inevitable. Often reflected as a conflict between tradition and modernity, at its core this is about how past, present and future are not seen as integral and inseparable parts of a single movement of progress.

## **Life, Mind and Progress**

Sri Aurobindo once said that Western civilisation while being proud of its successful modernism fails to recognise that “there is much that it has lost in the eagerness of its gains and much which men of old strove towards that it has not even attempted to accomplish.” (CWSA, Vol. 20, p. 81). This is true not only of Western civilisation anymore. In the East, in India, and wherever else we find strong impact of the ‘modernism’ of the Western variety, we see similar story being played out.

Certainly, modernism, especially the modern science, has brought many valuable gains, but much has also been lost. In the name of

modernity, societies are getting oppressed by what Sri Aurobindo refers to as “unashamed mass of ugliness and vulgarity, . . . unchastened external utilitarianism, . . . vitalistic riot and the morbid exaggeration and unsoundness of many of its growths,” resulting from an “uneliminated survival of the triumphant barbarian” (CWSA, Vol. 20, p. 82).



**Progress is the  
sign of the  
divine influence  
in creation.**

-The Mother, CWM 15: 75



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This is because the Western variety of modernism – driven primarily by the advent of modern science and the age of rational individualism – is entirely a child of the Mind, at the service of exaggerating and embellishing Life. The nature of progress

unleashed by this has very little real connection with inner dimensions of Life – that real throbbing, pulsating, vibrant field for multi-faceted human progress.

But this is a concern not only for the civilisational or collective progress. It equally concerns the individual aspiring for a higher and truer life. How should we approach and live our individual lives as means to the progress and perfection we seek, without getting caught up in the web of ‘external utilitarianism’ or ‘a vitalistic riot’? What is that right attitude and right spirit with which we can make our life a means to an integral growth?

## **Two Possibilities**

Two possibilities arise: the method of exaggeration of Life, and the method of upraising the Life.

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“The Spirit is a higher infinite of verities; life is a lower infinite of possibilities which seek to grow and find their own truth and fulfilment in the light of these verities. Our intellect, our will, our ethical and our aesthetic being are the reflectors and the mediators. The method of the West is to exaggerate life and to call down as much—or as little—as may be of the higher powers to stimulate and embellish life. But the method of India is on the contrary to discover the spirit within and the higher hidden intensities of the superior powers and to dominate life in one way or another so as to make it responsive to and expressive of the spirit and in that way increase the power of life. Its tendency with the intellect, will, ethical, aesthetic and emotional being is to sound

indeed their normal mental possibilities, but also to upraise them towards the greater light and power of their own highest intuitions.”

(Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 20, pp. 15-16)

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Let me add that the ‘West’ here is not really a geographical marker but rather a descriptor of a particular outlook on life, existence, reality, knowledge and truth. In other words, ‘the method of the West’ is more about a rational-materialistic approach to Life, which views Spirit as something outside, something separate from Life. Whereas ‘the method of India’ is about a more integral approach where Spirit is not removed from Life and Matter, just hidden, and hence Life becomes a means to unveil that hidden spirit.

The first method, by exaggerating the Life *As Is* and by only embellishing it here and there with the powers of the Spirit, offers one path to progress. But it is predominantly an outer progress only, and may eventually dig us deeper into an inner cage, golden and gem-studded though it may be.

This cage with its captivating aesthetic appeal, high intellectual ideas, and enthralling advancement in our material life is still that, a cage. Even the embellishments we occasionally add from the house of the Spirit are mostly add-ons, done primarily for the purpose of making Mind – intellect, emotion, aesthetics, ethics – more effective means for fulfilling the ever-increasing and incessant demands and desires of Life. The cage created in this process may engage, amuse and entertain us for a while, a long while even.

## **Deep Inside We Know...**

But somewhere deep inside we know there is more to Life. There is a yearning for life outside the cage, life that liberates or at least has the potential to liberate.

That is when we turn to the method of upraising the Life. And there is only one way for it – by turning inside. It doesn't involve rejecting anything that Life offers. Nor does it reject anything concerned with the Mind – intellect, emotion, aesthetics, or ethics. It works by journeying the inner path to discover the hidden spirit behind them all, by raising everything to their highest possible meaning and purpose, by dominating the Life through the hidden powers of the Spirit. The destination of this journey lies within us, and so are its pathways and the detours. The key which can open up this pathway is hidden behind the mix of things that cloud up our vision. We need to clear our way of seeing first.

## **A Journey Within**

The mix of all the good and the bad, the ups and the downs, the contentment and the confusion, the tranquillity and the turmoil that Life presents on our individual life-paths must become the grist for the mill, so to speak. It must become the means and the way to our inner progress.

Only when the Light of the Spirit shines upon the dark, hidden, sleepy and sluggish corners of our minds, we begin to see and recognise the real meaning and purpose behind all that life offers us. With each little effort made to wake up in the Light, with each little step taken to step out and walk in that Light, we begin to upraise the

life, to uplift every little or big experience, every victory or failure, every up or down, every gain or loss, every good or bad.

When we begin to see, recognise, accept and work through each of these experiences with lesser and lesser inner excitement (in either direction – up or down), and with more and more inner calmness and equanimity, we can be sure that we are making progress.



**There is no end to  
progress and  
every day one can  
learn to do better  
what one does.**

-The Mother, CWM 15:76



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This progress is qualitatively different from the one made when we only exaggerate Life, the progress unleashed by the Western variety of modernism. This progress is transformative in nature, because it

opens up an entirely new way of looking at, and more importantly, of living Life.

It places Mind not in conflict with Life, but facilitates a harmony between the two. Essentially both Mind and Life, in their true essence, not only express but are also moved by the Spirit. It helps both rise consciously to their fuller and greater possibilities via all that they experience. It helps them realise that in such development and upraising rests their true and real purpose.

This is progress aimed to gain a real mastery over Life – an inner self-mastery, a true control over how to experience Life.

We explore this and a few other aspects of Progress through our offerings in this issue. The aspect of collective progress is also not ignored.

### **Twenty-one Offerings for this Special Issue**

Twenty-one felt like the most appropriate number for our offerings in the February 2022 issue. The Guiding Light highlighted a few passages from the Mother which emphasise that the earth is a field for progress. She reminds that while one inevitably makes progress with the rhythm of Nature, with sādhanā this progress can become conscious and swift. We receive some practical guidance from Sri Aurobindo about inner nearness to the Mother and a constant opening to her Force as two keys to making progress in sādhanā.

We also explored the relation of psychic being and soul, and the progressive quality of the psychic being. Our selection for Sādhanā feature reminded us of the great patience of the

Supreme Mother with her children who fumble and fall thousand times on their path of progress.

Like Progress, another related word which most people generally understand in a narrow or limited manner and often in a superficial way is Perfection. In the Spiritual Philosophy section, we featured a few selections which help us remove our intellectual cobwebs and gain a deeper dimension to these ideas of Progress and Perfection.

In the article Ancient Hindu Cyclical Theory of Evolution, Sri Aurobindo drawing upon insights from Hindu scriptures explains that the Hindu mind has never admitted the principle of linear progress. An Ideal for the Future Progress of Humanity brings us a summary of two different lines of movements of progress that have been predominant in the West and East, and the necessity of an ideal which integrates the two for the future progress of humanity. We also get to explore about how past, present and future are integral and inseparable parts of a single movement of progress in Conservation and Progress.

We celebrate the Mother's birthday by highlighting a few aspects of her Divine Personality. The Mother, an Educationist of the Future highlights Free Progress as explained by K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar. Our other feature focuses on the Mother as an Artist.

Sri Aurobindo once wrote to a disciple that “those who want to progress quickly, welcome even the blows of Mahakali because that pushes them more rapidly on the way” (CWSA, Vol. 32, p. 353). With Progress as our theme for this issue, a feature on the Mahakali Aspect of the Divine Mother seemed most befitting.

The Mahakali aspect continued to inspire as we remember the Mother as a master storyteller by featuring the story titled Building and Destroying, which also fits in nicely with our theme of Progress.

The Mahakali aspect was also our guide for two more features. In the Insightful Conversation we talked with Saiswaroopaa Iyer about her journey as a writer of engaging with women from our *Purāna*-s and *Itihāsa*-s, especially the warrior queens. For the Book of the Month, we featured a reading of Iyer's novel titled *Abhaya* in the light of Sri Aurobindo.

Are you bored? Most people have said yes to this question from time to time. We highlighted a conversation of the Mother with the children in which she explains that the only reason we ever feel bored is because we fail to make use of every moment as an opportunity to learn something new. Shraddha Gour Mohanti in a piece written primarily for young adults titled Progress simplified for the yearning minds reiterated in a simple manner what essentially is progress.

In our Flower-meditation series, Sheeba Naaz reminded us about the cancer-busting chemical produced by the humble periwinkle, the flower which was given the spiritual significance 'Progress' by the Mother.

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To close, let us recall that the Mother has cautioned us about two of the greatest obstacles in our path to progress. It is key that we remember this as we walk the path.

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“Scepticism and doubt are two of the greatest obstacles to progress; they add presumptuousness to ignorance.”

(The Mother, CWM, Vol. 10, p. 27)

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## Explore the ‘Progress’ Issue

(Clickable links)

### On the Birthday of the Mother

- The Mahakali Aspect of the Divine Mother
- Free Progress: The Mother, an Educationist of the Future (K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar)
- Remembering the Mother as an Artist

### On Progress

- “Always Go Forward, Advance, Advance” (Guiding Light)
- Sri Aurobindo on Conservation and Progress
- Progress and Perfection: Words of the Mother
- Psychic Being and Progress: Words of the Mother
- Progress in Sadhana: Words of Sri Aurobindo
- Ancient Hindu Cyclical Theory of Evolution
- An Ideal for the Future Progress of Humanity
- Are you Bored? – Time to Ask Yourself if You are Progressing
- Building and Destroying: The Mother’s Story about Thiruvalluvar
- Progress Simplified for Yearning Minds (Shraddha Gour Mohanti)
- Cancer-buster Rosy Periwinkle (Sheeba Naaz)
- Sādhanā: “How Great Must be Thy Patience!”



# COURAGE

**Courage Our Armour, Faith Our Sword, We Must  
Walk**



Mudar, Crown plant (*Calotropis gigantean*)  
*Spiritual significance: Courage: Bold, it faces all dangers.*

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother strongly emphasise courage as one of the most important qualities to be cultivated by an aspirant on the path of yoga of transformation. This is true both at the individual and the collective levels. The March 2022 issue was our humble attempt at highlighting some of their insights on this soul-quality. We explored ‘courage’ through several different viewpoints, to present an integral picture.

A couple of days before the release date, as I prayed for some inspiration for writing the editorial – something I normally do only after I am more or less satisfied with the choice and presentation of the most of the content in the issue – one phrase “we must walk, we must walk,” . . . kept coming to me. I took it as a guidance from the Mother that walking with courage is what I should write on.

As I began typing out some initial thoughts, I remembered this line from *Savitri* – “Courage their armour, faith their sword, they must walk” (CWSA, Vol. 33, p. 211). And it was soon clear that there couldn’t have been any other title to this editorial than what you see now. Looking back at the content of the issue and reflecting on what possibly inspired my selection of the articles and passages featured here, more clarity came. The key idea guiding me, consciously or sub-consciously, was perhaps this: courage and faith, courage and truth, courage and love – these things always go together.

## **Courage and Faith**

A sincere look deep within reveals that most often disappointments in life occur because we cling to our mental and vital preferences. These egoistic preferences prevent us from surrendering to the hidden wisdom guiding our life’s journey through all the veils of

ignorance. This failure to surrender indicates a lack of faith and trust in the Divine's Plan for us.

When faced with a difficulty – any difficulty, big or seemingly small, because nothing is truly small or insignificant in the Divine's plan for our path to perfection, especially in the path of Integral Yoga, – the right attitude is to call in the Mother's help. We must ask for courage so that we can pick ourselves up. Strengthening our faith and trust which once gave us the courage to face the challenges is essential. We must pray for the Divine Grace.



**A real  
aspiration is  
something  
full of courage.**

(The Mother, CWM, 14:169)

  
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But for the Grace to work, sincere aspiration and steadfast effort to purify our instrumental nature are equally essential. It requires us to give up our pride, our egoistic preferences, our know-it-all ignorance, our will that life should go our way. Such surrender is not easy. But nothing that is truly worth doing is ever easy.

### **What is outside is a projection of what is inside.**

It takes a long time for the inner 'I' to cultivate all the equanimity, trust and faith necessary for a true surrender. This is why the outer 'I' needs repeated lessons. Such training helps us actually practice what the mind believes it knows in theory. To work our way through the repeated lessons, we need immense courage as we gradually learn to confront the various obstacles in our nature. Confronting them means not to manifest in action any movements resulting from the weaknesses and defects of our nature. It also requires using our willpower to reject these movements. It requires that we do not rationalise or give excuses for the weaknesses. Rather we must continue to aspire for light and strength and turn to the Divine for help. Personal effort at rejecting our weaknesses is possible only when we call in the Divine's help. We are not alone doing it all by ourselves. We can not do it by ourselves alone. The Mother is always guiding our steps, she is always walking with us. She is protecting us as we walk through the net-practice sessions of Life. Let us never forget to call her.

### **What is true of the individual is also true of the nation.**

What should be our attitude when it comes to challenges in a nation's life? Calling in for Divine Help and Grace? Yes, most

certainly. Because our intellect, no matter how sophisticated and developed it is, will only show us partial truths. We will never grasp the deeper forces working themselves out and leading the nation towards its true destiny through the turmoil and struggle.

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“. . . human reason is a very convenient and accommodating instrument and works only in the circle set for it by interest, partiality and prejudice. The politicians reason wrongly or insincerely and have power to enforce the results of their reasoning, so make a mess of the world’s affairs,—the intellectuals reason and see what their minds show them, which is far from being always the truth, for it is generally decided by intellectual preference and the mind’s inborn or education-inculcated angle of vision,—but even when they see it, they have no power to enforce it. So between blind power and seeing impotence the world moves, achieving destiny through a mental muddle.”

(Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 199)

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What else is needed? Rejecting all the falsehood and redundancies we have accumulated in our collective life and mind? Again, a big yes. It also requires purifying our collective ego of its biases, preferences and prejudices. But most importantly, it requires re-kindling our aspiration to identify with the soul of the nation which unites us all despite our outer diversity. This does not mean closing our eyes to all the disunity and chaos and ugliness in our midst. It actually means rededicating ourselves to connect with the deeper light and truth within. Because that same source of light and truth

also hides behind and within the outer body, life and mind of the nation.

All this is not the work of a weak heart, mind and body. Tremendous courage is needed. The Mother's advice – Cling to Truth – has two unspoken pre-requisites. First, we keep the inner temple clean where the Truth can take its seat. Second, we cultivate a true courage which makes it possible to cling to Truth. This requires a true warrior spirit, that of a Samurai, or as Sri Aurobindo describes, *Kshatratej* guided by the *Brahmatej*, the true Aryan spirit.

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“We must face life as a whole, with all the ugliness, falsehood and cruelty it still contains, but we must take care to discover in ourselves the source of all goodness, all beauty, all light and all truth, in order to bring this source consciously into contact with the world so as to transform it.”

(The Mother, CWM, Vol. 12, p. 243)

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## **Our Offerings on Courage and Individual Life**

The Mother has spoken extensively of courage as one of the fundamental requisites for the path of sadhana. We selected three passages for our guiding light feature. A true aspiration, she reminds us, is always full of courage. But this courage means having a taste for the supreme adventure.

We highlighted a few excerpts from Sri Aurobindo's essay titled 'Kurukshetra' from *Essays on the Gita*. For our Sādhanā series, we featured a prayer from the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations*, which

reminds us to break all the resistances and aspire to be a courageous instrument of the Supreme Mother.

In the Sunlit Path feature, we highlighted powerful commentaries of the Mother on two aphorisms of Sri Aurobindo. She emphasises that a sadhak must get rid of fear, distrust, despair and face all challenges in life with courage and strength. We found more guidance in another conversation of the Mother with some disciples and children on the topic of true courage. She explains that true courage is courage with the full knowledge of all the possibilities and is ready to face everything without exception.

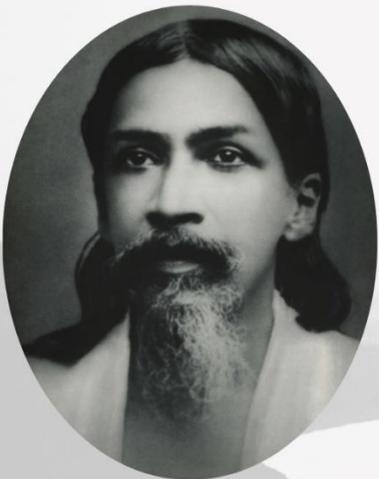
Sri Aurobindo once wrote, “All perfect perfection must have something in it of the stuff of the hero and even of the Titan.” (CWSA, Vol. 13, p. 210) We featured the full passage followed by the Mother’s commentary on it. This addresses the question – what is really needed at this critical juncture of evolutionary crisis faced by the humanity?

The Mother used the art of storytelling most sweetly and effectively to inculcate higher and nobler values in children and adults. We featured a collection of a few stories told by the Mother which highlight what is true courage and how to embody it.

### **Our Offerings on Courage and Life of a Nation**

We featured one of Sri Aurobindo’s Bengali writings which presents a most comprehensive and deeper understanding of the principal reasons why the mighty India could be easily conquered by the British. We also included Sri Aurobindo’s words on the Aryan ideal of courage which are a must-read for all, especially all Indians.

Also highlighted were some of his words on Courage and Nationalism. Courage, he says is the first quality, absolutely essential if we truly wish to work for the glory of our motherland. No half-baked, wishy-washy patriotism; the Mother asks for sacrifice. Only a complete faith in the Divine who is leading the nation to her glorious future and a total freedom from fear will make us ready if we truly want to practice the religion of nationalism.



A brave, frank,  
clean-hearted,  
courageous and  
aspiring youth is  
the only  
foundation on  
which the future  
nation can be  
built.

(Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, 8: 168)



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Sri Aurobindo has spoken at length about the inner psychological truth behind Chaturvarna. For this issue, we zoomed in on his explanation about the Kshatriya turn of the nature and the integral perfection it can arrive at with the Yoga of Self-perfection.

Also featured were a few passages from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to highlight the multi-layered truth about war as a necessary means employed by Nature for its evolutionary purposes. The Mother reminds us, war will cease to exist when it becomes unnecessary to the evolution of the earth. For this man has to undergo a spiritual transformation.

## **Remembering Our Heroes**

In this 75th year of independence from the British colonial rule, we honour the tremendous sacrifices made by countless heroic men and women. Stories of their love for motherland and fiery enthusiasm to sacrifice all they had and all they were at the feet of Mother India inspire us to this day.

In the ‘Courage’ issue we featured some glimpses of the great revolutionary Jatin Mukherjee, popularly known as Bagha Jatin. Sri Aurobindo had once described him as “a man who would belong to the front rank of humanity anywhere.” Admiring his strength and beauty, he added, “his stature was like a warrior’s.” (Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo as recorded by A.B. Purani, 14-12-1938) We also presented a close study of Sri Aurobindo’s poem *Baji Prabhou* written by Shruti Bidwaikar. She explains that the poet expresses the exemplary strength, patriotism and valour of Baji Prabhou Deshpande through different *rasa*-s. Sri Aurobindo has infused in the poem a deeper spiritual philosophy and ideal, giving it a powerful intensity and force.

In our ‘Book of the Month’, we shed some light on the valour of one of free India’s war heroes, Major Somnath Sharma, the first recipient of the Param Vir Chakra. Shyam Kumari, a senior member of Sri

Aurobindo Ashram, has written and published his biography. This is part of a series of booklets titled *Our Heroes: Param Vir Chakra Recipients*. The author hopes that such stories reach a large number of Indian youth in schools and colleges. We presented part 1 of Major Sharma's biography in the March 2022 issue and continued this series in the following issues.

Sheeba Naaz in her flower-meditation on Arka, the 'Courage' flower blended some profound reflections on faith and sadhana with a story from the Mahabharata. Imran Ali Namazi's poem spoke of the "steely serenity" needed to go through the ups and downs of life.

The issue on 'Courage' would not have been complete without incorporating some excerpts from Sri Aurobindo's essay 'The Bourgeois and the Samurai'. I have always felt that this, along with Uttarpara Speech of Sri Aurobindo, should be mandatory reading for all high school and college students in India. This is the finest analysis ever made about one of the most significant blows to Indian collective psyche during European colonisation.

Sri Aurobindo wrote this essay during 1906-7, most likely for *The Modern Review* or another monthly journal. The British seized the notebook containing the manuscript in May 1908 at the time of Sri Aurobindo's imprisonment. Four years after his passing, this and several other notebooks were rediscovered and restored to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. The text was transcribed and first published in *Sri Aurobindo: Archives and Research* in 1978.

## Explore the ‘Courage’ Issue

(Clickable links)

- [Having a Taste for the Supreme Adventure \(Guiding Light\)](#)
- [Get Rid of the Fear, Disgust and Despair](#)
- [Sri Aurobindo on Courage and Nationalism](#)
- [Sri Aurobindo on the Aryan Ideal of Courage](#)
- [Of Life and War: Sri Aurobindo on Kurukshetra](#)
- [The Perfection of the Kshatriya Soul-Force](#)
- [The Conquest of India by the British](#)
- [Of Courage, Wars, and Evolution of the Earth](#)
- [Something of the Stuff of the Hero and of the Titan](#)
- [To Face Everything in Life Without a Shudder](#)
- [The Bourgeois and the Samurai \(in 2 parts\)](#)
- [Stories of Courage as Told by the Mother](#)
- [Arka, the ‘Courage’ Crown Flower \(Sheeba Naaz\)](#)
- [Sādhanā: To Become a Truly Strong Being](#)
- [Dare to Journey High \(Imran Ali Namazi – poem\)](#)

### Remembering Our Heroes

- [Remembering Bagha Jatin \(Satyavrata Bhardawaj – in 2 parts\)](#)
- [The Poetic Strength and Beauty of ‘Baji Prabhou’ \(Shruti Bidwaikar – in 2 parts\)](#)



# GOODNESS

## Towards a New World – Work of the Dual Avatāra



Sweet Alison, Sweet alyssum (*Lobularia maritime*)

*Spiritual significance: Goodwill: Modest in appearance, does not make a show but is always ready to be useful.*

Goodness theme was scheduled in the month of April, a very special month. On April 4 in 1910, Sri Aurobindo arrived in Pondicherry, his “cave of tapasya.” And in 1920 on April 24th, the Mother arrived in Pondicherry to be always with Sri Aurobindo and collaborate in the Supramental Yoga. Their work was to bring down a new consciousness on the earth, which is the key to unlocking the evolutionary crisis facing humanity.

This new supramental, Truth-consciousness alone is capable of not only manifesting a new creation but has also accelerated the very pace of evolutionary process working behind the outer march of humanity and world.

In most of the old yogas, the aim has been to draw back altogether from life and enter into a greater divine Truth where one lives no longer in the mind and the ego, and grows into the inmost truth of one’s being above mind, life and body. But in Integral Yoga, “the aim is to transform mind, life and body into an expression of this divine Truth and to make the outward as well as the inward life embody it” (Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 35, p. 728).

This is definitely a new turn and an inevitable culmination of the gradual unfolding of Divine Truth in manifestation.

Integral Yoga concerns itself not only with rising out of the ordinary ignorant world-consciousness into the divine consciousness, but also aims “to bring the supramental power of that divine consciousness down into the ignorance of mind, life and body, to transform them, to manifest the Divine here and create a divine life in Matter.” (Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 29, p. 19)



It is only by a change of  
consciousness that the true basis  
of life can be discovered.

Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, 35: 194



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This change of consciousness, at the cosmic level, is about the change from Mind to Supermind as the founding principle of all creation, all manifestation.

### **The Gateway for the Next Future**

On the evening of 29 February 1956, during a collective meditation with the Mother in the Ashram playground, a stupendous event happened which opened the gateway for the next future of the earth-consciousness. The manifestation of the Supramental in the earth consciousness was achieved.

On 24th July, 1957, the Mother described the significance of this great spiritual event as the beginning of a new world. She said that up to now, all that has manifested of the Divinity is the world, our present world as we know it. This is a mental world, and its apex and prototype is man – the mental being.

She added that the manifestation, however, is boundless, and after this mental world, another reality will manifest, which Sri Aurobindo calls the Supermind, because it is in fact the next step after the mind. So, when we see the new world from this standpoint of our present world, it is naturally “supramental,” that is, something above the mind. And she explained further: “...so far the whole creation belonged to... “the lower hemisphere” ..., which is governed by Ignorance and based upon the Inconscient, whereas the other one will be a complete reversal, ... which instead of being based on Ignorance will be based upon Truth. That is why it will truly be a new world.” (The Mother, CWM, Vol. 9, p. 158)

Will this new world have anything to do with the old world as we know it? Will it be a transformed world out of the present world?

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“But if the essence, the principle of this [new] world were not included in the world as we knew it, there would be no hope of the one being transformed into the other; they would be two worlds so totally different and opposed that there would be no contact between them...”

(The Mother, CWM, Vol. 9, p. 158)

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And she continued further, "...in its essence and principle the new is already enclosed, involved in the old world. So, in fact, it is there, inside, in its very depths, hidden, invisible, imperceptible, unexpressed, but it is there, in its essence. Still, unless from the supreme heights the supramental consciousness and force and light manifest directly in the world, as it happened a year and a half ago, this Supermind which in principle is at the very bedrock of the material world as it is, would never have any possibility of manifesting itself." (CWM, Vol. 9, p. 158)

What we have here is a Divine declaration, a revelation of a stupendous inner movement in a progressive unfolding of the Truth.

The manifestation of a new supramental consciousness which has activated the principle of Supermind that was already hidden at the very base of the Matter is a decisive action direct from the Supreme. That is why the Mother said that the material nature has now become a willing collaborator to the call of the Spirit for transformation of Life.

### **Insights from Indian Tradition**

In Indian tradition this union of Material Nature with the Divine Being has been symbolised in the divine marriage of Ma Parvati with Lord Shiva. As we know, the prequel to the story of Shiva and Parvati's marriage is the story of Sati – Parvati in her former birth – who immolated herself because her father Daksha Prajapati who had organised a grand yajna for all the gods insulted Shiva by not inviting him.

After Sati is reborn as Uma Parvati – literally, the daughter of the Mountain, and hence symbolising Material Nature, she undertakes

intense tapasyā to appease Shiva who at that time had plunged into a deep trance. As the story proceeds, we meet other characters playing interesting roles such as Kamadeva, the god of vital love, and his consort Rati. But Shiva eventually emerges out of his trance and pleased with Parvati's tapasyā, marries her.

Shiva, the masculine principle, is the Knowledge of the One Supreme, which becomes the Purusha, the Soul which sanctions and witnesses. Sati and Uma Parvati, the feminine principle, is the Shakti or Power of the One and hence, in essence, identified with the Supreme, but in manifestation has separated (or rather seems to be separated) and become material Nature, Prakriti.

Creation is the outcome of the dual dance of Purusha and Prakriti. When the dance is in perfect rhythm, a harmonious and beautiful creation comes forth. But when out of rhythm, the result is chaos and destruction. We can understand the self-immolation of Sati as the sacrifice of the mind-born, ego-driven old consciousness, the result of a creation in avidyā or Ignorance. Now reborn as Parvati and through intense tapasyā, She has reclaimed all Her power. Her union with Shiva has opened the possibility of a New Creation, based on Truth. Shiva representing the Spirit, and Parvati or Shakti representing Material Nature unite in a perfect and harmonious embrace.

In the Rigveda we find a legend of the Divine Shakti, the Consciousness of the Supreme, plunging down and hiding in the Inconscient. The gods slowly bring her back from there to re-unite with the Brahman.

The legend appears in Sūkta 109 of the tenth Mandala. Nolini Kanta Gupta had once narrated this story in a most delightful manner, revealing its deeper symbolism and significance. Titled ‘The Bride of Brahman,’ the story helps us understand the evolutionary march of Material Nature to re-unite with the Spirit, thereby opening the possibility of an entirely New Creation based on Truth-consciousness.

“It is said that this separation and this reunion meant a greater fulfilment upon earth. Without the separation the fulfilment also would not have happened upon earth. Earth would have remained as it is but because of the separation, that is to say, the Bride of Brahman separating herself from her Lord and coming down into Matter and becoming one with Matter, there arose the possibility, the inevitability of fusing her reality and the reality of Brahman into Matter.

“The Divine Bride dropped down on earth and dived into Matter and became one with it. She became Matter, material Nature, dense, dark, heavy with all its weight. She became as the Veda names her, “Bhimajaya” – the mighty, the terrible spouse – in fact our Mahakali. She was originally the fair spouse – Saumyajaya. But there is to be a progress, a gain.

“So when she rises and is on her upward march she has now acquired the capacity to carry and lift with her the heaviest load of the Inconscient and gradually transmute it. In the final realisation all the

Gods are to come to the forefront and all mankind are to come out, as it were, into the open and bask in the Solar Light and share in the delight of the union of the Divine Bride and her Bridegroom.”  
(Collected Works of Nolini Kanta Gupta, Vol. 7, pp. 21-28)

The ancient Tantric discipline had for its aim the mastery over the Power of Material Nature. It has found its apex and culmination in the descent of the Supramental Truth Consciousness which also has the power to transform material nature. And THAT is what makes all the difference. While the Tantra concerned itself with release from life, Supramental Yoga aims at transformation of life.

Such colossal work required the advent of the dual avatāra – of Ishwara and Shakti – on the earth. This is the real significance of the collaborative supramental yoga of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. And of the Mother’s final coming to India on 24th April 1920.

In one of the “Evening Talks” Sri Aurobindo spoke of the inner, truer nature of collaboration that was necessary in order for their Supramental Yogic work. When asked whether complete transformation is possible without having a Shakti, he noted something fundamental about the Mother’s yogic work:

“The function of the Shakti is something special. In my own case it was a necessary condition for the work that I had to do. If I had had to do my own transformation only or give a new yoga or a new ideal to a select few people who came into personal

contact with me I could have done that without having any Shakti.

“But, for the work that I had to do, it was necessary that the two sides must come together. By the coming together of [the Mother] and me certain conditions are created which make it easy for you to do the transformation.” (published in *Mother India*, April 1970)

The April 2022 issue featured two offerings to mark the two special dates – April 4 and April 24. An essay by Nolini Kanta Gupta summarises the new future which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother brought down with their Supramental Yoga. Another one by M. P. Pandit gives a peek into the Yogic work of the Mother and throws light on another important dimension to their supramental work.

### **Goodness in this issue**

The Mother once said that the first eight attributes in the Mother’s symbol: Sincerity, Humility, Gratitude, Perseverance, Aspiration, Receptivity, Progress, and Courage, concern the attitude towards the Divine. And the next four – Goodness, Generosity, Peace and Equality – towards humanity. (Agenda, Vol. 13, p. 41)

In the April 2022 issue, we explored the significance of Goodness as a soul-quality for transforming inner and outer life at both the individual and collective levels. The Mother once said that a good deed is sweeter to the heart than a sweet in the mouth, and “a day spent without doing a good deed is a day without a soul.” (CWM, Vol. 15, p. 225)

Goodness is often confused with simply ‘being nice,’ or considered simplistically in moral-ethical terms as ‘that’ which is opposed to ‘evil.’ But there is more to being good than simply being nice or unpleasant. And there are often many shades of grey in between the good and evil. Perhaps we are faced more often with a dilemma to choose between two possible ‘good’s’ than between good and evil.

And where does one’s moral-ethical development fits in with our growing understanding of goodness and our efforts to cultivate this attribute? What are some of the implications of this quality for our collective life in a society and as human race? These were some questions that guided our selection of content for the ‘Goodness’ issue.

The Guiding Light feature reminded us that winning victories over the weaknesses in our nature and by constantly aspiring for truth, harmony and universal goodwill is the best way to help others and do good for the world. A few commentaries of the Mother on selected verses from the Dhammapada helped us explore further the true meaning of goodness.

We also featured some comments of the Mother on three aphorisms of Sri Aurobindo. These words reveal for us that because of our ignorance and egoism we find fault with others, call them sinners or other names. But when we become aware of the higher truth, we realise that such self-righteous behaviour is a real obstacle to cultivating and practicing goodness.

We often associate ‘Goodness’ with one’s moral-ethical development. A few selections from the chapter titled ‘The Suprarational Good’ from *The Human Cycle* help us understand the

evolution of our ethical impulses from infrarational to rational to suprarational. We also felt that a talk that the Mother gave in 1912 to a group of seekers in Paris where she speaks of the true and sublime charity should be a must read when exploring the true meaning of goodness.

We included a few letters of Sri Aurobindo explaining the core difference between a moral life and spiritual life. The articles titled Of God, Universe, Good and Evil and Sri Aurobindo on the Principle of Evil answer a question many people have asked one time or another in their lives – if there is a God and if He is All-love, *sarvamaṅgalam*, why does He create evil or, if He does not create it, why permits it. In the Sādhanā feature, we highlighted a prayer to remind us to take refuge in Divine Love to transfigure our consciousness and manifest goodness.

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“One can say very simply that all that leads to the Divine is good, and all that leads away from the Divine is bad.

“Many virtues lead away from the Divine by making men satisfied with what they are.”

(The Mother, CWM, Vol. 16, p. 378)

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The treatises that give practical advice for individual and social well-being, keeping in consideration the four pursuits of human life (*purushārthas* – *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokśa*) are called Nītiśāstra. Because these texts also included a great deal of policy and worldly wisdom, they served as important resources for the education of princes, ministers and others in leadership roles.

Bhartrihari's Nitishataka, hundred verses on *nīti* (a word which generally means right conduct, practice, propriety, guidance, etc.) is one such Nītiśāstra. Sri Aurobindo had rendered these verses freely into English; we featured a few in the Goodness issue. We also included a write up by Kireet Joshi on Bhartrihari from his book *The Aim of Life*, written as part of a series to be used in teacher education programmes.

Also included was a memoir by Shobha Mitra in which she shares how she once fell into the grip of jealousy, which was later dissolved by the Mother's sweet blessings. The passage reveals that inner revolts such as anger and jealousy can be transformed into feelings of calm and goodness only when we call the Mother for help.

The Mother once said that animals feel a spontaneous gratitude for an act of kindness towards them. But men, 98 times out of a 100, begin to reason and ask themselves what interest one could have in being good. We included two features in this 'Goodness' issue to direct readers' attention towards our fellow living creatures from the animal world. Pranav Makhijani submitted a short documentary about an animal rescue and organic farm. Shraddha Gour Mohanti summarised the right attitude of compassion, kindness, and respect one must cultivate towards all living creatures.

Sheeba Naaz in her flower-meditation wrote of the fragrance of the 'goodness' flower Sweet Alyssum, also known as Sweet Alison. A few more of our regular features completed the Goodness theme of the issue. In our continuing series, we featured part 2 of the biography of Major Somnath Sharma, written by Shyam Kumari of Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Rajeshwari, in the ongoing health and wellness series, wrote about how walking or padayatra has been used

traditionally and purposefully in our culture with a deeper psychological or spiritual intent.

## Explore the ‘Goodness’ Issue

(Clickable links)

- Vishnu's Fourth Stride, from Humanity to Divinity  
(Nolini Kanta Gupta)
- The Manifestation of the Mother of Ananda (M.P. Pandit)
- Doing Good by Conquering Oneself
- Goodness in Sri Aurobindo's Aphorisms
- The Mother on True and Sublime Charity
- Sri Aurobindo on Morality and Yoga
- Sri Aurobindo on the Essence of Ethics
- Goodness and Fragrance of Sweet Alison (Sheeba Naaz)
- Sri Aurobindo on the Principle of Evil
- Of God, Universe, Good and Evil
- Sādhanā: To Transfigure Egoism into Goodness
- A Documentary on Peepal Farm, an Animal Rescue Farm  
(Pranav Makhijani)
- From the *Dhammapada*: On Goodness and Vigilance
- Goodness in Bhartrihari's *Nitishataka*
- Resolving the Inner Revolts by Calling the Mother  
(Shobha Mitra)
- Cultivate Goodness and Kindness towards Animals  
(Shraddha Gour Mohanti)



# GENEROSITY

**Be Generous, Be Sincere and Evolve**



Garden balsam (*Impatiens balsamina*)

*Spiritual significance: Generosity: Gives and gives itself without bargaining*

We live in times when soliciting donation for charitable causes has evolved into an art form, if I can use that phrase. Most of us have seen advertisements which are worded to evoke a certain sentiment, with appropriate pictures for complete effect. Such ‘calls for charity’ are found abundantly in all forms of mass media – print, broadcast, online, social, even on roadside hoardings.

Charitable organisations seem to have mastered the art of shaking up people’s sleeping conscience. The targets are mostly the well-to-do middle- and upper-income sections who are otherwise so occupied with their lives and absorbed in their lifestyles. The idea is that some of them will be ‘moved’ enough to open their wallets and cheque books and help the ‘needy.’

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“The existence of poverty is the proof of an unjust & ill organised society, and our public charities are but the first tardy awakening in the conscience of a robber.”

(Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 447)

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But perhaps it is also necessary to spend a few minutes reflecting on the question: why give? Or a better question would be: why should I give? Or not give? Such questioning requires a sincere checking-in with oneself, especially about one’s motivations.

## **Why Give?**

Am I giving because it is the ‘moral-ethical-socially responsible’ thing to do? Am I giving because I really believe in the ‘cause’? Do I even know enough about the cause for which I am about to give? Do

I know how my donation will be utilised? Will it go towards the cause or will it end up as part of the big fat salaries for the NGO directors and marketing staff or be simply used up for their huge administrative expenditure?

Some more questions may come up: Why should I even bother about how the money I give will be used? Isn't my job over once I have sent the cheque? After all, am I not giving simply because I will get a tax benefit because of this big donation? So why am I calling it a 'moral' thing? Isn't it selfish of me to get tax benefits from this donation?

The deeper the line of questioning, the greater is the need for stepping back from the first 'moralistic' urge to 'help the needy.' It is important to figure out the source of this urge itself. From where does this instinct arise?

Is it coming from our emotional-vital ego which might feel a sense of pride at having done something good for the 'less fortunate' among us? Is it a movement of our mental ego to help get rid of a bit of its guilt or shame or regret for enjoying a luxurious life while so many poor out there struggle for even the most basic necessities? Is it really a movement of our higher, more compassionate, empathetic layer of our vital, emotional part?

How can we be sure? Or should we even bother about all this introspection and instead merely do the 'right thing' by helping those in need? But then, what is indeed the 'right thing'?

## Nature of Giving

So many questions. How to know what to do? Perhaps the answer can be found in understanding the nature of ‘giving’ itself.

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“As with tapasya, all giving also is of an ignorant tamasic, an ostentatious rajasic or a disinterested and enlightened sattwic character. The tamasic gift is offered ignorantly with no consideration of the right conditions of time, place and object; it is a foolish, inconsiderate and in reality a self-regarding movement, an ungenerous and ignoble generosity, the gift offered without sympathy or true liberality, without regard for the feelings of the recipient and despised by him even in the acceptance. The rajasic kind of giving is that which is done with regret, unwillingness or violence to oneself or with a personal and egoistic object or in the hope of a return of some kind from whatever quarter or a corresponding or greater benefit to oneself from the receiver. The sattwic way of giving is to bestow with right reason and goodwill and sympathy in the right conditions of time and place and on the right recipient who is worthy or to whom the gift can be really helpful. Its act is performed for the sake of the giving and the beneficence, without any view to a benefit already done or yet to be done to oneself by the receiver of the benefit and without any personal object in the action.”

(Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 19, p. 490)

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Or perhaps the answer lies deeper.

As Sri Aurobindo reminds us when he speaks of how the sentiments of doing charity and being altruistic are stirred up in us.

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“But even charity and altruism are essentially egoistic in their immediate motive. They are stirred by the discomfort of the sight of suffering to the nervous system or by the pleasurable of others’ appreciation of our kindness or by the egoistic self-appreciation of our own benevolence or by the need of indulgence in sympathy. There are philanthropists, who would be troubled, if the poor were not always with us, for they would then have no field for their charity.”

(Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 13, p. 454)

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## **Ego’s Motives**

Sri Aurobindo mentions here many possible underlying motives for indulging in charity. All these motives are however egoistic in nature – from discomfort to one’s nervous system when confronted with the sight of suffering to a craving for appreciation (from others or from one’s own self). Even the vital’s need to indulge in sympathy can be a motivation for a philanthropist.

Does it mean there is no such thing as genuine charity or altruism? Here it is important to recall the Mother’s extremely helpful note of caution. She says, charity, like all things, “must be the result in us of

a conscious and reasoned will, for impulse is synonymous with error and above all with egoism”(CWM, Vol. 2. p. 104).

Only through a sincere and honest in-search we can begin to know whether our act of altruism is truly an unselfish or non-egoistic act. Because often, “altruism is only the sublimest form of selfishness” (Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 12, p. 455)



Fling not thy alms  
abroad everywhere  
in an ostentation of  
charity; understand  
& love where  
thou helpst.

Let thy soul grow  
within thee.

~ Sri Aurobindo, 12: 447



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But being generous is not only about giving material charity.

Speaking of the last four attributes in the Mother’s symbol, the Mother once said that the soul-qualities of Goodness, Generosity, Equality and Peace concern our attitudes towards humanity. As we began our work on the theme ‘Generosity,’ we felt it was important to recall these words of the Mother:

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“It is a mistake to consider service to humanity as the highest expression of service to the Divine. To do so is to remain far too confined within the limits of an exclusive human consciousness.”

(CWM, Vol. 14, p. 276)

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This guided us as we researched for the relevant passages from the Mother and Sri Aurobindo for our guiding light feature. These passages shed light on some key facets related to ‘Generosity’ which were then elaborated in the selections curated for other features.

## **Generosity as a Virtue**

For our Sādhanā series, we highlighted a prayer which reminds us to pray for a generous heart and boundless love to permeate the sorrowful earth with love and mercy. Generosity also means wideness of the heart. As the Mother once said, “A generous heart always forgets the past offences and is ready to reestablish harmony.” (CWM, Vol. 17, p. 357). We presented a beautiful story by Sri Aurobindo, where we find a high ideal of forgiveness that marks the highest Aryan culture of India.

In another Bengali writing, Sri Aurobindo speaks of the kindness, generosity, self-control, charity and other noble qualities that he

witnessed among the thieves, robbers and other convicts during his 12 months in Alipore Jail.



Generosity is to find  
one's own satisfaction  
in the satisfaction  
of others.

-The Mother, 10: 282

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## **From Goodness to Generosity**

Building upon the insights presented in the previous issue on Goodness, in the ‘Generosity’ issue we featured three passages from Sri Aurobindo that speak of the inner significance of practicing higher virtues. A few more passages from Sri Aurobindo help us understand the psychological foundations of altruism, its limits and potentiality for facilitating self-development.

We also featured a conversation of the Mother where she speaks candidly that most ideas people have of serving the humanity are nothing but signs of personal ambition. She enlightens us that the best way to serve the humanity is to offer oneself entirely, truly, most generously to the Divine. In another conversation the Mother speaks about giving oneself sincerely to the Divine without bargaining. She also narrates a beautiful story about perfect giving.

If Integral Yoga is Yoga in real-life and for the transformation of all Life, the subject of money cannot be left unaddressed. What is the right attitude a sādḥaka on the path of Integral Yoga should have towards money? This and several related questions related to money were addressed by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in many of their writings and conversations.

We featured selected words of the Mother where she explains that wealth is a force of nature which creates harmonious balance if circulated and utilised for its true work. She advises that each one must find in one's highest consciousness the best possible use of the money. We featured a short article by M.P. Pandit which presents a good summary of several essential points from the teachings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo on this topic of money.

The issue also included an excerpt from a conversation between a group of children and the Mother where she explains that both generosity and avarice are deformations of a higher truth. A short essay by Nolini Kanta Gupta served as an important reminder of what is true charity. In her meditation on Balsam 'Generosity' flower, Sheeba Naaz explored the subtle but important difference between *dakshinā*, *bhikshā* and *dāna*.

## Explore the 'Generosity' Issue

(Clickable links)

- "One is unhappy only when one is not generous"
- Practicing Higher Virtues as Aids to Inner Evolution
- Sri Aurobindo on Ego, Altruism and Self-development
- Kashithumba, the Generous Flower (Sheeba Naaz)
- Give All You Are, All You Have
- "Europe is the land of enjoyment, India of sacrifice"
- The Ideal of Forgiveness - A Story by Sri Aurobindo
- Sādhanā: Prayer for a Generous Heart and Boundless Love
- Service to Humanity or an Ambition to be a Great Man among Men
- Empathy - the Origin of True Charity (Nolini Kanta Gupta)
- Money as Power (M. P. Pandit)
- The More Money We Have, the More We Need...
- The Generous and the Avaricious



# EQUALITY

## Practicing Equality and Harmony



Candytuft (Iberis)

*Spiritual significance: Equanimity: Immutable peace and calm.*

The other day I found myself recalling and reflecting on some lines from *Savitri*. . .

*For though a dress of blind and devious chance  
Is laid upon the work of all-wise Fate,  
Our acts interpret an omniscient Force  
That dwells in the compelling stuff of things,  
And nothing happens in the cosmic play  
But at its time and in its foreseen place.*

*(Sri Aurobindo, Savitri, Book V, Canto I, p. 389)*

“Our acts interpret an omniscient Force. . . nothing happens in the cosmic play, but at its time and in its foreseen place.”

I find myself unable to express why these lines, these words brought a deep relief – or was it a release? Maybe the mind doesn’t know the reason or maybe it does, but does it really matter? What matters is what was experienced, what was felt.

Even if such experiences of release are for a few moments, perhaps their value lies in the way they leave their imprint drop by drop on our mental-emotional selves. This is how these parts are gradually prepared for seeking greater calmness and equanimity.

### **The Divine Assurance**

We have all been through life’s straight lines and curves, its ups and downs, the good and the bad that often come together in life. In its ignorance the mind naturally attributes these things to mere Fate or Chance. We not only fail to see the good in what appears as the bad –

or vice versa, but also fail to recognise the working of an omniscient Force behind all this play of Life, this cosmic play.

But when there is the Guru's assurance, the Divine's assurance, such as this one – "*Our acts interpret an omniscient Force,*" wouldn't the mind naturally relax, experience a deep release? An experience of letting go, because there *IS* an assurance that an omniscient Force "*dwells in the compelling stuff of things.*"

If only the ignorant ego-mind lets go of its insistence that *it* knows better, and it is replaced with a deep trust in *That* omniscient Force, life would go much more harmoniously. Because that omniscient Force is the true and absolute unfailing Power which operates in the ignorant domains of a million conflicting possibilities which seek their realisation through the acts we choose – consciously or unconsciously.

As I sit here on my desk recalling many happenings and events from the years gone by, things which I could hardly control in any way – or anyone else could – I continue to discover the much-needed strength and comfort in the line, "*Nothing happens in the cosmic play, but at its time and in its foreseen place.*" Oh, how in our ignorance and impatience we go on imposing our timelines on the Universe, forgetting that such restlessness of our nature only prolongs the suffering!

### **Life – a Field of Growth**

As the time passes and we gain additional knowledge because of the hindsight (and hopefully some wisdom gained through experience),

we slowly recognise that all life-experiences bring with them some much-needed lessons.

Lessons we need to grow and progress in our inner life, our real life – lessons in detachment from our own narrow ideas and preferences of what *should* happen in our lives and when. These are lessons in acceptance of what *does* happen and when, and also on how to go with the flow of things and stay as calm as possible despite and underneath all the turmoil on the surface.

### **Lessons in being like the ocean.**

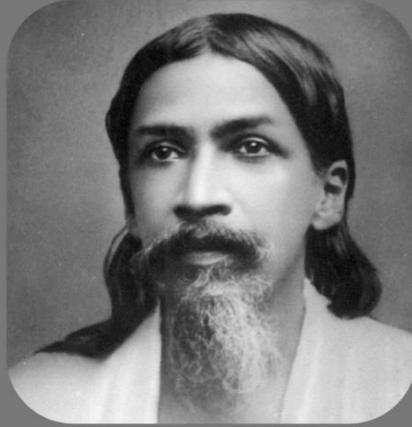
All the surf is only on its shore of the ocean. As our vision moves farther and farther from the shore, there is only a calm vastness. The mighty waves come one after another, hitting the shore and receding one by one. But all this activity is on the surface. In its deepest depths the ocean remains untouched, calm, detached.

Maybe the path of healing, the path of recovering what is lost on the meandering, zig-zag, up-down curves of life, goes through such a seeking, such an effort to move beyond the surface waves to a deeper quietude within. Because “*nothing happens in the cosmic play but at its time and in its foreseen place.*”

Greater equality is the result of this realisation. And with greater equality comes deeper harmony.

Harmony requires that we place things in an order that feels just right. Things outside, things inside. Things tangible, things intangible. Things physical, things subtle. The right order brings a

quietness within. And the quietude brings a calm equality towards everything. Everything around us, everything within.



There can be no firm foundation  
in sadhana without equality,  
samatā.

Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, 29: 129



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True equality does not lead one to inertia and inaction. Rather equality must kindle an aspiration to engage in action that is detached yet a means for growing inner perfection. It prepares us to perform disinterested action, which also helps develop a deeper concern and genuine care for all that is around and within.

Equality, according to the Bhagavad Gita, is not mere disinterestedness but a state of inner poise and wideness. Sri Aurobindo says that this is the foundation of spiritual freedom. And in that freedom, one must do the “work that is to be done,” a phrase, as Sri Aurobindo explains, is used by the Gita with the greatest wideness, including in it all works, and which far exceeds, though it may include, social duties or ethical obligations.

This practice of action in a state of equipoise and wideness leads us to greater self-awareness, a greater harmony. We arrive at a subtler awareness of how the different parts within us often conflict with one another. One going in one direction, another in another. One striving to make greater effort for progress, another rebelling and preferring lethargy. One wanting immediate gratification, another stepping back and remembering to let go of the desire for a preferred result. One seeking greater harmony and quietude, another reveling in chaos and noise.

The more we quieten down these conflicting parts within, over and over, ever so patiently, the more the equality deepens.

But then it begins again. . . something goes amiss and the work of placing things in the right order and in the right place, within and without must resume. This is the patient and constant work of

practicing equality and practicing harmony. Of becoming conscious of the play of the ego.

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“Do not worry or be impatient—all the disharmonies will disappear, but it must be on the true basis of a settled luminous consciousness leaving no room for the play of the ego.”

(The Mother, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 185)

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## **The Quality of Equality – Inner and Outer**

The ‘Equality’ issue of *Renaissance* through its varied offerings delved into the various dimensions of this soul-quality essential for full manifestation of the Mother’s work. Several features shed much-necessary light on how to grow in equality, a state of inner *samatā*. We highlighted some passages from Sri Aurobindo which explain what is Yogic Samatā. His letter dealing with *samatā* and loyalty to truth is especially relevant for our present times.

In *The Synthesis of Yoga* when elaborating upon the Yoga of Self-Perfection, Sri Aurobindo devotes several chapters on Equality describing it as the most essential and fundamental basis for spiritual perfection. The Perfect Equality in Integral Yoga, a three-part feature highlighted the chapter titled ‘*The Perfection of Equality*’ to bring out the significant nuances of this most important quality.

In the feature titled The Perfect Equality of Soul and More, we read the Mother’s explanations of Sri Aurobindo’s phrases – namely, “strong immobility of an immortal spirit” and “the equality of soul”. To have this equality of the soul requires one to know that everything is an expression of the divine Will. But the Mother

emphasises, it also requires at the same time to accept the truth that there is a will higher than that of man which wants things to progress.

From the selections that speak of the significance of equality in the face of misfortunes and attacks from hostile forces to some of the letters of Sri Aurobindo which give us practical advice on cultivating equality with regard to interactions and relations with others, the issue explored a few more crucial aspects on how to cultivate equality. Also featured was an interesting conversation of Sri Aurobindo with a few disciples on the subject of vegetarianism, pity, compassion and more. The deeper point there is about cultivating an attitude of equality towards food preference in spiritual life.

Also included was a prayer from the Mother's *Prayers and Meditations* which instills an aspiration to give oneself to the Divine in peace, serenity and equanimity for the Divine's work to be done. The Mother on Bodily Equality featured passages where she emphasises the necessity of equanimity in the body to receive the divine forces.

The Mother's explanation of why it is critical to treat both genders with a deeper attitude of perfect equality was also an important read.



In the deep peace of equanimity  
the love will grow to its full  
blossoming in a sense of pure  
and constant unity.

THE MOTHER, CWM, 14: 172



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In the feature titled Equality and Supermind, the Mother's words on the significance of equality for living in Auroville are worth deep reflection. In her contribution, On Candytuft, Equanimity and Finding Balance, Sheeba Naaz offered some practical tips on finding that inner equipoise and balance. Auro Ashish reflected on Sri Aurobindo's spiritual realisation in Alipore Jail, and an interesting parable to highlight some nuances of equality and unity.

## **Equality and Democracy**

Like many other terms, the word 'equality' – in its outer dimensions of social, economic and political equality – has become contentious in present times. This is primarily because of its over-simplistic, surface-level, politicised reading.

Sri Aurobindo reminds us that the democratic trinity of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity can find its true essence and fulfilment only when we realise that these are essentially qualities of the soul. In a two-part feature 'The Religion of Humanity and the Democratic Trinity', we included Sri Aurobindo's description of the gains made by the intellectual religion of humanity. His words help us understand the inadequacy of this mind-borne ideological religion in bringing forth a true democracy.

In Sri Aurobindo on Asiatic Democracy, we explored if there is an essential difference between Indian and Western understanding of the true spirit of the democratic trinity of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

## **For International Day of Yoga**

This issue was released on June 21, 2022 – International Day of Yoga. With the hope that more people across the world will aspire to understand the true meaning of Yoga and not confine it to a set of exercises, we included highlighted an essay of Sri Aurobindo, where we find a profound understanding of one of the most popularly quoted phrases from the Bhagavad Gita — योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् or “Yoga is skill in works.”

# Explore the ‘Equality’ Issue

(Clickable links)

- [What is Yogic Samatā? Sri Aurobindo Explains \(Guiding Light\)](#)
- [The Perfect Equality of Soul and More](#)
- [Equality and Supermind: The Mother Explains](#)
- [Equality and Relations with Others: Advice from Sri Aurobindo](#)
- [The Perfect Equality in Integral Yoga \(in 3 parts\)](#)
- [The Mother on Bodily Equality](#)
- [On Vegetarianism, Compassion and Equality - A Conversation with Sri Aurobindo](#)
- [The Mother on Gender Equality](#)
- [Sri Aurobindo on “Asiatic Democracy”](#)
- [Sādhanā: To Give Oneself to Thee in Equanimity](#)
- [On Equality, Misfortunes and Hostile Attacks](#)
- [On Candytuft, Equanimity and Finding Balance \(Sheeba Naaz\)](#)
- [The Religion of Humanity and Democratic Trinity \(in 2 parts\)](#)
- [Some Reflections on Unity and Equality \(Auro Ashish\)](#)
- [Sri Aurobindo on Yoga and Skill in Works](#)



# PEACE

## Of Flowers, Peace and Perfection



*Crinum (Crinum lily, Spider lily)*

*Spiritual significance: Joy of Integral Peace: Calm and tranquil, an unfailing smile.*

Have you had those moments when everything seems perfect? Even if it is just a few moments, but somehow everything feels right in those moments – completely peaceful and perfect? We look around and everything feels as if it is in its right place, as it should be. Nothing is amiss, nothing is wrong. No chaos, no fuss, all is at peace.

I think we all have experienced such moments filled with a peaceful and calm perfection. In the middle of these perfect moments, however, sometimes somewhere some part of the mind begins to ask – can it always be so? Can it always be this perfect?

### **That Morning in the Garden**

But let me go back to that morning when it all was indeed perfect.

I had gone out in the garden to pluck a few curry leaves for the *upma* I was about to cook for breakfast. With curry leaves in my hand, I strolled lazily in the garden. On the spur of a moment, I just looked up, through the branches of the coconut trees and other flowering trees and bushes. And for that moment, everything was perfect. It just was.

A sense of quiet happiness and a peaceful joy came over the heart. There was no pull or push, just a calmness in the heart. Mind did not bring up any of the thousand things that are normally hovering around it, routine things that consume a busy morning, or any of the non-routine things that we falsely assume are our business to resolve. Just for those few moments all was perfectly right with my life. All was alright with the world.

Most of the mornings when I am out in the garden, my mind generally gets busy preparing a list of tasks that need my attention. The bushes that need pruning, weeds that need pulling, plants that need re-potting, vines that need supporting, areas that need cleaning, etc. But that morning, there was nothing to be done. All was just perfect, as it should be.

Everything was in its right place and everything was as it should have been. Everything felt perfect, right up to the plant that was almost dying, the last dead leaf in the flower bed, and the over-filled compost bin. I was simply there, just there, midst the plants and flowers, and everything was perfect.

Such moments are precious, such moments are rare. That is why we feel so immensely grateful for these moments. We must cherish them deeply, keep them safe in our hearts, relive them via memory. And we must aspire to have more of such moments, to gradually build upon what we felt during these rare moments.

### **The Mother's Grace**

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“The Grace is always there, eternally present and active, but Sri Aurobindo says that it is extremely difficult for us to be in a condition to receive it, keep it and make use of what it gives us.

[...]

To receive the divine grace, not only must one have a great aspiration, but also a sincere humility and an absolute trust.”

(The Mother, CWM, Vol 16, p. 250)

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*Spiritual significance: Integral Opening to the Light; the assurance of the coming peace and joy. (Common name: King's mantle, Bush clock vine).*

It is indeed Her Grace alone that some gifts offered by my little garden over the past few months gave me some valuable reminders. These reminders are for how to be more open and receptive to the Grace; how to keep working on my aspiration, faith, sincerity, purification, peace. And also, how to patiently wait for those rare moments when everything is perfect.

Take a look.

### **When Flowers are the Reminders**

A pre-requisite is to seek support only in the Divine. This does not mean there is no need for any personal effort. On the contrary, it only means to enhance the intrinsic quality of all personal effort by infusing it with an unflinching trust in the Divine which guides, supports, and energises all our efforts.



*Spiritual Significance: Seeking for Support only in the Divine; The Divine is the only support that never fails. (Common name: St. Vincent lilac, Italian jasmine)*

Given that we are made up of many different parts and not fully unified in our being, some parts within us may be more resistant and hence not ready to trust the Divine support. Such obstinate parts within us, especially the most crusty physical mind in us must go through a conversion process of sort.

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“In the human physical mind there is always a tendency not to understand or to misunderstand and to interpret according to its own notions. That can only be removed by the Light in the mind and the power everywhere which refuses to accept suggestions of disturbance.”

(Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 28, p. 182)

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*Spiritual Significance: Conversion of the Physical Mind  
Ready to understand everything and to grow continually.  
(Common name: Amaryllis)*

## **Flowers of Peace**

When restlessness in the vital-emotional nature clouds the consciousness and creates a discouraging inner environment or brings in despair and sadness, we become less receptive to the higher Force, less open to the higher Light. That is when we must call upon the Peace. Because peace is the first foundation, Sri Aurobindo reminds us.

Peace is not only fundamental for inner harmony, but also equally good for outer health.



*Spiritual significance: Peace in the Nerves; Indispensable for good health. (Common name: Beach gardenia, zebra wood)*

We also must call for peace that comes from the cessation of a clinging desire or want for something.

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“One cannot overcome one’s desires by making oneself weak but only in strength, balance and peace.”

(The Mother, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 255)

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Much of the hard, rough crust in our outer parts – physical, vital, mental – that continues to resist the working of the Light has its deep roots in the hidden, subconscious layers of our being. Only the Higher Light and Force can gradually purify the subconscious. But for these higher powers to descend, peace is the first condition.



*Spiritual Significance: Peace in the Vital; the result of the abolition of the desires. (Common name: Orange Jessamine)*

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“The subconscious is to be penetrated by the light and made a sort of bed-rock of truth, a store of right impressions, right physical responses to the Truth. Strictly speaking, it will not be subconscious at all, but a sort of bank of true values held ready for use.”

(Sri Aurobindo, CWSA, Vol. 31, p. 612).”

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*Spiritual Significance: Supramental Influence in the Subconscious; under its modest appearance, it is a great force of transformation. (Common name: Firecracker flower)*

Slowly, over time, with intense and sincere aspiration but mostly with the Divine Grace, the subconscious may begin to loosen its grip.



*Spiritual significance: Power of Truth in the Subconscious; it can only act when sincerity is perfect. (Common name: Cape honeysuckle)*

That is how the Truth from above begins to work, slowly, and in response to a sincere call, a true aspiration from below. Peace, patience, perseverance, trust and sincerity are indispensable.

In time, a miracle does happen. And all is peaceful and perfect.

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“At every moment all the unforeseen, the unexpected, the unknown is before us — and what happens to us depends mostly on the intensity and purity of our faith.”

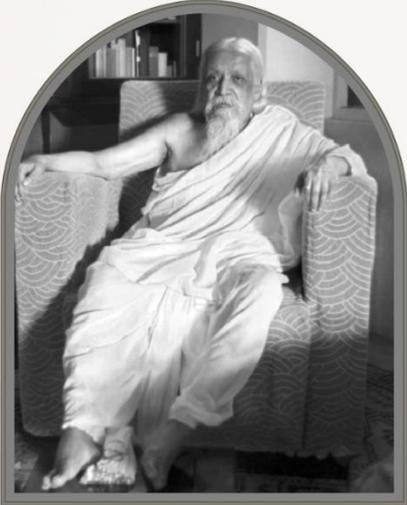
(The Mother, CWM, Vol. 14, p. 80)

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*Spiritual significance: Miracle; Marvellous, strange, unexpected.(Common name: Ironwood)*

For those moments at least, everything is perfect. Those moments are miraculous indeed when we truly begin to feel that everything is perfect. Everything is at Peace. Just as it should be. As it happened that morning.



*Peace is a sign of mukti—Ananda  
moves towards siddhi.*

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- SRI AUROBINDO, CWSA, 29:157

In our exploration of the 12 attributes that the Mother says are essential for full manifestation of Her Work, we have now come to Peace. As with others, here also we explore the soul-quality of Peace in its various dimensions – inner and outer, individual and collective.

The Mother once said:

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“It is by a quiet, strong and persistent peace that the true victories can be won.”

(CWM, Vol. 14, p. 138)

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What are the victories we are trying to win? Over our nature’s defects and imperfections; over the attacks from adverse forces that keep shoving us down every time we make an attempt to rise above our lower nature; over all the darkness within and without that tries to steer us away from the sunlit path.

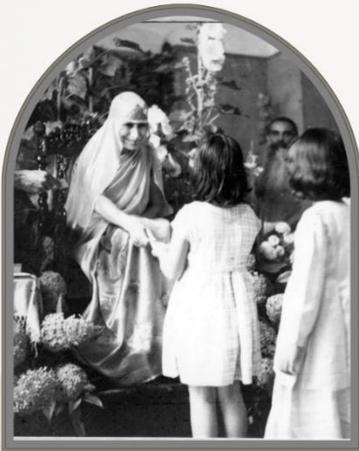
But none of these victories are possible unless we have established a firm base of peace, quietude and calm. Peace is the first foundation, said Sri Aurobindo. And that is what was highlighted in our Guiding Light feature.

A prayer from the Mother’s *Prayers and Meditations* will inspire the readers to pray for the transformation of the ordinary consciousness and for uniting with the supreme consciousness so that peace may descend upon all earth.

In another feature, we highlighted some letters of Sri Aurobindo where he speaks of the necessity of having a solid and settled basis of higher Peace so that the *ādhār* is made ready for descent of other powers such as Force, Light, Knowledge and Ananda. A state of absolute Peace and Silence is also essential for the manifestation of the Eternal Will, as the Mother reminds us in the passage featured in the article titled ‘Peace and Transformation in Integral Yoga.’

## Peace and Sadhana

Another feature will remind the readers that peace is the essential and true remedy for all difficulties on the path. The key is to detach from and not identify with the wrong movements in the nature that are bound to come on the path of sadhana. Sri Aurobindo advises to go on aspiring for greater peace because only in inner peace and silence the Divine Force can work to transform the nature.



*The Divine's Peace must dwell  
constantly in our hearts.*

*The Mother, CWM, 14:140*



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We also featured a few selections from Sri Aurobindo's letters and the Mother's conversations which speak of the complexity of the

being and also on how to work upon the parts of the being which are less open to the Divine. These passages also highlight that an inner poise of peace and calm prepares a sādḥaka to meet the attacks of adverse forces on the path.

In the piece titled ‘Step Back, Keep Peace, Grow in Receptivity’ readers are reminded of the Mother’s highly practical advice on how to keep one’s peace. We also featured the Mother’s advice on how to invoke peace for a conscious sleep and establishing a settled peace in mind. For aspirants on the sunlit path, more practical guidance from the Mother and Sri Aurobindo is found in the piece titled ‘On Being Calm and Conquering Anger.’

## **Tales and Stories, Divine Humour and More**

Sri Aurobindo once said that if one is looking for peace, one should go to Ramana Maharishi! What does that mean? Readers will find out in the Divine Humour section which highlights the specific conversation where this matter came up. The conversation also provides insightful perspectives which can help widen and deepen our understanding of peace in Integral Yoga. Peace, Persistence and Renunciation: Two Parables of Sri Ramakrishna will delight readers with two short tales which bring out two distinct but complementary aspects of peace.

The feature titled ‘Peace through Culture and Education’ by Kireet Joshi emphasised that culture for peace implies a new orientation of human consciousness; it implies eventually transformation of human consciousness. In another piece titled ‘Indians in Adversity – The Hidden Strength Within’, Chamanlal Gupta, a senior member of Sri

Aurobindo Ashram recounted the time when he was trapped for 30 hours under a leaking hangar at Mumbai airport in July 2005.

In the ‘Book of the Month’ feature we highlighted a Meditation on Peace, the Real Truth of Our Being from Anilbaran Roy’s beautiful collection *Songs from the Soul*. For our flower-meditation series, a new author joined the Renaissance team – Chitra Kolluru, who reflected on ‘Indian Mulberry and Indispensable Peace.’

## **War and Peace**

Mankind’s Illusions about “The Passing of War” featured excerpts from Sri Aurobindo’s insightful essay titled ‘*The Passing of War?*’ which was written in the early months of World War I. The piece titled ‘Of Moral Violence and Gandhian Ahimsa’ featured a short piece by M.P. Pandit, titled ‘*Violence*’. And apropos of this, we also included some remarks made by Sri Aurobindo regarding the methods of Satyagraha and Ahimsa applied by Gandhi during India’s freedom struggle.

The issue also featured a letter from Sri Aurobindo where he spoke of WWII as the “Mother’s War.” A few excerpts from the book *On the Mother: The Chronicle of a Manifestation and Ministry*, which speak of the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s yogic work in WW2 were also included in the feature titled ‘This is the Mother’s War”: Of WW2, Victory and Atomic Bomb.’

## Explore the 'Peace' Issue

(Clickable links)

- Sri Aurobindo on Peace, the First Foundation (Guiding Light)
- For Peace, Go to Ramana Maharshi (Divine Humour - Talks with Sri Aurobindo)
- Peace through Culture and Education (Kireet Joshi)
- Peace, the True Remedy for Difficulties on the Path
- Mankind's Illusions about "The Passing of War"
- Of Moral Violence and Gandhian Ahimsa (M.P. Pandit)
- Peace and Transformation in Integral Yoga
- Keep Your Poise and Resist the Attacks
- Peace in the Mind and Having a Peaceful Sleep
- Peace, Persistence and Renunciation: Two Parables of Sri Ramakrishna (Tales and Stories)
- "This is the Mother's War": Of WW2, Victory and Atomic Bomb (K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar)
- Sādhanā: "Peace, Peace Upon All the Earth"
- Step Back, Keep Peace, Grow in Receptivity
- Of Indian Mulberry and Indispensable Peace (Chitra Kolluru)
- On Being Calm and Conquering Anger
- Indians in Adversity — The Hidden Strength Within (Chamanlal Gupta)



# FLIPBOOKS ON 12 QUALITIES

(Clickable links)

- [Prayer for India](#)
- [Inspiring Words on Sincerity](#)
- [Sincerity and Religion](#)
- [Sincerity and Politics](#)
- [Sri Aurobindo and August 15](#)
- [The Japanese Flower-artist: A Tale Told by the Mother](#)
- [Sri Aurobindo on Humility](#)
- [Humility, Nobility and Aryan Character](#)
- [The Mother on Humility](#)
- [Wise Sayings on Humility](#)
- [The Mother on Gratitude](#)
- [Sri Aurobindo on Perseverance](#)
- [The Mother on Perseverance](#)
- [Agni in the Veda](#)
- [Sri Aurobindo on Aspiration](#)
- [The Mother on Aspiration](#)
- [Sri Aurobindo on Divine Force and Receptivity](#)
- [The Mother on Divine Force and Receptivity](#)
- [The Mother on Progress](#)
- [Sri Aurobindo on Progress for the Humanity](#)
- [On Courage – Words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother](#)
- [Sri Aurobindo on Kurukshetra and Kshatriya Spirit](#)
- [The Mother on Goodness](#)
- [Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Good and Evil](#)
- [Sri Aurobindo on Equality](#)
- [The Mother on Equality](#)
- [Sri Aurobindo on Peace](#)

## FEATURED BOOKS

Book Excerpts (clickable links)

- History and Culture of India: A New Approach (Kittu Reddy)
- Bhārat Bhārati (Maithilisharan Gupt)
- Sītā's Banishment by Rāma in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśam* (Kireet Joshi)
- Rhythm of the Veda: Know Your Devas (Sushrut Badhe)
- Deliberations on The Life Divine – Vol. 1 (Ananda Reddy)
- The Tale of My Exile: Twelve Years in Andamans (Barindra Ghosh)
- Our Heroes: Param Vir Chakra Recipients - Major Somnath Sharma (Shyam Kumari)
- Pursuit of Goodness - A Resource for Teachers (Kireet Joshi)
- Songs from the Soul (Anilbaran Roy)

Book Reviews (clickable link)

- Reading 'Abhaya' in the Light of Sri Aurobindo (Beloo Mehra)

# INSIGHTFUL CONVERSATIONS

(Clickable links, with videos)

- Indian History in Indian Education: Beyond Ideologies and Politics (with Pranjal Garg and Neha Singh)
- A Conversation on the Art of Heritage Photography (with Madhu Jagdish)
- A Creative Gurukul for a New Age (with Jayashree Ashok, B. Ashok and Reshma Madhusudan)
- Krishna's Butter: Taking Wisdom of Bhagavad Gita to Children and Youth (with Bhawana Badhe and Sushrut Badhe)
- Indian Approach to Psychology: An Educator's Experience and Insights (with Aditi Kaul)
- *Antaryatra: An Artist's Journey Within* (with Bindu Popli)
- Reimagining Tales from Purāna-s and Itihāsa-s: A Writer's Journey of Engaging with Epic Heroines (with Saiswaroop Iyer)
- Exploring Indian Culture and History through Curated Heritage Trails (with Sawani Shetye)
- The Timeless Tradition of Storytelling – An Art that Educates, Inspires and Elevates (with Deepa Kiran)
- Bringing Indian Culture in Schools: An Educationist's Experience and Insights (with Challamayi Reddy)
- Krīḍā- Making Indian Games Cool! A conversation with authors of 'The Games India Plays' (with Sangeeta Goswami and Amitabh Satyam)

With Gratitude  
to  
the Mother and Sri Aurobindo



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**AUROPUBLICATIONS**

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