



Pearls from
Sri Aurobindo
& *the Mother*

Krishan Sethi

Pearls From Sri Aurobindo & The Mother

A Collection of Writings on Integral Yoga and Spiritual Life

Krishan Sethi

Sri Aurobindo Society
Pondicherry, India



Sri Aurobindo Society

AUROPUBLICATIONS

POWERFUL THOUGHTS, INSPIRING VISION

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Pearls From Sri Aurobindo & The Mother

This book is dedicated to
Sri Aurobindo and The Mother
whose teachings have illuminated the path
for countless seekers



And in loving memory of
Shri Krishan Chander Sethi
(7 September 1940–23 November 2024)

*A true child of The Mother who dedicated his life
to spreading the message of Integral Yoga*

Foreword

Krishan Sethi, as a child of the Mother, has exemplified a dynamic spirit in both his inner and outer work. His deep commitment and dedication to Her have allowed him to offer much of his life's journey at Her feet. Years of sadhana – both external and internal, have shaped him, and it is through these reflections on his own journey that he is able to inspire others, both implicitly and explicitly.

An avid reader and a seeker of wisdom, Krishan bhai immerses himself in the teachings of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo, which have provided him with profound insights into the nature of life and existence.

I wish that this new book of his serves as a guiding light for all those who are on the path of seeking and spiritual aspiration. May it inspire them to continue their inner and outer work with renewed vigour and understanding.

Tara Jauhar, Chairperson
Sri Aurobindo Ashram
(Delhi Branch)

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Section 1: Spiritual Masters

Sri Aurobindo's and The Mother's Action in World War II

World War II began in 1939, a year after Sri Aurobindo's accident and ended in 1945 with the victory of the Allies. India's long struggle for liberty came to an end in 1947 when she became independent. This was one of the most exciting phases in our 12 years stay with Sri Aurobindo. We had the unique opportunity of watching with him, from his room and, following step-by-step, the long course and rapid development of these two historic events: on the one hand, the great danger to Europe and the whole world; on the other, opportunity given to India to gain her freedom by her co-operation with the Allies.

We shared with Sri Aurobindo his hopes and fears, his anticipations, predictions and prophecies. He allowed us some glimpses into his action and gave a calm assurance of the victory of the divine cause. For the Mother had declared that it was her war.

The account will also bring to light Sri Aurobindo's acute political insight and wide knowledge of military affairs. Although he had left public life in 1910 and lived thereafter in seclusion for nearly half a century, he always kept in touch with all world-movements through outer and inner means. Perhaps people will find it difficult to believe and many will flatly deny that such a spiritual force exists; and it will be hard for people to swallow that, a man acquiring and possessing it can apply it to an individual or cosmic purpose. But fortunately, we have Sri Aurobindo's own word for it and our personal experience in its support. In fact, his Integral Yoga aims at nothing less than bringing down the supramental consciousness and changing the present terrestrial consciousness by its dynamic power and light.

Sri Aurobindo's Support for the Allied against Hitler

Long before Hitler's actual invasion of Poland, Sri Aurobindo had seen this dark Asuric Power rising in Germany and striding over Europa, making Hitler its demoniac instrument, a pseudo-colossus, a self-acclaimed Napoleon. Therefore, he supported the Allies and warned India of the forthcoming peril, much to the chagrin and indignation of our blind countrymen. Future events proved his forecast right to the letter.

For all the war news, the inmates of Sri Aurobindo Ashram had to depend on the daily newspaper since they were not supposed to have

radios. Somebody in the town began to supply a short bulletin but when the war had taken a full-fledged turn, the radio news was transmitted to Sri Aurobindo's room. Sri Aurobindo, who was once an opponent of the British rule in India, came to support the Allies against the threat of worldwide domination by Hitler. Sri Aurobindo now listened carefully to health bulletins about Churchill when he had pneumonia. He even helped him with his force to recover.

Nirodbaran wrote, I still remember two crucial periods when Sri Aurobindo intervened to turn the direction of the war. These were, firstly when Hitler flouted Holland's neutrality and then penetrated Belgium. Another crucial period was when Stalin held a pistol threatening at England and was almost joining hands with Hitler. Most of the people were dismayed and felt there would be no chance for the divine, if such a formidable alliance were to take place.

When seeing Hitler sweeping like a meteor over Europe, a Sadhak cried in despair to Sri Aurobindo, where is the Divine? Where is your world of hope? Sri Aurobindo replied calmly, "Hitler is not immortal". Then the famous battle of Dunkirk and the perilous retreat where the whole Allied army was exposed to the enemy's attack from land and air with the bright summer sun shining above. All of a sudden a fog gathered from nowhere and gave unexpected protection to the retreating army. We said, "It seems the fog helped the evacuation". To which Sri Aurobindo remarked, "Yes, the fog is rather unusual at this time". We of course understood what he meant. It was the after the fall of Dunkirk and the capitulation of France that Sri Aurobindo began to apply his force more vigorously in favour of the Allies, and he had "the satisfaction of seeing the rush of German victory almost immediately arrested and the tide of war begin to turn in the opposite direction."

Fall of Dunkirk and surrender by France in 1940

Why did Sri Aurobindo support the British in the war? Sri Aurobindo said, "It was for two reasons that I support the British, for India's own interest and for humanity; and the reasons I have given are external ones, these are spiritual reasons too".

Ideal one: You should not think of it as a fight for certain nations against others or even for India; It is a struggle for an Ideal that has to establish itself on earth in the life of humanity, for a Truth that has yet to

realise itself fully and against a darkness and falsehood that are trying to overwhelm the earth and mankind in the immediate future. It is the forces behind the battle that have to be seen and not this or that superficial circumstance. There cannot be the slightest doubt that if one wins, there will be an end of all such freedom and hope of light and truth and the work that has to be done will be subjected to conditions which would make it humanly impossible. There will be a reign of falsehood and darkness, a cruel oppression and degradation for most of the human race such as people in this country do not dream of and cannot yet at all realise it.

Ideal two: If the other side that has declared itself for the free future of humanity triumphs, this terrible danger will have been averted and conditions will have been created in which there will be a chance of the Ideal to grow, for the Divine Work to be done, for the spiritual Truth for which we stand to establish itself on the earth. Those who fight for this cause are fighting for the Divine and against the threatened reign of the Asura.

These two extracts show Sri Aurobindo's vision of the play of forces. They are enough to clearly show Sri Aurobindo's vision of the play of forces, how they try through the use of human instruments to fulfil their purpose and also what Sri Aurobindo's part was in this mysterious play. Following are some extracts from the talks Sri Aurobindo's attendants had with their Master. These talks demonstrate Sri Aurobindo's close watch on the trend of the War, his comments on the military movements of the contending parties, sometimes his anticipation of their strategic moves and the consequences that would ensue, or his own suggestions about the courses that could be followed.

Sri Aurobindo's Vision of War

Question. Hitler's declaration that before 15th August, the War is to be finished and peace agreed upon seems significant.

Answer. Sri Aurobindo: That is the sign that he is the enemy of our work. And from the values involved in the conflict, it should be quite clear that what is behind him is the Asuric, the Titanic power.

Question. It is strange how he takes his decisions.

Answer. Sri Aurobindo: It is not he who takes the decisions. The being behind him decided.

On 15th August 1940, on Sri Aurobindo's birthday, the radio news at noon said that 144 German planes had been brought down over England in half a day, the biggest number so far. We commented that it was the result of the Darshan. Sri Aurobindo laughed and said, "The day of Hitler's triumphal entry into England!"

These talks sum up Sri Aurobindo's vision of the War. They embody his active interest and participation by his spiritual Force in it. One wonders what would have been the fate of the world without Sri Aurobindo's actual intervention. Nirodbaran wrote, "I often marvelled at the grasp he showed of military affairs. Once I asked him in my letter whether he had any latent military capacity in him, his reply was, "Not in this life". When somebody asked the Mother why England was meeting reverses in spite of Sri Aurobindo's support, she replied, "If he had not helped Britain, she would have been swallowed up by Hitler long ago".

Sri Aurobindo's Divine Diplomacy

When America joined the Allies and Hitler attacked Russia, undoubtedly, behind both these movements, Sri Aurobindo's divine diplomacy played a great part just as his intervention or what he called the Divine intervention saving England from invasion by Hitler.

Mother was Occupied with the Result of the Occult Force

Sri Aurobindo had said, "I am not occupied with details of occult working. I have left them to the Mother. She often hears what is said at a distance, meets sadhaks on the subtle planes, talks to them. She saw exactly what was going to happen in the recent European trouble. We know whatever we have known for our work."

The Mother, by her occult powers, could see how Hitler was indeed under the domination of an evil force. She later said, "Hitler was in contact with a being whom he considered to be the Supreme: this being constantly gave him advice and directed his actions, told him all he had to do. *Hitler used to retire into solitude* and remain there if it was necessary to come into contact with his guide and receive from him inspirations which he carried out later very faithfully. This being which Hitler took for the Supreme was quite plainly an Asura, one who is called 'the Lord of Falsehood' in occultism, but who proclaimed himself "The Lord of the Nations". Generally, he used to appear to Hitler wearing a silver cuirass,

body armour and helmet; a kind of flame came out of his head and there was an atmosphere of dazzling light around him, so dazzling that Hitler could hardly look at him. He used to tell Hitler everything that has to be done – he played with him as with a monkey or a mouse. He had decided clearly to make Hitler commit all possible extravagances till the day he would break his neck.

Lord of Falsehood and the Mother's Action and Sovereign Voice

Finding Hitler going from strength to strength, the Mother resolved to imitate the special form in which the Lord of falsehood always appeared to him at his secret headquarters in the Bavarian Alps and inspired him to fantastic actions which yet proved triumphant. Taking the same form in her subtle body and exteriorising her consciousness, the Mother went to the Führer and commanded him to launch on the most fantastic-seeming action of all: an attack on Stalin's Russia, his publicly avowed ally. Hitler, as usual, accepted the order implicitly. In view of the unexpected, brilliant successes in the past, there was no question now of his doubting the new mandate delivered out of the same flashing presence by the "sovereign voice". He resolved to unleash a sudden onslaught on his former partner was unbreakably set.

In October 1939, Sri Aurobindo wrote a poem on Hitler in which what he predicted came so literally true!

The closing lines are,

*Thus driven he must stride on conquering all,
Threatening and clamouring, brutal, invincible,
Until he meets upon his storm-swept road
A greater devil – or thunderstroke of God.*

How did Hitler come to meet a greater devil? What made him commit this colossal blunder? We human beings are no match for an Asura. Only an Asura can "tear the guts out of Another Asura". In one of her talks, the Mother was asked, "if Russia has been on Hitler's side, would things have been better?" She replied, "Oh No! Then there would have been no hope for the world. It is by our *coup be maître* that they were on opposite sides. This is divine diplomacy, it was very successful".

(laughter) But the world does not know that a Supreme Force had worked for its deliverance.

“A Power worked, but none knew when it came”. (Savitri)

Sri Aurobindo’s Birth Anniversaries and Coincidences

Nazism, according to Sri Aurobindo, the spearhead of an all-out offensive from the pit. Its success would have brought the beginning of an age in which the diabolic would have reigned over the human, making the advent of divine forces impossible for untold centuries. Hence the Second World War was unlike other wars.

August 15th, 1940

A month after 15 August, 1940, on the same day, 15 September, 1940, Sri Aurobindo said smiling, “England has destroyed hundred and seventy five German planes, a very big number. Now the invasion will be difficult. Hitler has lost his chance after the fall of France. He had really missed the bus! If after the French collapse he had invaded England, by now he would have been in Asia. Now another force has been set up against him. Still the danger has not passed.”

Apropos of this battle and its date, the editor of the *Mother India*, wrote, “Hitler fixed in 1940 the 15th August as the day on which he would complete his conquest of Western Europe by broadcasting from Buckingham Palace the collapse of Britain, and on that day the largest toll so far has taken of the Luftwaffe. We will designate it as the turning point in the Battle of Britain.”

Amal Kiran (K.D. Sethna) in his article, ‘The War behind the War’, wrote, “Sri Aurobindo stood alone in his sun-bright seeing of the war, inner significance. He declared his unrestricted sympathy, his unconditional support “whatever may happen”, as his own words had it in his message to the Governor of Madras in connection with the Viceroy’s Fund. At the back of those words was the entire mystical puissance of an Integral Yoga, puissance that worked secretly like a dynamo sending out word currents, driving a vast invisible strength into the armies and navies and air forces ranged against Hitler.

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Sri Aurobindo's Cave of Tapasya

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to France on May 3, 2022, came at an interesting and symbolic time of confluence in India's history. While India and France were celebrating 75 years of their diplomatic relations, India was celebrating its 75th year of independence and was also commemorating the 150th birth anniversary of one of her most global and powerful philosophers and sages, Sri Aurobindo, who had made the then French enclave of Pondicherry, his seat of refuge, 'Cave of Tapasya' for four decades.

As one of Sri Aurobindo's most poetic biographers, K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, described it, "Sri Aurobindo chose Pondicherry as his 'Cave of Tapasya', because it was then a French territory, removed further away from Calcutta than Chandernagore."

A well-known personality and patriot of the region, K.V. Rangaswami Iyengar, had been told by his Guru Nagai Japata, also known as Sri Vasudeva, 1829 of Thanjavur, at the time of his passing, that a Yogi from the North – Uttara Yogi – would one day come to the South.

Rangaswami recognised in Sri Aurobindo, his Guru's 'Uttara Yogi'.

To the British-Indian administration around 1909, Sri Aurobindo came across as the only nationalist with a pan-India stature who still held out, while most of his compatriots such as Lokmanya Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Aswini Kumar Dutt, Lala Lajpat Rai had either been deported, interned or sent into exile or brutally killed in the protest march.

Sri Aurobindo continued to be the master of the game of revolution, the 'ring-leader' who eluded their net. Andrew Fraser, the then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, in his report to the Governor General, had written earlier, "He is the ring leader. He is able, cunning, fanatical.... He is regarded and spoken of by all as disciples regard their Master, But he has kept himself, like a careful and valued General, out of sight of the "enemy". For the British thus, a "man as dangerous as Arabinda Ghose",

wrote historian M.N. Das in his opus, *India under Morley and Minto*, “should not be allowed to remain at large.”

Had it perhaps not been for France and for successive French governments, administrators and governors from 1910 onwards, who prevented and circumvented numerous efforts and pressures exerted by the British to deport him, Sri Aurobindo would have been sent into exile to one of those remote British enclaves either in Africa or the Far East.

Fortunately, it was France’s lot in the 20th century, as far as Sri Aurobindo was concerned, to become the agency, the instrument through which Providence ensured that the sage was allowed, undisturbed, to continue with his sadhana, his contemplation and with his action of rekindling the narrative, the vision and aspiration of India as the spiritual leader and teacher of the world.

For years, the British intelligence tried to get hold of Sri Aurobindo. There were several attempts to even get him kidnapped. As per historical records, seditious literature was planted, through a ruse, in the well of the house in which he lived. When the planted consignment was unearthed, Sri Aurobindo asked that the police be informed. The investigating magistrate, M. Nandot, a Frenchman, who came with the Police Chief of Pondicherry, was so impressed with Sri Aurobindo’s vast collection of books and papers in Greek and Latin, all scattered around, that he was convinced that a person who was steeped in Greek and Latin could never indulge in illegal acts. Nandot exclaimed, “*Il sait du latin, Il sait du Grec*” (“He knows Latin, he knows Greek!”) and left, “the prosecutors became friends and admirers.”

The trouble, wrote Srinivasa Iyengar, “was not with the French, but with the British spies in Pondicherry and the British authorities in India. For the French, Sri Aurobindo was an honoured political exile, entitled to their protection.”

The British tried other means as well. Word was sent that the British Government of India would “be pleased to grant him asylum at a secluded and salubrious hill-resort like Darjeeling to pursue his Yoga in complete freedom”, and that Lord Carmichael, then Governor of Bengal “himself would like to discuss philosophy with him.” Sri Aurobindo

dismissed it as “ointment to catch a fly.” There was talk of the British having convinced the French to offer him “safe passage” to Algeria where he could live in peace with his chosen disciples. Some of his compatriots dithered for a while wondering whether it would not be a good idea, to move out of India and shift base to Djibouti, Tripoli, or French Indochina? But Sri Aurobindo “was firm. He wouldn’t by himself move out of Pondicherry. That was his chosen place – or God-directed sanctuary – for continuing the work... that was his Gaya where he would one day complete his siddhi...”

British ingenuity surpassed all efforts of the past, when in a final attempt of sorts to nab Sri Aurobindo, they made an “attempt to exchange France's Indian possessions”, especially Pondicherry, “for certain areas in the West Indies.”

It is said that the Mother’s brother, Matteo Alfassa, a formidable administrator in the French administration; an intellectual and a man of great standing, at some time was Governor-General of French Equatorial Africa, got the move scuttled from Paris. Pondicherry continued to remain French and Sri Aurobindo continued his tapasya there.

The Raymond Poincaré Administration from 1913 to 1920, “firmly decided against the proposal. Pondicherry remained French, and Sri Aurobindo continued his tapasya there.”

Sri Aurobindo’s constant companions in those early days in Pondicherry were Tamil revolutionaries and thinkers such as Mahakavi Subramania Bharati, Srinivasachariar, Subramania Siva, Nagaswami Aiyar and V.V.S. Aiyar – a close associate of Veer Savarkar. Well-known Indian French citizens of Pondicherry too provided him protection and succour and rallied around him whenever the need arose.

It was because of Sri Aurobindo’s presence and the profound respect that the French administration and French intelligentsia held for him that transfer of French enclaves to India was smoothly carried out.

The Governor of French India, at the time of independence, Francois Baron, for instance, “considered himself a disciple of Sri Aurobindo”.

Two encounters had transformed Baron's life. He had become a man of action because he met General Gaulle; and he "became a mystic and thinker because he met Sri Aurobindo."

The legendary French statesman and war hero Maurice Schumann (1911–1998), later French Foreign Minister under Georges Pompidou, Minister for Scientific Research and Social Affairs, a close collaborator of General De Gaulle in the French Resistance movement, known as the 'Voice of France' for his inspiring broadcast from exile, writer and thinker, called on Sri Aurobindo in September 1947. Schumann was sent to explore the possibilities of setting up a special cultural institute or university in Pondicherry as a confluence of Indian and French culture and also to discuss the transition.

Aurobindo, who himself spoke French well, granted an audience to Schumann, with the Mother playing a crucial role. Sri Aurobindo, the most powerful Indian thinker, interrupted his confinement which started 21 years ago to receive Governor Baron and Maurice Schuman. Once only, 19 years ago, Sri Aurobindo had interrupted his confinement to talk with the poet Rabindranath Tagore. Going back to the meeting he had with Governor Baron and Mr. Schumann, a 45-minute meeting, during which he declared, "France, after India, is the country for which I have the most fondness and respect." Sri Aurobindo assured Schumann of "his full support" for the proposal "as a permanent meeting place between France and India."

His meeting with Sri Aurobindo was widely reported then. Schumann was also received by Mahatma Gandhi and later Nehru, leading to the gradual and peaceful merger of the French enclaves. Regarding Schumann, one of Sri Aurobindo's leading French disciples, Philippe Barbier Saint Hilaire (Pavitra) was to write, "He is a man who is open and intelligent, capable of understanding Sri Aurobindo's goal, wide with ideas, already a bit of a politician, but an idealist, all the same."

His meeting with Sri Aurobindo led Schumann to convene a conference in Pondicherry of the French representatives of the five enclaves, which relayed the following message, in Schumann's words: "We salute Independent India. We know perfectly well that the whole of India will one day be independent. We would like that the departure of

France as a power and as an authority should coincide with an agreement regarding Pondicherry which would become a window open to France, to the whole French entity, French culture, and the French language.” This was in stark contrast to Portugal’s attitude towards her Indian colony.

Of his meeting with Sri Aurobindo, Schumann would recall decades later, “The extraordinary radiance of the divine life was there on his face. I always thought that faith manifested as a breath. One feels, in certain circumstances, the Breath of God – Spiritus – it means ‘breath’, and felt it as soon as I saw him. One had the impression, although there was no artificial light falling on him, yet he was himself a radiant centre.”

As Prime Minister Modi visits Paris this significant year, it will be, in a sense, a reiteration of that special bond, that symbolic past, and the memory of that “radiant centre”, inspiring the civilisational partnership between our two nations.

Bibliography

The writer is a member of National Executive Committee of BJP and the Director of Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation.

Working of The Mother's Force

Sri Aurobindo has revealed to us many marvels that the future will bring to earth and has encouraged to prepare ourselves. 1

The Mother's Force

Nothing can be done except through the force of the Mother. All has to be done by the working of the Mother's force aided by your aspiration, devotion and surrender.

What is The Mother's Force?

Question: You often speak of the "Mother's Force". What is It?

Answer: It is the Divine Force which works to remove the ignorance and change the nature into the divine nature.

The Force of Prakriti and The Mother's Force

When I speak of the Mother's Force, I do not speak of the force of Prakriti which carries in it things of ignorance but of the higher Force of the Divine that descends from above to transform the Nature.

No, there is no intention on the Mother's part. It is yourself who by coming to the Mother became aware of your mistake.

Descent and Working of The Mother's Force

There is a force which accompanies the growth of the new consciousness and at once grows with it and helps it come about and protect itself. This force is the Yoga Shakti. It is here coiled up and asleep in all centres of our being (Chakras) and is at the base of what is called in Tantra Kundalini Shakti. But it is also above us, above our head as the Divine Force, not coiled up, involved, asleep but awake, all powerful and strong; extended and wide. It is there waiting for manifestation and to this Force we have to open ourselves – to the power of the Mother. In the Mind it manifests as the divine mind – force or a universal mind-force. It

can do everything that a personal mind cannot do; it is a Yogic mind-force, or a Yogic body-force.

It can be awake in all these forms, busting outwards and upwards, extending itself into wideness from below, or it can descend and become there a definite power for things. Also it can pour into the body, working, establishing its reign, extending into wideness from above, link the lowest in us with the highest above us, release the individual into cosmic universality or into absoluteness and transcendence. 2

All this is prepared and assisted, furthered by the work of the psychic being in the heart centre. The more it is open, in front, active, the quicker, safer, easier the working of the Force can be. The more love and Bhakti and surrender grow in the heart, the more rapid and perfect becomes the evolution of Sadhana. For the descent and transformation imply at the same time an increasing contact and union with the Divine.

Oneness with The Mother

The consciousness of the mind, life and body is ordinarily in each person blocked in itself; it is narrow, not wide, sees itself as the centre of everything, judges all things according to its own impressions. It does not know anything as it really is. But when by Yoga, one begins to open to the true consciousness, this barrier begins to break down. One feels the mind grow wider, until, you feel all things in yourself, yourself one with all things. You then become the Mother's universal consciousness. 3

The Mother's Force in the Material

Question: When can it be said that the material is ready for the Divine?

Answer: If the material consciousness is open, feels the Mother's Force working in it and responds, then it is ready. 11.6.1933

Question: Is it that the Mother begins to work on the physical nature after the inner parts are made ready?

Answer: It is the usual course, but some work is always being done in the inner parts all the time, because they are interdependent.

The Universal and Transforming Power

Question: The more we open individually to the Mother's Light and Force, the more her power is established in the Universe – is it not?

Answer: It is transforming power that is established – the universal power is always there. 13.8.1933

Receiving The Mother's Force at a Distance

It is quite possible to do sadhana at home and in the midst of your work, many do it. What is necessary in the beginning is to remember the Mother as much as possible, to concentrate in the heart for a time every day, if possible thinking of her as the Divine Mother, to aspire to feel there within you, offer her your works and pray that from within she may guide and sustain you.

Remember the Mother, and though, physically far from Her, try to feel Her within you and act according to what your inner being tells you, that would be Her Will. Then you will be best able to feel Her presence and mine in yours and carry Her atmosphere around you as a protection and a zone of quietude and light accompanying you everywhere.

It will be interesting to note here how the Mother helped people even individually in Her occult manner during the Second World War. She said, "Once we were having a talk on the Mother's trance in Her presence. She was listening to it with an amused smile. Her personal attendant said, "What a personal embarrassment situation I had to face sometimes? Holding in Her hand a glass of water I had given Her to drink, She would go into a trance and Her body would sway from side to side, while I was waiting, and waiting. In this way, She would go away somewhere in Her trance."

Then the Mother explained, "During these years of the war, people used to call me in their great distress and I appeared to them at once, leaving everything behind."

"But people do not know you, Mother?" Nirodbaran exclaimed. Looking at him, She replied, "That does not matter. Wherever people call the Divine in any form. I answer to their call. I shall tell you what

happened one day. The Germans were bombing France heavily. Two children, sister and brother, had gone to school. When they returned, they could not find their house nor their parents: they were destroyed. The elder sister clasping her brother began to call her parents and the brother was trembling in fear like a leaf. Suddenly a cry to God reached me surging from the depth of the heart. I had to go immediately. Making some provision for them.” 4

Receiving Force from The Mother’s Photograph

Question: When I sit in meditation before the Mother’s Photographs – the drawing especially of her feet, I receive an intense Force. Is this only a subjective feeling?

Answer: No, it is not subjective merely. By your meditating near them you have been able to enter through them into a communion with the Mother and something of Her Power and Her Presence.

Resistance to The Mother’s Force

The illnesses you have are the signs of resistance of your physical consciousness to the action of the Divine Powers.

If you cannot advance in sadhana, it is because you are divided and do not give yourself without reserve. You speak of surrendering everything to the Mother but you have not done even the one thing which was asked of you and which you have promised more than once. If after having called the action of the Divine Force, you allow other influences to prevail, how can you expect to be free from obstruction and difficulties. 20.11.1918

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Swami Chinmayananda: His Life and Mission

Introduction

Nowhere man does express himself more honestly as he does in a diary. And the diary of a spiritual aspirant is bound to contain basic truth which throw light on the dark recesses of our own personalities.

“In the year 1948, a young seeker travelled barefoot through Uttarakhand on a rare pilgrimage of self-discovery. At the end of each day, he meticulously entered his thoughts and experiences in two small cloth-bound books. Often going without food and sleeping where ever he could put down his bundle for the night, lashed by the cold by the northern winds, then he sat down to describe the Himalayan splendour around him, with never a trace of bitterness. His narratives were interspersed with his own sketches of routes, villages or temples along the way. This seeker was Swami Chinmayananda.” 1

He had written this account in pencil and it was still in a reasonably good condition when it was given by Miss Danayanthi to Bharati Sukhantankar in Mumbai.

When it was decided to print the book, *My Trek through Uttarakhand* by Swami Chinmayananda, Madhav Naik helped to make the book alive and vivid through some pictures of Swamiji.

Trek Through Uttarakhand

Swamiji had written in March 1982, “Pilgrimages can be a great spiritual discipline for beginners because as an individual, he watches the world around him moving in the company of others. Thus, creating his own environmental atmosphere. Yet though the performance of your day-to-day activities, you are compelled to maintain consistently, one ennobling thought reaching the alter of the Lord. This becomes a powerful practice to maintain continuously remembrance of the Lord, through dreary daily routine.”

According to Vedanta, going on a pilgrimage (teerth yatra) is considered to be the lowest spiritual path as compared to other techniques of self-unfoldment. The higher subtler paths can be walked only by those who have achieved basic inner purification.

Visit to Char Dham

Yatra is a very powerful means of purification and if the pilgrim is living consciously, he expresses the beauty and majesty of Mother Nature. His capacity to contemplate expands within himself and he starts reaching the inner depths of his being. When we consider all the pilgrimage centres of the world, Char Dham of Jamnatri, Gangotri, Kedar and Badri, can undoubtedly be declared as the most speculator. The snow peaks peeping now and then over the shoulders of pine-covered mountain slopes, and the thunderous melody of the gushing waters of mother Ganges, glorious sun rises and sunsets, the misty mornings and glowing dusks – this is Nature at its best, all along the route, all the time.

Shortly before taking sannyas, I once visited these four dhams. Prompted by my journalistic tendencies, I scribbled notes with the intention of enlarging upon them later. However, these notes suddenly came to an abrupt stop. May be the notebook was filled, and the writer at that time could not afford to buy another notebook. Or maybe by then he had got over this habit and practice and had learnt the art of living consciously. I don't remember. It stopped where it stopped.

From where it was unearthed I do not know. Even though it had completely slipped out of my mind, yet I saw it again only when it was brought out by some inquisitive peeping Toms!

This book reflects only the exciting enthusiasm of a young man who saw in the beauty of Peace that looked as colourful! However, for an exhaustive and an interesting travelogue covering this very area, one should read Guruji Tapovan Maharaj's *Wanderings in the Himalayas*.

“I congratulate the “grihastha” who retrieved this book from the trash-can and preserved it so lovingly. And by the time she got tired of hanging on to it, a Brahmachari collected it from her. It finally came into the hands of Delhi Yagna Committee, which not knowing what to publish in their

souvenir, decided to use this material. This is in short, the genesis of the book.” 2

Life and Mission of Swami Chinmayananda

Swami Chinmayananda lived in physical form from 1916 to 1993. His transformation from Balakrishnan Menon to Swami Chinmayananda, a spiritual giant is indeed extraordinary. In his younger days, he was a fun-loving, popular, rebellious and an extremely brilliant man. He graduated with degrees in literature and law from the University of Lucknow in India.

His exceptionally brilliant mind and the intensity to seek out the human existence led Swami Sivananda to recommend that he leave the Ashram and study under the tutelage of the great Vedantic master, Swami Tapovanam.

Swami Tapovanam was a recluse who didn't stay at one place for long. He spent his time in the Himalayan mountains moving from place to place. Swami Chinmayananda turned to be an exceptional student who could keep up with the rigorous lifestyle and strict discipline of his master. Swami Tapovanam took him as a disciple on the condition that he would never repeat anything. The student will have to take the responsibility of going deep into his studies through his personal notes, reflection and meditation. While the lessons were in Sanskrit, the language of ancient spiritual texts, Swami Chinmayananda wrote his notes in English. Under Swami Tapovanam, Swami Chinmayananda totally immersed himself in his spiritual studies and a life of meditation. In just two short years, in the tranquillity of the great Himalayan mountains, Swami Chinmayananda gained inner peace and spiritual enlightenment.

In December 1951, Swami Chinmayananda came down to the plains to teach spirituality to ordinary men and women. He started teaching in English to men and women without any distinction in caste, religion, creed and dogma.

Swami Chinmayananda was an enthusiastic and animated orator. He taught with clarity, humour and insightful examples from everyday life. He soon became popular with one and all. The indoor venues became

too small for larger gathering. Many people came to satisfy their curiosity about this modern-day Swami. His talks then were arranged in open public grounds, accommodating thousands of aspirants.

In 1953, a small group of enthusiastic devotees formed the Chinmaya Mission in Chennai to formalise and organise the work of Swami Chinmayananda. The word Chinmaya means “true knowledge”. Chinmaya Mission is dedicated to global spiritual upliftment and Indian Cultural Renaissance. It is an organisation where seekers of the Truth come together to acquire and impart teachings of the Upanishads.

The unique contribution of Chinmaya Mission to the world is that it gives the message of spirituality based on logic and Vedic Culture in the light of Advaita Vedanta, the ageless wisdom of universal oneness.

The governing body of the Mission is the Central Chinmaya Mission Trust, Mumbai. It is presently headed by Swami Swaoopananda. The Mission has over 313 centres worldwide, which organise and coordinate spiritual, cultural, educational and social service projects and activities. Chinmaya is a movement that touches all aspects of life.

The core teaching of Vedanta was and always has been the main focus. The work includes a wide range of cultural, educational, community and social service projects. The Mission also publishes books, audio-visual material and distributes Swami Chinmayananda commentaries on the Gita, Upanishads and other spiritual texts.

Swami Chinmayananda travelled extensively in India, staying only a few days at each place before moving on. Realising that the spiritual teachings were for all humankind, he said, “Our vision is not for Hindus only”. So, in 1965, he took his universal message overseas. He visited the USA, Australia, England, Canada, Japan, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Singapore, Mauritius, West Indies and some other countries.

Swamiji worked gruelling 18 hours a day, travelling from place to place. At night, he would be writing letters to his devotees till about 3 a.m.. His work was all hand-written. He wrote more than 80 letters a day. It is estimated that in his lifetime, he would have written about 30,000 letters.

Swami Chinmayananda had a tenacious memory and an uncanny ability to remember names, addresses, people and events accurately for decades. There are reports of people who he recognised even after decades and called out by names nearly 30 years later. A devotee remembers talking to Swamiji while driving him to the airport. Their conversation ended when they arrived at the destination. They were not able to speak again until the next trip the following year. When they met, Swamiji calmly picked up the conversation as though they just have been speaking. “So, I was saying ...”. This is mind-boggling when he met thousands of people every year.

Swami Chinmayananda worked tirelessly for 42 years. He worked until his last days. He left his mortal body on 3rd of August 1993 in San Diego, California at the age 77. His body was taken to India and placed in Samadhi in lotus position in his ashram in Sidhabari, a small town at the foothills of Himalayan ranges in Himachal Pradesh.

The outer expression of Swami Chinmayananda’s divine work was only a miniscule part of the immeasurable impact he had on the inner transformation of lives of his devotees. His entire life was a living expression of loving devotion to God whom he saw in all.

He chose to become a journalist and took up a job of sub-editor in *National Herald* in Delhi. Soon he gained the reputation of being a controversial journalist who was willing to raise India’s societal, social and political issues. His popularity and fame provided him with many opportunities to move around in high society, rubbing shoulders with India’s aristocracy. As he got to know them, he realised that all that wealth and glamour was a superficial covering for the life they lived. And that money and power were no guarantee of happiness.

Swami Chinmayananda was brought up in a very religious Hindu family. And he valued old customs and traditions. With the passage of time, his rebellious nature questioned the reasoning and logic behind those traditions which were not in consonance with the very existence of God. His childhood days spurred in him a desire to seek out the meaning and purpose of life. In his childhood, he had been exposed to many saints and yogis and now his thoughts went back to them. Could they have been genuine men of God? Did they have answers to his seeking? This process

of seeking combined with his journalistic exquisiteness led him to visit Char Dhams.

Here are some anecdotes and instances from his treks to the Himalayas and Char Dhams which gave him courage and resolve to face the dualities of life. He had written,

8th April 1948: We reached the famous and much talked about “chatti” at Darasu, expecting to get everything there. On reaching there at 5 p.m., we could not get even milk to prepare tea. Over a few handful of *channa* and *gur* (chick peas and jaggery), we had to sleep off our exhaustion.

24th April 1948: Carrying my own bundle on my back to the bus stand in Dehradun and Rishikesh is a singular feat! Had a good, continuous “japa” on the way.

7th May 1948: After tea we were on a road to Uttarkashi by 5.45 a.m. The road on the whole is horribly stony and gave me a few more cuts. As we walked some miles, the road suddenly turns to the left and on your right flowed Bhagirathi in all its splendour and glory.

The resonant humming of the Bhagirathi acted as soothing balm to my aching muscles.

Thus, yatra is a very powerful means of purification and if the pilgrim can experience the beauty, glory of Nature, his capacity to contemplate expands, and he connects with his true self-being.

Swami Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh

He thought that he needed only two days to do what he set out to do. But he was completely awestruck by the dynamic lifestyle of Swami Sivananda, whose entire day was spent in services such as guided meditation, greeting visitors, administering the hospital, writing articles and books; giving discourses on spiritual texts and conducting evening services with devotees.

Menon ended up staying for a full month! Such was the inspiration and influence of Swami Sivananda, a true saint in true sense of the world. Menon returned to the ashram many times in the next few months. In a surprising turn of events, Balakrishnan Menon decided he would renounce his earlier worldly lifestyle and become a Hindu monk. In February 1949,

he was initiated into monkhood by Swami Sivananda and gained the new name, Swami Chinmayananda.

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Swami Bhaskarananda Saraswati

Swami Bhaskarananda Saraswati (1833–1899) was a noted 19th century sannyasin and saint of Varanasi in India. He wandered over India for 13 years before settling down in Anandabag near the Durga Mandir, in 1868.

A Sanskrit and Vedic scholar-turned-ascetic of the Dashanami Dandi sannyasi order, many kings visited him to seek advice, and he was also reported to be an advisor counsel to Kashi Naresh (Maharaja of Kingdom of Kashi).

Durga Mandir is one of the ancient temples in Kashi. It is situated about 5 kilometres from Varanasi Cantonment. His samadhi is situated at Durga Kunda, adjacent to the historic Durga Mandir, and is maintained by a small trust.

Childhood

Swamiji's pre-monastic name was Matiram Misra. Born into a Brahmin family in Kanpur District in Uttar Pradesh, he was invested with the sacred thread at the age of eight and was married at the age of 12. From 8 to 17 years, he was a diligent and most successful student of Sanskrit.

At 18, he had a son, which in his own opinion freed him from any further social obligations and bondage of this world. Soon after the birth of his son, he disappeared from his father's house and travelled on foot to Ujjain, where he erected a temple of Shiva.

He continued his Vedantic studies and also started practicing yoga. He subsequently travelled to all the parts of India and devoted his life to the study of Vedanta philosophy from noted gurus including Pandit Anant Ram of Patna, who was at Haridwar at the time.

When he was about 27 years old, he was initiated into the holy order of Sannyas by Paramahansa Swami Purnananda Saraswati of

Ujjain, and was christened as Swami Bhaskarananda Saraswati, a name by which he was later known.

For 35 years, he travelled around India, constantly practicing tapas – austere spiritual meditation practices. He finally settled down for the remainder of his life in 1868 in the sacred city of Varanasi, where numerous miracles of healing are attributed to him. Many kings are reputed to have visited him to seek his advice, and he is also reported to have been an Advisor and Counsel to Kashi Naresh, the Maharaja of Kingdom of Kashi. But his influence spanned all sections of society, and transformed the character of several notorious pandas.

Mark Twain on Swami Bhaskarananda

Swami Bhaskarananda Saraswati's influence was so extensive, he even made his way into popular culture. Mark Twain, the famous non-fiction travelogue writer, documented a meeting with the Swami in Varanasi in his book *Following the Equator*, published in 1897. 1

He wrote, “He was sixty years old when I saw him. He is called Sri 108 Swami Bhaskarananda Saraswati. He attained to what the Hindus called the “state of perfection”. It is a state which others reach by being born again and again, and over and over again into this world, covering centuries and decades of centuries. But in reaching perfection, Swami Bhaskarananda has escaped all that. He is no longer a part or a feature of this world; his substance has changed; all earthiness has departed out of it. He is utterly holy, utterly pure; nothing can desecrate this holiness or stain this purity; he is no longer of the earth, its concerns are matters foreign to him, its pains and griefs and troubles cannot reach him. *When he dies, Nirvana is his; he will be absorbed into the substance of the Supreme Deity and be at peace forever.*”

Mark Twain travelled in India and when he was wandering about in Benares, he had this to write, “Despite the crowded and often funereal experiences, Benares was not entirely a disappointment.” He called it “The Oxford of India” for its wealth of Hindu and Sanskrit studies.

He met the priests who purported to broker salvation for the pious contributor, but he also met a real holy man in whom Hinduism and

saintliness became embodied for him – Swami Bhaskarananda Saraswati. Mark Twain visited the Swamiji, who had studied Vedanta philosophy and renounced the world, in a small garden called Anandaag where he lived. He impressed Twain as a great spiritual leader and scholar, compelling him to write: “He is no longer a part or feature of this world. He is utterly holy and utterly pure. There he is, minus the trappings of civilization. He hasn’t a rag on his back. But he has perfect manners, a ready wit and a turn for conversation. Tolerance was an essential part of his personality because he was raised amid in an environment where he had seen too much of hatred and self-righteousness in the slave-master relationship in the American South. So he preached the foolishness of it to others.”

After meeting Swami Bhaskarananda Mark Twain reflected thus: “He has my reverence. The ordinary reverence defined and explained by the dictionary costs nothing. Reverence for one’s own sacred things, parents, religion, flag, laws, and respect for one’s own beliefs; these are feelings which we cannot even help. They are natural to us like breathing. But the reverence which has personal merit in it, is the respect which you pay, without compulsion to the religious man whose beliefs are not yours. You can’t revere his gods and no one expects you to do that, but you could respect his beliefs if you tried hard enough.”

Mark Twain never truly comprehended Hinduism, but only in one visit to a Jain Temple, a knowledgeable man presented the deeper views Hinduism and Vedanta and corrected Twain's misconceptions.

In Benares he evinced an inner pleasure at the many men and women, kneeling prayerfully for hours “While we in America are robbing and murdering”. Of India itself he eloquently summed up his three months of exploration: “Nothing has been left undone, either by man or nature, to make India the most extraordinary country that the Sun visits on his round. Nothing seems to have been forgotten, nothing overlooked.”

Towards the end of his journey, he wrote to a friend, “I have been sick a good deal and could not rest much but still we had a good time in India. We couldn’t ask for more. There are lovely people here, they made us feel at home.”

Last Word

In the words of Mark Twain, “India had the start of the whole world in the beginning of things. She had the first civilization; she had the first accumulation of material wealth, she was populous with deep thinkers and subtle intellects; she had the mines and woods, and a fruitful soul.” 2

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Whither Goes My Life: Part 1

Life of Preparation in England

Sri Aurobindo was born on 15th August, 1872, to Dr. Krishnadhan Ghosh and Swarnalata Devi in Calcutta (now Kolkata). He was the third son and was named Arvind Ackroyd Ghosh. The middle name 'Ackroyd' reflected his father's fascination with everything British. His father was a medical doctor who had done his post-graduation studies at Aberdeen University, Scotland. Like many educated Indians those days, he believed that the Indian culture had become obsolete and the deliverance lay in the ways of the West. Being an affluent and well-connected Indian, he could afford to do what he wanted.

Childhood

As a toddler, Arvind was looked after by a British governess and when he reached the school-going age, he was sent to a school run by Irish nuns in Darjeeling. When he was seven, he, along with his elder brother, was taken to England and left in Manchester with Mr. and Mrs. William Drovett, with instruction that the children will not be exposed to any Indian influence. Therefore, taught at first at home and then in King's College at Cambridge, in 1890, he spent 14 years studying and when he returned to India he was almost 21.

During much of his stay in England, his father was very erratic in sending money. As a result, the boy had to skip dinner for more than a year and tolerate harsh winter with no heating in the rooms and no overcoat in his clothing. Thus it was a 14 years' exile and not a life of comfort.

Student Life

Arvind was very bright as a student and had won many prizes and scholarships. He wrote a poem at age 11, which was published in a British magazine. One of his teachers at Cambridge, Oscar Brown, said that Arvind's answer sheets were better than any he had seen in his experience of 13 previous examinations. Arvind not only mastered English language better than the British, he also learnt Greek, Latin, French, Italian and Spanish. He could have cleared any examination and got a Degree, but his father wanted him to clear the I.C.S. examination so that he could get a cushy Government job as soon as he returned to India. But destiny had other plans.

In spite of his father's efforts, Arvind came in contact with Indians who were secretly working for India's freedom. Therefore, he decided that he would not serve the Government that had enslaved his country. Accordingly, he absented himself from the horse riding test which was one of the qualifying requirements for I.C.S. Even though he was given four opportunities for the horse riding test, he absented himself every time. Moreover, although he had cleared all the examinations necessary for graduation and all that was required was a little more stay in the college to get the Degree. Yet he came back to India without putting in that extra period of stay and applying for a Degree. He felt he had learnt enough in England and just wanted to return to his Motherland. He left Cambridge in October 1892, and after spending a couple of months in London he left for India in January 1893.

What did young Arvind Ghose do when he arrived in India? One, he dropped the British admixture 'Ackroyd' from his name. Two, he headed for Baroda. Why Baroda of all the places? While Arvind was still in England, Maharaja of Baroda had made a trip to England. The maharaja was looking for someone who could work in Baroda state service. He talked to a friend who referred him to Arvind Ghosh. The Maharaja found him suitable and offered him a job which Arvind did not mind taking up. Why did he take up a job instead of joining the freedom struggle and what contribution it made to Arvind's stay in Baroda, to the mission of his life. What might be revealed is that it helped transform him from Arvind Ghosh to Sri Aurobindo.

Casting Sri Aurobindo in the Role of a Genius

When Sri Aurobindo landed at Bombay port on 6th February 1893, he felt a calm descend on him the type of which he had never experienced, call it a spiritual experience or sacred atmosphere in India. From Bombay he proceeded to Baroda and joined Baroda state service, but it was soon discovered that he was an accomplished scholar rather than an administrator. Therefore, he was asked to teach English and French in the college run by the Maharaja of Baroda. His teaching style was entirely different. He was not restricted by the syllabus, and his teaching was designed to stretch and develop the mind and not to pass examinations. K.M. Munshi, one of his best students who went on to establish Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan wrote, "Sri Aurobindo filled him with awe and reverence". Another student, Raja Ram N. Patkar wrote, "His method of teaching was

novel. He used to give series of introductory talks for initiating the students to the subject matter. It was only when the students were prepared adequately that he would read from the text”.

Once the Maharaja requested Sri Aurobindo to write a speech for him. Sri Aurobindo did not mind being a ghost writer. When he showed the speech to the Maharaja, he said, “Can you not tone it down a bit? It is too fine to be mine.” Sri Aurobindo replied smilingly, “Do you think that if it is toned down, people will believe it to be yours? What matters is whether the thoughts are yours or not.”

In appreciation of Sri Aurobindo’s multi-tasking, he was appointed as the Vice Principal of the College in 1905. In the same year he was in the position of acting Principal. But there were far more important things that he did during his long stay at Baroda. Let me expand on these. Sri Aurobindo’s job did not allow him to participate in political activity. Therefore, he could not participate in the freedom struggle, but he managed to write several articles anonymously to vent his thoughts and feelings about the British rule. His best known articles of those days are the ones published in 1893–94 in a weekly, *The Indu Prakash*. Sri Aurobindo’s first few articles created such a sensation that the proprietors of the magazine feared prosecution for sedition. At the proprietor’s request Sri Aurobindo moderated the intensity of the articles but still there was sufficient for the youth of India to rise against the British rule. He defined his goal as total freedom from the British, and by these articles he managed to arouse the courage of the youth and gave them the cause to work with passion.

The most significant thing that Sri Aurobindo did during his Baroda days was to learn and master Indian languages and culture. While he knew the European languages and culture, he knew nothing about India and its spiritual heritage. He learnt Bangla, Sanskrit and several other Indian languages without the help of a teacher. He read almost all Indian scriptures and thus was able to prick holes in Max Mueller’s comparative philosophy. In short, he processed whatever he learnt to convert into wisdom. Thus, by the time he left Baroda, he was a complete synthesis of the East and the West.

As an end note to Sri Aurobindo’s stay in Baroda, one may mention his marriage to Mrinalini Devi in 1901. They were not destined to

spend much time together and this compelled Sri Aurobindo to write his famous letter to his wife on 30th August, 1905. This letter details his three madnenses. In brief, these were,

“The first one is this. I firmly believe that accomplishments, genius, higher education and learning and wealth that God has given me are His. I have a right to spend for my own purposes only what is needed for the maintenance of my family and is otherwise absolutely essential. The rest must be released to God. If I spend everything for myself, for my pleasure and luxury, I am a thief.

My second madness has only recently seized me. It is this: by whatever means, I must have the direct vision of God. If God exists there must be some way to experience His existence, to meet Him face-to-face.

My third madness is that I look upon my country as my mother. What would a son do if a demon sat on his mother’s chest and started sucking her blood?”

Soon came the time when Sri Aurobindo was in the grip of his third madness. In 1905, the British decided to partition Bengal and the people were against this. There was a revolt and Sri Aurobindo decided to join it. In 1906, he decided to quit Baroda and go to Bengal. Before he left, he approached Yogi Vishnu Bhaskar Lele, with the request that he be taught how he could acquire yogic powers by which he could free India from the British rule. In just three days, he experienced total inner silence, the unmanifest Divine. This experience was a partial fulfilment of his second madness.

One year that he spent in jail was required for him to discover the mission of his life. However, before making a final exit from the fight for freedom, Sri Aurobindo had much to say to his countrymen. This he did through the new weeklies, the *Karmayogin* in English and *Dharma* in Bangla.

Summing up, Dr. Karan Singh said, “Brief though was his political career, he defined the essence of spiritual nationalism in a manner which for sheer power and passion has perhaps never been equalled.”

On 20th February 1910, sister Nivedita informed Sri Aurobindo in his office of *Karmayogin* that he would be raided and arrested on some flimsy grounds. She had many friends in the Government who conveyed

this information to her. Whereupon Sri Aurobindo told Nivedita to take charge of the paper, which she did. On getting this news, Sri Aurobindo wrote the article, 'My Political Will', an open letter to my countrymen which stopped his arrest and it carried a prophetic statement.

Whither Goes My Life: Part 2

Sri Aurobindo's Political Activities

As long as Sri Aurobindo was in Baroda service, he could not take part publicly in politics. He was debarred from public action due to his position. When Lord Curzon announced the Partition of Bengal on 20th July 1905, Sri Aurobindo saw an opportunity to participate in the freedom struggle and also to strengthen the revolutionary movement. **He sent a little pamphlet called, 'No Compromise' which no publisher wanted to publish due to its highly seditious content. Somehow it was privately published and about 1,000 copies of this manifesto were circulated.**

Bengal National College

The Partition of Bengal led to violent protests throughout Bengal and also to the establishment of Bengal National College in Calcutta to provide homespun substitute for the education designed by the British. Sri Aurobindo was invited to join the National College as its Principal. He resigned from the lucrative job at Baroda in order to take up this offer, for a salary of Rs. 200 a month, which was about one third of what he was getting at Baroda. But he also quit this new job within a year because the society was not yet ready for a thorough overhaul. By then, he was fully into the freedom struggle.

Poorna Swaraj

In 1906, Sri Aurobindo joined the Congress Party in order to work for the freedom of his country. He soon discovered that the party was dominated by Westernized-educated affluent Indians. Generally, the affluent class in any society is too attached to its secure and comfortable life, to engineer a revolution. Sri Aurobindo found that the efforts made by the Party were too lukewarm and their methods too gentle. **In contrast, the goal that Sri Aurobindo had set before himself was total freedom or Poorna Swaraj.** Another leader who had a similar approach to his, was Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The conflict between the two approaches led to the division of the party. At a meeting of the Congress Party held in Surat in 1907, and presided over by Sri Aurobindo, ended with Nationalists led by Sri Aurobindo and Tilak parting way with the Congress.

The combination of fiery articles and a blueprint of action published in the *Bande Mataram*, together with clandestine revolutionary activities so shook the British Government that it started looking upon Sri Aurobindo as the most dangerous Indian to deal with. The founder of *Bande Mataram* Bipin Chandra Pal, who did not divulge the name of the editor because he refused to co-operate with an unjust authority, was sentenced to six months of simple imprisonment for contempt of court. Even more comic was three months' rigorous imprisonment, which was handed over to Apurba Bose, the printer, who did not even know English.

However, an opportunity to arrest Sri Aurobindo came soon enough. In 1908, a bomb was thrown in Muzaffarpur at a closed carriage assuming that in it was the same magistrate who had been passing drastic sentences against freedom fighters. It so happened that he was not in the carriage. Instead, two British women, who were in the carriage, died in the bomb blast. As a follow-up to this incident, anybody who could be remotely connected with the bomb blast was rounded up. There were 40 persons arrested including Sri Aurobindo who was lodged in Alipore Jail on 5th May 1908, where he spent a year.

He could not understand why he was in Jail. So, he questioned God, why his work had been interrupted. After all, he was not busy with his personal work; it was for the nation that he was working. Finally, the answer came. The answer was that the arrest had become necessary because of the bonds, which he could not break on his own accord; God had broken them for him. And what were these bonds? Sri Aurobindo had a feeling that he was indispensable for the freedom movement; and he had developed an attachment to the work, he was doing. These are the subtle bonds, and one is not even aware of this.

Sri Aurobindo then turned to Sri Krishna as Arjuna had done in the Gita. Sri Aurobindo's dilemma was also whether to continue performing work for India's freedom or not. Before he got the final answer from Sri Krishna, he went through a major spiritual experience. The experience was that of Sri Krishna, the Divine being everywhere, in everyone and in everything.

To believe that the Divine is everywhere is one thing, but to experience the presence of the Divine everywhere is something else.

Sri Aurobindo saw Sri Krishna in the trees and in the prison bars. He saw in the dirty blanket with which he had to wrap himself, Krishna's arms embracing him. With this new awareness, he could have a dialogue with the Divine.

Then, Sri Aurobindo was moved to a prison cell where he had the company of other inmates of the prison, including some freedom fighters. Sri Aurobindo saw Krishna even in those charged with serious crimes such as murder. He not only saw Sri Krishna in them, but he also saw an inherent goodness in them.

After Sri Aurobindo had spent some time in the company of other inmates of the prison, he was again placed in solitary confinement. Here, he had the solitude in which to resume his dialogue with Sri Krishna. He asked Sri Krishna for a clear answer to his predicament; whether to continue with the freedom movement or something else was expected from him.

The answer he got from Sri Krishna was twofold:

One: The assurance that India would be free.

Two: Sri Aurobindo was meant for a more important work. And the goal was a world free from sorrow and suffering. Once he had reconciled to stepping out of the freedom movement and understood the mission of his life, Sri Krishna had to ensure his release from the prison. That accomplished, Sri Aurobindo was to be guided by the Divine to move to the place of his Tapasya in Pondicherry.

These were two significant indications that there was Divine Guidance behind his acquittal. The first was the labour of the bright patriotic lawyer, Deshbandu Chittaranjan Das, which contributed to Sri Aurobindo's acquittal and the second was the choice of a judge appointed to handle the case to Mr. C.P. Beachcroft, who was Sri Aurobindo's classmate at Cambridge. The trial generated hundreds of pages related to Sri Aurobindo. When the judge sifted through them, he came to the conclusion that there was not sufficient evidence to convict Sri Aurobindo. The result was that Sri Aurobindo was acquitted and walked out of prison as a free man on 6th May 1909.

Whither Goes My Life: Part 3

Cave of Tapasya

Sri Aurobindo left Calcutta for Chandernagore in the middle of February 1910 in a boat. His connections with *Karmayogin* ceased with his sudden departure. Most articles in subsequent issues were written by Sister Nivedita.

In pursuance of the Adesh, “Go to Pondicherry”, hoodwinking the British spies, he landed in Pondicherry on 4th April 1910. One of his young associates in the freedom struggle, Suresh Chakravarti known as Moni, had been sent to Pondicherry in advance to make the arrangements for Sri Aurobindo. Another, Bijoy Nag, accompanied Sri Aurobindo on the ship and two more namely, Nolini Kant Gupta and Saurin Bose followed him soon. The five of them started living a frugal life as money was scarce to come. Also, they lived undercover, and it was only a matter of time before the British spies would discover them. But what kept them happy was the saintly presence of Sri Aurobindo. It was the type of friendship that Sri Krishna had with Arjuna.

Sri Aurobindo was in Pondicherry to fulfil a mandate and to accomplish what he had to do. He needed some preparation in relatively peaceful solitude that he got in Pondicherry. He had not gone to a cave, but it was almost like being in cave. This is why Prof: K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar has called Pondicherry Sri Aurobindo’s ‘Cave of Tapasya’.

Within a few months of Sri Aurobindo’s arrival in Pondicherry, Paul Richard, a Frenchman came to Pondicherry to do canvassing for a candidate who was contesting an election as a representative from Pondicherry, for the French Parliament. He had another task on his hands, that is, to meet an Indian saint or yogi who could solve a riddle for him. Accordingly, he was advised to go and meet Sri Aurobindo. After meeting Sri Aurobindo, he not only got his riddle solved but he described Sri Aurobindo as the greatest among such men, “The leader, the hero of tomorrow”. So impressed was he with Sri Aurobindo that he went and talked to his wife, Mira Alfassa.

The four years from 1910 to 1914 were years of intense sadhana for Sri Aurobindo, which provided the finishing touches required before Sri Aurobindo could share his wisdom with the world. In 1914, Paul

Richard came to Pondicherry once again with his wife, Mirra. The first meeting which Mirra had with Sri Aurobindo on 29th March 1914, was truly remarkable. There was instant recognition and silent communication between Mirra and Sri Aurobindo. The next day, on 30th March 1914, Mirra wrote in her diary, “It matters little that there are thousands of beings plunged in the densest ignorance. He (Sri Aurobindo) whom we saw yesterday is on earth; his presence is enough to prove that a day will come when darkness shall be transformed into light and thy (Divine) reign shall indeed be established upon earth.”

Truly, as the event unfolded, it became clear that Sri Aurobindo and Mirra had two bodies but one consciousness. The two bodies had been brought into the world with a single mission, because what the two bodies did, one could not have done in a single body.

As a result of their meeting that Sri Aurobindo had with Mirra and Paul, emerged an idea of starting a monthly journal called *The Arya*. The philosophical journal will address the basic questions of human existence and work out a synthesis of various religious and spiritual traditions of the world. The first issue was published on 15th August 1914. But Paul and Mirra could not stay in Pondicherry for a very long time. The First World War had broken out and Paul, being a diplomat was wanted back in France. Therefore, they left Pondicherry on 22nd February 1915. Hence the task of bringing out *The Arya* fell on the shoulders of Sri Aurobindo and what marvellous job he did alone!

Arya: A Philosophical Review was a six-page monthly periodical written by Sri Aurobindo published between 1914 to 1921. The majority of material initially appeared in the *Arya* was later edited and published in book form as ‘*The Life Divine*’, ‘*The Synthesis of Yoga*’, ‘*The Secret of the Veda*’, ‘*The Foundations of Indian Culture*’ and ‘*The Ideal of Human Unity*’ as well as number of translations of Vedic literature. In these books, Sri Aurobindo touched upon every subject under the sun, i.e., education, psychology, philosophy, sociology, science, history, religion, spirituality and yoga. Every subject acquired a timeless spiritual orientation.

When the work of sharing wisdom with the world through his writings was nearing an end, it was time to give his teaching a practical

shape. For this, his spiritual collaboration with Mirra had triggered the publication of *The Arya*. As if on a cue, Mirra, Paul and a British friend, Dorothy Hodgson, arrived in Pondicherry from Japan on 24th April 1920. Thus, Mirra and Dorothy came to live with other inmates. The two ladies brought the community of five men a touch of orderliness. Soon the community started growing, and by 1926, it had grown from 5 to about 25 inmates.

On 1st January 1922, Sri Aurobindo asked Mirra, whom he has begun to address as ‘The Mother’ to take charge of management of the house. Then came another momentous event on 24th November 1926 when Sri Aurobindo had yet another spiritual realisation and he decided to go into seclusion.

He reached a stage when he completed the programme assigned to him and his individual sadhana ended that day. He became a perfect man, ‘Siddha’. Thereafter Sri Aurobindo was to prepare the whole humanity for divine life on the Earth. This day, 24th November 1926, is considered the date on which was founded the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry and Mirra Alfassa became the Mother, who is now ‘The Mother’ to millions of the world.

Following this, Sri Aurobindo concentrated on inner work, and the Mother on outer work. She developed the Ashram and addressed the needs and difficulties of the disciples, answered their questions with infinite patience, developed systems and discipline to be followed. She created one department after another, catering to the needs of the Ashram and its inmates. In this, She was guided by the unique talents and skills of ashramites. Under the care of the Mother, the number of ashramites grew from 25 to more than a 1,000 in 1973, when She left her body. During this time, She did not leave Pondicherry even for a day. In short, the Ashram was the creation of the Mother. She gave a form to Sri Aurobindo’s ideas, which is never an easy thing to do.

Highlighting the vital role of the Mother, Sri Aurobindo once said, “All my realisation – Nirvana and others would have remained theoretical so far as the outer world was concerned. It is the Mother who showed the way to a practical form. Without her, no organised manifestation would have been possible.”

The Second World War (1939–1944) brought many children to the Ashram, many men who went to fight in the war, left their families in Sri Aurobindo Ashram. That created the need for a school which was established in 1943. The school gave birth to a new model in education, in which children learnt more by observing and doing than by reading and imbibed values of reflection rather than through preaching. Every child was treated as unique and was allowed to progress at her or his pace. Education was holistic and not restricted to the development of the body and the mind. Education inculcated virtues and values. The school has now grown into Sri Aurobindo Centre of Education. It perhaps is the only institute in the world which starts at pre-school and can take care of the child up to graduation.

This world has been a place of sorrow and suffering for thousands of years. Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's mission was to change human nature so that the world would become a better place to live in. How did Sri Aurobindo's inner work and the Mother's outer work contribute to this mission. After the epochal event of 24th November 1926, Sri Aurobindo undertook intense tapsaya and His spiritual adventure has been the greatest in the modern times. He has written about His spiritual experiences in *The Life Divine* and *Savitri*. He regards this world as real as God himself and believes that this creation has a purpose; and man is on earth to manifest the divinity of God in the life of the world.

Sri Aurobindo believes that evolution is nothing but unfolding of consciousness, but there is a difference. Evolution was a spontaneous process up to now. Man rose out of animal without any conscious effort on his part. Now, any further evolution beyond mental being cannot be an unconscious process. It has to be conscious because mind goes to a certain point and after that it can move only in circles. Thus, turning of consciousness has to be made by which mind has to change into higher consciousness. But man is incapable of doing it by himself; he has to seek divine help for this spiritual endeavour.

Sri Aurobindo remained in seclusion from 1926 till he left his body in 1950, and he no more met disciples during this period. However, they could write to him if they had a question or difficulties. Sri Aurobindo replied to these questions in writing, and sometimes it kept him busy till late at night. These letters have now been compiled into four volumes as

Letters on Yoga. These letters are a precious resource because the type of questions which the spiritual seekers had asked were no more different from those which the seekers have now. Second, Sri Aurobindo wrote a brief description of his epic poem ‘Savitri’ from 1916 to 1920. He undertook this work again in 1930. And over the next 20 years, it grew into its present version with nearly 24,000 lines. From 1930 to 1945, he wrote in long hand but after 1945, his eye sight became weak, and he started dictating it to one of his disciples, Nirodbaran. This dictation went on until almost the day he left his body.

Savitri stands out among the works of Sri Aurobindo. Savitri is also the principal character of a legend in Mahabharata. In the legend, there is a King, Aswapati, who does not have a child. Through intense ‘tapasya’ and sincere prayers, he gets a daughter Savitri. She gets married to Satyavan, who dies one year after marriage. Savitri follows Yama, the god of death, and pleads with him the return of Satyavan. Through the sheer power of persistence and devotion, she succeeds in getting back Satyavan from Yama.

In Mahabharata, this legend is described in a few lines. Sri Aurobindo had taken this legend as a theme and embarked on an inner exploration. And once having started, he wrote page after page without an intermission, as though it was a thing already complete up there, and he had only to transcribe it in ink down here on these pages. And what a work! **“It may be said that Savitri is a revelation, it is a meditation, it is quest of the infinite – the Eternal. To read Savitri is indeed to practice yoga, spiritual discipline; one can find all that is needed to realise the Divine”.¹**

Let us go back to the human urge to evolve. To evolve is to express more of one’s divinity; makes the person a better human being. What Sri Aurobindo has visualised is that evolution has reached a tipping point. From now onwards, more and more people would feel a strong urge to evolve. The results would be a much larger number of better men and women on the earth than have existed on this planet for thousands of years.

It basically means being driven by love rather than ego. Love is an antidote to ego. Love is feeling of oneness whereas ego is a feeling of

being separate. This will yield to further evolution. The result would be a larger number of love-driven people in the world. In other words, the basic human nature will change for the better. Then the world will no longer have inequality, injustice, misery and suffering. This will be the ultimate solution to the problems of human existence. Sri Aurobindo has given the assurance that human nature will change in the near future due to the evolutionary force at work. Unleashing that force on earth was the invisible work that Sri Aurobindo was engaged in during his 24 years of seclusion.

Then came the time when Sri Aurobindo had done what was to be accomplished for the fulfilment of his mission. He left his body on 5th December 1950. In the Mother's words, here is the summary of events leading to 5 December 1950, "Sri Aurobindo did not allow the physical handicap to trouble him in his work and he maintained throughout the same fire and passion; for his occult sublime purpose of divinizing himself as a representative of whole humanity. By his own effort and "tapasya"; and his own sadhana, he had gathered in his body a great amount of supramental force and as soon he left – lying in his bed, I stood by his bedside, and in a very concrete way, all the Supramental force which was in him, passed from his body into mine. And I felt a friction of this passage. It was extraordinary."

Nirodbaran writes in his book *Twelve Years with Sri Aurobindo*, "On 5th December 1950, at 1.26 A.M, leaving his physical sheath, colonist from immortality departed from earthy habitation, in the presence of the Mother who stood near his feet with intense penetrating gaze. I saw to my utter wonder and delight that the entire body was suffused with golden crimson hue. Pointing to the light, the Mother said, "If the supramental Light remains, we shall keep the body in a glass case." It remained fresh even after four days, giving time to the devotees, who flocked from all parts of the world, to have the last glimpse of the temple that had housed for more than seventy-eight years the soul of someone who had come to the world charged with a special mission."

"Only at 5 pm on December 9th, in a rosewood case lined with silver and satin, it was buried most simply and without any sectarian religious ceremony in a vault specially prepared in the centre of the Ashram courtyard. Even when the body was put into the case, there was

neither actual decay nor the odour of death, though marks were present to indicate that the miraculous preservative light had begun to depart. The light may be said to have remained in full for over 90 hours – a period more than double the record time which Lyons’ Medical Jurisprudence gives of a body keeping undecayed in the climatic conditions of the East.”
2

References

1. ‘The Mother’; 5.11.1967: This Talk was given by Mona Sarkar from memory, after several years. It was seen by the Mother.
2. From an article written by K.D. Sethna in January 1951 in the journal *Mother India* of which he was the editor.

The Message and a Call

Sri Aurobindo brings a message of hope based on absolute certitude. This call is to the elite of humanity to overpass the limitation of the past. He affects a synthesis on which both the East and the West assuredly guard their future. His Integral Yoga will prepare the future of man for a divine life on earth. He embodies in himself all that he has promised for the race.

“Not to go on ever repeatedly what man has already done is our work, but to arrive at new realisation that we have to accomplish?”

“What is there new that we have yet to accomplish? Love, for as yet we have only accomplished hatred and self-pleasing; Knowledge, for as yet we have only accomplished errors and perception and conceiving; Bliss, for as yet we have accomplished pleasure and pain and indifference; Power, for as yet we have only accomplished weakness and effort and a defeated victory; Life, for as yet we have only accomplished birth and growth and dying; Unity, for as yet we have only accomplished war and association. In a word, godhead, to remake ourselves in the divine image.”

1

“This is thy work and the aim of thy being and that for which thou art here, to become the divine superman and a perfect vessel of the Godhead.

“It is to be the master of thy mind, thy life and thy body; it is to be a king over Nature of whom thou are now the tool, lifted above her who now have thee under her feet. It is to be free and not a slave, to be one and not divided, to be immortal and not obscured by death, to be full of light and not darkened, to be full of bliss and not the sport of grief and suffering, to be uplifted into power and not case down into weakness. It is to live in the Infinite and possess the finite”.

“To live in the Divine Being and let the consciousness and bliss, the will and knowledge of the Spirit possess thee and play with thee and through thee, this is the meaning”. 2

And who are these elites of humanity to whom is addressed this inspiring call? “Whosoever is weary of the littleness that are, whosoever is enamoured of the divine greatnesses that shall be, whosoever has any

glimpse of the Supreme within him or above him or around him, let him hear the call, let him follow the path. The way is difficult, the labour heavy and arduous and long, but its reward is habitation in an unimaginable glory, a fathomless felicity, a happy and endless vastness.” 3

The elite is always looking for an ideal. “What then shall be our ideal? Unity for the human race by an inner oneness and not only by an external association of interests; the resurgence of man out of the merely animal and economic life or the merely intellectual and aesthetic into the glories of the spiritual existence; the pouring of the power of the spirit into the physical mould and mental instrument so that man may develop his manhood into that true supermanhood which shall exceed our present state as much as this exceeds the animal state from which science tells that we have issued. These three are one; for man’s unity and man’s *self-transcendence* can come only by living in the Spirit.” 4

Sri Aurobindo affirms that man and the world in which he lived are not illusions; matter is not the sole or ultimate reality. “The world is a manifestation of the Real and therefore it itself is real.”

“Man is abnormal who has not found his own normality.” 5

This is the position from which Sri Aurobindo starts. The entire burden of his work lies in showing the way and helping man progress.

For they are all fixed in their own types, and they have no desire to change or grow into something else; they are too satisfied with themselves. Man alone has been endowed with a divine discontent; he alone does pine for what is not. He may sometimes come to believe that he has reached his goal. But in this he is soon deceived, for the Daemon within him will not let him rest.

The task has been left unfinished, because it was found to be too difficult, perhaps because the time had not yet come. And in any case, the aspiration could never yet be generalised in the mind and heart of the race. And unless that is done, unless there is a collective mind open to receive the spiritual ideal as the one thing worth pursuing, the aspiration to divine humanity remains a chimera. “Therefore, if the spiritual change of which we have been speaking is to be effected, it must unite two conditions

which have to be simultaneously satisfied but are most difficult to bring together. There must be the individual or individuals who are able to re-create themselves in the image of the Spirit. And there must be at the same time a mass which is capable of receiving and effectively assimilating, ready to follow.” 6

There is no other way for mankind than this. Man has been trying every means in his power – philosophy and religion, ethics and education, art and literature, sciences of all kinds, physical and biological, social and political, psychology and occultism and systems of yoga. They have all failed him. Sri Aurobindo examines the reason for this failure.

References

1. *Thoughts and Glimpses*
2. Bulletin of Physical Education, III. 3
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5. *Human Cycle*, Chapter 22
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Future of India and the Tasks Ahead

“To get at the Divine and Eternal in himself and the world and to harmonise them” is the true aim and destiny of all the higher powers of man as envisaged by the Indian spiritual ideal. But how is the spiritual order to deal with the lower nature of man, over normal life, which either in the individual or in the society, is concerned not with good, beauty, spiritual experience, the higher truth, but with interests, physical needs, desires, vital necessities? Its whole principle and aim is to be, to assert its existence, to increase to expand, to possess and enjoy. To the higher parts, it pays an occasional homage, but it fully reserves its right to its own self-fulfilment on its own lines. The attempt of reason and morality and religion and aesthetics to put a curb on this dangerous but dynamic part of human life has nowhere met with any kind of complete success.

This, it may be well to remember, has been the core of Sri Aurobindo’s teaching about India from the Swadeshi days. Sri Aurobindo in one of his last messages addressed to Shri K.M. Munshi wrote, “That there should be a re-integration of Indian culture under modern conditions is quite right. It is the work to be done”.

The task next in importance is “to raise the mind, character and tastes of the people, to recover the ancient nobility of temper, the strong Aryan character and higher Aryan outlook and the perception which made earthly life beautiful and wonderful, the spiritual expression, realisation and aspiration which made us most delicately profound in life of the people on the earth, is the task next in importance.

One might argue that these are primarily things of the spirit and the mind. They have their importance, for without them our life loses all sense of value. Still there are problems of sociology, of economics and politics which, if left unsolved, might render the higher effort futile and worthless. Besides the world is upon us and we no longer can keep ourselves shut in a shell. We have to meet it and master it if we are to survive. How should we deal with these?

Sri Aurobindo gives the answer. He insists that our external life must be governed by “The Supreme Indian idea of all men in God.” 4 We

need to work out thoroughly in life what we have always kept in spirit. There lies the secret of the needed harmony between essential memory of our past culture and the environmental requirements of our future.

Let us see how this translates in practice. Sri Aurobindo's answer is, We have to treasure everything in our social structure, manners, institutions which is of permanent value, essential to our spirit and helpful to the future; but we must not cabin the expanding and aggressive spirit of India in temporary form which are creation of the last few hundred years.

We must get rid of the notion that the economic improvement of the nation, a result of two centuries of British rule cannot be met by vigorous steps in line with our ancient traditions and in the light of modern knowledge. India must get wealth first and she must attain a high economic standard of life. This can be achieved through large-scale production to usher in the necessary change. **This is our first work.**

What should be our aim in politics? Politics of the Western pattern, with its violence and strife, its constant recourse to sham, is of rajasic nature. Therefore, we must use the means that the modern science places at our disposal, such as the press, telecommunication and digital platforms, etc. At the same time, we shall hold as sacred the Vedantic ideal of liberty, equality and fraternity. But these processes cannot be put into practice unless the soul in man becomes the dominant influence. Patriotism is true only when it takes count of spiritual possibilities of the nation and develops them. **This is our second work.**

As in our national life, so in our international life, our aim must be to receive the external influences and return them to the world transfigured in the light of our true spirit. The genius of Japan lies in imitation and improvement, that of India is origination. The contradiction of outside people she can accept only as rough material for her creative faculty. **This is our third work**

India alone of all the nations of the world still preserves the secret of transmuting the lease of earthly life into divine life. The work which have to do for the humanity, which no nation can accomplish, is the spiritualisation of the race. **This is our fourth work.**

The Mother said that the future of India is very clear. India is the guru of the world. The future structure of the world depends on India. India is the living soul. She incarnates the spiritual knowledge in the world. The government of India ought to recognise this significance in the sphere and plan their action accordingly. It is India that can bring Truth in the world. By manifestation of divine Will and Power alone India can preach her message to the World, and not by imitating the materialism of the West. **This is our fifth task.**

Youth of India: Our Sixth Task. To perform the functions of a guru, “a living Influence, a living example is needed. India must provide the living example of spirituality before her teaching is accepted and her influence grows. But spirituality does not flourish on earth in the void; even as our mountaintops do not rise like those of an enchantment of dream out of the clouds without a base.”

Our first necessity, then, is that the youth of India must learn to think independently, fruitfully. We must begin accepting nothing risky from any source by questioning everything and forming our own conclusions. We need not fear that we shall cease to be Indians, by that process. India can never cease to be India.

But thought alone is not enough; will is also needed. The heart is the one inspirer of all human action. Heart is the repertoire of love. In Love is the will, the power; and the strength of elevating all human actions. If a people begin to feel the necessity of greatness and glory, they will develop a strength of will which nothing can resist.

What India needs at this movement are aggressive virtues namely, offering challenges, spirit of soaring idealism, bold creation, fearlessness, courageous attacks; and daring in Action.

But will and courage without discipline and order and a noble ideal can easily lead a nation to astray. It is the ideal of the Kshatriya that must be inculcated in to the race. “Loyalty to leader and comrade, devotion to banner and cause, the pride that makes nobles, are the qualities of the ideal kshatriya. 13 – *Karmayogin*, ‘The Ideal of the Kshatriya’

All this implies that thorough overhauling of our education system. Not a mere tinkering with details of its aims and a re-adjustment of methods of these aims. It must be an education that will make its one central object, the growth of an individual, his soul and its power and potentialities. At no point will it lose sight of man's highest object, the awakening and development of his spiritual being.

Integral Five-fold Education

The Mother, "Education to be complete must have five principal aspects corresponding to the five principal activities of the human being: the physical, the mental, the vital, psychic and the spiritual. Usually these phases of education succeed each other in a chronological order following the growth of the individual. This, however, does not mean that one should replace the other but that all must continue, completing one another, till the end of his life."

Physical Education: The aim is to express Strength, Power, Beauty and Harmony. For the body to become a perfect instrument, a systematic process of education is needed, and this education can only be initiated in the earliest years, for it is in the earliest years that the body is most supple and free of habits and can be moulded in any way. This development continues throughout the growing years and even into adulthood.

Vital Education: The aim is to keep Beauty as the constant ideal. The vital is the fountainhead of life, the energy without which nothing can be accomplished. It is also the source of all our emotions, feelings, desires and impulses. Purified, it can become the perfect instrument for all we have to realise in the physical world.

Mental Education: The aim is to express knowledge. "*Mind is not the last term of education, not an ultimate aim, but, like body, an instrument*" – Sri Aurobindo. It is fascinating for a child to witness the flowering of his mental faculties; there is an eagerness to discover, to understand. A stream of questions gushes forth. The powers of the intellect, their petals and knowledge blossom. Curiosity keeps the child alive; he learns to observe, to discriminate and to judge.

Psychic Education: The aim is to express love and beauty. Very young children often have a natural contact with their soul. The aim is to help children to remain in contact with their soul. From the very earliest age, children must be taught that there is a reality within – our Divine essence, our deepest Self, an inner friend and guide, '*andar ka dost*'.

The principle of its method will be to help “build up men and not machines, national men, able men, met fit to carve out a career for themselves by their own brain power, fit to meet shocks of life and waves of adventure. Thus, equipped and educated, India may hope to carry the message of spirituality to the world. But here, she must guard against some dangers.”

Dangers to Avoid

The first danger comes from her own view of spirituality as it has developed during the last 2,000 years or more – an exaggeration of certain spiritual motifs to the exclusion of others. For instance, the Buddhist Illusionist view of the Absolute as the only Real and all else is the imposition of the real-unreal Maya on this Absolute, is not the whole truth of Indian spirituality. The Veda speaks of Maya, but in the sense of a creative and self-limiting power of the Supreme, who has manifested the worlds of Mind and Life; and the worlds on Inconscient and of the Supraconscient below and above them.

The Gita, our last great scripture of spirituality, speaks of the triple status of the *Purusha* or Lord, the transcendental, the universal and the individual and of the two Natures, the supreme and the cosmic that rules the universe. All this presupposes the reality of the world, no less than of the Absolute.

First danger. Sri Aurobindo, basing himself on these supreme records of Indian spirituality and adding to them his own experiences and knowledge, presents a comprehensive view of Indian spirituality. According to Sri Aurobindo, the world is a manifestation of the Real and therefore, it is itself Real, the reality of Satchidananda. But here in the phenomenon world, He has covered and hidden himself, which seems to be its opposite, that is, non-being, inconscience and insentient. The apparently inconscient Energy which it creates is in fact the

Consciousness—Force of the Divine, and its aspect of consciousness, secret in matter which begins to emerge in life, finds something more of itself in Mind and its true-self in spiritual consciousness; and finally, in supramental consciousness through which we become aware of the Reality, enter into it and unite ourselves with it. This is the central Idea in the explanation of the universe put forward in *The Life Divine*. Indian spirituality will escape its first danger if it accepts this position.

Danger two. The other danger comes from the Western outlook. To the Western mind steeped in traditions of European Christianity and in the modern secular Ideal, it is not at all clear that spirituality is not a high intellectuality, nor idealism, nor an ethical turn of mind or moral purity and austerity, not religiosity or an ardent and exalted emotional fervour, nor even a compound of all these excellent things.

True spirituality recognises the full value of the intellectual, emotional and aesthetic activities of man; but it will permit none to usurp the function of the others by a desire to possess and control.

The spiritual life (*adhyatma-jivana*)

The spiritual life, the religious life and the ordinary human life of which morality is a part, are quite different things, and one must know which one desires and not confuse them.

Ordinary life is that of the average human consciousness separated from its own true self and from the Divine and led by the common habits of the mind, life and body which are the laws of Ignorance. The religious life is a movement of the same ignorant human consciousness, turning or trying to turn away from the earth towards the Divine, but as yet without knowledge and led by the dogmatic tenets and rules of some sect or creed which claims to have found the way out of the bonds of the earth-consciousness into some beatific Beyond.

Religious life may be the first approach to the spiritual, but very often it is only a turning about in a round of rites, ceremonies and practices or set ideas and forms without any issue. The spiritual life, on the contrary, proceeds directly by a change of consciousness, a change from the ordinary consciousness, ignorant and separated from its true self and

from God, to a greater consciousness in which one finds one's true being and comes first into direct and living contact and then into union with the Divine. For the spiritual seeker, this change of consciousness is the one thing he seeks and nothing else matters.

Spirituality is indeed the master-key of the Indian mind; the sense of the Infinite is native to it. India saw from the beginning and even in the ages of reasoning and ignorance, she never lost hold of that insight that life cannot be rightly seen in the sole light. It cannot be perfectly lived in the sole power of its externalities. She was alive to the greatness of material laws and forces and had a keen eye for the importance of the physical sciences. She knew how to organise the acts of ordinary life.

Danger three. The West has put its faith in its science but it is being destroyed by its science. It has not understood that spiritual change is necessary for the accomplishment of its ideals. India has the secret of that spiritual change and even though this secret has been possessed, it has not been sufficiently practised. The time has now come to heal the division and to unite life and spirit.

Danger four. However much we deplore some of the characteristics of the intervening period in which we were dominated by Western standpoint or move away from the stand point back to our own characteristic way of seeking existence, we cannot get rid of certain elements of inevitable change it has produced in us. We cannot go back to a past form of our being, but go forward to a large repossession of ourselves in which we shall make a better, more living, more self-possessed use of intervening experience. We can still think in the essential sense of the great spirit and ideals of our past. We support them with added strength of new viewpoints. But the Indian mind can only assert itself successfully by meeting these problems by giving them solution which will justify its own ideals and spirit.

Closing Word

The power of the universal Time Spirit which has begun to move in the midst of the creation of a new and greater India. "The future of India is very clear. India is the Guru of the world. The future structure of the world depends on India. India is a living soul. She incarnates the spiritual

knowledge in the world. It is India that can bring Truth in the world. By manifestation of the divine Will and Power alone India can preach her message to the world. By following the Divine Will, India will shine at the top of the spiritual mountain and show the way of the Truth and organise the world unity”.

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Section 2: GEMS OF MOTHER INDIA

The Untold Story

There are numerous reasons I feel compelled to tell this story of a co-traveller in an authentic and powerful way, especially when our destination and the goal are the same. What is fascinating about this person is that there are instances and anecdotes in his life wherein he has positioned and placed the knotty problems in the foreground, and then, he overcame and surmounted them with equanimity and inequality.

This can best be narrated through recreating the world in which he lived and how he functioned within it. Did he change the world or did the world change him? Who has placed him at the global central stage and with what purpose? What are his successes and failures? In the ensuing pages, I will give an account of Pradeep Narang, who has the privilege of serving the Mother and the Mother has put a chain around his neck. I will start with his family tree, which will take you back to his third generation.

Pradeep Narang's grandfather, Shri Gokul Chand Narang, was a versatile personality. He belonged to an affluent and prosperous family of the undivided Punjab. He went to England to study Law (in the late thirties). But instead of practicing law on his return to India, he ventured into business of manufacturing sugar. So, he set up sugar mills and distilleries in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. With the passage of time, a prosperous business empire was created with factories at Basti, Nawabganj, Balrampur in Uttar Pradesh; Bhagwara in Punjab and distillery business in manufacturing also at Basti and Gonda. Shri Gokul Chand Narang was popularly known as the Sugar Baron of Punjab.

Shri Gokul Chand was knighted with the Title of 'Sir' by the Queen of England at about the same time when Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore was also knighted. He was then living in Lahore with his wife and his only son Suraj Chand, because Lahore was then the business centre of Punjab.

Pradeep's father, Des Raj, got married in Calcutta to Smt. Satwant. A son was born to them on 15th May 1940, and he was named Pradeep. He spent his childhood in a luxurious and wealthy family environment and grew up to be a playful and happy child.

Here is an interesting anecdote: When Pradeep was a small child of five years, he used to have nightmares. A hostile force in the form of

‘Rakshas’ used to visit him at night in his dreams and would twist both his arms with the intent to cause Pradeep immense pain. His parents naturally were extremely upset and looked for a solution. One day, a person came out of the blue and met his father and told him that he would cure Pradeep of his malady provided he entrusted Pradeep to him for two days. Des Raj accepted this proposal out of his helplessness. This so-called spiritual person cured Pradeep of his malady with his occult power in just two days. He then just vanished into thin air leaving behind no trace of himself. This incident signifies that even in his childhood, Pradeep was being guided by a higher power in his destiny.

Pradeep did his schooling from La Martiniere College and School in Lucknow, and he went on to do his Masters in Economics from Lucknow University. Following this, he returned to Calcutta where his parents were staying. His father was keen that Pradeep should join the family business, but Pradeep declined. He told his father that he would work in some established company to gain on-the-job experience. His father’s friend recommended Pradeep to an English company with business operations in tea and insurance, with its headquarters in Calcutta. On joining the company, he was asked to work, first in the Insurance Department and then in insurance business. However, on joining the company, he soon got disappointed with his job profile, which seemed to be of routine nature. He was then sent to a tea factory. Even this job was not challenging enough. He decided to quit his job. It was a practice with this company that the Managing Director would interview any person quitting his job as a part of exit interview. He told the Managing Director that he wanted a more challenging job, which his enterprise could not provide.

In the meantime, Pradeep realised that it would be in his interest to join the family business. In order to sharpen Pradeep’s business acumen, his father arranged his training in the Engineering Department, Manufacturing Department, at the shop floor, in the laboratory where spirit was tested for its quality; in the Industrial Relations Department; in the Weigh Bridge section dealing in and receiving sugarcane from farmers; and its Accounting for payment to farmers. His father thus ensured Pradeep would be exposed to a different business environment and will understand the nitty gritty of business before being placed in a position of responsibility.

Des Raj passed away in 1965 when Pradeep was 25 years old. The death of his father brought with it many challenges which Pradeep was to face and resolve in a peaceful and amicable manner. Here is another interesting anecdote from Pradeep's life, for those who may be keen to tackle unionism in a manufacturing unit. One day, the union leaders got all the workers together and addressed them with these words, "These factory owners make huge financial profits by sucking your blood and utilising these profits to educate their children. Thus, depriving you all from a decent living", or words to this effect.

Pradeep being a keen observer, studied the situation and having contemplated, decided to invite all 500 workers along with their union leaders to his home for tea the next morning. The following day, all the workers collected and sat down in the sprawling lawn of his house, where Pradeep along with his managerial and office staff were present, facing the workers. Pradeep got up to address the workers and asked one of the workers to stand up. He then asked this worker if his blood was being sucked by the company management, and whether he was being exploited by the management and their staff for their selfish ends. This individual said, "NO". Thereupon, all the workers stood up in support of this lone worker by saying 'No'. Pradeep seized the developing industrial environment and addressing them said, "If what you all said is true, then why were the union leaders spreading lies and spreading fictitious propaganda?" All the workers got up and stood by the management and started shouting, go away so and so (union leader). From that day onwards, the union got dissolved in his enterprise and the workers returned to the shop floor in the sugar mills.

Shri Pradeep Narang came in contact with Navjata ji when the Mother deputed Navjata to acquire land for Auroville Township. Regarding Auroville, the Mother writes, "Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony, above all creeds, all politics and nationalities. The Purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity."

Pradeep had close contacts with various ministries in the Government of India because of his business background. Thus, he became a nodal person between Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Puducherry and the concerned ministries.

The Mother chose Navjata to carry out her work,. His name appears in various documents both as Keshav Dev Poddar and Navjata (the name given to him by the Mother, meaning the 'New Born'). He was the Society's first General Secretary and Treasurer. After the Mother left her body in 1973, he became its first Chairman. Along with the Mother and Navjata, the third member of the first Executive Committee of the Society was Arunendranath Tagore of Kolkata, an advocate, and notary public.

In 1980, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi announced through an ordinance that Auroville Township will be taken over by the Government. The Opposition got agitated on this issue, and it became a burning issue to corner the Government. It was then decided that this problem could best be addressed by Sri Aurobindo Society. Navjata pondered over it and called Pradeep Narang telling him that he was competent enough to deal with this knotty problem. He further added that he will explain and put across the Mother's agenda for Auroville to 25 members of parliament from the opposition benches. Pradeep Narang resolved the problem in an amicable manner. Thereafter, the Government of India established Auroville Foundation with Dr. Karan Singh who was then the Minister of Cultural Affairs in Indira Gandhi's cabinet. He was to be assisted by an IAS officer with his secretariat staff in Auroville.

In 1972, Pradeep was asked to join Sri Aurobindo Centre, New Delhi as Joint Secretary. Mr. Dharam Vira, ICS, was the then the Governor of Uttar Pradesh but in his honorary capacity, was also the Chairman of Sri Aurobindo Centre, New Delhi. Pradeep experienced and realised that working in a spiritual organisation was different in many ways from working in a private sector organisation. However, he was able to harmonise working in tune with the working environment of Sri Aurobindo Centre and continued to offer his work and services to it.

In 1976, He got married to Ms. Malti. A daughter was born after a year or so and was named Sunaina. She went to England for higher studies and acquired a rare degree in the literary field of advising budding writers and authors how to write a book, a novel or storytelling. Sunaina has one son who is studying in the Ashram School in Puducherry. They all live together as one family.

In 1978, the Executive Committee Sri Aurobindo Centre, New Delhi comprised of the following members:

Shri Dharam Vira, I.C.S. – Retd. Chairman

Shri Pradeep Narang – Vice Chairman

Dr. D.M. Agarwala – Secretary

Shri T.P. Nedungadi – Joint Secretary

Shri M.S. Bishnoi – Asst. Secretary

Members: Shri Vijay Poddar, M.L. Puri, S.C. Dey, Smt. Charat Ram, Smt. Mohini Singh and seven other members

In 1982, Pradeep shifted to Puducherry and joined Sri Aurobindo Society as Additional General Secretary. And late Shri Kishori Lal was the General Secretary. On the demise of Kishori Lal, Pradeep was appointed as General Secretary and was later promoted as Chairman of Sri Aurobindo Society. Shri Vijay Poddar (Vijay bhai), who was member Executive Committee, was also re-designated as Member Executive and Finance.

Development and Growth of Activities

In December 2000, I travelled to Puducherry with my wife for a short visit when some higher Power brought me in contact with Pradeep Narang. Our visits became more frequent with the passage of time and I was included to work for the Society in its different fields. What I saw then, in terms of its office accommodation and its working environment; its various verticals with their outreach to different communities both in Puducherry and in Auroville, and later what emerged in the years 2023–24, was a sea change.

I will cover some of the important areas of the Society to illustrate my point.

One: There were two Guest Houses managed by the Society namely, Sea Side Guest House and International Guest House. The latter was in dire need of renovation.

Two: Some office bearers of its different departments had their offices in barrack-type accommodation with meagre facilities for air conditioning. Later, the Retreat Guest House with a dining room equipped with modern amenities was also added to its inventory. The food served to the guests is

prepared with an eye not only on taste but also on the ingredients, which support the digestive process.

Three: The Society has in-house facility for lunch for its office staff with a view to enhance their productivity.

Fourth: Laundry Section has been expanded in order to cater to the demands of all its guest houses and the Matriniketan complex, thereby resorting to economy of scales. Thus, the Society can take pride in providing latest accommodation and other facilities, for all its departments and sections and guests.

Pradeep's urge to achieve excellence in whatever is to be done in the Society's working and in its new projects is laudable indeed! I will briefly cover these in next couple of paragraphs.

Matriniketan – Centre for Integral Health

A large and beautiful heritage building in Puducherry with a wonderful view of the sea, having unique architecture harmoniously fusing elements of French and Tamil style, has been developed in collaboration with INTACH, Puducherry as a campus for Centre for Integral Health. The magnificent sustainable building with high roofs, wooden and Spanish floors and chandeliers provides an ideal backdrop for the centre's activities. Matriniketan is not just a building, it's a concept.

There are four suites tastefully furnished, capable of accommodating 10 people. Each suite is fully air-conditioned equipped with Wi-Fi. In future, eight additional double rooms will be constructed and will have the facility of a swimming pool for water therapy.

Here is an interesting episode on Matriniketan. Shri Rahul Bajaj – Padma Bhushan, Chairman emeritus, Bajaj Group of Industries, had come on a short visit to Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Pradeep was appointed as Liaison Person with Rahul Bajaj and in that capacity, took Rahul Bajaj on tour of the Ashram, the Society and Auroville. At the end of his brief visit, he told Pradeep that he would like to make a small donation. Pradeep took the opportunity to brief him on Matriniketan, the erstwhile Krishan Villa, a heritage building. This building was leased to the society for a period of 30 years, a period which was to expire in one year's time by the

Government of Puducherry. The property had a fixed price of rupees 4.5 crore. The society was keen to retain this property but did not have the required funds. Rahul Bajaj sent for his Financial Advisor and asked him to give 5 crores to the Society. Pradeep told him that this property was about 150 years old and was in a dilapidated condition and will require an equal amount to repair, before it could be brought into proper use.

Rahul Bajaj then gave another 5 crores for this work. One can attribute this to Pradeep's business acumen, which is a key characteristic of leadership.

Auro Schools

Auro schools offer transformative, holistic education to children. They seek to develop children so that they become integral personalities and agents of positive transformation in the world. These schools, with the passage of time, will follow the concept and the principles of Integral Education on the lines of Sri Aurobindo Centre of Education, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Puducherry. The most recent school that opened is in Bengaluru with the untiring efforts of Dr. Ajit Sabnis, Member Executive Committee Puducherry and State Secretary, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

AuroSchools are present in different parts of India.

They are,

- Sri Aurobindo Vidyalaya, Tirupati
- Sri Aurobindo School of Integral Education, Chandigarh
- La Vision School, Ompuri (Hazaribagh, Jharkhand)
- Mother's Children Preparatory School, Ranchi
- Auro Mirra International School, Bengaluru
- Mirambika School for New Age, Bengaluru
- Sri Aurobindo Vidya Mandir, Yalavatti, Karnataka
- Sri Aurobindo Aspirational school, Khandwa
- Sri Matri Vidya Mandir, Ratlam
- Auro School Navakriti, New Delhi
- Auro-Mirra Centre of Education, Patiala
- Sri Aurobindo Centre of New Education, Jodhpur

Sustainable Architecture – SHARANAM (Surrender)

Sharanam was created in an area of four acres close to Matri Udyam. It is a training and educational residential complex with extensive facilities, incorporating energy efficient principles.

Sharanam is a highly engineered structure built with the help of unskilled people from villages, using earth from the site itself as the primary building material and minimizing the use of steel and cement. The technology used is Earth Foundation and Compressed Stabilised Earth Blocks (CSEBS). It has enormous environmental, structural and cost benefits. Thus, being four times cheaper, ten times less polluting and three times stronger than local wire and cut bricks.

AuroYagna

A brief note on AuroYagna will suffice to continue with verticals. AuroYagna integrates traditional yoga practices such as yogasanas and pranayama with Integral Yoga. It designs programmes and workshops catering to students, farmers, rural communities and health enthusiasts. It also focuses on parental education in order to empower young mothers on conscious parenting. AuroYagna has been conducting monthly workshops.

AuroKrishi

It is a joint initiative with Gramonnate Trust, a not-for-profit social enterprise, to support rural transformation. It focuses on enrolling rural entrepreneurship in organic farming. It provides farmers with training, education and technological support to shift to organic farming. It has given training in organic farming, mushroom production, bee keeping, farming for schools and urban organic garden.

Last Word

This then is the story of a true Sadhak, Pradeep Bhai. A story which exemplifies non-attachment, sacrifice, dedication, sincerity and Nishkaam Karma. It has been an inspiration for me, and surely it will be a source of inspiration for all those who aim to work not for just their own enrichment but who wish to step out of their own comfort zone and be a catalyst for spiritual transformation.

Baji Prabhu Deshpande

With a view to help the reader know who was Baji Prabhu, it is important to know a bit of history of Adil Shah Sultanate of Bijapur.

Adil Shah was the reigning dynasty of the Sultanate of Bijapur in Western Deccan from 1489 to 1686, and Yusuf Adil Shah was its founder. He along with Golconda Sultan was responsible for the dissolution of the Vijayanagar Empire. This made him the most powerful ruler of the Deccan region for a while.

But the Marathas launched a series of battles and started capturing Bijapur territories one by one during Muhammad's reign itself, and Muhammad failed to check the rise of the Marathas. Shivaji launched a mass campaign in Deccan and captured all the regions which Deccan sultans had captured earlier from the Vijayanagar empire. The warrior king established the Maratha Empire, which lasted for close to two centuries. At its peak, the empire extended from Attock (Punjab), which today lies in Pakistan, to Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu. The credit goes largely to Shivaji's passion and vision, and his brilliance as a warrior, leader of armies, and diplomat who could form crucial alliances.

Shivaji's immense drive to become a powerful presence in Deccan politics was accompanied by the ruler's empathy for the poor who had been suffering for years in "endless wars due to the Mughal invasion, reducing the region to unprecedented desperation".

Mohammad's reign witnessed the revolt of the Maratha General Shahaji Bhosale and the rise of his son, Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and his founding of an independent Maratha kingdom.

Now enters the main player, Baji Prabhu – Maratha warrior, who changed the history of the Maratha Empire, along with Shivaji. He sacrificed his life for Chhatrapati Shivaji by fighting a valiant rear-guard battle to allow Shivaji precious time to escape to safety from the marauding Bijapur army.

Sri Aurobindo's long poem, 'Baji Prabhou' is founded on the incident of the heroic self-sacrifice of Baji Prabhu Deshpande, who to cover Shivaji's retreat, held the pass of Rangana for two hours with a small company of men against 12,000 of the Mughals. Beyond the single fact of this great exploit, there has been no attempt to preserve historical accuracy.

Baji Prabhu Deshpande's valour was not the only example. Tana Malsure was one of most trusted commanders of Shivaji Maharaj. He was a skilled military commander whose name is synonymous with valour. He was Shivaji's friend and is best remembered for the Battle of Sinhagad (1670), where he fought until his last breath against the Mughal fort defender, Udaybhan Rathore. This battle paved the way for the Marathas' victory. Shivaji used to call him 'Sinha' (Lion) because of his strength. Even Sri Aurobindo heaped praise on Tanaji Malsure in his long poem, 'Baji Prabhou'.

*“Tanaji Malsure, not in this living net
Of flesh and nerve, nor in the flickering mind
Is a man's manhood seated? God within
Rules us, who is in the Brahmin and the dog
Can, if He will, show equal godhead. Not
By men is mightiness achieved; Baji
Or Malsure is but a name, a robe,
And covers One alone. We but employ
Bhavani's strength, who in a arm of flesh
Is mighty as in the thunder and storm.”*

Baji Prabhu was born around 1615 in a Chandraseniya Kayastha family. Earlier he worked under Krishnaji Bandal of Rohida near Bhor. After Shivaji defeated Krishnaji at Rohida and captured the fort, many commanders along with Baji Prabhu joined Shivaji.

Battle of Pavankhind was a rear-guard pitched battle that took place on 13th July 1660 at a mountain pass in close proximity to the fort of Vishalgad, Kolhapur City. It was fought between Marathas and Adil Shahi Sultanate. The Marathas were led by fearsome Baji Prabhu

Deshpande, while the forces of Adil Shah Sultanate were spearheaded by Masood.

Upbeat by the defeat of Afzal Khan and the subsequent rout of the Bijapuri army at Pratapgad, Chhatrapati Shivaji continued marching deep into the Bijapuri territory with his troops. A few days later, they captured the strategically located Panhala Fort, near the city of Kolhapur. In the meantime, another platoon of Maratha forces, under the command of Netaji Palkar, proceeded towards Bijapur.

However, Bijapur fiercely pushed back the advancing Maratha forces, throwing spanners in the work for Chhatrapati Shivaji and causing grave damages in the Maratha ranks. Having lost some of his commanders and men in the battle, Chhatrapati Shivaji and his remaining forces were forced to retreat to the Panhala Fort.

Shivaji defeated Adil Shah generals of distinction one after the other. Hence Adil Shah as a last measure pooled all his resources and sent Siddi Jauhar on an expedition against the Marathas. At the same time, he made correspondence with the Mughals to attack Shivaji Maharaj. Accordingly, Shaista Khan attacked from the Northern side towards Pune whereas Siddi Jauhar laid the siege to Panhala Fort. All attempts to raise the siege failed. Shivaji Maharaj's senapati (commander) Netaji Palkar could not break through the siege from outside. Hence Shivaji decided to give a final battle. But instead of suicidal attack, he followed a different strategy. A grand escape was planned to give a battle from the Fort Vishalgad.

Siddi Jauhar had laid the siege around Panhala with utmost care. First, Shivaji sent his vakil (वकील) to Siddi Jauhar saying that he was ready to sign a treaty with him. Siddi Jauhar and his army thus relaxed a bit, foreseeing that their siege going on for months together was going to end. Still, getting through the siege of about 10,000 Adil Shah soldiers seemed impossible. Realising that they will have to fend for themselves and an external help is unlikely for the foreseeable future, a very audacious and high-risk plan was hatched and set into action. Second, the critical part of the plan entailed deceiving the Bijapuri forces so that they do not give a chase to Shivaji after he had broken the siege. For this, Shiva

Kashid, a barber by profession and part of the Maratha troops, who had uncanny resemblance to Shivaji, volunteered to dress himself like the king and let himself be captured.

According to this plan, Shivaji and Baji Prabhu along with a select band of troops were to make an attempt to escape the siege, in the dead of the night and make for Vishalgad Fort. In this, they were surprisingly successful and were speeding towards Vishalgad, when the enemy came to know about Shivaji's escape from Panhala. They were chased by the enemy who caught some of Shivaji's troops, but the captured king turned out to be an impostor of Shivaji. However, this charade allowed the fleeing Maratha forces some time to escape and the heroic sacrifice by Shiva Kashid gave the fleeing Maratha force some breathing space.

As soon as the Bijapuri forces realised they have gotten a lookalike of Shivaji and not the real Chhatrapati, they again went on chasing the Maratha forces, led by Siddhi Masood, the son-in-law of Siddhi Johar. The Marathas made their final stand at Ghodkind, a mountain pass in the vicinity of Vishalgad near Kolhapur city. It was very narrow so as to pass only a few soldiers at a time. Baji Prabhu Deshpande, a gallant general along with 300 of his Bandal sena, took the position to defend the pass till Shivaji reached another fort, Vishalgad.

In the meanwhile, Shivaji with 300 Maratha troops proceeded towards Vishalgad, while Baji Prabhu along with his brother Phulaji and the remaining 300 men stood their ground to block the advancing Bijapuri army. Baji Prabhu Deshpande made the supreme sacrifice of his life so that his king Chhatrapati Shivaji stays alive. As per the legend it was a breath-taking valour and courage displayed by Maratha forces during the rear-guard battle. Baji Prabhu and his men fought valiantly against the numerically superior Bijapuri army and blocked them for over 18 hours at Ghodkind.

The odds were stacked against the Maratha forces as Baji Prabhu and his men were vastly outnumbered, by the hysterical Bijapuri army baying for their blood. With the single-minded zeal of capturing Chhatrapati Shivaji, the Bijapur army launched relentless attacks against Baji's men. But Baji Prabhu stood as a shield, fending off the murderous assault of the enemy troops. Baji wielded very heavy swords in each hand

and slashed them with abandon at the Bijapur soldiers, using his body as a wall to prevent the enemy soldiers from breaching the blockade.

According to various accounts, Baji Prabhu was grievously injured, but he summoned his iron will and showed indomitable fighting spirit, continuously combating with the enemy soldiers until Shivaji's safe journey to Vishalgad was signalled by firing of three canon volleys. However, Prabhu paid a heavy price for this otherworldly dare devilry and lost his life in the famous battle.

It is worth mentioning that Shivaji's journey to Vishalgad with 300 men was no cakewalk. The fort was already under siege by Bijapur sardars named Suryarao Surve and Jaswantrao Dalvi. Shivaji with his 300 men had to defeat them to reach the fort. Baji Prabhu with his grit and determination, held on against the Bijapuri forces, to provide enough time to reach the fort after escaping from enemy siege at Panhala Fort. The Ghod Khind pass was subsequently named *Pavan Khind* ('Holy Pass') by Shivaji, in honour of the sacrifice of Baji Prabhu and his troops.

The village, Shind, Bhor in Maharashtra, was the native place of Baji Prabhu. The descendants of Baji Prabhu still live in that area. Another part of his family live in Bhor village and they have been continuing the heritage of their ancestors. Vishnu Narayan Deshpande, the 10th descendant and former Sarapanch of Parhar Budruk, was a freedom fighter. The family conducts social work and is aware of the legacy passed by previous generations.

One of Baji Prabhu's descendants, Ramchandra Kashinath Deshpande, was an Indian freedom fighter against the British rule, educationalist and a social activist who worked in Dhule, Jalgaon. He participated in the Quit India Movement during the British rule and was imprisoned for 19 months in the Kolhapur Central Jail. He was felicitated after Independence by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. For his social work, he was conferred the title of 'Special Executive Magistrate' by the Maharashtra Government in 1989.

Closing Word

Shivaji heaped praise on Baji Prabhu with these eulogising words:

*“Baji, more than once
In battle thou has stood, a living shield,
Between me and the foe. But more today,
O Baji, save that any single life,
Thy nation’s destiny....”*

Baji Prabhu Deshpande has a special place in Maratha history. He sacrificed his life so that his king reaches safety and continues his campaign against the marauding Islamic forces that had captured much of central India.

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From Pacifist Sikh to Militant Khalsa

Guru Gobind Singh was one of the greatest personalities, not only of India, but also of the world. At the time of assumption of Guru-ship in 1667, he was hardly nine years old; and India was ruled by the Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb. He was determined to convert the whole of India to Islam and his fanaticism was at its worst. The Hindus were chafing under his repression and atrocities. His religious fanaticism was responsible for the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675. It was at this critical juncture, that the Guru Gobind Singh assumed Guru-ship of the Sikhs.

He was a born leader, a great warrior, a remarkable commentator, a social reformer, a great religious leader, a literary luminary. Thus, Guru Gobind Singh played a wide variety of roles with extraordinary skill. The creation of Khalsa was one of his greatest achievements. By doing so, he galvanised the dispirited and politically subdued people in the history of India and Sikhism made rapid strides in diversified fields.

Childhood

Gobind Rai was only nine when his father's severed head was brought to Anandpur for cremation. The shock to the child's mind and to other members of the family was great and need not be exaggerated. The leaders of the community were concerned about Gobind's safety, for the possibility of his being taken to Delhi as a hostage could not be ruled out. To prevent this, the young Guru with his entourage was shifted from Anandpur to Poanta in Himachal Pradesh. Gobind spent many years of his childhood in this Himalayan town on the banks of Yumuna river. He was taught Sanskrit and Persian besides Hindi and Punjabi, which he mastered. He also learnt riding and shooting and spent a considerable time in hunting sport. The natural surroundings of the Himalayas brought out the poet in Gobind, and he began to compose verses in the four languages. He also wrote stories of Hindu mythology in his own words and his favourite being the exploits of Goddess Chandi, the destroyer of demons.

Battle of Survival

In the midst of the prevailing militant environment, he was convinced that the Mughal Emperor meant to destroy him, and it was his

duty to resist the enemy with all the means at his disposal. His mission in life became clear to him. In his autobiography (*Apni Katha*), he wrote, “I came to the world charged with the duty to uphold the right in every place, to destroy sin and evil. O ye holy men, know it well in your hearts that the only reason I took birth was to see that righteousness may flourish and the good may live and tyrants be torn out by their roots.” In a letter addressed to the Mughal Emperor, he justified the method he adopted to fulfil this end. When all other means failed he wrote in the *Zafarnama* , “it is permissible to draw sword.”

Gobind Rai drew sword while he was still at Paonta. He proclaimed that he would welcome offering in arms and horses; and will also welcome able-bodied men willing to join his crusade. Like his grandfather he made sure that his crusade would not be wrongly construed as one of Sikhs against Muslims. Accordingly, the nucleus of his private army was drawn from Pathan mercenaries.

Gobind’s troubles came from an unexpected quarter. He had been encouraged by the Rajput chiefs of hills to believe that they would support him against the Mughals. But as soon as he started organising his army, Raja Bhim Chand of Bilaspur, in whose territory Anandpur was located, pressed on the chiefs of neighbouring hill states to try to expel the Guru from their midst. They did not like the growing power of the Guru in their region due to the lower castes turning to classless fraternity of Sikhism. When threats failed to dislodge the Guru, the chiefs tried to eject him by force. For this, they bought over Gobind’s Pathan mercenaries and attacked him. Gobind Singh met their combined force about six miles out of Poanta, at a place called Bhangani. Despite desertions and numerical superiority, Gobind Singh’s forces comprising Rajputs, Pathans and Sikhs (mostly Hindus of the trading community) carried the day in 1686.

The victory of Bhangani gave Gobind Rai confidence to descend from the mountains to his ancestral home in Anandpur. The attitude of feudal overlords also changed. He was now looking for someone to organise the hill chiefs to resist the Mughal Governor who was on his way to collect arrears of revenues. Bhim Singh asked the Guru to lead the hill men against the Mughals.

Guru's second battle was fought in Nadaun in 1687, only a few months after his return to Anandpur. Despite the victory, the hill chiefs decided to come to terms with the Mughal Commander in order to prevent another force being sent against them. Gobind refused to enter into these discussions and after spending a few days at Nadaun, he returned to Anandpur.

Spiritual teaching was an integral part of Guru Nanak's teaching, and Gobind felt that a living mentor could now be dispensed with and be replaced by some institution which discharged the same functions. The Granth Sahib, by then was well-established as the book for people seeking spiritual guidance. Both the spiritual and secular functions of the Guru could be taken care by the Granth which could be regarded as the Spiritual Guru; and the panth itself as the Secular Guru. Thus, the combination of the two gave birth to the mystic entity and the panth.

A Call to Fearlessness

It was to the clarion call to flight injustice and oppression that Sri Gobind Singh in 1689 proclaimed at Anandpur Sahib the vision of the Sikh way of life. Tradition has it that Sri Guru Gobind Singh called for a special assembly of Sikh followers on the morning of Baisakhi festival at Keshgarh Fort at Anandpur Sahib. The anxious expectation of the assembly was as intense as the Guru's intensity of addressing them.

Following the morning prayers, the Guru suddenly got up with the drawn sword in his hand, exhorted the sangat (assembly) that there was a dire need to show devotion and faithfulness to Sikhism. And though the entire sangat is dear to me, which Sikh will give me his head to face the struggle staring at us. This stunned the sangat, there was a pin-drop silence in the assembly. Sensing the mood of the gathering the Guru repeats his call, but the sangat seems to be paralyzed at his command.

On the third call, Daya Ram, a khatri by cast, from Lahore gets up and offers his head and said, "O noble king, my head is at your service". Guru Gobind Sing takes Daya Ram to a tent in the backstage and emerged a few minutes late with the blood dripping sword in his hand and roared, "I want another head", This un-nerved the sangat even more. But this time, Dharam Das, a Jat from Delhi, offers his head.

As per historical records, Bhai Mokhan Chand, a tailor from Dwaraka, Himmat Chand, a cook from Jaganpura and Sach Chand, a barber from Bidar came forward to offer their heads to the Guru. As the assembly grew restless, the Guru emerged from behind the stage with five men whom he had presumably beheaded. He then proceeded to initiate the five men, baptised them with holy water, stirred with the double-edged sword, to the recitation of verses from Guru Granth sahib and sweetened by ‘patashas’. Thus, baptism transformed the five men into the Khalsa, the pure.

Guru Gobind Singh then himself chose to be baptised by the Panj Pyare, the Khalsa, for further dissolving all the differences between him and his disciples. Thereafter, he proclaimed that “Khalsa is my own Image”.

Panj Pyare were given a common surname as ‘Singh’, and were called upon to wear five distinctive emblems of the Khalsa – Kesh (unshorn hair), Kirpan (sword), Kangha (comb), Kachhchha (a short breech) and kara (a steel bracelet). At the end of the oath-taking, the Guru hailed the converts with a new form of greeting:

Wahe Guruji ka Khalsa (The Khalsa are the chosen of God)
Wahe Guruji ki Fateh (Victory be to our God)

Guru Gobind Singh’s heroic call to defend his vision even with one’s life laid the foundation of the spiritual path in the temporal world.

The complexion of the Sikh community also underwent a radical change. Up to that time the leadership remained in the hands of the non-militant urban Khatri from whom the Masands and Manjis were drawn. They only paid lip service to the ideal of a classless society where as the bulks of Sikhs were drawn from Jat peasants who were low in caste hierarchy. Thus, the rise of militant Sikhism became the rise of Jat power in Punjab.

The baptism of 20,000 Sikhs at Anandpur was followed by mass baptisms of over northern India. Within a few months new people with a crusader’s zeal were born to build a new commonwealth of brotherhood.

They implicitly believed:

The Khalsa shall rule.
Their enemies will be scattered.
Only they that seek refuge will be safe.

Martyrdom of Sahibzadas Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh

Some acts and deeds are so profound that they change the course of history! One such is the martyrdom of the two younger sons of the tenth master of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh! The young and innocent boys, martyrdom on 26th, December, 1704, when they were brutally murdered by Wazir Khan, the Mughal Governor of Sirhind.

The month of December has a special significance for the Sikh community. It was in this month that the combined forces of the Mughals and the small hill principalities used perfidious deceit to draw out Guru Gobind Singh, his family and followers from the Anandpur Sahib fortress and then sought their destruction. These forces, under Wazir Khan, promised (upon the holy Quran) safe passage to the Guru from Anandpur Sahib but attacked them with overwhelming numbers when they came out. The two Sahibzadas' aged nine and seven years, along with their grandmother Mata Gurjar Kaur got separated from the main contingent as they left the fort. They were promised refuge by an old retainer named Gangu in his native village Sahedi, but were handed over to the Sirhind administration of the Mughals, in what can be termed as the worst possible breach of trust and faith.

It is notable here that the main contingent of the Sikhs fought to the last man at Chamkaur where Guru Gobind Singh took up a defensive position with a handful of Sikhs. The elder sons of the Guru, Sahibzada Ajit Singh and Sahibzada Jujhar Singh attained martyrdom while fighting in the Battle of Chamkaur. He too wished to fight to the last but was disallowed to do so by his Khalsa who invoked the Panj Pyara tradition to order his to escape and fight for the Sikh cause.

The Guru's life was saved by two Pathans he had known earlier. At Michwara, where the imperial troops again closed on him, the Pathans put Gobind in a curtained palanquin and passed the Mughal sentries with the explanation that they were carrying their pir. That was the end of

pursuit as far as the Guru was concerned. He arrived in the village of Jatpura, weary, but still full of faith and courage. He wrote to Aurangzeb, "I will not let you drink water of my Punjab."

At Jatpura he learned the execution of his two remaining sons. Zorawar Singh aged nine, and Fateh Singh aged seven; and the death of his own mother due to shock. Gobind took the news with stoic calm. "What use is it to put a few sparks when you raise a mighty flame," he wrote.

Meeting Banda Singh Bahadur

In 1708 Guru Gobind Singh came to Nanded and while he was there, he was told to see Madho Das (Banda Singh). He went to the monastery of Banda Singh and sat on the cot upon which no one except Banda Singh would sit as a saint. Upon hearing this, Banda Singh was filled with rage and he used his 'magic' to flip the cot on which the Guru Gobind Singh sat but nothing happened. Filled with rage Banda Singh made his way to the Guru. Upon seeing the Guru, he recognised him as his Guru in his previous birth and his rage evaporated. Following a conversation with the Guru, Banda Singh accepted Amrit as a Khalsa. Madho Das was thus, named Banda Singh by the Guru. Upon learning of the killing of Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, Banda Singh cried. Guru Gobind Singh told Banda Singh, "When tyranny had overtaken men, it was the duty of the more sensitive to fight against it and even to lay down their life in the struggle." Banda Singh wished to fulfil Guru Gobind Singh's wish of punishing tyrants and saving commoners.

Guru Gobind Singh directed Baba Banda Singh Bahadur to avenge the murder of the Sahibzadas. Baba Banda Singh Bahadur came from Nanded (Maharashtra) to Punjab for the ordained task, Sikhs in large numbers joined him. He first took Samana and Sadhaura on the periphery of Sirhind and finally attacked Wazir Khan. The ensuing clash known as the Battle of Chappar Chiri took place on 22nd May 1710. It witnessed the larger Mughal forces being crushed by the Sikhs. Wazir Khan was killed in the battle and Sirhind occupied in the next two days.

The Guru spent about a year in the country around Muktsar. His stay proved to be the most fruitful as thousands of Jats of Malwa region accepted baptism and joined the Khasla fraternity; among them were the

ancestors of Patiala, Nabha and Jind whose families had already become Sikhs. Gobind retired for some time to the village of Tawandi Sabo now called Dam Dama. From Dam Dama Gobind sent a letter to the emperor telling him of the perfidy of officials, particularly of the crime committed by Wazir Khan of Sirhind. Gobind's emissary travelled to the Deccan and succeeded in handing the letter to the emperor. Aurangzeb was apparently moved by the contents of the letter and issued orders that the Guru was not to be harassed any further. But Aurangzeb either did not want or was unable to punish Wazir Khan. Gobind left Dam Dama to go and see Aurangzeb. He got as far as Rajputana when he learnt of the death of the emperor at Ahmednagar on 2nd March 1707.

In the meanwhile, the battle of succession started between Aurangzeb's sons. Bahadur Shah has shown consideration to Gobind in his troubles with the hill chiefs. Gobind felt that it was his turn to help the prince and therefore, he sent a detachment of Sikh horsemen who fought in the battle of Jajua on 8th June 1707.

When Bahadur Shah was firmly in the royal seat, Gobind came to Agra to pay him a formal visit. He was welcomed and given a jewelled scarf and presents worth Rs. 6,000. Gobind stayed in Agra for four months but the emperor did not take any action against Wazir Khan, and left for Rajputana. Gobind and his retinue of horsemen accompanied the imperial troops without participating in any of their battles.

Bahadur Shah turned towards the Deccan to suppress the rebellion of his brother Kam Baksh. Gobind and his band also went south. They arrived at Nanded, a small town on the banks of Godavari, in September 1707 and camped there. One evening two young Pathans, presumably on the directions of Wazir Khan, entered his tent and finding him alone, stabbed him in abdomen. The motive for murderous assault was never known, since the assassins were slain immediately. The Guru's wounds were stitched and it was hoped that he would recover soon. But the stitches burst a few days later and Gobind realised that his end was near. He assembled his followers and told them the line of Gurus would end with him, and Sikhs were thereafter to look upon the Granth as a symbol of all the ten Gurus and their constant guide. The Guru died hour-and-a-half after midnight on 7th October 1708.

The two hundred years between Guru Nanak's proclamation of faith (1499) and Guru Gobind's founding of Khalsa Panth (1699) can be neatly divided into two almost equal parts. In the first hundred years, the five Gurus pronounced the ideals of new social order for Punjab. The code of the new order was: The Granth, its symbol; and Harmandir, an edifice, whose first stone was laid by a Muslim, rest being built by Hindus and Sikhs together. Sikhism of the first Gurus and the Granth found ready acceptance among the men. They responded to it because it was eclectic, simple and propounded by men who were too modest either to claim kinship with God, or to announce their utterances as prophecies. Hindus caught the wisdom of the Vedas, of which they knew but little because of the monopoly over Sanskrit learning by the Brahmins. The Muslims were reminded of the exhortations of the Sufis. To both, the message of the Gurus came in a language they understood.

The Second period of a hundred years saw the development of traditions which supplemented this social order. The sixth Guru was the first to appeal to arms; and the tenth Guru put the army on the regular footing. The movement also found its martyrs and heroes. Arjun, Tegh Bahadur and sons of Gobind wore the crown of martyrdom. Hargobind and Gobind, the halo of heroism.

There was a long standing need to disseminate the story of the Sahibzadas' far and wide within India and across the world as a true example of standing up for what is just and righteous. Effort directed towards this end by the Sikh community and by the Indian government have resulted in 26th December being observed as "Veer Bal Diwas." Now the story of the Sahibzadas is being narrated all across the nation in schools, colleges, institutions and communities and is motivating all humanity, especially the youth.

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A Living Legend: Pranav Kumar Bhattacharya

Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya was born on 18 October 1923 in a family of respectable lineage in Berhampur, a district town 116 miles north of Calcutta. His father was Dakshina Pada Bhattacharya and his mother's name was Prafullamayee Devi.

His education started at home when he was five as was the practice in a Brahmin's family in those days. Then, for about a year, he studied in Berhampur Krishnanath Collegiate School. At seven he was taken to Calcutta, where his father was serving as one of the engineers in Bengal Telephones. He stayed with his parents and was admitted to a private school called Anandamayee Institution. This school was founded and run by a patriot named Charuchandra Dutta. Besides academic subjects, Pranab imbibed here the spirit of discipline, high morals, great ideals and patriotism. Later, he graduated in 1945 from Krishnanath College, Calcutta University.

From his early childhood, Pranab was highly interested in sports and Physical Education, and he wanted to build a strong healthy and powerful body. He took his first lesson in boxing when he was 7-years-old in Bhowanipore, YMCA in Calcutta, of which his father was a member.

Later, he also went through a physical education programme at Jagadbandhu Institution though not in a very serious manner except when he practised boxing seriously under a famous boxer of that time, Jagad Kumar Kanai Seal and his assistant, Biren Chunder.

Pranav narrated this episode from his boxing days. One of the boys in this school was very good in boxing and was known for it. I fought with him but was badly mauled by this boy because I had not practised for a while. There was nothing else to do but to accept the beating. Thereafter, I began practising earnestly and I challenged him again. This time it was my turn to maul him. I mauled him so badly that he decided to give up boxing altogether. Everyone asked him for the reason. What could he say? Do you know what he said in the end, because of boxing, his face was losing its shape!

At this time, an idea came to Pranab to open a Physical Culture Club in every town and village of Bengal (Bengal was not partitioned at that time), which would provide a strong, healthy, honest and capable people, who would build up a great India.

He did not know yet the ultimate aim of life towards which the organisation should be oriented. Pranab's family had contacts with Sri Aurobindo Ashram since 1934. His uncle Charupada visited the Ashram in 1936, and his father Dakshina Pada in 1938. Since then they frequently visited the Ashram. So it was natural that Pranab would come under the influence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

During his college holidays, when he came to Sri Aurobindo Ashram in April 1942, he not only saw the Ashram but also had Sri Aurobindo and the Mother's Darshan. He took this opportunity to get first-hand knowledge about the Ashram. He decided to stay here for about four months, took up work as a service in the Ashram Laundry and started learning Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, teaching and Yoga. He liked the ashram life and seemed to have enjoyed his stay at the Ashram.

In 1945, when he was about to take a state scholarship for the study of silk technology in England, he got a definite inner command to come to Ashram, and he obeyed it at once.

Pranab finally came to the Ashram in 1945, and took up work in the Laundry as he had done during his first visit in 1942. The Mother had a liking for him from the very beginning and she opened opportunities for him so that he could be closer to Her.

Gradually, children started coming to the Ashram, and the Mother had to make arrangements for their education and play. So the school and playground were opened for them and Pranab happened to take up the playground work. Then slowly and steadily the Mother started building the Physical Education organisation and made him Her instrument. She had seen great possibilities in Physical Education for the work of Physical Transformation which is our true aim. That is why She gave so much importance to Physical Education in the Ashram.

The Mother started taking him more and more into her fold. In August 1947, the Mother permitted Pranab to see Her whenever he needed to. He would go to Her for various kinds of work and to attend on Her. Gradually, he became a part of Her life.

She taught him personally all about Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and his Teachings. She guided him integrally in every field of life's action. And she gave Her Ananda that remained with him all the time. He was able to see the True goal of life.

Once an Ashram student asked him, "What was the nature of your relationship with Mother? When did she ask you to attend upon her? Did you have any correspondence with her?"

Pranab: My relation with the Mother was that of a mother and child, of a guru and shishya, of a leader and follower and that of a true friend. She gradually took me into her fold after she saw me for the first time in 1942. From 15th August 1947, she gave me the permission to see her whenever I wanted. The responsibility of attending on her came about slowly. And a time came when the Mother allowed me to stay in Her room all the time.

Here is an interesting anecdote as narrated by Pranav as to why the Mother permitted him to stay in her room and not anyone else.

Dada was sitting in his office. In conversation with Rani di, he mentioned that a long time ago Navjata had offered to stay with the Mother all the time and help her with her work as Dada used to.

The Mother heard him and said: "Yes, you can do that, but I have a condition. Will you be able to fulfil that condition?"

"What is that condition, Mother?" Navjata asked. The Mother replied: "No wrong thought should enter your consciousness."

On hearing the condition, Navjata did not insist any more. It isn't easy at all, this condition of the Mother. Not to let the slightest hint of a wrong thought enter the consciousness. Even for a second. Your mind

should always remain full of faith, love and surrender like a flawless diamond. Like the immobile, clear morning sky.

That is why Navjata used to say, “I respect Pranab for that reason, but I envy him.”

Ashram student, “What was your role in her work? Can you enlighten us on the reference that she makes about a fight in the subtle world where you were the only one who did not desert her?”

Pranab, “Like all her children, I felt that I had to do my inner and outer work properly and I have tried to execute my responsibility as well as I could. When her body rested, she would often go out of her body and fight with adverse forces in the subtle world. Somebody was needed to take care of her body at that time. She told me that she had full confidence in me and that I was doing my work all right.”

In November 1973, when the Mother left Her body, he used to be on duty by Her side for about 16 to 18 hours every day.

After she left Her body, he has continued doing her work as one of her ‘Uttar Sadhaks’ (Uttar Sadhaks carry forth the Guru’s work from where the Guru has left).

Now his work is to guide the Ashram Physical Education Department whenever needed, to look after the Ashram Film and Photographic work, and to see people who visit him and to answer the letters that come from devotees of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo, staying outside the Ashram.

At 75 years, he was in good health and in high spirits. He exercised regularly and was determined to go on right up to the end.

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Compiled from Pranav Kumar’s book: *By the Way: Part 1 and Part 2*

**Section 3: MARVELS FROM SRI AUROBINDO
AND THE MOTHER**

Preparing the Path

The ancient traditions rightly said, “Our origin and ourselves, our God and ourselves are one.” Thus, when a man who seeks the Divine attempts to ascend by degrees towards the inaccessible, he forgets that all his knowledge and all his intuition cannot take him one step forward in this infinite; nor does he know that what he wants to attain, what he believes to be so far from him, is within him.

For how could he know anything of the origin until he becomes conscious of his origin within himself? It is by understanding himself, by learning to know himself, that he can make a supreme discovery and cries out in wonder like the patriarch in the Bible, “The house of Lord is here, and I knew not.” That is why we must express that sublime thought, and make it known to all, the word that fills the heavens and the earth, “I am in all things and in all beings.”

Therefore, “If at any time a deep sorrow or a searing doubt or intense pain overwhelms you to despair, there is an infallible way to gain calm and peace. In the depth of your being there shines a light, a living and conscious portion of the universal godhead who animates, nourishes and illuminates Matter – a powerful and unfailing guide for those who are prepared to heed his law and hear and obey him. No sincere and lasting aspiration towards him can be in vain”.

For if we follow our path, bearing this thought in our hearts like the rarest jewel, the most precious treasure, if we allow it to do its work of illumination and transfiguration within us, we shall know that it lies in the centre of all beings and all things, and in it we shall feel the marvellous oneness of the universe.

Then we shall understand the vanity and childishness of our meagre satisfaction, our foolish quarrels, our petty passions, and our blind indignation. We shall feel ourselves being swept by this sublime current of true spirituality which will deliver us from our narrow limits and bounds.

So long as the mind is restless, it is not possible to get at the inner Truth, Calm, Peace and Quietude – that is the first necessity. To remain

quiet within, firm in the will to go through, refusing to be disturbed or discouraged by difficulties or fluctuations, that is one of the first things to be learnt on the Path.

An attempt has been made to extract from the inspiring words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother some spiritual exercises that give us direction and guide us in discovering our own highest self.

Establishing Peace

First of all, you must want it and then must try and must persevere, keep on trying. Method: Sit quietly and then begin saying to yourself “Peace”. Don't pay attention to thoughts but keep calling Peace and Calm as if they were your friends.

Stepping Back

Most of us live on the surface of our being; when you meet some unpleasant being similarly projected, you get upset. All that belongs to the ordinary world is impermanent and there is nothing in it worth getting upset about. What is lasting, eternal, immortal and infinite, that indeed is worth possessing? It is Divine Light, Divine Love, Divine Life. Stand back from your action and rise into an outlook devoid of all allurements of these temporal motions.

Control of Speech

Just for one hour a day – to say nothing but only indispensable words. Not more, not less. As regards speech, the quality of life is the quality of your communication with others and yourself.

Static Power

Static Power is something which can withstand everything, nothing can touch it, nothing can shake it, it is immobile. When you become conscious of your immortal spirit, you will know what its strong immobility is. It is integral immobility.

When You Have Some free time

Instead of wasting your time in chatting or doing useless things or reading things that lower the consciousness, use the moments to remember.

How to Have the Experience

It is indispensable to go within each day. To go within yourself. Once you have succeeded in going within yourself deeply enough to feel the reality of that which is within, and to widen yourself progressively and lose the sense of limitation. But this must be done in the greatest possible calm, peace and tranquillity.

Widening One's Consciousness

One must widen one's consciousness. There are many ways: Identify yourself with something Vast – the immensity of the waters of an ocean, it is so far that you cannot see the other shore, you can't reach its end anywhere. You think of this and feel that you are floating on this sea. You can widen your consciousness a little. **Another way** is to look at the sky and then imagine all those spaces between all those stars, the kind of infinite spaces in which the earth is a tiny point and you are too just a tiny point – smaller than an ant. And you look at their spaces and you feel that you are floating in their infinite spaces. **There is yet another way** – by trying to identify with all the things upon earth. Fourthly, there are intellectual ways of widening the consciousness. When something is unpleasant to you, begin to think of the eternity of time and immensity of space. If you think of all that has gone before and all that will come afterwards and this second in eternity is truly just a passing breath. Then, it has no place and no importance because what is indeed is a second in eternity. Then you sense the utter ridiculousness of the importance you attached to what happened to you. Simply a concentration like this can sweep away the deep pain, all unpleasantness. It takes you out of your ego.

Intensifying One's Power of Concentration

How to do one's best when one is in a hurry? To concentrate one's attention and one's energy, think only of what one is doing and not of

anything else. One can perform a job or complete a job in less than half the time and also do it well simply by intensity of concentration. One can succeed in doing things even better and more quickly by the power of concentration. Thus make use of work as a means for Growth.

Forgetting Oneself in Work

If you want to do something well, any kind of work, do painting, music, run a race, you must become what you are doing and not remain a small person looking at himself doing it because then one is in complicity with ego. Illustration: Filling a bottle from another bottle – that is why work is a great discipline.

For everything, it is the same even for tapasya. If you do tapasya, all the same observing yourself doing it and telling yourself, “AM I making any progress?” then it is your ego which becomes more and more enormous and occupies the whole place.

One must widen one’s consciousness doors, and the best way is to be able to concentrate upon what one is doing and become one with what one does.

Strengthen One’s will

It is the lower nature, the instincts of the subconscious which govern you and make you do things you should not do. It is a choice between your will and accepting submission. It is a choice between weak submission and a controlling will. If the will is clear, if it is based on truth, it has the power to refuse the wrong movement. As you are a conscious soul and intelligent will, your duty is to see that this is what governs you and not impulses.

Developing Controlling Will

“If you are in the habit of doing something, with some regularity, then you insist on it and compel yourself to do it as you compel yourself to lift a weight – you make an effort, a kind of inner effort. If you do this regularly, you will end up by acquiring an independent and strong will. Lastly, you must unify yourself. If one is pulled by opposite tendencies

without being conscious of oneself, one does not exist then and hence, one can't have a will. The center of human being is the psychic which is the dwelling place of the immanent Divine. Unification means organization and humanization of all the parts of the being – mental, vital, physical, around the center so that all the activities of the being may be correct expression of the will of the Divine Presence.” – the Mother.

Becoming Conscious of One's Consciousness

First of all, one must know what one's consciousness is, that is, to become conscious of one's consciousness and localise it.

Exercise: Explore yourself within – Observe yourself and watch yourself living and then see whether it is really the body which is the consciousness of the being, what one calls 'myself'. Then when one has realised that is not at all the body, then one searches in his impulses and emotions to see whether it is that, again one finds that it is not that, then one seeks in one's thoughts whether the thought is truly himself. What he calls 'myself'. When one thinks of himself, he thinks "Myself" as his body. But the body is the last instrument and yet it is this what one calls 'Myself', most of the time, unless one begins to reflect. At the end of a very short time one becomes aware "No, I am thinking, therefore myself is different from my thoughts". Thus by progressive elimination one succeeds in entering into contact with something, "yes that is myself" and this something I can move around. And so one begins to understand what our consciousness is, and it is after that one can say, 'I can unite my consciousness with my psychic being and I shall become that which may be in harmony with the Divine and be able to surrender entirely to the divine. If by this exercise of rising above my faculties and my intellect, I can enter a region of pure light, pure Knowledge, then one can put one's consciousness there and live like that, in luminous splendour.

Observing and Organising Movements of One's Being

One must be clearly aware of the origin of one's movements because there are contradictory desires and demands in the being – some pushing you here and some pushing you there, thus creating a chaos in life. If reviewing of the movements and reactions of the day, is to make

you progress, you must find something within you in whose light you yourself can be your own judge, which has some light and which is in love with the progress. Now place all the day's events before it, then try to find out why this has followed that and look at the luminous screen that is before you, certain things will pass across it well, others may throw a shadow, yet others cast a shadow which is dark and disagreeable. When you have done a thing which is in conformity with your ideal of knowledge and self-mastery, it does not leave any shadow. But when it was not in conformity with it, then it would leave a shadow on screen, Why has it left a shadow? What was there in the act that was contrary to the will to self-knowledge and self-mastery? Most often you would find that it corresponds to unconsciousness, then you resolve that next time you would try to be conscious before doing anything. But in other cases you will see that it was little egoism which has come to distort your action or thoughts. Now place this egoism before your Light and ask yourself: "Why has it the right to make me act like that?" Do not accept any explanation from your mind. And then resolve not to accept such thing. Most of the times it is self-love, vanity and ego.

If you organise your feelings, your thoughts, your impulses, etc., around the psychic centre which is the inner light, you will see that all the inner disorders will change into a luminous order.

Mother: "But if you continue this game, I assure you that in six months you will not recognise yourself, you will say to yourself, what? I was not like that! It is impossible!"

An old sage has said, "There is no evil there is only a lack of balance. There is nothing bad, only things are not in their place. Human suffering would disappear if everything was in its place".

Exercises for Not Being Angry:

When we enter into relationship with others, one of the following two things will happen:

- (a) If people do not see things eye to eye with other people – one sees them in one way, the other in another way; and if people are reasonable, they do not quarrel.

- (b) If people are not reasonable, they begin to quarrel. Instead of quarrelling, the best thing to do is to enter into other's consciousness and ask yourself as to why he says things like that or what pushes him to do this or that or what makes him take this attitude. If you do this immediately, you will stop being angry. So this is already a gain but also, if the other person continues being angry, it has no effect on you. Therefore, by identifying yourself, you have tried to enter the other person's consciousness to know exactly what is going on there. And later on, one can identify oneself more perfectly and prevent the movement of division, deformation and stop quarrels.

Exercise 2: How to get out of ego through knowing by identification. If one wants to get out of one's ego, one must learn how to identify oneself. So long one is shut upon one's ego, one cannot make any progress. For instance, you are with someone and this person tells you something and you tell him the contrary. It happens simply through a spirit of contradiction. Naturally, you will not come to any point. But instead of remaining closed in your own ideas or your words, if you tell yourself, "I am going to try and see why he said that to me. And you concentrate". Then the other person continues speaking because you do not contradict him. He feels happy that he has convinced you. When you concentrate more and more, on what he is saying, you are entering his mind and suddenly you enter into his way of thinking, and understand as to why he is saying or speaking to you this.

Now put together what you have known of the person and what you have come to understand, you can find the truth and here you have truly made progress. And this is the best way of widening your thought, your consciousness and getting rid of your little ego.

Last word

In all that you do together with others, if you do not agree, take it as a divine grace – a marvellous opportunity is given to you to make a progress. Instead of looking at yourself, you enter the other person's consciousness and having a little bit more control over your thoughts, over your movements. At first, you would not succeed very well, but when you

persist, you will succeed admirably. First, it adds lot of interest to life and second, it helps you come out of the shell in which you are shut up. For instance, when you are reading a book that interests you very much as to what happens next, or what end the author is leading you to, etc., at times you forget your meal times or your bed time. You get completely absorbed and engrossed in what you are reading. And if you do it with a certain perfection, you succeed in understanding ahead what is going to occur. These are a phenomenon of self-identification. Someone asked the Mother, “What is the way of knowing the Divine?” And the Mother answered, “The only way of knowing the divine is by identifying oneself with Him. There is no other way.” Hence, once you are master of this method of identification, you can identify yourself with the Divine”.

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Extracts from inspiring writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother as brought out in *All India Magazines* April 2007 and March 2019.

The Secret of Existence

All life here is a stage or a circumstance in an unfolding progressive evolution of a Spirit that has involved itself in Matter and is labouring to manifest itself in that reluctant substance. This the whole secret of earthy existence. 1

Evolution in its essence is not the development of a more and more organised body or a more and more efficient life. Evolution is the strife of a Consciousness somnambulised (sleeping) in Matter. To wake and be free and find and possess itself and all its possibilities to the very utmost and widest, to the very last and the highest. Evolution is the emancipation of the self-revealing Soul secret in Form and Force, the slow becoming of a Godhead, the growth of a Spirit.

From the clod and metal to the plant, from the plant to the animal, from the animal to man, so much has she completed of her journey. As from matter to life, from life to mind, so now she must pass from mind to supermind, from man to superman.

This world is not really created by a blind force of Nature. Even in the Inconscient the presence of the supreme Truth is at work; there is a seeing Power behind it which acts infallibly and the steps of the Ignorance itself are guided even when they seem to stumble. What we call the Ignorance is cloaked Knowledge, a Knowledge at work in a body not its own but moving towards its own supreme self-discovery. In this vast and apparently confused mass of existence there is a law, a one truth of being, guiding and a fulfilling purpose of the word's existence.

Existence is not a blind machine that somehow came and started a set ignoble motion without object or sense or purpose. Existence is a Truth of things unfolding by a gradual process of manifestation, and an evolution of its own involved Reality. Existence is not an illusion, a Maya that had no reason, no business to exist, could not exist, does not exist but only seems to be. A mighty Reality manifests in itself this marvellous universe

The Divine we see is not remote and inaccessible. He is at the core of His own creation, and what He wants us to do is to find Him and by our personal transformation to become capable of knowing Him, of uniting with Him, in the end, of manifesting Him consciously. This is what we should consecrate ourselves to, this is our true reason for existence.

The true aim of life is to find the Divine's Presence deep inside oneself and to surrender to It so that It takes the lead of the life, all the feelings and all the actions of the body. This gives a true and luminous aim to existence.

The Divine is not far, He is in ourselves, deep inside and above the feelings and thoughts. With the Divine is peace and certitude and even the solution of all difficulties.

The Mother says, "Europeans don't have the inner sense at all. To them, everything is like a thin layer on the surface. There is nothing behind, so that they can't feel". But it is an absolutely real fact that the Presence is there, I can vouch for it. People have given me little things in metal, wood or ivory, representing various gods. All I have to do is to take one in my hand for the god to be there. I have a few of Ganesh and when I take one in my hand and look at it for a minute, he is there. There is Narayana which comes from the Himalayas, Badrinath.

The Mother explains the principle behind idol worship, "Whatever the external form of the deity, the presence of the thing represented is always there. And there is always someone – whether a priest or an initiate, a sadhu or a sanyasi, someone who has the power to draw the Force and Presence down into it. And it's true, it is quite real. The Force and the Presence are THERE; and that is not the form of wood or stone or metal, is what you worship, it's that Presence. 2

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India One and Indivisible

What is India?

“India is not earth, rivers and mountains of this land, neither it is a collective name for the inhabitants of this country. India is a living being, as much as, say Shiva. All the countries have their spirit and if politically you make any changes, they would be unreal. For example, although Austria has become part of Germany, still they are quite separate and the spirit of Austria is in agony (Austria was invaded and annexed by Germany in March 1938). India is Goddess just as Shiva is a God. If she likes, she can manifest in human form.” 1

The Mother saw in her vision in the year 1920, that India was free.

“It is France that can connect Europe with India. There are great spiritual possibilities for France. She will play a big part in spite of the present bad condition. It is through France that the spiritual message will reach Europe. That is why I chose France for my birth although I am not French”. 2

The Mother wrote this note after hearing on the radio the declaration of the Viceroy to Indian leaders, announcing Britain’s final transfer of power to a partitioned India. A proposal has been made for the solution of our difficulties in organising Indian Independence and it is being accepted with whatever bitterness or regret and searchings of the heart by Indian leaders. But do you know why this proposal has been made to us? It is to prove to us the absurdity of our quarrels.

Clearly, it is not the solution; it is a test, an ordeal which, if we leave it out in all sincerity, will prove to us that it is not by cutting a country into small bits that we shall bring about its unity and its greatness; it is not by opposing interest against each other that we can win for its prosperity; it is not by setting one dogma against another that we can serve the spirit of Truth. In spite of all, India has a single soul and while we have to wait till we can speak of an India One and Indivisible, our cry must be, “Let the Soul of India Live For Ever”.

I will give you an example and that will make it clear to you. I used to meditate every day with Sri Aurobindo. He was on one side of the table, and I sat on the other side, in the veranda. One day, while in meditation, I went very deep inside or out of myself and reached a state of consciousness, in which I said to Sri Aurobindo, “India is free”. That was on 1920. Then he asked me one question, “How?” I replied, “Without struggle, without battle, the English will leave by themselves, because of the state of the world will be such that they will have no choice but to go away”.

When Sri Aurobindo asked me the question, “I put it in the future but, where I saw, I said, “India is free”. But India was not free at that time, it was 1920. Yet it was there, and it happened in 1947 which means that from the physical point of view, I said twenty-seven years later”. 3

A child asked the mother, Could you see Pakistan? “No, because liberation could not have taken place without Pakistan. In fact, if they had listened to Sri Aurobindo, there would not have been any Pakistan”. 4

1965 War Between India and Pakistan

At the height of the war between India and Pakistan, the Mother gave this message, “It is for the sake of Truth that India is fighting and must fight until India and Pakistan have once more become ONE because that is the truth of being.” 5

Closing Word

India is the place where the fate of the earth will be decided. The world conflict, the issue will be played out over India. The whirl of forces is here over India. It is becoming urgent and falsehood, duplicity; everything seems to be rising to the surface. It is tedious. It is like a conflict between the forces that wait to destroy the earth and the terrestrial transformation. It is only the truth that can save us: truth in words, truth in action, truth in will, truth in feelings. It is the choice between serving the Truth or being destroyed. 6

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4. *Ibid.*, pp. 32-22
5. *Ibid.*, p. 128
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Significance of Relics

The tradition of enshrining relics of great saints and yogis is a very old one and has been practiced by many traditions of yoga and religions. The reason behind this practice is that yogis, during their Tapasya, have come in contact with Divine Consciousness, and their relics when enshrined vibrate with this consciousness. Those who go to the samadhis where their relics are enshrined, feel the vibrations.

However, Sri Aurobindo's Relics have a much deeper and wider significance. It is for the first time in the history of humankind that supramental light was brought down into the earth atmosphere as a physical principle by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Before Sri Aurobindo, many rishis came into contact with the supramental light during moments of meditation. But it was for the first time that the supramental light has entered the earth atmosphere to banish the darkness of inconscience.

Though the date of the descent of the supramental light into Sri Aurobindo's body was not announced, one gathers from Sri Aurobindo's answers around 1938. However, the manifestation of the supramental light at the universal level took place on 29 February 1956 as described by the Mother. That is why the event of 1956 was declared by the Mother as a "manifestation" and not a "descent" which has already taken place.

The Relics of Sri Aurobindo, suffused with the supramental light, vibrate with a totally different spiritual force and all seekers who bow down before the Relics, no doubt, receive Sri Aurobindo's and The Mother's grace in abundance, each according to his or her own sincerity and receptivity.

We have seen how much importance the Mother attached to it when Relics were given away for the first time. She said that each and every molecule of Sri Aurobindo's body was filled with supramental consciousness. We know that his body was glowing with supramental light as soon as he left it. That consciousness is not a mortal thing which ceases with the death of the physical body.

To keep alive that truth and give due respect to it is what the Relics demand of us. Relics help us to live in the consciousness of the psychic and make our progress natural and easy. 1

The Mother writes, “I stood by his bed side and in a very concrete way, all the supramental force which was in him passed from his body into mine and I felt a fraction of this passage. It was extraordinary.”

Reference

1. *Divinity's Comrades*, Nirodbaran; pp. 216–217

Realisation of the Divine

It is when something which you aspire for becomes real to you, for example, you have the idea of the Divine in all, but it is an idea, a belief; then you see and feel the Divine in all, it becomes a realisation.

“When you see Light, that is Vision; when you feel light entering into you, that is experience; when Light settles in you and brings illumination and knowledge, that is realisation”. 1

Realisations are the receptions in the consciousness and the establishment there of the fundamental Truths of the Divine, of the Divine Nature, of the world consciousness and the play of its forces, of one’s own self and the real nature of things, the power of these things growing in one until they are part of one’s inner life and existence.

These things are often called experiences when they only come in flashes or rare visualisations. They are spoken of as full realisations only when they become very positive or frequent or continuous and normal.

Realisation – Three Successive Movements

In the physical world there are always two forms of knowledge, the direct and the indirect, pratyaksa – perceptible or visible to the eyes, and paroksa, of that which is beyond our vision. When the object is beyond our vision, we necessarily arrive at an idea of it by inference, imagination, by hearing the descriptions of others who have either seen it or by studying pictorial representation of it if these are available. By putting together all these aids, we can arrive at a more or less adequate idea or suggestive image of the object. But we do not realise the thing itself because it is not yet to us the grasped reality but only our conceptual representation of a reality.

For example:

- “We may hear clear teaching about the Self from philosophers or teachers or from ancient writings, or we may by thought, inference, imagination or by any other available means form a mental conception of it and we may hold firmly that conception in our mind and fix it by an exclusive concentration but we have not yet realised it because we have not seen God”. 2

- It is only when after long and persistent concentration or by other means, the veil of mind is swept aside and a flood of light breaks over the awakened mentality; and conception gives place to a knowledge – vision, in which the Self is as present, real, concrete as a physical object to the physical eye. Then, we possess in knowledge; for we have seen.
- An experience of a truth in the substance of mind, in the vital or the physical is the beginning of realisation. When I experience peace, I begin to realise what it is. Repetition of experience leads to a fuller and a more permanent realisation. When it is settled anywhere, which is full realisation of it in that part of the being.
- Experiences are sound as well as unsound. Those that are helpful are sign-posts, sometimes stages on the way, sometimes stuff and material of the realisation. A Sadhak asked Sri Aurobindo, “Why does X say that one should seek the Divine?” Sri Aurobindo replied, “It simply means that you have not to make experiences your main aim, but Divine only your aim, and if you do that, you are more likely to get the true helpful experiences and avoid wrong ones.”

Realise the Individual Self

The first is the discovery of the soul, the secret psychic entity, the divine element within us. This is the first step of self-realisation, to enthrone the soul, in the place of the ego. 3

The realisation of the psychic being, its awakening and the bringing of it in front depends mainly on the extent to which one can develop a personal relation with the Divine, a relation of bhakti, love, reliance, self-giving, rejection of instances of the separating and self-asserting mental, vital and physical. 4

The sadhana of inner concentration consists in:

One: Fixing the consciousness in the heart and concentrating there on the idea, image or the name of the Divine Mother, whichever comes easier to you .

Two: A gradual and progressive quietening of the mind by the concentration in the heart.

Three: An aspiration for the Mother's presence in the heart and the control by her of mind, life and action. 5

Realise the Cosmic – Self

Our first imperative aim when we draw back from mind, life, body and all else that is not our eternal being but it is to get rid of the false idea of the self by which we identify ourselves with the lower existence, and can reach only our apparent being as perishable creature in a perishable world.

Therefore, we have to know ourselves as the self, the spirit, the eternal. We have to exist consciously in our true being. Therefore, it must be our all-absorbing idea and effort in the path of knowledge. But when we have realised the external self that we are, we have still a secondary aim, that is, to establish the true relation between this external self that we are and the mutable existence and mutual world which until now we had falsely taken for our real being.

When we have got rid of our confinement to our lower nature, we are likely to seize the other side of the same relation between self and the world. But the self and the world are in an eternal close relation and there is connection between them, not a gulf that has to be overleaped. Spirit and material existence are the highest and lowest rung of an orderly and progressive series.

This principle of connection is the eternal unity between the Self and all existences; of that eternal unity. The liberated soul must be capable, just as the ever free and unbound Divine is capable of it.

We should realise equally with the pure self-existence at which we have first to aim. For integral self-possession, we must be one not only with the Self, with God, but with all its existences.

We have to identify our being with the infinite that makes itself the base and continent of the worlds and dwells in all existences. This is the realisation which the ancient vedantics spoke of as seeing all existences in the self and the self in all existences. In other words, besides the consciousness of the transcendent that is self-pure, self-existent, timeless, spaceless, we have to accept the cosmic consciousness.

In these three terms is expressed, fundamentally, the whole of that relation between the self and the world which we have to substitute for the false relation created by the limiting ego.

This Is Thy Work and the Aim of Thy Being

Sri Aurobindo writes, “This is thy work and the aim of thy being for which thou art here, to become the divine superman and a perfect vessel of the Godhead. All else that thou hast to do, is only a making thyself ready or a joy by the way or a fall from thy purpose.

If thou hast a duty, this is thy duty; if thou ask what shall be thy aim; if thou demand pleasure, there is no greater joy, for all other joy is broken or limited, the joy of a dream or the joy of a sleep or the joy of self-forgetting. But this is the joy of the whole being.

If thou seek the Truth, this is the Truth. Place it before thee and in all things be faithful to it.

That which thou hast to transcend is the self that thou appearest to be, and that is man as thou knowest him, the apparent Purusha. And what is this man? He is a mental being enslaved to life and matter.”

Steps to Get out of Ignorance

Nature invented the ego that the individual might disengage himself from the *inconscience* of the mass and become an independent living mind, life-power, soul, spirit, co-ordinating himself with the world around him but not drowned in it and separately in-existent and ineffective. For the individual is indeed part of the cosmic being, but he is also something more, he is a soul that has descended from the Transcendent. This he cannot manifest at once, because he is too near to the cosmic *Inconscience*, not near enough to the original Superconscience; he has to find himself as mental and vital ego before he can find himself as a source of spirit.

Closing Word

The realisation of the Divine is one thing needful and the rest is desirable so far as it helps or leads towards that or when it is realised, extends and manifests the realisation. But realisation is the first need and it

is that around which all the rest moves, for apart from it all the rest would have no meaning. 6

In a deeper and spiritual sense, a concrete realisation is that which makes the thing more real, dynamic, and intimately present in the consciousness that any physical thing can be.

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Part 1: Preamble to Prayers and Mantras

Why Pray?

1. Man's life is all wants and needs and therefore, of desires. When man becomes conscious of greater Power governing this world, he approaches it, through prayer for fulfilment of his needs, for help in his rough journey, for protection and aid in his struggle.

Religious Approach to God

2. Whatever absurdities there may be in the ordinary religious approach to God and there are many, especially the attitude which makes us believe that the Divine can be bribed into acquiescence by praise, entreaty and gifts. But this way of turning to the Divine is still an essential part of religious beings because prayer helps to prepare the relationship with the Divine, first at the lower level but subsequently, we can draw towards spiritual truth which is behind the prayer.

3. The human soul looks up to the Divine for help, for the protection, for guidance, for knowledge when we seek him as a Guide, Teacher, Giver of Light and for relief and solace and deliverance in pain and suffering. If you have an aspiration that is sincere enough, you can bring down in you something that will change everything.

Make Your Heart a Temple of the Divine

4. Prayer must follow the heart on the crest of its emotions, that is, with sincerity, aspiration and faith. If prayer is done mechanically, then it is ineffective. When we begin to make ourselves a temple of the Divine, our thoughts and feelings become a constant prayer of aspiration and seeking. The Divine looks into the heart and removes the veil, but you have to be a true devotee who feels the power the name.

Asking the Divine

5. Why are some prayers answered, all are not? You may ask, why should not then all prayers be answered. But why should they be? It is not machinery: put a prayer in the slot and you get your asking. Besides, considering all the contradictory things that mankind is praying for all the time, God would be in a rather awkward position if he had to grant all of them, it would not do. The Mother has this to say, "If you ask him as he is the Divine, He knows a little better than you. What your need is. He will

give you what you need for your spiritual growth and not to fulfil your desire.” 1

Several Kinds of Prayers

6. *The first is a request.* The request is for something that the person feels is beyond the reach of only his own efforts, and yet the person wants it badly. It may be a request for a material object, or a non-material object such as health or happiness.

a) The prayer may be for something which the person himself wants, or the prayer may be on behalf of someone else. It may be specific, such as the prayer for a specific person’s recovery from disease, or it may be general, such as a prayer for all the victims of a flood or earthquake.

b) It may also be universal with a very broad goal, such as the prayer for health, happiness and enlightenment of every human being in the world. Many people, as a matter of principle, do not ask God for anything for themselves. They argue that since He knows everything, He also knows what is good for us better than we do. Further, since He loves us, He will give us whatever is good for us without our asking for it. But there is nothing wrong with asking God for something, provided we do not try to force Him to give it to us. We may ask Him for something which, with our limited intelligence, we think we should have. But we should be prepared for the prayer to be answered in His way and in His time, not ours. And, even if it seems as if the prayer has not been answered at all, it should not shake our faith in the existence and benevolence of God.

c) It is sometimes asked that if God already has a plan, called destiny, will He change it in response to a prayer. According to Sri Aurobindo, destiny is not an irrevocable mechanical law. Sincere and intense human aspiration can also get incorporated into God’s plans, all sincere prayers are answered, although not necessarily the way we would like them to be. God does not always give us whatever we want, but He always gives us whatever we need for our spiritual growth.

d) The important thing is not how a prayer is answered, but the fact that the prayer helps us build a relationship with the Divine. The

initial stimulus for the prayer may be a request that we wish to make, but the prayer should not end there. It should proceed towards the establishment of a personal association with the Divine, and eventually reach a point where the bond is all that matters to us. It should finally become a relationship for the sake of the relationship. We should enjoy and value the relationship so much that we do not even think of what we are getting from it.

7. *The second Kind of prayer is confession.* There are so many occasions in life when we are faced with choices, we know what is right, but because of some ‘compulsions’, we end up doing what is wrong. When we make the wrong choice, we feel guilty about it and may become uneasy about it off and on. The uneasiness may continue to haunt us long after the bad deed was done. One way out of the self-inflicted mental torture is to confess the mistake to God, and ask for His forgiveness. It is assumed that we can always bank upon God’s generosity to give us a second chance. Confession and asking for forgiveness go together, and in that sense, this part of prayer is also a request. But one should not continue to make the same mistake again and again. Then the Divine’s help ceases.

8. *The third prayer consists of gratitude.* If we look around, it is easy to find countless reasons for being grateful to God. Gratitude incorporates a large number of other virtues. Only a person who is selfless, self-denying, sincere, humble and truthful can be grateful. There is great truth in the dictum that the best prayer consists of just three words, ‘Thank you God’.

9. *The fourth prayer consists of adoration and surrender.* A devotee is so overwhelmed by the glory of God that his prayer may consist primarily of a verbal expression of adoration. The devotion makes it very natural for the devotee to place himself entirely in the hands of the Divine, making no condition, asking for nothing except that in him and through him his Will may be directly performed. The more you give yourself to the Divine, the more he will be with you. You ask him for buddhi, knowledge and sound health without which you cannot progress. Leave everything to Him, and feel happy and privileged to do His bidding. Surrender of personal will to the divine will, and eventually merger of personal will with the divine will is the path by which the devotee reaches out to God.

10. Sincere gratitude and devotion generally lead to actions that are intended to serve our fellow creatures. Serving the creation of God is the best way to express our gratitude to Him. We have all been given something, which someone around us needs that may come of use to another person. Some have money, some have knowledge, some have time and others have power. Each of these empowers us to help or give something to another, and if we look around, we can always find someone who needs it. And the ones who have none of these have the capacity to give the ones who have, an opportunity to give! That is how life gives each of us opportunities to fulfil the purpose of life.

Aspiration and Prayer

11. Aspiration implies a faith but not necessarily faith in a divine being; while prayer cannot exist if it is not addressed to something that has no personality! One prays to someone, who can hear us. If there is no body to hear us, how could one pray? Hence, if one prays, this means that even if one does not acknowledge it, one does have faith in something infinitely higher than us, infinitely more powerful, who can change our destiny and change us as well. That is the essential difference. Sri Aurobindo says that aspiration need not be in the form of thought – it can be feeling within that remains even when the mind is attending to work. 2

12. To be clear, we may say that prayer is always formulated in words; but the words may have different values according to the state in which they are formulated in words, but the words may have different values. Prayer is a formulated thing and one may aspire for it, but it is difficult to pray without praying to someone. For instance, one who has a conception of the universe from where they have driven out the idea of the Divine, or the idea that there is someone that knows all, can do everything and who is formidably greater than they. They evidently will pray. However, there are people who do not believe in the existence of God, these people evidently cannot pray.

13. And pray to what? One does not pray to something that has no personality; one prays to someone who can hear us. If there is nobody to hear us, how could we pray? Hence, if one prays, this means that even who does not acknowledge it; one has faith in somebody higher than us

who hears us. All prayers rightly offered bring us close to the Divine and establish a right relation with him. 3

How to Remember the Divine as much as possible in one's Daily Sadhana

14. In order to guide seekers, these prayers and mantra were given by Sri Aurobindo.

- On Getting up in the Morning. Om Sri Aurobindo Mirra!
“Open my mind, my heart, my life to your Light, your Love, and your Power. In all things may I see the Divine.”

This was given by Sri Aurobindo to a Sadhak who had asked him for a brief prayer with Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's name to use as a mantra. While giving it, Sri Aurobindo wrote, “I have written for you a brief prayer with the names in the form of a mantra. I hope it will help you to overcome your difficulty and get an inner foundation”. (16.7.1938)

On receiving the mantra, the Sadhak inquired, “Have I to consider the names and the prayer as one manta?” Sri Aurobindo replied, “Yes”. (18.7.1938)

A Morning Prayer

A prayer of the Mother in Sri Aurobindo's handwriting to as Sadhak: Mother Divine, grant that today may bring to us a completer consecration to Thy Will, a more integral gift of ourselves to your work, a more total forgetfulness of self, a greater illumination, a purer love. Grant that in the communion growing ever deeper, more constant and entire, we may be united always more and more closely to Thee and become thy servitors worthy of Thee. Remove from us all egoism, root out all petty vanity, greed and obscurity. May we be all ablaze with thy Divine Love, make us Thy torches in the world.

Before Starting Work

O Sri Aurobindo Mira! “What you want me to know, let me know. What you want me to do, let me do. What you want me to be, let me be.”

For this you can place your will at the disposal of the Divine, to do the best possible. Because you do not know at every moment what is the best thing to do, nor how to do. Do it with consciousness, sincerity and perseverance. What others do is not your concern.

Before Meditation

O Mother! You are the divine conscious force that dominates all existence, you are in me, you are in every cell of my body, and you are in my mind, in my vital. I am in you; you are in all existence and all existence is in you. You are the Divine Mother.

Before Sleeping

O Mother! Restore my body and nerves and bring calm and quietness to my brain so that when I am awake, I begin my journey to reach you with renewed vigour.

O Mother! In the night as in the day, be always with me. In sleep as in the waking, let me feel in me always, the reality of your presence. Let it sustain and make to grow in me Truth, Consciousness and Bliss constantly at all times.

Prayer to Sri Aurobindo

To Thee who has been the material envelope of our Master, to Thee our infinite gratitude. Before Thee who has done so much for us, who has 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.

Summation

15. Belief in an all-knowing, all-powerful supernatural agency and attempts to communicate with it through prayer are almost universal. Even those who are full of doubts than belief, have a tendency to say a prayer when they find themselves in a helpless situation. A true prayer

is meant to change the will of God or to change you. A true prayer begins as a request to change oneself and culminates in silent and thoughtless state of mind. On the other hand, any request to change the circumstance cannot be a prayer. That would be sheer begging.

References

1. *Letters on Yoga*; Vol II, pp. 902
2. CWM: 5; pp. 141-145
3. SABCL 22; pp. 145

Part 2: Prayers and Mantras for Daily Sadhana

Remembering the Mother – Before meditation

You are the Divine Conscious Force that dominates all existence. You are in me, you are in every cell of my body, and you are in my mind, in my vital. I am in you. You are in all existence and all existence is in you. You are the Divine.

Meditate on Sri Aurobindo (before meditation)

“You are the Light of the sun and the moon, the manhood in man, the intelligence of the intelligent, the energy of the energetic, the strength of the strong, the ascetic force of those who do Tapasya. You are life in all existence. You are eternal seed of all existence.” (The eternal seed is the power of spiritual being; the conscious will of the being.)

– Sri Aurobindo

Mantra for Meditating on the Mother

- OM Anandamayi, Chaitanyamayi, Satyamayi Parmay
(O Mother of all Bliss, O Mother of all Consciousness, O Mother of all Truth, O Mother Supreme)

- Meditating on Sri Aurobindo
OM Satyam, Jnanam, Jyotir Aravinda
(O Lord Sri Aurobindo, Thou art the Truth, Thou art the Knowledge, Thou the Light).

- Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Aravindaya
OM – I implore the Supreme Lord
NAMO – Obeisance to Him
BHAGVATE – Make me Divine

“Do not think yourself big or small, very important or very unimportant, for we are nothing in ourselves; we must only live to become what the Divine wills of us.”

– The Mother

Prayers

➤ **On getting up in the morning.** A seeker can select one which harmonises with his inner being.

(a) Aurobindo Mira, Let the new birth become manifest in my heart and radiate in calm and joy and take up all the parts of my being, mind and vision and feeling and life and body. Let each date in my life be a date of its growth and greater completeness till all in me is the child of the Mother.

(b) Let the Light and Power and Presence envelope me and protect and cherish and foster, till all in my inner and outer existence is one movement and one expression of its peace and strength and Ananda.

(c) O Sri Aurobindo Mira, open my mind, my heart, my life to your Light, your Love, your Power. In all things, may I see the Divine. – Sri Aurobindo

➤ **One must aspire to conquer all mistakes, impurities and obscurities.** Therefore, after meditation, recite this prayer. O Mother, I pray for a divine body, a divine Life. But with my present imperfections, my limited capabilities, my fragmented personality, it is impossible to realise it, not in one life, not in 300 lives. My only hope is YOU.

➤ **O Maa,** Grant that today may bring to us greater consecration to Thy will, a more integral gift of ourselves to Thy work, a greater illumination, a purer love. Grant that in the communion growing ever deeper, more constant and entire, we may be united more and more closely to Thee and become your servitors. May we be ablaze with your Love, make us Thy torches in the world.

Before Sleeping

➤ “O Mother, restore my body and nerves and bring calm and quietness to my brain so that when I awake, I begin my journey to reach you with renewed vigour”.

- “In the night as in the day, be always with me. In sleep as in the waking, let me feel in me always the reality of your presence. Let it sustain and make to grow in me Truth, Consciousness and Bliss, constantly and at all times”.

Prayer before Staring work

- **“Remember and Offer”**. The advice that the Mother gives us in all pursuits, intellectual or active – our one motto should be ‘Remember and Offer’. Let whatever you do be done as an offering to the Divine. And this too is an excellent discipline for you; it will prevent you from doing many foolish and useless things.
- Lord, Thy will be done but grant that I may do as well as I can, the best thing to do.
- “Remember always the Divine and all you do will be an expression of the Divine Presence.” – The Mother
- Placing one’s will at the disposal of Aurobindo Mira.
O Aurobindo Mira.
What you want me to know, let me know.
What you want me to do, let me do.
What you want me to be, let me be.

For this, you can place your will at the disposal of the Divine, to do the best possible. Because you do not know at every moment what is the best thing to do – nor how to do it.

Do it with consciousness, sincerity and perseverance. What others do is not your concern.

– Sri Aurobindo

- “O Lord, Eternal Master ... guide my steps, open my eyes, illumine my heart, and lead me on the paths that go straight to Thee.” – The Mother

- “O Lord, awaken in me the ardent desire to know you. I aspire to consecrate my life to your service”. – The Mother
- “O Mother, I pray to thee, guide my footsteps, enlighten my mind, that at every moment and in all things I may do exactly Thou wants me to do. “– The Mother
- “Give me Thy light, O Lord, grant that I do not fall into any error.” – The Mother
- **Quote: “Rise above the falsehood, Live in the pure Light of your soul and you will be close, very close to the Lord.” – The Mother**

More Prayers by the Mother

- O Mother, I pray to thee, guide my footsteps, enlighten my mind, every moment and in all things I may do exactly what thou wants me to do. – The Mother
- O Mother, thou are the light of my intelligence, the purity of my heart, the quiet strength of my vital, and the endurance of my body. I rely on Thee alone and want to be Thine entirely. Make me surmount all obstacles on the way. – The Mother.

– The Mother, CWM 15; p. 230

Inscription on the Samadhi

To Thee who has been the material envelope of our Master. To Thee our infinite gratitude. Before Thee who has done so much for us, who has worked, struggled, suffered, hoped and endured so much, before Thee who has willed all, attempted all, prepared, achieved all for us, before Thee we bow down and implore that we may not forget even for a moment, all that we owe to thee.

– The Mother

Mrityunjaya Mantra

- *OM Trayambakam Yajamaha, Sugandhim Pushti Vardhnam, Urvaraka Miva Bandanat, Mrityor Muksheer Mamritat*

Meaning: Let Thy Light be in me like a Fire that makes all alive; let Thy divine Love penetrate me. I aspire with all my being for Thy reign as sovereign and master of my mind and heart and body; let them be Thy docile instruments and Thy faithful servitors.

Darshan Days at the Ashram

A Brief History and Significance (1927–1950)

Darshan or vision of the Divine exists as is proved by the life of great saints and seers. Though there are levels and ranges of seeing, yet not all visions are the vision of the Supreme. There is much which exists beyond our senses that can be experienced and seen and known. In fact, our vision rises from the dull mortal sight through a series of subtle sights wherein the Godhead is revealed to us in varying degrees of his Splendour. And it is easy to mistake any of these beings for the Divine and form a cult or a religion around him as has happened in the history of the earth's spiritual evolution.

The Mother said, "In 1926, Sri Aurobindo had given me charge of the outer work because he wanted to withdraw into concentration in order to hasten the manifestation of the Supramental consciousness and he had announced to the few people who were there that he was entrusting to me the work of helping and guiding them, that I would remain in contact with him, naturally, and that through me he would do the work."

After 1926, disciples and devotees were able to have Sri Aurobindo's darshan (darśana, दर्शन) on select occasions, referred to as **Darshan Days**.

Later, after coming to Pondicherry, the birthday celebration of Sri Aurobindo began to assume greater and deeper significance. In one of his birthday talks, Sri Aurobindo reveals, "The period of 15th is a period of great descents but also of great resistances. This 15th is not an exception."

1

Since 1927, Sri Aurobindo consented to Darshan on three days, 21st February (the Mother's Birthday), 15th August (Sri Aurobindo's Birthday) and 24th November (Siddhi Day). However, a long gap came up after the Darshan of 15 August 1938. The battle Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were waging from their rooms in the earnest, sheltering earth and humanity, took its toll and Sri Aurobindo suffered a thigh bone fracture on

23rd November 1938. Nirodbaran captures this moment when the embodied Divine himself is struck by the dark hostile forces.

Sri Aurobindo's Room and Samadhi

Sri Aurobindo's room and his Samadhi remind us of his ever present Divine help amidst our earthy life. To be in front of his room is to perceive the Truth Consciousness. He, who knows how to truly open himself, will find his invariable help for everything. It is all powerful! It vibrates with his Presence. One has to open oneself to be able to feel his Beatitude. What a marvel! What a Power! The one who was with us, his Power and his Force still vibrates with his presence. The presence of Sri Aurobindo is palpably felt by one who is sincere. 2

“In days, when Sri Aurobindo used to give Darshan, before he gave it there was always a concentration of certain forces or of a certain realisation which he wanted to give to people. So, each Darshan marked a stage forward; each time something was added. But that was the time when the number of visitors was very limited. It was organised in another way and it was part of the necessary preparation. But this special concentration, now, occurs at other times, not particularly on Darshan days. And it occurs much more often on other kinds of occasions, in other circumstances. The movement is much more accelerated; the stages succeed each other much more rapidly. And perhaps it is more difficult to follow and if one doesn't take care to keep up; one gets the feeling of being late or being abandoned. These Darshan times with all this rush of people serve not so much for an inner progress inside the Ashram as for the diffusion outside. The use we make of these days is a little different, it is to go farther.” 3

After 1950, the Mother continued to give Darshan on these days. From 1963 onwards, the Mother gave Darshan from the terrace as She gazed upon those who had gathered in the street below.

A brief description of other Darshan days is considered essential to highlight their importance and significance.

Darshan Day 4th April 1910

A disciple asked Sri Aurobindo, “Why did you choose Pondicherry as the place for your Sadhana”? Sri Aurobindo: “It was an Aadesh (Higher Command), I was asked to come here.”

Sri Aurobindo wrote on 12 July 1911. “I need some place of refuge where I can complete my yoga unassailed and build up other souls around me. It seems to me that Pondicherry is the place appointed by those who are beyond, but you know how much effort is needed to establish the thing that is purposed upon the material plane. I am developing the necessary power for bringing down the spiritual on the material plane, and I am now able to put myself into men and change them, removing darkness and bringing light, giving them a new heart and a new mind”.

This quote from Sri Aurobindo’s Poem, ‘A God’s Labour’, is testimony to this.

*He who would bring the heaven here
Must descend himself into clay
And the burden of earthy nature bear
And tread the dolorous way.*

In simple words, what Sri Aurobindo says is not forgetting that I am God yet I have taken human birth here. I have travelled through the world of Inconscience, that dark world full of filth and dirt for what? It is for the golden river to flow on earth where death rules the nature’s domain.

Sri Aurobindo’s coming to Pondicherry marks a new phase in his yoga for which Vedantic foundation was laid already. It was for Sri Aurobindo to build upon that solid bedrock of Truth and Oneness, the edifice of a New Creation. It was for this that Sri Aurobindo had withdrawn from the murky field of politics. It meant three-fold labour:

- a) First, preparing the mind of humanity to receive the New Light that he was bringing down from the heavenly heights;

- b) Second, to prepare a small group that had gathered around him to receive the New Light, not only in their minds, but also in their body and life;
- c) Third, which was initiated in its fullness only after the Supramental Descent in 1956, was the expansion of this work beyond the Ashram, through Sri Aurobindo Society and Auroville.

It has been said in ancient times that Rishi Agastya or Agathiyar had come to this city, and then known as Vedpuri. The Ashram, it seems, is located at this place. The great effort of the seer of the past was resumed again. Pondicherry is blessed by the touch of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. One day humanity will know how the great journey undertaken by Sri Aurobindo changed the course of human journey itself. The seat of a New Age was found.

Darshan Day 24th April: The Mother's Final Arrival in Pondicherry

The coming together of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother marks the beginning of a New Age, the stir of New Consciousness upon earth. Sri Aurobindo installed the Mother in the heart of humanity, in some unrecorded moment in history. Due to Their 'tapasya', the Supramental Consciousness and Force are now active upon earth moulding humanity for the Next Future.

The Key to this Future is with the Mother whose present embodiment is to help humanity cross the perilous passage towards the superhumanity of tomorrow, as revealed in prophetic writing in *Savitri*. (p. 723)

*If this is she of whom the world has heard,
Wonder no more at any happy change.
Each easy miracle of felicity
Of her transmuting heart the alchemy is.*

Sri Aurobindo wrote on 17th August 1941: "The Mother is not a disciple of Sri Aurobindo. She has had the same realisation and experience as myself. The Mother's sadhana started when she was twelve or thirteen, every evening many teachers came to her and taught her various spiritual disciplines. Among them was a dark Asiatic figure. When we first met,

she immediately recognised me as the dark Asiatic figure whom she used to see a long time ago. That she should come here and work with me for a common goal, as it were, a divine dispensation.”

A few events highlighting the significance and importance.

With Her coming, there was a mighty confluence of two vast streams of sadhana, which Sri Aurobindo and the Mother were pursuing individually. These now joined forever to mark the beginning of a new era of spiritual creation: 'An hour began the matrix of new Time.'

On 24th April 1937, The Mother wrote about the significance of 24th April 1920: “The anniversary of my return to Pondicherry, was the tangible sign of the sure victory over the adverse forces”.

It was this which helped to add this special day as the fourth Darshan Day. At first there were only three Darshan days in the year; 21st February, the Mother's Birthday, 15th August – Sri Aurobindo's Birthday and 24th November – Siddhi Day. In 1938 when Sri Aurobindo met with an accident in the early hours of 24th November, the Darshan day was cancelled. Even on 21st February 1939, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother did not come out for Darshan. It was then decided to hold Darshan on 24th April. Thus, since 1939, the day has become Darshan day.

Balcony Darshan

It is in this context that we have to understand the Darshan Days at the Ashram. There were different darshan moments with the Mother; the most well-known and eagerly sought after by seekers and aspirants being the Balcony Darshan when the Mother would come out on the Balcony adjacent to Her room where seekers and devotees would be waiting for a glimpse. The Mother herself reveals the real purpose of this darshan, in her reply to a Sadhak.

Sweet Mother, “*What do you give us in the morning at the balcony, and what should we try to do in order to receive what you are giving?*”

The Mother, “Every morning at the balcony, after establishing a conscious contact with each of those who are present, I identify myself with the Supreme Lord and dissolve myself completely in Him. Then my body, completely passive, is nothing but a channel through which the Lord passes His forces freely and pours upon all his Light, his Consciousness and his Joy, according to each one’s receptivity.”

“The best way to receive what He gives is to come to the balcony with trust and aspiration and to keep oneself as *calm and quiet* as one can in a *silent and passive state of expectation*. If one has something precise to ask, it is better to ask it *beforehand*, not while I am there, because any activity lessens the receptivity”. 4

Then there were individual moments before the Mother when one was face-to-face with the Aditi assuming a human form. All these various Darshans were an occasion for the Divine Mother to pour Her heart of Love on those who had entrusted their lives and destiny to Her. Of course, in her universal Being, as the Universal Mother, She is always doing what each creature needs; Her vast embrace holds this manifested universe and Her profound Love and Grace reaches out to all who call and ask for it. Even when not sought after, her love and Grace are the secret support of all creation. However, it is quite a different thing when the Divine embodies himself in an individual body, assuming the dark terrestrial robe. It is a chance for earth and matter itself to take a leap forward.

This is the brief history of the four Darshan days at the Ashram. The Mother has given us a significance to each Darshan day as follows: 5

- 21st February, The Mother’s Birthday (1878)
- 24th April, The Mother’s Final Arrival in Pondicherry (1920)
- 15th August, Sri Aurobindo’s Birthday (1872)
- 24th November, Siddhi Day (1926)

All these darshan days were days of special descents and were meant to hasten earth’s further progress and help the ailing humanity. The

earth could not contain these descents of special Light and Force except periodically and indirectly through the physical persona of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. However, something new began to happen after the great event of the Supramental Manifestation of 29th February 1956. The Mother remarked regarding this darshan day thus: 6

29th February 1956: The Supramental Manifestation upon Earth. The Golden Day. Henceforth 29th February will be the day of the Lord.

Closing Word

The Darshan days continue to hold a very special meaning to all who have turned to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Here it does not matter where we live, whether in Pondicherry or far away since the Ashram itself has now extended far beyond the boundaries and borders of Pondicherry. It will soon be a year since we had the manifestation of the Supramental Force. Since then, it has been working very actively, even while very few people are aware of it, but still I thought the time had come for us to help a little in its work by making an effort of receptivity. Of course, it does not work only in the Ashram, it is working in the whole world and in all places where there is some receptivity, this Force is at work. The Ashram has not the exclusive receptivity in the world. 7

References

1. *Correspondence with Sri Aurobindo*, Nirodbaran; p. 57
2. *Blessings of the Grace*, Mona Sarkar; pp.109-110
3. CWM 8; pp. 262-264
4. *The Mother*; 12 October 1959
5. CWM 15; pp. 184
6. CWM 15; pp. 188
7. CWM 9; pp. 39

The Supreme Secret of the Gita

Thus runs the secret of secrets, the highest most direct message of Sri Krishna to Arjuna, “Become my mind, my lover and my adorer, a sacrifice to me, bow thyself to me, to me though shall come, this is my pledge and promise to Thee. Abandon all dharmas and take refuge in me alone, do not grieve.”

The Gita intervenes with a statement of the truth of the Spirit. The Gita’s message to those:

- who are seekers of the infinite and whose ultimate aim and endeavour is to cease from the individual being; is indeed one path of journey and entry into the Infinite.
- who have the strength to follow after it, the master men, the great spirits, the God knowers, the God lovers, who can live in God and for God, a divine worker, uplifted above the restless darkness of human mind and false limitation of the ego.
- who are the lowest and full of sins, enter into path of this Yoga and if there is true surrender and absolute faith, success is certain in this path.

The Lord’s assurance to those who are treading the path of Yoga, is not for the worldly pleasures here in the world or a safe place in the heaven above but for seeking and realising the Divine.

As Arjuna was ignorant as a Kshatriya of this spiritual path, the Gita lays down steps and movements and action in chapters 1 to 17.

Sri Krishna tells Arjuna, “If after all this dialogue and explaining – “what is right action”, you still do not follow this path and do not act as per your swadharma, then this will be your greatest loss.” However, Sri Krishna doesn’t let go at this and he then reveals to him another secret in Verse 18/59.

He tells Arjuna, “You are Kshatriya and you cannot desist from fighting. The choice, therefore, before you is to fight either as a slave to your nature as an ignorant Kshatriya, or to fight from your state of consciousness and knowledge. He further adds that His Grace and protection will come only, when you would have made a complete and integral surrender to the Lord of Works.

The solution comes only by living in the higher consciousness, but by doing so one lives and acts as a soul, a portion of the Universal Consciousness and Power. One is then filled with transcendental delight and his action becomes the divine action. This is the solution which Sri Aurobindo offers but to elevate to this condition, the first necessity is to turn away from all that belongs to the lower nature.

The question arises how do I erase from my consciousness, the confusion of the gunas. Answer is that all action is subject to ignorance of the mind and play of the gunas, and it is only when the soul of man finds that it can surpass and erase from its consciousness, the ignorance and confusion of gunas that he can live in his true self. But even that is not enough because when you have found yourself and live in yourself, your nature will still continue in its old way of living and act according to its inferior nature.

Man's action in his embodied soul follows a progressive law of development, determined by an inner law of his being, his swabhava. But even that is not enough. Thereafter, man must follow the social, ethical and religious law and ideal which helps him to observe and follow his true law of nature, his swadharma, the law of his inner being

But you cannot feel and know that Will while you live in your ego-self. You can only respond to it when you expand your consciousness to see all things in the Self and in God; the Self and God in all things. Therefore, by fixing yourself in the inner reality and stillness, you no longer regard yourself as the doer of action. By remaining seated in yourself above the play of gunas, one can live untroubled by the mortal ways. Know that action will still be done by you because nature is always at work but you must learn and feel that you are not the doer of action

According to Sri Aurobindo, this is not all the truth of Yoga of Knowledge, though a great end or great way. Action is a part of integral knowledge of God and his greater mysterious truth. By entirely living in the Divine, action can be and should be continued even after perfection and freedom is won. This is the action of the 'jivamukta', the works of a siddha.

The Yoga of Love will give the highest potential for spiritual freedom and vastness, but it must be love which is One with God

knowledge and not devotion which seeks God in suffering for succour or seeks him in his gifts of divine aid and protection or satisfaction of desires. So, when the God lover is also God knower, the lover becomes oneself with the beloved. It is this perfect love that is key to perfect knowledge.

This triple way is the means by which one can entirely rise out of one's lower nature into the spiritual nature.

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The Greatness of India and Her Creative Power

What happened in Indian history happened because it was inevitable. First the Muslims arrived. From them, India learnt the importance of physical power. Then came the British. From them, our country learnt the importance of material power.

There was no question of the Muslims or the British conquering India, it was not even possible for them. But because of historical needs, it is India's destiny itself that made this conquest inevitable. Just have a look at history and see what lessons it has for us.

After Babar's short reign, Humayun was almost driven out. Sher Shah ruled for five years. He died on the battlefield of a cannon burst. After him, General Hemu took over. This mighty Hemu (Hemendra) was a simple grocer, an ordinary hawker in Delhi market. All of a sudden, he was noticed by Sher Shah's brother, Adil Shah's Prime Minister and Chief General. Then he became the sovereign ruler of entire India.

The Mughals were not supposed to conquer India. Humayun died when his son, Akbar was just 14 years old. When Bairam Khan began thinking of attacking India once again, his counsellors dissuaded on the plea that Hemu was too strong for them. It was impossible to defeat Hemu because he had already succeeded 20 times in pushing away the Muslim invaders.

And yet the Second Battle of Panipat commenced. Had the battle lasted a little longer, the Mughals would have been wiped out. But just when Hemu was on the verge of victory and his victory was certain, an arrow came and pierced his eye. With this, his destiny deserted him. He was fighting astride an elephant. A well-trained elephant on realising that his master was hurt, fled from the battlefield. In those days, once the king disappeared from the battlefield, the soldiers were routed. Thus, the Mughals snatched victory from the jaws of death and after this, the Mughal reign was established. And during the reign of Akbar, the valour of Hindus blended with the physical power of the Muslims.

The Mughals were followed by the British. The British gave much to India. They united the entire country under one solid administration. They gave India a vast road-network, the telegraph, the rail-network, the Rule of Law, an impartial judiciary, and an opportunity to develop a more

nationwide education. Trade, commerce and industries, we got from them. It was truly with the help of the British that India stepped into the modern world.

But all these were the ways of the Powers Beyond, to help India regain her past glory. The British came, stayed here for such an extended period yet failed to mix with Indians and remained aloof.

They were happy to rule and carry on with their commerce.

In a conversation with a Sadhak, the Mother has given some of the attributes of the English. It is these which created a gulf between the two cultures. She said, “Oh, English, that is a different phenomenon! The English alone are practical, the English alone are intelligent, the English alone know how to live, the English are powerful. In short, there are only English, the entire earth ought to be English. The English are haughty by nature”.

Remember! The English came to India in the disguise of East India Company; and through trading rights, they established their domination in the country. For them, commerce and trade were the main objectives. As a consequence, the country’s social, cultural traditions and its national identity remained intact. India did not lose its uniqueness and its glory under the influence of foreign culture. This too is a favourable achievement of history – God’s way of protection.

For the protection of India and the humanity what was necessary finally took place in India’s history. In future too what is needed to take them forward, will happen. Everything is fine and moving in the right direction.

The Mother said, “India is a big pot in which ingredients have been brought from everywhere to cook a fine dinner. Whatever is good, in whichever part of the world will reach India and all this new synthesis will awaken a new Truth that will give a new direction and a new Ideal to humanity to advance on the path of progress.”

A huge confusion reigns over India and the world today. There is no such thing as idealism, no such thing as religious discipline. People are

fighting with one another just over their empty shells. Individual and collective ego is at its peak. There is no peace anywhere, no enthusiasm or inspiration. There are no more ideals and therefore, man is unable to find a path which can help him move forward.

But such a situation cannot last for long. Man has to go forward. It is my conviction that that the greatness of India and her creative power will illuminate this new path, and provide the lead to the rest of the earth in order to take it forward towards a bright future.

It is lamentable that Indian influence has been underrated by so-called Western Pseudo Intellectuals. But we Indians have lot of reasons to be proud. Take for example, The Angkor Wat Temple in Cambodia which is dedicated to the Hindu God Vishnu. It was built in early 12th century and the religious motifs were derived from Hinduism. In 1992, the temple was declared as a UNESCO World Heritage site. There is another place in Egyptian port city, where we see a magnificent Buddha statue. These two places set you thinking about the possible range and magnitude of India's influence. The cornerstone of this influence was seen in three areas: The spread of Buddhism as a state religion in China, the influence of Sanskrit and Hindu Culture in South-east Asia and remarkable journey of Indian Mathematics and astrology first to the Arab world and later to Europe.

Compiled from

Mother India; On the Way; and Personal written notes.

Section 4: Ladder of Consciousness

Part 1: The Psychic and Psychic Being

Difference Between the Psychic and Psychic being

Our single objective must be the Divine himself towards whom, knowingly or unknowingly, something always aspires in our secret nature.¹ The Mother explains, “What is that something which always aspires?” It is a part of the being which is not always the same in everyone and which is instinctively open to the influence of the psychic.

Sri Aurobindo elaborates that the word ‘soul’ is very vaguely used in English as it refers to a non-physical consciousness (produced by the physical brain state) including even the vital with all its desires and passions. That is why the word ‘psychic being’ has to be used to distinguish this divine aspect from the instrumental part of nature. He further explains the psychic as the soul or the spark of the Divine-Fire supporting the individual evolution on the earth, and the psychic being as the soul-consciousness developing itself from life to life. With the mind, vital and body as its instruments. ²

Thus, the psychic is the essence and the psychic being is the form it takes. Sri Aurobindo states that this in very clear words, “There is a difference between the essence of a thing which is always the same and its formations and developments which vary. For instance, there is the essence of gold and there are many forms which gold can take. ³

In India, the Psychic is called ‘Antaratman’ and the Psychic Being, ‘Chaitya Purusa’.

It is of course not the same thing in everyone; in each one, it is different. It is the point in man’s nature or character through which he or she can touch the psychic and receive the psychic influence. It depends upon the people; for each one, it is different and everyone has a point like this. You may feel that there are certain things which suddenly lift you above yourself, open a kind of door upon something greater. It is the part of the being which enthuses over something.

There are two main things which prepare people: The capacity for enthusiasm and the capability of having gratitude, which enables one emerge out of his inertia and to immerse completely in something which they aspire for. For instance, the artist for his art, the scientist for science and in general every person who creates or builds, has an opening of a special faculty, creating enthusiasm in him or her.

And then, there are those who have an innate faculty of gratitude. They have an ardent need to respond with warmth, devotion, joy of something they feel like a marvel hidden behind their entire life.

The Mother states that she knew people who had no knowledge of anything and who were hardly educated, whose minds were altogether ordinary but who had in them this capacity of gratitude, of warmth, which gives itself and is thankful. For them, the contact with the psychic is very frequent, and they feel that they were carried, helped and lifted above themselves. These two things prepare people the most. They all turn with one or the other.

What Connects One to the Psychic being?

The capacity for enthusiasm which throws you out of your miserable and mean little ego and this generous gratitude flings itself in thanksgiving. These are two of the most powerful levers to enter into contact with one's psychic being.

This sense of gratitude that the Divine exists, that there is something in the universe which is the Divine. And each time that thing puts you either directly or indirectly in contact with the divine Reality. There is nothing which gives more joy of gratitude, than when one hears a bird sing, sees a lovely flower, looks at a little child, reads a beautiful sentence, looks at the setting sun and so on. This comes upon you as a kind of emotion that world manifests the Divine. 4

There are two beings in us, one on the surface, our ordinary exterior mind, life, body consciousness and another behind the veil, an inner life, an inner physical consciousness constituting our inner self. This inner self once awake opens in its turn to our true real eternal self. It opens inwardly to the soul which supports our successive births and at each birth assumes a new mind, life and body. It opens above to the Self or Spirit which is unborn and by conscious recovery of it, we transcend the changing personality and achieve freedom and full mastery over our nature.

Therefore, the first process of Yoga is to open the ranges of this inner being, and to live from there outward governing his outward life by an inner light and force.

When the psychic being awakens, you grow conscious of your own soul and you know yourself. And you no longer commit the mistake of identifying yourself with the mental or with the vital being; you do not mistake them for the soul.

Second, when awakened, the psychic being gives true bhakti for God or for the Guru. That bhakti is quite different from mental or vital bhakti. Now what is mental and vital bhakti?

Mental Bhakti

In the mind one may have admiration or appreciation for a person of great intellect or Guru, but is merely mental. It does not carry the matter very far. But by itself it does not open the whole of the inner being. It only establishes mental contact.

Vital Bhakti

Even the vital bhakti demands and demands by imposing its own conditions. It surrenders itself to God, but conditionally. It says to God, “You are so great, I worship you, and now satisfy this desire of mine or that ambition, make me great, make me great sadhak, a great, etc.”

But the psychic being and its bhakti is not like that because it is in direct communication with the Divinity behind, it is capable of true bhakti. Psychic bhakti does not make any demands, makes no reservation. It is satisfied with its own existence. It gives itself up truly to God or to the Guru, and because it can give itself up truly, therefore it can also receive truly.

Third, when the mind is playing its own game or when the vital being is carried away by its own impulses, it is the psychic being which says, “I don’t want these things; what am I here for after all? I am here for the Truth; I am not here for these things.”

If the psychic being is strong, it makes itself felt on the mental or the vital being and compels them to change. But if it is weak, the other parts take advantage of it and use the psychic sadness to their own advantage.

Lastly, the psychic being refuses to be deceived by appearances. It is not carried away by falsehood. It refuses to be depressed by falsehood;

it does not exaggerate the truth. For example, even if everything around says, “There is no God”, the psychic being refuses to believe in it. It says, “I know and I know because I feel”. When the psychic being is awakened, it throws out all the dross from the emotional being and makes it free from the lower play of emotionalism.

Growth of Psychic Being

The Mother states the essential conditions for the growth of the psychic being:

It is through all the experiences of life that the psychic personality forms, grows, develops and finally becomes a complete, conscious and free being. This process of development goes on tirelessly through innumerable lives, and if one is not conscious of it, it is because one is not conscious of one’s psychic being. Through interiorisation and concentration, one has to enter into conscious contact with one’s psychic being. This psychic being always has an influence on the outer being, but that influence is almost always occult, it is neither seen nor perceived nor felt, save on truly exceptional occasions.

Conclusion

In order to strengthen the contact and aid the development of the conscious psychic personality, one should turn towards it and aspire to know it and feel it. One should open oneself to receive its influence, and take great care, each time that one receives an indication from it, to follow it very scrupulously and sincerely. These are the essential conditions for the growth of the psychic being.

References

1. *Synthesis of Yoga*: ‘Self Consecration’
2. SABCL, Vol 22; p. 291
3. SABCL, Vol 22; p. 286
4. *Synthesis of Yoga*, CWSA, Vol 23; pp. 53-58

Part 2: Psychic Being – Your Inner Master

The Psychic Being: Your inner Master

Living in the Psychic Being is the supreme aim of Integral Yoga. Not only does it offer the fulfilment of living in the soul, but it also gives us the opportunity to master and completely change our nature. The psychic being presents immense dynamic implications as it embodies the perfect vehicle to integrate our entire being. Realising it is a considerable task. First we have to find it, and then we aim to unite with it. This is the objective of all meaningful practice.

We begin with baby steps and end in culmination of the journey, where the complete identity with the psychic being is described. But how do we awaken it in the first place? Each one of us will have a different path to the psychic, but there are common features which underlie the journey and are its foundation. If you have a deep longing to embrace your Truth and become master of all your being, continue reading.

What is Myself?

If you think objectively without confused thoughts, you realise that one does not perceive oneself independent of the head, the trunk, the arms and legs and all that moves. And you begin to realise one is independent of these. And then you understand that you must observe much more still to see that this somebody else which watches, judges, decides and tries to found its decisions on knowledge. Even though that happens much later.

Second, you begin to see that it has the power to set in motion which is an active will and that it has direct action on the reactions, the feelings, the sensations and finally, it can have control over all the movements of the being. What is this part which watches, observes, judges and decides?

When one becomes conscious of that, one has seized the thread, and when one speaks of the centre, one can know, this is what has the power of control. This is how one learns to look at one's self. 1

The psychic being is formed by the soul in evolution. It supports the mind, vital, body and grows by experiences, carries the nature from life to life. It is 'chaitya purusha'. At first it is veiled by mind, vital and body but as it grows, it becomes capable of coming forward and dominating the mind, life and body. In the ordinary person, it depends on him or her for expression and is not able to take them up and freely use

them. When by sadhana, the psychic being becomes dominant and freely uses its instruments, the impulse towards the Divine becomes complete and the transformation of mind, vital and body and their liberation becomes possible.

The psychic part of us is something that comes directly from the Divine and is in touch with the Divine. It is the origin, the nucleus pregnant with divine possibilities that supports the lower triple manifestation of mind, life and body. There is a divine element in all living beings, but it stands hidden behind the ordinary consciousness. It is not at first developed and even when developed, is not always or often in the front. It expresses itself by its instruments. It is always this psychic being which is the secret cause of man's turning to the spiritual life. It is, therefore, that which we have to bring from behind to the front in the yoga.

Plants and Animals and the Psychic

The soul of a plant or an animal is not dominant and their means of expression are less developed than those of human being. The plant has only the vital-physical evolved in its form. Therefore, it cannot express itself, whereas the animal has a vital-mind, but its consciousness is limited and so are its experiences. Therefore, the psychic essence has a less developed consciousness that is present in man. All animals have a soul and can respond to a man.

The psychic being is in direct touch with the Divine Truth, but it is hidden in man by the mind, the vital being and the physical nature. One may practice yoga and get illuminations in the mind and reason. Besides, one may conquer power and have all kinds of experiences in the vital; one may establish even physical Siddhis, but if the psychic being does surface; nothing tangible has been done. In Integral Yoga, the psychic being is that which opens the rest of the nature to the supramental light and finally to supreme Ananda. Therefore, the function of the psychic is to work on each plane so as to help each to awaken to the essential Truth and the Divine Reality. 2

Importance of Finding the Soul

There seems to be only one way out and that is go in search of one's soul and to find it. The soul makes great efforts to help you find it and to make itself heard.

How to Find the Soul

The first thing necessary is aspiration for the Divine. The next thing you have to do is to tend it, to keep it always alert and awake and living. And for that what is required is concentration upon the Divine with a view to an absolute consecration to its Will and Purpose. The Mother says that one should concentrate in the heart (the psychic centre) and go deep within, gather all the strings of consciousness and take a plunge. It is divinity in you, your true being. Hear its voice and follow its dictates. 3

Finding one's soul implies a kind of conviction, a faith in the existence of the psychic being. One must become aware of it and then allow it to take up the direction of life and action; one must refer to it to take up the direction of life and action; one must refer to it and make it one's guide.

Essential Conditions for the Growth of the Psychic Being

To live in a great aspiration, to take care to become inwardly calm and remain calm so always as far as possible, to cultivate a perfect sincerity in all activities of one's being, these are the essential conditions for the growth of the Psychic Being. 4

The psychic being does not impose itself. It has to be invited constantly. We invite by sincerely wanting to know the truth, by becoming quiet and pure, to hear its silent voice by choosing to follow it.

Inner Growth and Self-Development

The first important step is to become aware of it and that can only be done by turning inwards. Once we start plunging our consciousness inwards, there are elements which can be mistaken for the psychic because the central being (Jivatma) reflects itself on every level, in the mental nature as mental purusha, on the vital level as vital purusha, on the material level as physical purusha. Therefore, it is easy to mistake the vital being for the psychic being. Many have mistaken the vital being or emotional being for the psychic, forgetting that the emotional being gives

you thrill and happiness and one gets excited. And you want to throw yourself out and tell everybody your story. But psychic is silent, very soft and tender and is offended by such vulgar movement. It remains behind in veil and will not be telling us anything. But when its influence starts reflecting, one sheds psychic tears. For instance, you must have experienced it when you saw something magnificent in the Nature or even in a small child; one is touched by its simplicity and innocence. Now contrast it with someone who suddenly gets up during a programme of kirtan and bhajans and starts dancing to the tune of the music. It is the emotional being which has become dominant. So, we have to be careful whenever we feel something which is bigger than our normal self. It is one of these three purusha and not our inner being or our psychic being.

But when you reach the psychic being, the first thing is that it throws its influence to regulate your outward behaviour but it does not come forward at once. Once the contact is established, then it influences that part of you which approaches it. For instance, if one is a thinker, the first stamp of psychic being is that one awakes to the experience of Impersonality to the unity of Oneness. One experiences that He is all, He is in all and everything, all is One. Similarly, when the heart opens, the influence of the psychic being on the heart is that it pours love and devotion; and one becomes bhakta. And when one consecrates one's works with real devotion and self-giving, eliminating one's ego-will and motivating desire, one becomes a consecrated worker.

“Mind, vital, physical are instruments of the soul and spirit. When they work for themselves they can produce ignorant and imperfect things and if they can be made into conscious instruments of the psychic and the spirit, then they get their own divine fulfilment; that is the idea contained in what we call transformation in this Yoga”. 5

The psychic being is a great discovery which requires as much fortitude and endurance as the discovery of new continent. A few simple words of advice by the Mother may be useful to one who has resolved to undertake it. 6

References

1. *AIM* July 2004, pp. 5-6
 2. SABCL 22; pp. 282- 83, 341-288, 294, 438
 3. CWM 12; pp.45-47
 4. CWM 12; Psychic Education
 5. CWSA 31; pp. 307- 08
 6. CWM 12; pp. 32-35, 5
- ** Appendix A refers

Part 3: Stages of Progression in Ascent of Consciousness

What stages of progress and change will take place in ascent of consciousness will depend on the form, need and power of the individual nature. In the spiritual, the essence is always one but there is infinite variety. According to Sri Aurobindo, "Even when mental beings walk in the same direction, no two natures proceed exactly on the same lines. Similarly, in the states of progress will be very much in this order. It follows that the logical success in the states of progress will be very much in the same order. We will discuss the stages of progress.

(a). Stage one: There is a large turning, in which all mental activities are taken up and dedicated by the soul in us to the Divine service.

(b): Stage two: There is an attempt at the ascent of the being in bringing down the Light and Power, gained through the ascent, to some new height of consciousness gained in the process. There is a strong concentration on inward change.

We may say that whatever be the course of development chosen by the master of yoga, the end result is the growing consciousness of Him as a mover, decider, shaper of all movements of mind and all activities of knowledge.

How do we discern these changes? First, there is change of consciousness leading to direct experience, vision and feeling of Supreme and Cosmic existence. One sees the Divine in itself and Divine in all things. Mind's foremost occupation is with this aspect of the Divine. Second, the central consciousness takes up more and more outer mental activities and infuses into these more authentic true movements. There is certain perfection. There is less and less human choice and opinion and more and more dependence on the light within. It will be the inner Knower who will do in the universalised and liberated mind of individual all comprehending knowledge. From here the mind mounts successively into reaches of higher mind and from there into still greater illumined mind, with Light from above.

This is also not an aid, for the mind must rise beyond the domain of institution, catch a world of existence, vastness, more full of activity than the earth. Our mental language cannot describe these planes.

What stages of progress and change are there depends on the form, need and power of the individual nature. In the spiritual domain, the

essence is always one, but there is an infinite variety. However, a logical succession of the states of progress would be very much in this order: First, there is a turning in which all the mental activities proper to the individual nature are taken up and dedicated to the soul in us. Next, there is an attempt at ascent and bringing down the Light and Power gained through the ascent to some new height of consciousness gained in the process. There is a strong concentration in inward movements of the mind and all activities of knowledge. Change of consciousness and an abandonment of a part of the external mental life. At different stages, it may be taken up again from time to time to see how far the new inner psychic and spiritual consciousness can be brought into its movements. But the compulsion of temperament in human beings necessitates one kind of activity or another and makes it almost an indispensable part of the existence. This will diminish and eventually no attachment will be left. Only the Divine will matter, Divine alone will be the need of the whole being. If there is any compulsion of activity, it will not be that of implanted desire or force of nature but the luminous driving of some greater consciousness – Force which is becoming more and more the sole motive power of the whole existence.

On the other hand, it is possible at any point of the inner spiritual progress that one may experience an extension of activities. There may be opening of new capacities of mental creation and new provinces of knowledge by the touch of the Yoga Shakti.

Aesthetic feeling, in one field or in many fields, talent of literary expression or faculty of thinking any power of eye, ear or hand or mind power may awaken where none was present before. The Divine may throw these latent riches out of the depth in which they were hidden or from above, pour down its energies to equip the instrumental nature for the activity for which it is meant to be a channel. But whatever may be the course of development chosen by the inner master of Yoga, the culmination of this stage is the growing consciousness of Him above as the mover, decider, shaper of the movements of mind and all activities of knowledge.

There are two signs of the transformation of the seeker's mind of knowledge and work of knowledge from ignorance to the process of a liberated consciousness working partly, and then wholly, in the light of the Spirit. There is first a central change of consciousness and a growing

direct experience, vision, feeling of the Supreme and cosmic existence that is the Divine in itself and the Divine in all things, At the same time, the mind will be taken up with a growing preoccupation with this first and feel itself heightening, widening into more and more illumined means of expression of the one fundamental knowledge. Also the central consciousness in its turn will take up more and more the outer mental activities of knowledge and turn into a parcel of itself; and it will infuse into them its more authentic movement and make more and more spiritualised and illumined mind as its instrument in the surface fields. The second sign; the sign of certain perfection that the Divine Himself has become the knower and all inner movements, including the activities of purely human action, have become his field of knowledge. The result is that there will be less individual choice, opinion and preference of the mental being. A Light within will see all that has to be seen, know all that is to be known and develop, create and organise. It will be the inner Knower who will do the liberated and universalised mind of the individual the works of all comprehending knowledge.

These two changes are the signs of a first effectuation in which the activities of mental nature are lifted up, spiritualised, universalised, and liberated to a consciousness of their true purpose as an instrumentation of the Divine. But this cannot be the whole scope of the Transformation, for, if it were so, knowledge would still remain a working of the mind, even though spiritualised but yet comparatively imperfect in its dynamism. It would reflect harmoniously greater construction of Truth in the domain where truth is authentic, direct and sovereign.

There is an ascent still to be made from this height, by which the spiritualised mind will exceed itself and transmute to supramental power of knowledge. At this point it will begin to feel more freely the radiant beginning of an intuition. It will no longer be entirely mental and therefore subject to intrusion of error. Hence here too is not an end, for it must rise beyond into the domain of intuition and attain that from which this light comes. From there is an Overmind behind mind, a power more original and dynamic which supports mind and sees it as diminished radiation from itself.

Last step of ascension will be surpassing of overmind itself or return into its own still greater origin – its conversion into supramental light of the Divine Gnosis. Here is the seat of Truth – Consciousness that

has the power to organise the works of a Truth which is no longer tarnished by the shadow of Cosmic Inconscience and Ignorance. Then to reach and bring down a supramental dynamism that can transform Ignorance is the distant but the supreme goal of the Integral Yoga.

Part 4: Stages of Progress of the Psychic Being

Man is growing and has to grow in consciousness until he reaches complete and perfect consciousness, not only in his individual but in his collective and social life. The growth of consciousness is the supreme secret of life, the master key to earthy evolution.

Creation, according to Sri Aurobindo, has a purpose and man moves to a goal. Originally, all was dead matter and at a certain stage out of matter came life. What appeared to be dead, became alive. Thus the plant was born as a result of primordial stirring of consciousness. There was again a period of gestation and incubation bringing out at the end a rudimentary Mind, so the animal was born. If life came out of Matter, it is because life was there, hidden in Matter. Matter was secretly housing life. That only can evolve which was involved. So again Mind came out of life, it is because mind was involved in life and also in matter, although further removed. Yet again, vital mind developed with intelligence and consciousness proper and it could be only because that was its secret nature and hence the secret nature of life. Thus the whole chain of gradation is linked together indissolubly and the binding reality runs through all is consciousness, overt or covert. It is consciousness that lies at the root of existence and is the basic substance.

Therefore, the Matter is nothing but consciousness becoming unconscious. The whole process of cosmos is the increasing manifestation and expression of that consciousness. Second, the other character is that at each stage of the crossover, there is not only a rise in consciousness but also a renewal of consciousness. Simply it means that the level attained turns back upon the preceding levels, influencing and moulding them in its own mode and law of existence.

These three major layers of consciousness: Matter, Life and Mind, man has taken upon himself and in light of his consciousness and his intelligence, he has studied and classified them; and arranging them serially as the well-known sciences of Physics, Biology and Psychology.

Now Sri Aurobindo says that evolution marches onwards and will rise beyond mind to another status of consciousness which he calls supermind. In this scheme of things there will manifest a new type, a higher consciousness and a new race or species on earth with this new consciousness as the ruling principle – out of rock and mineral came plant,

out of plant came the animal, out of mere animal man has come, and out of man the superman will come inevitably.

Standing at the mental plane within the dimensions of reason and mental intelligence, it is not easy to contemplate the type of consciousness that will be. Even as it was difficult for the ape to envisage the advent of his successor man. But certain characteristic signs of higher status are visible in the mental consciousness as it is. The ape likewise was not without a glimmer of reason and logic; even the faculty of reason that seemed to be the exclusive property of man. For example, there is a movement of intuition which is so different from Reason to which even the scientists and mathematicians acknowledge their debt of gratitude for many of their discoveries and inventions. There is a similar movement called inspiration that rules the poet and the artist disclosing to them a word of beauty and reality that is not available to normal consciousness. Again, there is another group of human beings at the top of the ladder of evolution, mystics and sages, who see the truth and possess the Truth through perception called revelation. All these functions of consciousness that happen frequently are still expressions of the higher mode of consciousness. They are not play of reason or logical intelligence which makes the character and distinguishes different states of human consciousness.

But at present, these are only glimpses from elsewhere and man has no control over them. They come and go like happy visitations from a higher world of which there are faint distant echoes. The superman will be born when man has risen above his mind and arisen into supramental consciousness. Therefore, man is expected to consciously transcend himself and deliver this superman-hood through a conscious process.

So far evolution was a spontaneous and unconscious process, moving at snail's pace as things in nature normally move. But now at the stage of manhood, consciousness has become ever more conscious as a result of deliberate energising. This is a process of self-transformation. It is a system of its own and the growth of consciousness, its culture and its transformations the end and purpose of its highest consummation, its supreme perfection. Its supreme perfection is what is intended by yoga, the system of internal discipline. Therefore, supramentalisation of consciousness is the goal. Nature is aiming and man is striving for. It is the next step that earth and man are taking in their evolutionary urge. What

was being done behind the veil in ignorance will now be done openly in full knowledge. The first result will be the shortening of the time factor. As the process increases in tempo, telescoping into decades or years a process, the development that would take centuries or even more otherwise, in man a growth is achieved in one life that would normally need several lives. The other characteristic is that when the supramental establishes itself, there is no more ignorance; it is all light and knowledge.

When humanity was created, the ego was a unifying element. It was around the ego that the different states of being were grouped, but now that the birth of the supramental is being prepared, the ego has to disappear and give way to the psychic being, which slowly is being formed by divine intervention in order to manifest the Divine in the human being.

It is under the psychic influence that the Divine manifests in man and thus prepares the coming of super humanity manifested on earth. So the important thing now is to find one's psychic, unite with it and allow it to replace ego, which will be compelled either to get converted or disappear.

For thousands of years, man has tried to perfect himself and his life but lacked the power that could transform human life and make it perfect. What he had was not his power of truth but the power indirectly from truth. Ages had to elapse before the next step in the evolutionary process in man had to be taken and that was to bring down the consciousness and power of the Truth World, not as individual siddhi which our Vedic Rishis had done, but for the entire collectivity and to fix it on earth as collective principle and to enable this consciousness and power to gradually transform human life into a Divine life.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother pointed out that no power except the Truth Power, the Truth Will could do it.

Sri Aurobindo has spoken, in this connection, of Overmind and Mind of Light. But these two lie beyond the border of mental twilight and are the domain of Light. It is important here to mention a few characteristics of supramental consciousness. First, it is the seat and instrument of complete knowledge as known. Second, Will too is not an effort, striving and struggling but spontaneous expression of the Self-power of the consciousness. Third, it is state of perfect Delight and Joy, the source of creation beyond the veil of tears. In other words, it is at the

bottom of status of Sat-chit-ananda. It is this that seeks to manifest in and through the physical form and modes of life and existence. Lastly, it is all human effort in any human domain towards higher life that has been contributing to the supreme perfection, according to Sri Aurobindo. The Supermind alone can transform the earth and transfigure the earthy life. But all attempts and preparations did not go in vain.

Sri Aurobindo's aim is not an individual fulfilment however deep and high, but embracing the whole of man and the whole of society. A new society in which men have found their soul and the soul function is a harmonious, composed group of individuals who by living each one in his Self, lives in all.

Likewise, an aggregate of such societies, a society of nations, will also be an inherently harmonious and unified one.

Sri Aurobindo gives India a great role and responsibility. For he considers India as a repository of spiritual consciousness. 1

In the physical being the progress is two-fold. We have discussed the case of psychic being where it is formed out of psychic essence and simultaneously building and organising itself. Now, we take up a case where psychic being is fully developed, fully individualised and master of itself and its destiny. When this stage is reached, his progress in growth has come to an end. In other words, it is not indispensable for him to take birth again in the body. The psychic being is now free in the sense that he can take birth or not. Here also, two options. One: If this fully formed psychic being wants to become an instrument of work upon earth to fulfil the Divine work, it has fresh progress to make. Now what kind of progress is this? This progress is in the field of the capacity to work, for organisation of his work and for the expression of the Divine, through him. Therefore, so far as he chooses to work in the world, he will progress. As we know, only earth is a field of progress. Nowhere else.

The Second scenario is like this. If he decides to retire and rest and repose in the psychic world and chooses not to work for the Divine here in the phenomenon world, it can remain in a static condition outside all progress.

Summary

We have discussed different stages of progress of the Psychic Being.

Scenario 1. In ordinary people in whom the psychic form is not fully developed and organised, when the psychic leaves the body, the mental and vital sheaths may persist for a certain time and then disappear.

Scenario 2. When the psychic is completely formed and is already a conscious being, it then presides over the formation of a new body; it chooses its physical parents and circumstances of rebirth and the time of its incarnation.

Scenario 3. When the psychic is fully formed and wants to come down for service and not go out of the cosmic cycle of death and rebirth, it is able to bring to the body in formation certain elements of mind and vital from previous lives, which have been preserved and can participate in general progress of humanity.

Scenario 4. When the fully developed psychic wants to become an instrument of the Divine Will, then some parts of the mental and vital being are allowed to be preserved in spite of dissolution of the body. For example, a highly intellectual individual who has particularly developed his brain, the mental being keeps this structure and is preserved it in the form of organised brain for future life.

Compiled from

Collected Works of Nolini Kant Gupta, Vol 4; pp. 351-363; CWM 16 and *AIM* December 2018: 'Birth and Death'

Part 5: The Mother's Body of Light

Sri Aurobindo was working for the new creation. This is how the Mother also worked towards this end. “Mind is the foremost of all human functions; mind suppresses all and embraces all”. As it comes down and enters you, the first thing it teaches is your head, that is your mind. France represented just the mind of humanity at its best (when the Mother took birth in France) so that the highest mind of the human race may receive the Light through her. France represented the mind of humanity at its best. With this mind she started a group and gave the name *Le Cosmique*, meaning a Cosmic World, embracing consciousness. She was thus creating a new kind of world through highest mental development, beyond the egoistic mind. This way, the Mother brings the Golden Light into the head of humanity.

Second, Japan as a nation represent a very sensitive vitality, an artistic vitality that seeks order and beauty in life. For Golden Light to manifest and have its play in the physical work and possess its body as it were, artistic vitality is necessary for it to hold. It is for this, the second stage of her work that she went to Japan and stayed there for five years.

Third, the Golden Light must come into the feet, and that was the work she was doing in Puducherry. And it was for this that she created the Ashram.

The Mother had a special emphasis on physical education so that we may prepare our body more beautiful. In the Ashram, the Mother achieved this through four prolonged movements. Besides the physical culture we have just explained, the other three movements from human to Divine in the Ashram follow:

- Provision is made for the growth of the mind in a healthy climate of spiritual knowledge, through Sri Aurobindo’s writings and the Mother’s Letters.
- There is a large field for Karma Yoga as a necessary part of Sadhana. All different parts of life are organised in the Ashram community, and each Sadhak undertakes to contribute his or her share of the work as his consecration to the Master of Works. Work is also welcomed as a testing ground for the extent of change in one’s consciousness.

- Lastly, through the spiritual endeavour of Integral Yoga, the pattern of life that was being shaped by the Mother led towards a many-sided perfection:

Harmony and beauty in material order.

- Perception of being conscious in material things.
- Full development of will and power by consecrating them to the Divine.
- Enhancement of the faculties of knowledge and opening of higher ranges of mind leading to Truth Consciousness.
- The dynamism of the centre of Love in the heart.

The Mother's way is the way of illumined Nature which expands and widens with the Light above. The Mother has been working with Sri Aurobindo for the advent of New Life for humanity which is possible only with the development of new consciousness in man, higher than the mental consciousness. A new consciousness which has been hither to unmanifest and has to be brought down and made to act on earth. This is the next stage in human development, and the Mother has successfully embodied this truth in her consciousness in Herself thereby making it possible for others to do likewise.

The declared objective of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother was to bring down on earth, the power of supramental consciousness and make it active here, was accomplished by the Mother on 29 February 1956. After the descent of Truth Consciousness, she took on the task of creating a harmonious body embodying Truth consciousness.

- The task of Physical transformation of her body was most difficult and a painful one. This meant taking up each cell, persuading it to change, coaxing it to change, exposing it to the force of change, and when it resists it has repercussions in the body as a pain which no medicine can cure, but one has to endure.
- There are millions of cells in each body and that was a labourious and patient process which she was undergoing.
- Nobody could seriously have expected that the entire process of transformation will be telescoped in a few years, barring a miracle,

but the Mother's way is never to work in miracles. With her effort from below, of the transformation of the various cells in her body, work was going on from above. Sri Aurobindo, according to his promise has been working.

- A new body was under formation, the supramental body, in which she was to take her embodiment as the end result of the transformation of her body. The body was being prepared.

The Mother gives a description of this body in 'Notes on the Way'. "I am trying to fuse the material body into that body but I have not been able to get the clue." And as soon as that harmonious body was ready, the Mother would just walk into this without dying. "Without dying", means not necessarily keeping the body but without gap in consciousness, keeping up continuity of the personality she would just cross into this new body of Light on the morning of 17 November 1973. This has been testified by some Ashramites.

The Mother has assured us that Sri Aurobindo is there in subtle physical work in his supramental body waiting for the condition under which alone he can manifest on earth. We do not know when. The body cannot function on earth till the earth substance has been changed. The Mother's body, the body she has assumed, is near the earth. She is going to be a bridge between Sri Aurobindo's supramental body and this material world. In *Savitri*, Sri Aurobindo says of the Mother, "She is the golden bridge, the wonderful fire". The only way in which we can repay our debt of gratitude to her for what she has done for us is to let her live in us, to let her manifest.

The Mother has prophesised that Sri Aurobindo's thought would have spread throughout the world in the next 50 years. We are seeing a change, helping all in accepting the insights of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Compiled from

CWM Vol 2; pp 153-165; *All India Magazine*; April 2011; and M.P. Pandit's talk at Auroville on 28 November 1973.

Part 6: Appendix A – Words of Advice by The Mother

The first and perhaps the most important point is that the mind is incapable of judging spiritual things. All those who have written on this subject have said so; but very few are those who have put it into practice. And yet, in order to proceed on the path, it is absolutely indispensable to abstain from all mental opinion and reaction.

Give up all personal seeking for comfort, satisfaction, enjoyment or happiness. Be only a burning fire for progress, take whatever comes to you as an aid to your progress and immediately make whatever progress in required.

Try to take pleasure in all you do, but never do anything for the sake of pleasure.

Never get excited, nervous or agitated. Remain perfectly calm in the face of all circumstances. And yet be always alert to discover what progress you still have to make and lose no time in making it.

Never take physical happenings at their face value. They are always a clumsy attempt to express something else, the true thing which escapes our superficial understanding.

Never complain of the behaviour of anyone, unless you have the power to change in his nature what makes him act in this way; and if you have the power, change him instead of complaining.

Whatever you do, never forget the goal which you have set before you. There is nothing great or small once you have set on this great discovery; all things are equally important and can either hasten or delay its success. Thus, before you eat, concentrate a few seconds in the aspiration that the food you are about to eat may bring your body the substance it needs to serve as a solid basis for your effort towards the great discovery, and give it the energy for persistence and perseverance in the effort.

Before you go to sleep, concentrate for a few seconds in the aspiration that the sleep may restore your fatigued nerves, bring calm and quietness to your brain so that on waking you may, with renewed vigour, begin again your journey on the path of the great discovery.

Before you act, concentrate in the will that your action may help or at least in no way hinder your march forward towards the great discovery.

When you speak, before the words come out of your mouth, concentrate just long enough to check your words and allow only those that are absolutely necessary to pass; only those that are not in any way harmful to your progress on the path of the great discovery.

To sum up, never forget the purpose and goal of your life. The will for the great discovery should always be there above you, above what you do and what you are, like a huge bird of light dominating all the movements of your being.

Before the untiring persistence of your effort, an inner door will suddenly open and you will emerge into a dazzling splendour that will bring you the certitude of immortality, the concrete experience that you have always lived and always shall live, that external forms alone perish and that these forms are, in relation to what you are in reality, like clothes that are thrown away when worn out. Then you will stand erect, freed from all chains, and instead of advancing labouriously under the weight of circumstances imposed upon you by Nature, which you had to endure and bear if you did not want to be crushed by them, you will be able to walk on, straight and firm, conscious of your destiny, master of your life.

And yet this release from all slavery to the flesh, this liberation from all personal attachment is not the supreme fulfilment. There are other steps to climb before you reach the summit. And even these steps can and should be followed by others which will open the doors to the future.

Only one thing is absolutely indispensable: the will to discover and to realise. This discovery and realisation should be the primary preoccupation of our being, the pearl of great price which we must acquire at any cost. Whatever you do, whatever your occupations and activities, the will to find the truth of your being and to unite with it must be always living and present behind all that you do, all that you feel, all that you think.

Bibliography

Extract from CWM 12; pp. 32-35, 5

Section 5: Four Aids to Yoga

Part 1: Shastra

Yoga-siddhi, the perfection that comes from the practice of Yoga, can be best attained by the combined working of four great instruments. There is, **first**, the knowledge of the truths, principles, powers and processes that govern the realisation – *shastra*. **Next** comes a patient and persistent action on the lines laid down by the knowledge, the force of our personal effort – *utsaha*. Third, uplifting our knowledge and effort into the domain of spiritual experience, the direct suggestion, example and influence of the Teacher – *guru*. The final one is the instrumentality of Time – *kala*; for in all things there is a cycle of their action and a period of the divine movement.

2 *The supreme Shastra of the integral Yoga is the eternal Veda secret in the heart of every thinking and living being.* The lotus of the eternal knowledge and the eternal perfection is a bud closed and folded up within us. It opens swiftly or gradually, petal by petal, through successive realisations, when the mind of man begins to turn towards the Eternal, once his heart, no longer is confined by attachment to finite appearances in whatever degree, of the Infinite. All life, all thought, all energising of the faculties, all experiences passive or active, become thenceforward shocks which disintegrate the covering of the soul and remove the obstacles to its inevitable flowering.

He who chooses the Infinite has been chosen by the Infinite. He has received the divine touch without which there is no awakening. But once it is received, attainment is sure, whether conquered swiftly in the course of one human life or pursued patiently through many lives.

Nothing can be taught to the mind which is not already concealed as potential knowledge in the unfolding soul of the creature. So also all perfection of which the outer man is capable, is only a realising of the eternal perfection of the Spirit within him. We know the Divine and become the Divine, because we are ‘That’ already in our secret nature. All teaching is a revealing, all becoming is an unfolding. Self-attainment is the secret; self-knowledge and an increasing consciousness are the means and the process.

The usual agency of this revealing is the Word, the thing heard (shruta). The Word may come to us from within; it may come to us from without. The word within may be the utterance of the inmost soul in us

which is always open to the Divine, or it may be the word of the secret and universal Teacher who is seated in the hearts of all but for all the rest, the Yoga is an unfolding under that constant touch and guidance. Great indeed are those to whom self-knowledge from within is thus sufficient and who do not need to pass under the dominant influence of a written book or a living teacher.

Ordinarily, it may be either a word from the past or the more powerful word of the living Guru. In some cases, this representative word is only taken as a sort of excuse for the inner power to awaken and manifest. Thus it is said in the Upanishads of Krishna, son of Devaki, that he received a word of the Rishi Ghora and had the knowledge. So Ramakrishna, having attained by his own internal effort the central illumination, accepted several teachers in the different paths of Yoga, but always showed in the manner and swiftness of his realisation that this acceptance was a concession to the general rule by which effective knowledge must be received as by a disciple from a Guru.

For the Sadhaka of the Integral Yoga, it is necessary to remember that no written Shastra, however great its authority or however large its spirit, can be more than a partial expression of the eternal Knowledge. He will use, but never bind himself even by the greatest Scripture. Where the *Scripture is profound, wide, catholic, it may exercise upon him an influence of incalculable importance.* It may be associated in his experience with his awakening, thus leading to his realisation of the highest experiences. His Yoga may be governed for a long time by one Scripture or by several successively, – by the Gita, the Upanishads, the Veda. Or it may be a part of his development to include in its material a varied experience of the truths of many Scriptures and make the future opulent with all that is best in the past. But in the end, he must take his station and he must live in his own soul beyond the written Truth for he is not the Sadhaka of a book or of many books; he is a Sadhaka of the Infinite.

Another kind of Shastra is not Scripture, but a statement of the science and methods, the effective principles and way of working of the path of Yoga which, passing from mouth to mouth through a long line of Teachers. All the lines of the Yoga the Sadhaka elects to follow. Each path has its Shastra, which was either written or traditional are supposed to be

fixed, and the Teacher who has received the Shastra by tradition and realised it, guides the disciple along the ancient traditional method. One often hears the objection urged against a new practice, a new Yogic teaching, the adoption of a new formula, "It is not according to the Shastra. The written or traditional teaching expresses the knowledge and experiences of many centuries systematised, organised, made attainable to the beginner. Its importance and utility are therefore immense. But a great freedom of variation and development is always applicable.

Even so a highly scientific system such as Rajyoga can be practised on other lines than the organised method of Patanjali. Each of the three paths of the path of Knowledge, Devotion and Works, breaks into many bypaths which meet again at the goal.

An integral and synthetic Yoga needs especially not to be bound by any written or traditional Shastra; for while it embraces the knowledge received from the past, it seeks to organise it anew for the present and the future. Since then mankind has moved forward on the current of eternal Time, and the same problem has to be approached from a new starting-point.

By this Yoga we not only seek the Infinite but we call upon the Infinite to unfold itself in human form. Therefore, the Shastra of Integral Yoga must provide for an infinite liberty in the receptive human soul. Vivekananda, pointing out that the unity of all religions must necessarily express itself by an increasing richness of a variety in its forms, once said that the perfect state of that essential unity would come when each man had his own religion, when not bound by sect or traditional form he followed the free self-adaptation of his nature in its relations with the Supreme. So, one may say that the perfection of the Integral Yoga will come when each man is able to follow his own path of Yoga, pursuing the development of his own nature, developing towards that which transcends the nature. For freedom is the final law and the last consummation.

Meanwhile, certain general lines have to be formed which may help to guide the thought and practice of the Sadhaka. But these must be taken as general truths and statements of principle because all Shastra is the outcome of past experience and a help to future experience. It is an aid and a partial guide. It puts up sign-posts, gives the names of the main roads

and the already explored directions, so that the traveller may know whither and by what paths he is proceeding. *The rest depends on personal effort and experience and upon the power of the Guide.*

Compiled from

Sri Aurobindo's *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Part 1: 'The Yoga of Divine Works' and SABCL Vol 20; pp. 47-62.

Part 2: Utsaha

The process of Yoga is turning of the human soul from the egoistic state of consciousness absorbed in outward appearances and attractions of things to a higher state in which the Transcendent and the Universal can pour itself into individual mould and transform it. Therefore, the first determining element of the siddhi is the intensity of turning the force which directs the soul inward. The power of aspiration, the force of the will, the heart, the concentration of the mind, the perseverance and applied energy are the measures of that intensity.

The ideal Sadhaka should be able to say in a Biblical phrase, “My zeal for the Lord has eaten me up”. It is the zeal for the Lord, *utsaha*, eagerness for the attainment of the zeal of the whole nature for its divine results, the heart’s eagerness for the attainment of the Divine, that devours the ego and breaks up its limitations of its petty and narrow mould, for the full and wide reception of that it seeks – the largest and highest individual self.

The ideal Sadhaka has the following qualities:

- Carrying out instructions. The ideal Sadhaka carries out their Master's instructions with ‘Sradha’ and ‘Prem’.
- Living well with money. The ideal Sadhaka can live poorly without want, and richly without attachment to wealth or self-indulgence.
- Pure mind. The ideal Sadhaka’s mind becomes pure as they refine their intellect and spiritual practices.
- Frankness. The ideal Sadhaka is frank and candid and avoids self-justification.

Stages of Process

But this is one side of the force that works for perfection. The process of Integral Yoga has three stages.

First. There must be the effort towards an initial and enabling self-transcendence and contact with the Divine.

Two. The reception of that which transcends to the transformation of our whole conscious being.

Three. The utilisation of our transformed humanity as the Divine Centre in the world. So long as the contact with the Divine is not established, in some degree of sustained identity, the personal effort must normally predominate.

In the world we act with a sense of egoism. We claim the universal forces that act in us as our own. *Enlightenment brings to us the Knowledge that the ego is only an instrument.* We begin to perceive and feel that these things are our own in the sense that they belong to our integral Self, one with the Transcendent. Our limitation and distortions are our contribution to this working but the true power in it is the Divine's. When the human ego realises that its will is a tool, its wisdom ignorance and childishness, its power an infant's groping, its virtue a pretentious impurity, and learns to trust itself to that which transcends it, that is its salvation.

The apparent freedom and self-assertion of our personal being to which we are so profoundly attached, conceal a subjection to a thousand suggestions, impulsions and forces which we have made extraneous to our little person. Our boasting of freedom is at the very moment the slave of and puppet of countless beings, powers forces and influences in universal Nature. The self-abnegation of the ego in the Divine is its self-fulfilment. It would be not surrender to that which transcends; it is the liberation from bonds and limits and its perfect freedom. But still, each of the three stages has its necessity and utility and must be given its time and place. It would not have been the right course, either to leap prematurely from one to another. For even if from the beginning we recognise in mind and heart the Supreme, there are elements of the nature which prevent the recognition from realisation of knowledge, not a living truth, an idea, not yet a power.

But without realisation our mental belief cannot become a dynamic reality instrument. This assumption may introduce a calamitous falsity.

Our worldly knowledge is proud that it knows so much, whereas the Wisdom is humble and knows no more is its antithesis. For example, the human characteristic of pride is associated with our ego-self whereas humility is a sign of wisdom. Knowledge about human nature is constant and does not change with the passage of time. Wisdom is usually associated with knowledge of human nature.

There is a period more or less prolonged, of internal effort and struggle in which the individual will has to reject distortions of the lower nature and to put itself resolutely on the side of the Divine Light. The mental energies, the heart's emotions, the vital desires, the very physical being have to be compelled into the right attitude. These have to be trained to admit and answer to the right influences. It is only then, that the surrender of the lower to the higher can be affected, because sacrifice has become acceptable.

The personal will of the Sadhaka has to siege first on the egoistic energies and turn them towards the light and right. And once turned, he has to still train them to recognise to always accept and follow that. Thus progressing, he learns, still using the personal will, personal effort, personal energies, to employ to the higher influence. Progressing yet farther, his will, effort, energy become no longer personal and separate, but activities of the higher Power at work in the individual.

At the end of the progress, with the progressive disappearance of egoism and impurity and ignorance, this last separation is removed and all in the individual becomes the divine working.

Reference

1. *Synthesis of Yoga*; pp. 52- 55

Part 3: Guru

Integral Yoga implies transforming our integral being into the image of God by establishing contact with the Divine, and then calling him to transform our entire being. The Divine then descends upon our limited nature and progressively energises the whole nature.

According to Sri Aurobindo: The perfection that comes from the practice of this yoga can thus be attained by the combined working of four great instruments or four aids namely, Sastra, Utsaha, Guru and Kala.

The turning of the being from the egoistic state of consciousness to a higher state of consciousness requires the power of aspiration of the heart, Force of will, and Concentration of mind, Perseverance and Determination of 'Prana'.

The third great instrument for changing our egoistic consciousness to a higher consciousness is the Guru. Taking the supreme Shastra of Integral yoga (Purna Yoga) as the eternal Veda, secret in the heart of every man and woman, the supreme guide and teacher is the inner guide. It is he who destroys our darkness, by the height of his knowledge. He starts disclosing progressively, his own divine nature of freedom, bliss, love, power and immortal being.

One may ask how the Inner Guide and Teacher go about doing this and what is his method? Answer: He has no method and every method. He takes our natural being as it is and organises it in such a manner that it accepts his highest movement; and by the pouring of his influence and presence into us, he enables the individual being to identify with the Universal and the Transcendent. The force that works in man is infinite and impersonal, implying thereby that it is shapeless without any form and is not in space and time. Therefore, recognition of this force of the Inner Guide, a World Teacher and the Lord of this Universe is of utmost importance.

Sri Aurobindo writes in *The Synthesis of Yoga*: It is immaterial whether he is seen as impersonal God behind all things as Transcendent, Absolute, Unmanifest, Unknowable, Immutable, manifesting as one's highest self and highest Self of all, as a Divine Person within us and in the world. Or in one of his or her numerous forms and names, Krishna, Christ, Buddha, Aditi – the Divine Mother. In the end, we perceive that he is all

and more than all, the things together. Therefore, our perception of him must vary according to our past evolution and the present; and our present nature.

If we accept this as an act of faith, why this inner guide is often veiled from us. Because, this inner guide is veiled by the intensity of our personal effort and by the ego's preoccupation with itself. As we gain clarity, our personal effort gives way to self-knowledge and then we recognise the source of a growing light within us. The surest way to find integral fulfilment is to find the inner guide who dwells within us, open ourselves to this Divine Power and trust to it to effect conversion of consciousness.

Unless reversal of consciousness is attempted, it is difficult for our egoistic consciousness to do it in the beginning. And even if it is done, it is difficult to do it perfectly. Unless the egoistic thoughts, sensations and feelings which have blocked the avenues by which we arrive at the perception needed are cleared, we cannot perceive this inner guide and teacher.

It is difficult even afterwards because of faith, surrender and courage required in the path are not easily accepted by our ego-clouded soul. The ego cannot see where it is being led. It revolts against the Divine leading it. But our inner guide is not offended by the revolt or want of faith, etc. He has the entire force of the Mother and teacher.

As in the world, so in ourselves, we cannot see God because of his working, as he works in us through our nature and not by miracles. But man demands miracles to have faith. While it is different for man to believe in something unseen within himself, it is easy for him to believe in something which he can imagine as something external to himself. 1

Pranav Kumar Bhattacharya has narrated these two interesting anecdotes to bring home this point. 2

A Sufi fakir would always be absorbed in the contemplation of Allah, and tears would flow uninterrupted from his eyes. He did not speak except to utter the name of Allah.

A fakir from Mecca came to see him. He told him, “Do you think by remembering Allah with your tears, you will find Allah?”

“Then how else can one find Allah?” he asked. “You must do at least some work for him. It is through work that you should call him. Then Allah will reveal Himself to you.”

The fakir replied,

“Fine. Then tell me what work I should do.”

“Come with me to Mecca. Then I will tell you.”

“I will not go anywhere”, the Sufi replied. “I will stay back and call Him with my tears. And as He sent you to me, someday He Himself will come and tell me how to find Him”. The fakir did not say anything after that.

Then Pranav recounted another story. There was a disciple of the Jain Tirthankar Vardhamn. He lived in a cave by himself. One day a lot of people came and told him, “The Tirthankar himself is coming to see you. Please come outside your cave and wait.” But then he did not come out of his cave.

“If the Guru has come this far, then surely he can come inside the cave too”, he responded. This explains the significance of the Guru on the path of yoga.

The spiritual progress of most human beings demands external support. An object of faith outside of us, it needs external image of God, it needs human representative as Incarnation, Prophet, Guru. Hindu discipline of spirituality provides for this need of soul by conception of Ishta-devata, The Avatar and Guru. Ishta Devata means a chosen deity whom some of us worship as Hanuman, Kali, Ram, Krishna or Christ. This concept of Ishta-devata is not based on any inferior power but on the name and form of the transcendent and Universal God. However, its necessity for the human soul is evident; otherwise it would be difficult for man to come into contact and communion with the Divine. This call of the human soul is satisfied by the Divine to manifest in a human appearance as the Incarnation, the Avatar.

All this is not enough because besides all this, man needs a living influence, a living example, a present teaching. For this need too, the Hindu discipline of spirituality prevails in the relation of Guru and disciple. The Guru should represent to the disciple the divine wisdom, convey to the disciple something of the diviner ideal. Thus, teaching, living by example and influence are three instruments of the Guru.

The Guru's whole business is to awaken the divine light and set the working of Divine Force, of which he himself is the means or channel. Setting an example is more powerful than instruction. But it is not the example of outward acts or personal character but the fact of divine realisation within him, governing his whole life and inner state and all his activities.

Lastly, influence is more important than example. Influence means the power of a Guru's contact, of his presence, of the nearness of his soul to the soul of another infusing into it, even though in silence. This is the supreme sign of the Master.

It is in this context that the Darshan days were evolved and introduced in Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Both Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have not left us, they are in the earth atmosphere.

Sri Aurobindo is the subtle world and the Mother in the subtle physical plane helping humanity to change and transform. Therefore, their example, their influence, their teachings will continue to guide the soul of man through his evolutionary process.

References

1. *The Synthesis of Yoga*, 'Four Aids'; pp. 56-58
2. *By the Way*, Pranav Kumar Bhattacharya; pp. 125-126

Part 4: Time

The Sadhaka who has all these aids is sure of his goal. Even a fall for him will only be a means of rising and death a passage towards fulfilment. For once on the path, birth and death become only a process in the development of his being and the stages of his journey.

Time is the remaining aid for the effectivity of the process. Time presents to human effort as an enemy or a friend, as a resistance, as a medium or an instrument. But always it is really the instrument of soul.

Time is a field of circumstances and forces meeting and working out a resultant progression whose course it measures. To the ego it is a tyranny or a resistance, to the Divine an instrument. Therefore, while our effort is personal, time appears as a resistance, for it represents to us all the obstruction of the forces that conflict with our own. When the divine working and the personal become one, it appears as a servant and instrument.

Compiled from

The Synthesis of Yoga, 'Four Aids'; pp. 61-62.

Section 6: Marriage

Part 1: What is Marriage?

Let us understand why marriage exists. As a human being, either as a man or a woman, you have certain needs. When you were eight years old, if I had asked you about marriage, the question would not have meant anything to you. If I had asked you when you were 14, you might have been a little shy because your body started growing in a certain way and hormones started infecting your intelligence, and you started thinking about it. If I had asked you at 18, there would have been a clear ‘yes’ or ‘no, not now’ or ‘not at all’, depending on what happened to you between the ages of 14 to 18.

The word ‘marriage’ has acquired a very negative aura around it in certain parts of the world because there is a sense of juvenile freedom. It affects young people in some societies who perceive marriage as a forceful binding thing. When you are young, you are against it, because your physical body is in a certain mode.

To working and professional women, who want to work in a certain way, marriage is perceived as a bondage and a chain. But as one gets older and the physical body starts weakening, once again you wish there was someone with you in a committed way. Therefore, there are arguments for and against marriage and in that case marriage is not something undesirable and bad. The question is, “Do you want it?” Each individual should consider this for himself or herself and not be dictated by any the social norm.

As a human being you have physical needs, emotional needs, psychological needs, social and economic needs. People may not want to consciously think about these things because they think their marriage will become distorted if they do. But these needs and considerations do exist.

For women today, the world has changed to some extent. She need not necessarily get married for social and economic reasons. She has a choice. She can take care of her own finances and social situations. It was not so a hundred years ago, but there is a little bit of freedom now. At least two of the reasons why you need to get married are,

This is a very juvenile feeling – “When I am strong I do not need anyone; when I become weak, I wish there was someone with me.” I think a partnership should be formed when you are at the peak of your well-

being. When you have fallen, you will make desperate partnerships. When you are well, when you are at the peak of your life, that is when you must make a partnership which will take you through all those ups and downs.

Psychologically, you need a companion in your life to satisfy your physical and emotional needs. And how strong are your physical needs, and for this you need to look at this as an individual. This is not a social prescription and it is not going to work that way. Is this some kind of a passing need that you can easily go beyond? If it is, do not get married because it is not worth getting tied up. If you do, it is not just two people but a family that has to face the consequences. Each individual has to consider this for himself or herself.

As per the statistics available, at least 25 to 30 percent of the people do not need to get married because it is just a passing interest for them. For another 30 to 40 percent, people like to get into this. For 10 to 12 years, they consider marriage as a burden. But there are some people for whom the need is very strong. About 25 to 30 percent need partnerships for a much longer period, and they definitely need to get into such arrangements.

At this time, people have found other kinds of solutions. “Okay, I won’t get married, I will just live-in.” If you are just living with one person, it is anyway a marriage, whether you have a certificate or not. But if you think you can choose your partners every weekend, you are causing serious damage to yourself because just as your mind has a memory, your body has a much stronger sense of memory. The body imbibes and retains experiences beyond the memory that you carry in your mind.

The Importance of Marriage

The body develops a deep sense of memory through physical intimacy. It will respond and react in many ways, based on this memory. If you imprint too many memories, there will be confusion in the body and a certain level of misery.

You can clearly see this with people who are loose with their life and their physical body. They never know any real sense of joy. They can never laugh whole-heartedly nor can they cry totally. They develop

confusing memories in the physical body in their lifetime. Therefore, a live-in relationship is not the solution to handle one's needs. Live your life in such a way that whatever you do, you do it sincerely.

Either one should go into marriage or one should simply go beyond these needs. This is something that you have to look at individually, considering how strong is your need. When you make this decision, you must be in a state of clarity and must not be influenced by anyone. If you find that marriage is not a necessity, then abandon the idea altogether. However, you must choose one of these options because there is no best thing. Live your life in such a way that whatever you do, your action creates harmony within your inner being.

The Institution of Marriage

Today, many youngsters do not want to marry, and those who are married are getting divorced. One aspect of marriage is to bring about certain sanctity to the simple basic needs that every human being has.

The nature of human offspring that it is most vulnerable as compared to any other creature, and needs the maximum support through his or her growing years. You could leave a puppy on the street and as long as it gets food, it grows up into a good dog. But it's not so with human beings. They need not just physical support but a variety of supports, and above all, a stable situation.

At the time when the physical body is dominant, you will question every institution. This is hormone-fired freedom. Your intelligence has been hijacked by hormones and therefore, you question the fundamentals of everything. It is not that marriage is the right thing or bad thing but we do not have a better alternative because a stable situation is a must for a child.

Marriage is about Choosing Consciously

It is not compulsory or necessary for everyone to get married and have children. It is advisable to get married if the human race was in danger of disappearing, but the human population is exploding. If you do not reproduce, you do humanity a great service.

But if you get into marriage and if you have children, it is a minimum 20-year project. That is if they do well. If they do not do well, it is a lifelong project and there must be a commitment to create a stable situation for at least 20 years. Otherwise, you should not get into such a project, drop it halfway and walk away.

And there is no need to talk about marriage and divorce in the same breath as if they come together. No one thought of divorce in India until recently. If it so happens something went entirely wrong between two people, there is no way to fix it, and they have to separate, it is unfortunate, but it happens. But you do not have to think about it at the time of the wedding!

Part 2: Marriage and Children

To unite your physical lives, your material interests, to become partners in order to face together the difficulties and successes, the defeats and victories of life, that is the very foundation of marriage, but you already know that it is not enough.

To be united in your sensations, to have the same aesthetic tastes and enjoyments, to be moved in common by the same things, one through the other and one for the other – that is good, that is necessary, but it is not enough.

To be one in your deeper feelings, to keep a mutual affection and tenderness that never vary in spite of all the blows of life and can withstand every weariness and irritation and disappointment, to be always and on every occasion happy, to be together, to find peace and joy in each other – that is indispensable, but it is never enough.

To unite your minds, to harmonise your thoughts and make them complementary, to share your intellectual preoccupations and discoveries; in short, to make your sphere of mental activity identical through a widening and enrichment acquired by both at once – that is good, that is absolutely necessary, but it is not enough.

Lasting Union

Beyond all that, in the depths, at the centre, at the summit of the being, there is a Supreme Truth of being, an Eternal Light, independent of all the circumstances of birth, country, environment, education; That is the origin, cause and master of our spiritual development; it is That which gives a permanent direction to our lives; it is That which determines our destinies; it is in the consciousness of That that you must unite. To be one in aspiration and ascension, to move forward at the same pace on the same spiritual path, that is the secret of a lasting union. 1

Marriage is not a direct way to prepare oneself for sadhana. It can be an indirect one if the outward nature needs trouble and disappointment to get rid of all worldly attachments, but in that case the experiment usually ends by separation and often a painful one, at least for one of the two associates. That is all I can tell you on the subject. 2

In reference to the view of some modern social thinkers expressing fear of the possible breakdown and disappearance of family system, you have remarked that this breakdown “was, and is still, an indispensable movement to bring humanity to a higher and broader realisation.”

This raises some important questions which I state below for your clarification:

Question: Do you consider this dissolution of the family system indispensable only for the few exceptional individuals who follow some high mental or spiritual ideal or also for the general humanity?

Answer: Yes, only for the few exceptional individuals who follow some high mental or spiritual ideal.

Question: If You advocate a complete dissolution of the family system for the entire humanity, do You consider it advisable for it to happen even before the new process of birth by direct materialisation has been normalised on earth?

Answer: More liberty and plasticity in the system are advisable. Fixed rules are harmful to evolution.

Question: Do you also consider the abolition of the marriage system as equally indispensable as the abolition of the family system for the higher development of humanity? So long as the new process of birth has not been normalised, would not the present manner of sexual procreation continue? In that case, would not some form of marriage relationship be necessary?

The Mother: Marriage will always take place, but legal ceremonies must not be enforced, to avoid illegality.

Question: So as long as the new process of birth has not been normalised and the children continue to be born through the present sexual process, is not the family life and atmosphere best suited to their upbringing, especially in their early formative years? The other alternative is to provide for their care and upbringing through some other agency, like the State-nurseries, as was advocated by some Communist thinkers. But this view has not found many supporters, for it has been realised that the tender and affectionate care which the young children

need could best be provided only in the intimate atmosphere of the family home by the parents. If this is true, then for the sake of the young children at least, would not the family be necessary, until the new method of birth becomes possible and normal in future?

The Mother, “You say that you could not bring up your children properly because although you are well-educated and cultured you have no time to spare for them, and that your wife has time but she is uneducated, uncultured, good for nothing. Will you tell me who is responsible for her condition? For more than twenty-five years she has lived with you. What did you do in these twenty-five years to educate her or give her your “culture”—absolutely nothing? Even the idea did not occur to you. You never thought that even if you had given her one hour daily for her education, it would have made a big difference in twenty-five years. For you she existed only as a machine to look after your comforts and produce your children. You could not take her into your confidence, you could not do anything for her improvement, but there you stand with all your vanity, blaming her for being uneducated and uncultured.

“I hold you responsible for all her shortcomings.” 3

The Mother answers, “You want your children to do as you bid. What do you know of Truth? You want to impose your will because you are stronger. That way a giant can catch hold of you and you will have to do whatever he says.

“It is the most difficult thing to bring up children. I have not seen many parents who are completely satisfied with their duty in the upbringing of a child. What right have you to impose your will on the children, you who have brought them into the world without giving any serious thought to their problems or making the necessary preparations?

“Do not beat your children, it clouds *your* consciousness and spoils *their* character. Beating or raising a hand on the children can cloud one’s consciousness and perhaps harm the child’s progress, especially in their mental growth. Also, it can further cause a lack in confidence and personality development. It is advisable to gently talk with the child and try to make him/her see the truth in a peaceful and gentle manner.” 4

References

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Part 3: Growing Parents

It is high time for parents to become more vigilant and aware of the changing times so as to bring up their children as more healthy, cultured and better citizens of India.

The Mother says that merely by fulfilling physical needs of children, most of the parents think that they have fully discharged their duty. However, they have many more responsibilities while bringing up their children. Often they forget that their children, apart from having a beautiful physique, also have a wonderful soul. The child tries to perceive the environment according to his capacity, and gradually the environment leaves a lasting impression on his tender mind. These impressions play the most important role in his later life. In order to mould his tiny and growing mind and emboss beautiful impressions on it, the parents may take care of the points discussed here.

- Not to discuss family affairs in the presence of the children. It is likely that according to his understanding, he misinterprets the whole communication and develops fear, insecurity and withdrawal tendencies from such events. Some parents may say that due to lack of privacy in the house and their busy schedules, they cannot postpone the discussion until the child goes to school or play because they may forget the issue. These are excuses which parents should try to avoid and be more alert and prudent.
- Often it is observed that the child has been victimised due to grudges and anger the parents have towards each other. Instead of communication through the child, they should develop the courage to talk it over directly in his absence. And point out their weakness in the child's presence.
- Both parents should never accuse each other and point out their weaknesses in the child's presence. The child respects them as his guide, teacher and mentor. If they do not show respect and love for each other through their words, demeanour and behaviour, then the child, understanding their weaknesses begins to manipulate to get things done from either of the parents. To disagree with each other on any of the child's demand and desire in his/her presence does harm his/her future development.

- According to the Mother, It is always good to tell the truth but the art of telling the Truth consists in telling the Truth in such a way as to make it accessible to the mind of the recipient. Parents should make efforts to enhance their knowledge and overcome their ignorance by answering their questions even if these pertain to birds and bees. For instance, kids are taught the science of reproduction in school, but schools are not the place where the context of romance is taught. And they start talking about it awfully early. Children already have lots of stupid things to worry about and hormones are merciless, puberty is hard anyway. Parents should be just straight with their kids and teach them responsibility.
- By educating themselves and acquiring more knowledge of changing times, parents can cope with the situation more discreetly without losing respect.
- And last but not the least, love and sacrifice lose their grace and value when boastfully exhibited. But done in silence, it has a much more positive and powerful effect than mentioning to the child a hundred times all that they have done for them.

Part 4: Nurturing the Potential of Children

When one is very young and wellborn, meaning born with a conscious psychic being within, there is in the dreams of a child a kind of aspiration for something beautiful, goodness, and a constant success. One dreams of miracles when one is young, Everything seems to be luminous, beautiful, happy. One wants stories which end happily. One dreams of being able to rise in the air, of setting things right when they are wrong, of healing the sick, etc. Indeed, one has all sorts of dreams when one is very young.

Usually teachers and parents pass their time throwing cold water on it, telling them, ‘Oh! It is a dream; it is not a reality.’ “They should do the very opposite; and this you must realise that and not only is it possible but it is certain, if they come in contact with the part in which he/she is capable of doing this thing. This is what should guide your life, organise it, make you develop in the direction of the truer reality which the ordinary life calls illusion.”

This is what should be, instead of making children ordinary, with that dull, vulgar common sense which makes them habitual. When the child is full of enthusiasm, never throw water on it, never tell him, ‘You know, life is like that.’ On the contrary, you should always encourage him, tell him, “This is what you should love and draw towards you, this is what you should make the object of your dreams, of your ambitions.

If you do this when the child is very young, it is less difficult than if it happens later to undo formed patterns of habits could be a hard task. .

On the contrary, you must tell a child that you are no longer a baby. When a child shares a beautiful dream with you in which he seemed to have unusual powers and perhaps other very beautiful things, be very careful never to discourage him or tell him: “Oh! Life is not like that”, for you will be doing something wrong.”

There is another quality that must be cultivated in a child from a very young age: that is a feeling of uneasiness, of a moral misbalance which can be felt when it is done with certain things, not because it has been told not to do them, not because the child fears punishment but spontaneously, without being told anything, it will feel an uneasiness when it has done something against the truth of its being. And it is exactly upon this that the latter puts his/her effort for progress.

Naturally, if a child gets disastrous education, it will try to extinguish within itself this little true thing, and sometimes it succeeds so

well that it loses all contact with it, and also the power of distinguishing between good and evil. That is why I insist upon this and say that from infancy children should be taught that there is an inner reality within themselves, within the earth and within the universe. And earth and universe exist only as a function of this truth. If it did not exist, the child would not last even for a short time and that everything would dissolve even as it comes into being. It is because this is the real basis of the universe, all that opposes this cannot endure it, because it is That, the eternal thing which is at the base of this universe.

The Mother says that it is not a question of giving a child philosophical explanation, but he could well be given the feeling of this kind of inner comfort, of satisfaction, and sometimes of an intense joy when he obeys this little silent thing within him, which will prevent him from doing something what is contrary to it. It is an experience of this kind on which the teaching can be based. Besides, the child must be given the impression that nothing can endure if he does not have within himself this true satisfaction which is the only thing permanent.

For the children, it would be best to instil in them the will to conquer the future, the will to always look ahead; and to want to move as swiftly as they can towards what will be.

Children should be told: There are wonderful things to be manifested, prepare to receive them. Then if they want something a little more concrete and easier to understand, you can then tell them: Sri Aurobindo came to announce these things; when you are able to read him, you will understand.

Compiled from

Ahana; September 2001 and *Collected Works of the Mother*.

Part 5: Parenting

It is difficult to communicate with children when they enter their preteens. But parents should ensure that they get through them as much as possible. There are changes in boys' and girls' body, how the hormones affect their moods and personality. The parents should discuss without any inhibition these changes until they grow up and step into adulthood. For example, puberty is nature's way of transforming a child into an adult, all for the sake of reproduction. While both girls and boys go through puberty, girls reach puberty and sexual maturity at earlier ages than boys do.

There are some things that we expect the children to do that are non-negotiable. For example, eating will always happen at the dining table, and that they cannot bring anything else, not even a book, to the table. They have to be explained that it is impolite to read while eating for important reasons. They are expected also to greet people who come home and people we meet when we go out.

Parents should join kids in doing things together. For instance, they should go together for walks, swimming or any other sport where they can spend some time in each other's company. Therefore, it should be their mission to create activities that they enjoy doing together.

The Mother's Guidance

Children should learn to enjoy whatever they are doing, be it an intellectual activity or an artistic one or even physical. They should especially learn that an activity, done with sincere effort, acquires an extra glory.

Part 6: Prenatal Education

It is a matter of great concern that a maximum number of human conceptions are unplanned and accidental. The parents are not conscious when the child is conceived. It is not a mere conjugal pleasure which should result in a child but it must be a result of prayers and aspiration. The spiritual seed that develops into the form of a child belongs to the Divine. What a man and woman can do is that they pray, invoke and call the Divine to preside over the formation of the child, and eventually to ensoul the body. The entire process is all about creating a conscious population.

For this extraordinary creation, a great deal of preparation is required. Men and women aspiring for children must undergo progress and spiritual change. What this spiritual change is and how it can be achieved are matters of immense scope and study, but one can draw many insights on the subject from the writings of the Mother.

Relationship Between Man and Woman

To reduce the woman's part solely to domestic occupation and interior, and the man's part to exclusively exterior and social occupation would be to perpetuate the present sad state of things. Both men and women are equally suffering from this out-moded system.

It is true that this hostile attitude of the two sexes facing one another as adversaries should cease. All human beings must associate in a common effort to become conscious of the highest ideal, and to work ardently for its realisation. Now, the question is not only that of a better utilisation of their outer activities but above all, that of a spiritual growth. Without inner progress, there is no possible spiritual growth. For the spiritual reality is the basis of all the rest. All are equal, men and women, to the Supreme Reality. Therefore, the only distinction which can exist in this domain being based on sincerity and aspiration and the consistency of Will. It is in this fundamental equality that any lasting solution of this problem of the relation of sexes can be found. 1

General Qualities of Women

Women are not more bound to the vital and mental than consciousness than men are.

On the contrary, as they have not in general, the mental perception of men; it is easier for them to discover their physical being and allow it to guide them. They are, in general, not conscious in a mental way which can be expressed in words but are conscious in their feelings and their actions.

2

Quality of Passivity: When a man is sufficiently conscious of the all-pervading, all-permeating and indwelling immanent Divine, he becomes humble. On the contrary, a woman by the very fact of her passivity is more receptive to her inner thoughts and is, thus, in touch with the inner being than man with functions_of logic.

Even in the material domain, there are many men who depend mentally on women as there are many women who depend on men. Besides, to say that women should be humble because it is they who please men is also erroneous. It would lead one to think that woman has been put on earth only for the purpose of giving pleasure to men which is absurd.

The best that can be done for the progress of the present human race is to treat both sexes on a footing of equality and to give them the same education and training and teach them to find, through contact with the Divine reality that is above all sexual differentiation, the source of all possibilities and harmonies. 3

Freedom from Slavery: No law can liberate women unless they liberate themselves from what makes them slaves: (a) Attraction towards male and his strength; (b) Desire for home life and its security; (c) Attachment to motherhood.

If they get free from these slaveries, then they will truly be equal to men. Similarly, men have three slaveries. These are, (a) Spirit of possession, attachment to power and domination. (b) Desire for sexual relation with women; (c) Attachment to small comforts of married life. If they get rid of three slaveries, they truly become equal to women.

All human beings are an expression of one and the same soul. Nature has made a differentiation in the expression with a view to satisfying her needs and realising her purpose.

Foundation of Marriage

Love is not a sexual attraction. It is also not vital attraction and interchange but mighty vibration coming straight from the One. Human love is based on give and take. This is one reason human love is transient whereas Divine Love is unconditional and does not depend on give and take relationship. Transforming human love into divine love needs appreciation of Oneness that underlines the superficial separation between individuals. Therefore the consciousness has to rise above the mental level for the divine love to manifest in man.

At the summit of the being, there is the Supreme Truth of being, that is Eternal light, independent of all the circumstances of birth, country, environment and education. That is the cause of our spiritual development and that is the secret of lasting union between men and women. 4

Importance of the Mother's Aspiration

The Mother says, "The nature of the child to be born depends very much upon the mother who forms it, upon her aspiration and will, as well as on the material surroundings in which she lives. To see that her thoughts are always beautiful and pure, her feelings noble and her material surrounding as harmonious as possible and full of simplicity. If she also has conscious will to form the child according to the highest ideal, she can conceive so that the child born can come into the world with utmost potentialities." 5

When Should Education of a Child Begin?

The education of a human being begins at birth and continues throughout his life. However, if we want to have the maximum results, it should begin before birth. In any case, it is the mother herself who proceeds with education. She takes upon herself for her own improvement and second, upon the child whom she is forming physically. However, it is the responsibility of both parents to educate themselves with the problems of growing children and to learn good parenting.

Father's Education

Despite the man's role in prenatal care and its impact on high risk pregnancy, men are not aware of real needs. They need to learn about maternal nutrition, warning signs of pregnancy, sexual health, preparation for labour and childbirth and parental care. Men's participation in women's health and fertility can promote quality of maternal relationship at home and in society.

Most pregnant women consider reproductive health services are essential for men. The state of consciousness in which the parents are at the moment of conception gives a sort of stamp to the child, which it will reflect throughout its life. Though they appear to be little things, yet it has a great consequence. It brings into the world a child who is incomplete or wicked or a failure and people are not aware of that. 6

Material basis of Mother's Attachment to the Child

It is because the child is made up of her very own substance, for quite a long time, the material link, the link of substance, between the mother and child is extremely close. It is much later that the tie between the two is completely cut. There is this kind of a bond, of subtle sensation, such that the mother feels exactly what the child feels. This is then the material basis of the mother's attachment to the child. 7

Leaving Children with Servants

Worst of all is to leave children with servants. It is a crime. For those people have altogether a vulgar consciousness, low and obscure and they let it enter the children. Naturally, there is also an age when children are put to school and they begin to come in contact with other children whose company is not always desirable. But have now reached a stage when they have their parents' or teachers' counsel. But all the same, if one has started life with a little consciousness and goodwill, one meets people whose company is not always desirable. 8

Closing Word

It goes without saying that there is enormous difference between conceiving a child deliberately, with a conscious aspiration, a call to the invisible world and spiritual ardour; and conceiving a child by accident and without intending to have it, and sometimes without wanting at all. 9

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4. CWM 13; p. 237
5. CWM12; p. 9
6. CWM 5; pp. 411-412
7. CWM 6; pp. 106-107
8. CWM 5; pp. 412-413
9. CWM 8; p. 334

Section 7: Management

Part 1: Management by Consciousness

A modern industrial-commercial organisation is a miniature world in itself and represents, in a small way, all the different problems, potentialities and facets of the contemporary human society. The solutions to these problems depend to a great extent on the quality of management. This implies that any breakthrough in the theory and practice of management is bound to have repercussions on the progress and well-being of the entire human society.

In spite of attainment of mastery in the technological changes in dealing with the human element, the modern manager finds the greatest difficulty. There are innumerable theories, systems and strategies for managing human resources; and organisations have experimented and practiced with various degrees of success, but none of them seem to have solved the problem of human resource development with any degree of completeness. Most of the business and corporate managers admit the significance in the scheme of management.

In any work system, may be home, hotel, a hospital, college, university, business or state, management enters through its various ramifications.

Even when man was an uncivilised being, he must have felt the need of managing himself by hunting for his hunger and shelter for his living. This was the beginning of managing for the self. And this process has been a continuous and ceaseless human effort.

Western Approach

There was a time when the core of western thought treated a worker like a hired commodity and the result was the loss of human values.

Sri Aurobindo writes, “Do not dream that when thou has got rid of material poverty, men will be happy or satisfied or society freed from ills, troubles and problems. This is the first and the lowest necessity. While the soul within remains defectively organised, there will always be outward unrest, disorder and revolution.”

No wonder, then, that the materialistic Western-style management has remained only to be management without a soul.

Holistic Approach

India has always seen in man a soul, a portion of divinity using mind, life and body for individual and collective experience and self-manifestation. Therefore, the management approach has to be made soul conscious. It has to be focussed upon development of man and not merely to train and retain him as a worker. A worker has to be made soul conscious. In other words, he is guided by his soul to serve a higher purpose in life through his work and behaviour. This should be the aim of management programmes.

Man is an imperfect being; his mind is only an instrument of thought and not a fountain of knowledge. Knowledge emerges from consciousness and soul. Thus, soul should be suitably developed in order to make man responsive. Besides, sincerity should be his principal tool of action. Let us see what Sri Aurobindo says on this aspect of man and management. Sri Aurobindo writes, "For man intellectually developed, mighty in scientific knowledge and masterly of gross and subtle nature, using the elements as his servants and the world as his footstool, but under-developed in heart and soul, becomes only an inferior asura, using the power of a demi-god to satisfy the nature of animal." Management has to rely on the development of heart and soul. It should be management by consciousness.

Self-Management

The man who can master himself and manage efficiently his own affairs will do well when he sets out on a career of management of others and of institutions, small and large.

Core of the Problem

The core of the problem, whether of self-management or management of others, is self-change and world change through the process of psychological change or power of yoga. This change of awareness can only be brought about by changing our nature. When this happens, one comes in contact with other parts of our being. We might say that there are two beings in us, one on the surface, life and body consciousness and the other behind the veil, an inner mind, an inner life and inner physical consciousness constituting our inner being. This inner being once awake opens to our true being or soul.

Most people think that practical life has its own set of rules and regulations and spiritual life is not part of that. Sri Aurobindo tells us, “Worldly life is the outer periphery of spiritual life itself.” But majority of us accept the concept of spiritualism as something divorced from material life. This attitude has taken roots because spirituality has been looked upon only as an end, not as a means of perfecting life.

A subtle understanding of those with whom we interact avoids disharmony. In case a proposal is made by someone who seems ridiculous, it should not be rejected unless one has sought the Divine guidance and have examined the other person’s view point. An effort to identify with others give us a clear understanding of the situation and enables us to take correct action. Initially, the guidance may not be clear but that matters little. However, it opens a channel to the Higher Power to start working through us. And if we continue with the practice of offering all our problems and difficulties to the Divine with sincerity, the higher force will not allow a wrong decision to be taken.

In any business establishment, a great importance is given to material management. Normally, in most factories an annual ‘Vishvakarma Puja’ is organised. Workers go through the ritual without even understanding as why the puja is performed. The real significance of the puja is to make an effort to awaken divinity in the matter which is permeated and pervaded by the divine consciousness, so that the factory functions smoothly without any breakdown and stoppages. Therefore, one must understand that puja and worship is effective only if workers are sincere and earnest in their prayers. All those working on the shop-floor must learn to handle and treat all material objects with a sense of respect and care. Moreover, supervisors and foremen must ensure that all equipment and machinery are sincerely maintained to avoid any wastage.

Here is an interesting episode from my corporate life. In early 1900s, when I was serving with Unitech Group, I was in a way overseeing working of an industrial unit located in Alwar, Rajasthan. There used be lot of copper metal waste as a result of machining process, and it used to be thrown away in one corner, at the back of the factory. However, on my instructions, henceforth this so-called material waste used to be treated with care, washed with water and then kept aside as valuable metal scrap. It used to be sold to other industrial units who were in need of copper metal as an industrial input.

Physical culture is the process of infusing consciousness into the cell of the body. One may or may not know it but it is a fact of existence. When we concentrate, our muscles move according to our will and when we endeavour to make our muscles more agile and supple, we infuse into the cells of our body, a consciousness which was not there before. Thus, we turn the body into an increasingly homogeneous and receptive instrument which progresses in and by its activities. How useful this can be to the actions of our soul which has taken a dwelling in this human body. In our ordinary life, normal walking, jogging, workout and so on can help us to remain healthy whereas *asanas* increases body flexibility. For instance, you take a branch of a tree and you abruptly bend it. What will happen? It will break at once. But if you hold both ends and then slowly you bend, it will take a U-shape without breaking. It is the same thing with *asana*, where each and every part of the body is bent very slowly with appropriate *asana* and one has to hold this position in a relaxed state for few seconds. This brings flexibility in the body and helps control blood circulation and calms the nerves.

Pranayama through inhalation, retention of breath and exhalation increases and controls the prana energy in the body. The Mother once said that while in France, after reading Vivekananda's book on Rajyoga, she practised through different 'nadis'. This practice has an effect on one's psychological health.

We have talked of many methods and techniques of managing oneself. One can select the right method, depending on one's inclination and nature. All methods should be tried out and then the selection should be made. Once one starts practicing, the change will occur automatically. This process is really an adventure of consciousness. The beauty lies in the journey itself, which unravels to the traveller the infinity of the Divine.

Closing Word

Building and running industries with a human value system is certainly the need of the hour. Improving working ethics and creating pleasant environments that respect and value every employee will go a long way in elevating stress and ailments of the service class who form the backbone of the society. One can create wealth by adopting a work ethic and still not abandoning it.

A work ethic that respects human values, breeds modesty and humility and transforms each member of the team into a Karma yogi, an individual who works with sincerity, dedication and a deep respect for what he does because for such Karmayogis, their work defines them.

Part 2: Individual and Collective Management

Normally, Individual and Collective life depend on each other for their betterment. Collectivity creates opportunities for individuals to grow and to progress. Individuals by their achievements in various fields of human activities make the collective life rich and fruitful.

Man all over the world is facing various overwhelming problems. If we probe into them, we find that most of them are his own creation. It is often seen that an individual, having exceptional qualities, grows into a very strong personality and when selfishness creeps in, he tries to exploit the collectivity for his selfish and personal gains. To check this tendency, the collectivity adopts certain measures, which bring in some control, thereby curbing the freedom of the individual. Therefore, the possibility of getting the best and most from the individual becomes impossible.

The battle of individual freedom and collective control has been going on since time immemorial, and as a result the progress of the humanity is greatly hampered. Sometimes, this disharmony even threatens to destroy the existence of man.

Freedom is a very important condition of progress. But freedom must not be confused with license. When more than one person is involved in any project or when an individual wants to achieve something, certain outer rules and disciplines are necessary, at least in the earlier stages. Afterwards, with the growth of consciousness, these outer rules and disciplines could gradually be relaxed and replaced by inner rules and inner disciplines. But the discipline is a must and without it, nothing can be done.

So far all attempts of man to solve these problems have failed miserably. These problems are beyond the capacities and capabilities of man to solve successfully. Sri Aurobindo has pointed out that man has to change his nature, transcend himself and evolve to a higher species with the help of consciousness. Then only will he be able to come out his difficulties.

Let us examine these problems in our context. Sri Aurobindo has given us a programme with regard to our individual and collective progress. He says, "Our target is Supramental Realisation and Integral Transformation."

The saving grace is that the Mother told Pranav-da in the late 40s, "This time there will be no tragedy. I shall do what I have come here for.

Nolini, Pavitra, Amrita and all the sadhaks are waiting to see the Supramental Realisation and Physical Transformation. I cannot disappoint them. It must happen.” What a categorical assertion by the Mother!

For some reason or the other, the Physical Transformation could not be done on the Mother’s body. But that does not mean that Her work has been postponed for the time being. She constantly has been working from above for its fruition and helping those who are open to Her. She must have found a number of instruments through whom She will realise Her vision, and we shall surely see it during Her epoch.

Reference

1. *By the Way – Part 2*, Pranav Kumar Bhattacharya; pp. 71-72

Part 3: Management Through Trusteeship

Madanlal-ji wanted to donate property worth quite a huge sum to the Ashram through Sri Aurobindo Memorial Fund Society. But no donations can be made between a Trust and Society. The trustees decided that they will buy a part of the property for a big sum. The stamp duty and other expenses on this transaction would have been very high. Which meant that they agreed to buy a part of the property for a very large amount after spending quite a sum on sundry registration expenses. Even though some lawyers had said that it was legally possible to transfer property from the Society to the Trust.

After getting my letter, the trustees changed their mind and got the entire property by spending very little for the registration.

In this way, when necessary, I do intervene. It is only for the benefit the Ashram; otherwise, I keep doing my work.

It will be seen from the above-mentioned that my way of working is completely different from the trustees. Had I become a trustee, there would have been opposition at every step from the others. The other solution would have been to accept principles quietly. Either I kill my soul or fight against all, neither of which was very desirable.

The truth is that one should not make too much of a trustee's job. Anyone can be a trustee. What we truly lack is a real leader who can gather all our force and direct it towards our true aim: the supramental, physical transformation. We really do not have anyone of that stature. It is undoubtedly true that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo are guiding us but in this physical world of flesh and blood, we need such a person.

I too am of the belief that anyone can be a trustee of the Ashram. A trustee is not a leader though. He lacks some of qualities required of a true leader. A true leader is one who:

- Has the confidence of his or her people.
- Has a loving and compassionate heart, and is ready to help.

- Has a high ideal and a strong faith and has the capacity to carry with him all those who depend on him.
- Is easily approachable and has an amicable disposition.
- Looks after the material and spiritual needs of his dependents.
- Can infuse confidence, enthusiasm, hope and will in his comrades to progress.
- Is simple, frank, upright, straightforward and honest.
- Is resourceful in difficult times.

Compiled From

1. *By the Way Part I*, Pranav Kumar Bhattacharya; pp. 51-54.

Part 4: Management in Spiritual Institutions

In the 21st century, the pressure of change is mounting both within and without at a speed that baffles us many a time. It brings with it unseeingly unsurmountable problems, chaos and disorder. Sri Aurobindo Ashram and its various departments are no exceptions. The direction becomes more acute when the direction and guidance provided by the present leadership is confusing. This subject was discussed by Shri Pranav Kumar Bhattacharya (Pranav-da) and Shri M.P. Pandit (Pandit ji) and then with the Mother.

Pranav-da wrote to the Mother, “Our ideal was unity in diversity. There was plenty of diversity in the Ashram. But the Mother had not yet succeeded in bringing unity in it”. But the Mother remained silent and said nothing.

Soon after, he corresponded with Pandit ji through letters during the month of November in the late 90s.

In his first letter, on hearing Panditji’s tape-recorded speech, he wrote, “I totally agree with you. In our Ashram collective life, there is no unity. I understand that unity can be achieved in two ways. One, the ordinary way, when collectively people face a common danger and then due to mutual safety and security, forget their little ego and self-interest momentarily and come closer and work for the larger interest. The other way is, when men transcend themselves, have at least the psychic realisation and their consciousness turned with a higher Truth, they rise above ego and desires.

Pranav-da said that Once the Mother told me that if she were to pick from the Ashram population those who come only for the Truth, She would only get a handful of them. Most of the people had come because it was convenient to stay here. She said this as early as 1947. Since then in the situation at least, the elders amongst us who are running the organisation had true realisation, they could surely lead us to a better understanding. And as a result, there would be a better unity in our collective life.

All the qualities which favour better unity namely, love, understanding, fellow-feeling, comradeship, compassion, tolerance, patience, etc., are psychic qualities and these do not come from people of

ordinary consciousness. Therefore, there is truly a need for a good leader in the Ashram at the present hour. We do not have any leader among us. It is true that the Mother's and Sri Aurobindo's consciousness pervades the Ashram atmosphere, and they are guiding each aspirant according to his or her capacity and aspiration. But the presence of a true leader among us on the material plane will make a big difference.

In response to Pranav-da's letter, Pandit ji replied vide his letter dated 6th November 1991. To have a single leader here is not on the Mother's programme; this has been my perception even before She withdrew from Her body. What is required is collective leadership in keeping with the demand of the present Evolutionary Force. We must strive and build up a wise, upright, large-visioned leadership in tune with the Mother's Consciousness. Towards that end, I suggest that a core body, not exceeding three must be formed, with the door opened for a larger circle to be formed later. This core group must be essentially a spiritually oriented body exerting to see that the collective life of the Ashram keeps to a certain well-defined norm. It should be its duty to draw the attention of the Board of Administration when lapses occur or threaten to occur. Its role must be constructive from an objective, personal angle.

Pranav-da's reply of 19 November 1991 goes this way: I do not believe in collective leadership; the term itself seems to be a misnomer. I believe that it has been borrowed from western thought which arose out of fear of giving birth to dictators or autocrats.

Whenever we make a group or a committee, the final decision has to be taken by one man. Then where is the scope of collective leadership? The leader may have advisors, helpers, experts, etc., but the true leadership finally rests with one man only.

If we probe into the history, we shall never find an example where collective leadership solved any problem of man. I can serve as a stop gap arrangement, temporally, as it happened after the murder of Julius Caesar by forming the triumvirate.

Successful kings, explorers, scientists, reformers, political or religious leadership are all one man's shows. And our tradition of Avatars,

spiritual leaders and the existence of Gurudevas are all examples of singular leadership.

To have a single leader here is not on the Mother's programme. It was true as long as the Mother was with us in Her physical body. But after Her Mahasamadhi, the situation has to be viewed from a different angle.

It is my firm conviction that in the present Ashram set-up, only a man having Supramental Realisation can handle effectively all our Ashram problems, and help us to march towards our goal of Integral Transformation. Any other effort, done in a human way, will only add to the confusion already existing and are bound to end in abject failure.

It is better to wait with patience and see how things develop. The Mother has told us that Supramental Force works quietly, in a most normal and natural way.

Pandit ji replied on 2 August 1991, in reply to Pranav-da's letter.

First let me assure you that there is no intention of diluting the tradition of the Guru. It is understood that for all time to come, Sri Aurobindo and the Mother will continue to be the Gurus for every one taking the path of Integral Yoga. When Dakshinapada asked the Mother (unwisely) in the early 50s: "Sri Aurobindo has left us, one day you also will leave us. Then who is to lead us?" She replied, "There will be no need for it, the Truth will guide". So the Guru continues to look after the spiritual aspect of our life. The question is of the general life of the collectivity which is formed as the material base of their operations. It is no use saying, "The Mother will do". For example, there must be some arrangement to see that the Teaching is properly applied, the Ashram develops on the right lines so that the Ideal is not deformed in its transition.

Looking at [this] from [this] angle, there is a deplorable hiatus between what should be and what is. The present administration is or feels powerless to arrest degeneration and deviation. It has not the will to face the blackmail, the threat of non-cooperation that looms large. They know what is right and what should be done, but find it expedient to let things drift under the plea that the Mother alone can do. There is a steady deterioration in the standards of the Education Centre, a few elements hold

the progress at ransom. Talent, initiative, originality, are stamped out. Why should it be so? Where is the boldness that is required in such pioneering efforts?

Today every third person in the Ashram community is a non-ashramite, freely drawing upon the services with their money-power, leaving genuine sadhaks at a disadvantage. Some of the departments have been converted into private fiefs. Vested interests are forming and holding up healthy development of the Ashram life. Superannuated individuals rule the roost with the result that the youngsters are denied opportunities. One has to wait for the incumbents to die before hoping for any change for the better.

This is only to illustrate the areas where things have got to be urgently rectified. "A supramental being is not required to organise and run the life of what the Mother called this small world". In any case, the supramental being is something far, far off. It is not going to be in our lifetime. Are we to wait and watch the developments helplessly?

We have to fall back on a pool of a core of minds and hearts who are essentially spiritual in their motivation, impersonal in their dealings, capable of holding on to the Mother's LOVE in all conditions. Once the unit is formed, the Mother's Force is sure to vitalise it and function boldly and uncompromisingly. In the actual working, there can be no question of superiority or position of eminence.

Within the group, the select group of people forsake their individuality and function only in the greater interest of the collectivity. One person need not always be a deciding factor. With enough humility on part of all, the premium will be on achievement of the whole rather than getting one's way. The higher the consciousness, the more the humility and readiness to look from the standpoints of others.

Pranav-da took the discussion beyond its original scope and wrote to Panditji in reply to his letter of 28 January 1991.

But I am absolutely convinced that in the present set-up of the Ashram, nobody can do anything except a Superman. All the mal-practices and movements of the lower nature prevalent in the Ashram that you mention in your letter, are nothing but the play of the ordinary human consciousness, in which man dwells at present. It has plagued humanity with multifarious problems and made man extremely miserable throughout

the ages. Wise men tried to find out various solutions. People in the West, through their practical mind took the outer approach and ended in materialism but the problem of man is not solved.

Sri Aurobindo told us that nothing will change the fate of man unless he transforms integrally and emerges into a better species by radical change of his consciousness. And that is possible only when he realises the Supramental Consciousness. That is why Sri Aurobindo and the Mother worked throughout their life to establish the Supramental Consciousness in the earth atmosphere.

How many of us have a clear picture of our real problems and the method of dealing with them? Only by reading *The Life Divine* or *Savitri* and engaging in regular programmes at the Samadhi will not help much. An hour of deep study and meditation, working like a donkey from morning until night will mean nothing. It needs something more.

Madhav ji you say that Superman is not needed to steer the Ashram and its people in the right direction. You say that the Supramental being will come after many, many years, when these beings shall be more on the face of the earth. But I feel that a leader arises only when there is a pressing need and demand in the world for man's relief from his miseries, and Superman has to come now because never in man's history has there been so much chaos and confusion in his life.

Our new leader must come with so much power and such a personality that physical presence itself will be sufficient to make one do the right thing in the right way. It holds good in the cause of the world, India and the Ashram.

Bibliography

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In ancient Rome, a group of three men holding power, in particular *the First Triumvirate* the unofficial coalition of Julius Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus in 60 B.C. and *the Second Triumvirate* a coalition formed by Antony, Lepidus, and Octavian in 43 B.C.

Section 8: Miscellaneous

Does God Exist?

In the present age of the Internet, technology and information explosion, there is even more information available on one topic – God. Even God will be surprised and amused at this. God reigns supreme whether or not we believe in his existence. The atheists endorse it by non-believing and the believers by worshipping Him and surrendering to God.

Believers take the knowledge from the Vedas whereas non-believers are sustained by their own logic. But logic can be used both to support and nullify and is, in the end, inclusive. People generally have a concept or an idea of God, which may or may not be commonly accepted.

A systematic approach would be to refer to the scriptures of books that refer to the word God and find out how it has been defined. Upanishads refer to God as Ishvara, Bhagawan, Brahman and so on. They explain the concept and after studying these, we conclude that we do not believe in God, it is acceptable. Both believers and non-believers need to have clarity of the concept.

The Taittiriya Upanishad says, “That from which all beings are born, that by which all beings are sustained and that unto which they merge back is Brahman.” This statement means that if there is a creation, a product or effect, the effect must have a cause. Everyone has to accept it. There may be a dispute about the nature of the cause. Something cannot come out of nothing. So, if the creation is the effect, there has to be something in the origin, a cause. Something exists and that self-evident being has to be accepted. It is this pure existence, a Being which is God. Take for example, government officers, secretaries or ministers; each has the power to do several things. They all are part of a collective government which empower them to do a number of things. Even though the government is not seen, yet its decisions are implemented through these functionaries. Even an office peon, wielding power allocated to him, proves the existence of the government.

Often a question is asked, Does God Exist? How one is sure of the existence of God? The answer to them is again in the form of a question. Don't they feel the presence in the bright shining sun which rises each morning at a specific time? It has been performing its duty so meticulously from time immemorial in such a disciplined manner that is beyond imagination. So shining and beautiful are its rays at dawn that

except God no human being or science can create such a magnificent scenery around it and beyond. Who is managing this play, if not God? Don't you feel the presence of God in chirping of the birds early in the mornings?

Every moment we feel His presence, but due to our ego we refuse to accept it. It is the veil of ego which keeps us away from Him. Remove the veil of ego; then we will experience His Presence and His existence.

Could we breathe, had He not been present in Time and Space?

It is therefore better not to raise doubts and put forth questions about the existence of God. If we are really interested in knowing about his existence, we should start singing his glory and recite his name with complete faith, trust and confidence. But we must have faith, patience and perseverance like that of Sabri, as written in the Ramayana who waited for a lifetime to meet God, Lord Rama.

According to Sri Aurobindo, God already exists, and is not a make belief. Fundamentally, man formulates as best as he can the Truth felt or what he receives from the Cosmic Reality.

An artist or a Bhakta may have a vision and it may get established and generalised in the consciousness of the race, and in that sense, it may be true that man gives their own forms to Gods; but he does not invent these forms. He records what he sees.

Mother India is not a piece of land. She is a Power, a Godhead. All nations have such a form or a Goddess (Devi) supporting separate existence. Krishna Consciousness is a reality, but if there was no Krishna, there could be no Krishna Consciousness.

“Existence is not a fluke, a random creation by nobody, a thing that unaccountably happened to be. It carries in itself a Word of God; it is full of hidden Divine Presence. Existence is a Truth of things unfolding by a gradual process of manifestation, an evolution of its own involved Reality. Existence is not an illusion, a Maya that has no reason, no business to exist, could not existence, does not exist but only seems to be. A mighty reality manifests in itself in this marvellous universe.”

The un-illuminated mind is incapable of imagining and visualising the supreme Reality because mind deals with the outside world of forms and appearances which eludes all explanation of the mighty Reality.

Therefore, we turn to the highest Reality that we may imagine, God, with all his attributes and endeavour to possess his attributes. We, as we are, are all potentially divine, we can possess the divine attributes or we turn to a Godlike being who has actually lived amongst us on earth and can strengthen and purify us by His example. These we worship and towards these we aspire to follow the path shown by them. The Divine can be and is everywhere; it begins to be manifest with disguise or is veiled in its own swarupa.

The Being which is hidden in what seems to be inconscient void, emerges in the world first as Matter, then in Life, then in Mind and finally as the Spirit. This apparently inconscient Energy which creates, is in fact the Consciousness – Force of the Divine.

Lastly, let us turn to the Gita for true Knowledge. The Gita starts with the Vedantic view of existence that holds that all here is God, Brahman and there is nothing else. It is formless and unborn and has no name; and is beyond time and space. The Brahman is Infinite, Omnipresent and through his power of limitation and differentiation, has become finite from infinite. But in doing so, he does not become prisoner of his own infinity; and does not lose his states of Infiniteness. It is through this power of limitation that he has assumed three statures – the Transcendent, the Cosmic Divine – Brahman and the Individual Divine – the psychic element.

As we are a part of the supreme Reality, we too are potentially divine. But this divinity and soul in us is veiled by the cover of ego, which has been bestowed upon us by Nature in order to help man establish his separate identity. This sense of separateness was essential to help one's individual personality in the beginning but becomes an obstacle in man's future development and progress.

In the Gita, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna, "I am Purushottama, the Transcendent; I am Narayana-Ishwara, creator of this universe and its existence. I am all-pervading and all permeating and I am also "nara"." (Chap. 4/11). Sri Krishna further says, "Neither the Gods nor the great Rishis know the depth of my birth, for I am altogether totally and in every way the origin of Gods and the great Rishis." (Chap. 10/2).

It means that no one knows him in his status of Purushottma, which is beyond the Transcendent. Even devas and rishis who have been

created by Me, do not know Me. Materialists do not believe in anything other than this world, but there are some materialists who do believe that there is a Power and a Being. Therefore, in all philosophies there are two terms, Being and Becoming. Being is self-existence. It is Eternal beyond time and space.

The world is not self-explanatory. When focused with all our attention on this world, we do not find answers to this multiplicity. It puzzles us and makes us restless whereas when we enter the world of Oneness, it becomes self-explanatory. Then no answers are needed. This can be further explained in terms of actuality and potentiality of a coin. When we use a coin, its actuality is exhausted but not its potentiality. Similarly, in existence, multiplicity by itself is not eternal, but has the potentiality to become eternal.

The Gita is based on three Vedantic Truths and these are,

- a) Only Brahman exists.
- b) Out of nothing, nothing can come out.
- c) If something exists, it cannot go out of existence. It can only change its form but not the essence.

This can be further explained through an example. Water is essentially H₂O (compound of hydrogen and oxygen) in its essence, but it can be comprehensively known as vapour, gas and ice. Similarly, soul is and cannot cease to be, even though it may change its form. It is not a zero-sum game because soul finds in the end in realisation of the Self, by whom all universes has been. (Chap. 2/16)

Sachchidananda is One with triple aspects. In the Supreme, the three are not three but one. Existence is Consciousness, Consciousness is Bliss; they are thus inseparable. In the higher hemisphere of manifestation, they become triune (three in one) although inseparable, one can become more permanent or lead the other.

In the lower planes below, they become separable in appearance though not in their secret reality and one can exist without the other so that we become aware of what seems to us as inconscient or painful existence or consciousness without Ananda. If this separation of them in experience was not there, pain and suffering, ignorance and falsehood and death,

could not have manifested themselves and there could not have been this evolution of limited and suffering consciousness out of matter.

Sri Aurobindo writes, “We feel this even in the very finite existence and consciousness of life in the material plane. Conscious existence at best cannot endure without pleasure, even in the most miserable being, there must be pleasure in existence though it may be as small as a grain of mustard seed.”

Compiled From

Letter on Yoga Vol 1; *SABCL* Vol 22 and *The Life Divine*; Chapter 10.

What are Dreams?

- **What is their nature and importance?**
- **Why do we forget our dreams?**
- **Can we have control over dreams? How do we interpret dreams?**

We all see dreams during sleep. We would like to know their meaning and significance. There are a large number of books on this subject, but we do not get a satisfying answer. Here are answers taken from the writings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother about what happens during sleep:

Ordinarily, when one sleeps, a complex phenomenon happens, the working consciousness is no longer there, because all has been withdrawn within into one inner realm of which we are not aware when we are awake. 1

Sleep is going inward in which the surface self and the outside world are put away from our senses and vision. But in ordinary sleep, we do not become aware of the worlds within; the being seems submerged in a deep sub-consciousness. On the surface of this sub-consciousness floats an obscure layer in which dreams take place and are recorded.

When we are fast asleep, we have what appears to us a dreamless slumber, but the dreams are going on and they are too deep down to reach the recording surface, or are forgotten or wiped out in our transition to waking consciousness. 2

Waking Mind

It is the waking mind, which thinks and wills and controls more or less the life in the waking state. In sleep that mind is not present and there is no control. It is not the thinking mind that sees dreams.

It is usually the sub-conscious that surfaces then. If the waking mind was active in the body, one would not be able to sleep. 3

What are Dreams?

Usually we give the name 'dreams' to a considerable number of activities that differ completely from one another. The first point is to learn to distinguish these various activities and recognise which part of our being that dreams. What domain it is that dreams and what the nature of that activity is?

To understand this, one needs to know that our whole being comprises our physical being, mental being, vital being and subtle being.

Our emotional being or sensory being which is subjected to control of active will, reacts during the night when the constraint is no longer effective. Or let us put in the way – all our desires which have been repressed during the day without being dissolved, seek satisfaction while our will is dormant and mind control is weak.

Therefore, we must learn to distinguish between them for their varied nature and quality. There are dreams sent from the vital world. There are three things one must do with regard to them:

One: To get the habit of calling the Mother, at once in the dream itself and seek protection.

Two: Not to fear – if one does not fear, these other world forces become helpless.

Three: To put no belief in the reality of such formations and regard them only as suggestions put into form and be not moved by them.

Question: Is it possible to suppress this activity completely and to have a total dreamless sleep?

Answer: It is like putting our mental being at rest similar to repose of our physical being. We can do this provided we have achieved a perfect control over the mental being. It is not easy to achieve.

On the other hand, in certain cases, this activity increases because when the body sleeps, internal faculties are no longer focused or used by the physical life.

Why do we Forget Dreams?

It is not always the same part of your being that dreams, and it is not at the same place that you dream. If one were in conscious, direct and in continuous communication with all parts of one's being, one would remember all one has dreamt. But very few parts of our being are in communication. Second, we forget dreams because we have a dream in certain state of consciousness, and then we pass onto another state of being.

For instance, when you sleep, your body is asleep, your vital is asleep but your mind is active. So your mind begins to have dreams and its activity is not coordinated and you see all kinds of things.

After sometime, all calms down and the mind begins to seize, the vital being that was resting, wakes up and it comes out of the body, walks about, goes places, it reacts, it fights, it becomes hungry. Vital is heroic; it rushes to save people in distress or destroys enemies. It is this which pushes back the whole mental dream and it is forgotten.

A Remedy Suggested to Help Remember Dreams

If one wakes up at that time, one will remember the dream. Second, one should not abruptly jump out of bed on waking up. Instead, one should keep lying in bed, with head on the pillow without movement and become abruptly still – the dream will return.

After sometime the vital gets tired, then something wakes up. Let us suppose, it is subtle physical that goes for a walk. It starts moving, goes to different rooms to find this or that thing and if it is still there or not there.

What is the Value of Dreams?

The majority of dreams have no value other than that of a mechanical and uncontrolled activity of the brain, in which certain cells continue to function during sleep; and generate sensory images. Conforming to the pictures received from the external, some dreams are caused by physical circumstances such as state of health, digestion,

position of the body in the bed. These can be avoided with precautionary measures:

- a) If one is suffering from some ailment, one must shift or position one's consciousness elsewhere – turn to the Divine.
- b) Have a light meal in the evening and night.
- c) Sleep on your left. For a male, one should avoid sleeping on the back.

There are dreams which are caused by the erratic activities of certain mental faculties which associate with ideas, conversations, memories that come together at random. We must understand that it reveals to us the confusion that prevails in our mental being as soon as it is no longer in control of the will.

Some of these dreams enable us to perceive tendencies, inclinations, impulses, desires of which we were not conscious so long.

Therefore, what needs to be done is to bring these dreams bodily to Light, Truth and Reality and force them to leave us. Therefore, we must observe our dreams attentively and use these to help us in self-control.

What Is the Value of Higher Dreams?

Ordinary dreams are mostly incoherent because these come from the sub-consciousness where deep-lying impressions are left in by our past inner or outer life.

But a large part of our consciousness in sleep does not sink into such a conscience state; it passes beyond into other planes of our being which are connected with our own inner planes. Worlds of larger life, larger mind or psychic whose influences come to us without our knowledge. Occasionally, we get dreams from these planes. It is a dream experience, a direct record of what happens to us there. As the inner consciousness grows by sadhana, these dream experiences increase in number, clarity, accuracy, coherence. And if we observe, we can come to understand these and their significance in our inner life.

Please note that the waking consciousness and this, which is awake in sleep, are not the same. They are different. The one which is awake in sleep is witness consciousness.

Dreams and Their Interpretation

Let us accept that our sub-consciousness knows more than our habitual consciousness. Here are some illustrations which explain this:

- We all experience moral or practical problems with which we grapple in vain in the evening, and are not in a position to find any solution. But when we are awake in the morning, we have a clear solution. This is because the mental inquiry has been going throughout the period of sleep and the internal faculties, freed from all material activity, were able to concentrate solely on this problem at hand and find an accurate solution.
- There is another common example of you having quarrelled with someone during the day when you wished to say something unpleasant to him, but you controlled yourself. However, those thoughts are at work, and in your sleep you see someone who approaches you with a stick and wants to hit you and you have a fight. But it is your own thought which came back. In such a situation, centralise your consciousness around your being before you retire to bed and sleep.
- Sometimes the activities of the night are warped, crooked and we perceive the opposite of what they really are. For example: when you have a bad thought against someone, when this thought is left to itself, it gathers full force during night and you dream that this person is hitting you or trying to attack you.
- Some people are more mentalised and have conscious mental life and are able to enter the mental plane and move about in it, with some independence than they can in physical life. These people have mentally objective nights. But most of us do not fall into this category.

- Those of us who have learnt to dissolve the ego or eliminate it to an extent, are in a position to observe events outside ourselves. And if we know how to translate into intellectual language the images the brain has translated, we can learn many things that our limited physical faculties do not allow us to perceive.

As a general rule, we should take great precautions before interpreting a dream. We should review the subjective explanation before assigning objective reality to it.

How to Have Conscious Sleep?

At night you should pass into sleep in concentration; one must be able to concentrate with eyes closed, lying down. The concentration must deepen and help you to slip into sleep. Simply put, sleep must become a concentrated going within, away from the outer waking state.

If one finds it necessary to sit for a while you may do so, but afterwards lie down, keeping the concentration till this happens.

To be conscious in sleep, one must start by concentrating before sleeping with a specific will and aspiration. This aspiration and will may take time to reach the subconscious, but if it is sincere, strong and steady, it does reach after a while. Then, an automatic consciousness and will are established in sleep itself which will do what is necessary. 4

Sri Aurobindo gave this Prayer to a Sadhaka on his request:

“O Mother, restore my body and nerves and bring calm and quietness to my brain so that when I awake, I begin my journey to reach you with renewed vigour.”

True Rest in sleep and higher dreams.

In sleep one commonly passes from consciousness to deep consciousness in a long succession until one reaches the psychic and rests there, or else from higher consciousness to still higher consciousness until one reaches rest in some silence and peace. After a few minutes, say 10 minutes, one passes into real sleep. It is in these 10 minutes that the energy is restored in the being without which sleep is not refreshing. It is when you come near to either of these domains of rest that you begin to see

these higher kinds of dreams. After which one retraces one's way till one reaches the waking state. 5

Difference between Ordinary Waking Consciousness and Ordinary Sleep

Ordinary waking consciousness and ordinary sleep have nothing to do with true sleep of the psychic being. They are determined by mind's waking condition or activity or its cessation. When it ceases for a time, it is sub-conscious that is there; on the surface, there is sleep.

Premonitory Dreams

There are all kinds of dreams: dreams that are fulfilled immediately; you dream in the night what will happen next day. Then, there are dreams which are fulfilled over varying lengths of time.

These dreams belong to a region which is very close to the origin. There is a place where one knows everything of the past, the present and the future. For this to happen, one is identified with the Divine.

All events first take place in the subtle physical plane, and sadhaks who are advanced on the path of spirituality, may have a vision of these. The Mother explained, "An entity, an intelligence, a consciousness intervenes and forewarns or someone's subconscious was aware and had seen in the subtle physical plane. Events existed in the subtle physical before it manifested on earth."

In the sleep part, consciousness goes to other planes of the being and sees and experiences there. It is quite possible for witness consciousness to follow the happenings which usually transmit in a coherent transcription to the sleeping part the consciousness. The latter receives them, and they appear as clear significant dreams as opposed to the incoherent dreams of the Subconscious.

State of Absolute Rest and Silence

According to recent medical theory, in sleep one passes through many phases until one arrives at a stage in which there is absolute rest and

silence – it lasts only for 10 minutes, the rest of the time is taken up by travelling to that and travel back again to the waking state. I suppose these 10 minutes can be called ‘Sushupti’ in Brahman of Brahmaloaka, the rest is ‘Swapan’ (or Svapna in Sanskrit) or passage through other worlds (planes or states of conscious existence). It is these 10 minutes that restore the energies of the being, and without it sleep is not refreshing. 6

According to the Mother’s experience and knowledge, one passes from waking through a succession of states of sleep consciousness which are in fact an entry and passage into so many worlds and arrives at a pure Sachchidananda state of complete rest, light and silence – afterwards one traces one’s way until one reaches the waking physical state. It is this Sachchidananda period that give sleep all its restorative value. These two accounts, the scientific and occult-spiritual are practically identical with each other. But the former is only a recent discovery of what the occult-spiritual knowledge was around long ago.

People’s ideas of sound sleep are absolutely erroneous and incorrect. What they call sound sleep is merely a plunge of outer consciousness into complete subconsciousness. They call that dreamless sleep; but it is only a state in which the surface sleep consciousness which is subtle prolongation of the outer, still less active in sleep itself is, unable to record the dreams and transmit them to the physical mind.

As a matter of fact, the entire sleep is full of dreams. It is only during the brief time in which one is in the Brahmaloaka that the dreams cease. 7

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Section 9 : STORIES

Part 1: Stories from Scriptures

Chandala – The Untouchable

Once upon a time, Adi Shankaracharya went on a pilgrimage to Varanasi. One morning, he took his bath in the Ganga and was going to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple. On the way, he met a Chandala – an untouchable, who was strutting down the street towards him, along with his four dogs.

In those days, when Brahmins crossed the streets, others made way. Chandalas with dogs were no exception. But this one was weird. He didn't budge. Shankaracharya politely but firmly asked the Chandala to step aside. What happened next is a part of lore! The Chandala asks Shankara what he should move. Should he move his body, which is a heap of food anyways (Annamaya Kosha) and is made of the same five primordial elements – Earth, Water, Air, Fire and Space (Panchabhutas or Panchamahabhutas) as Shankara's? Or should he move his Self, which is formless and identical for all creatures? How can a Chandala's body defile a Brahmin's body, when both of them are exactly of the same nature?

“What, O! Shankara, should I move aside?” asked the Chandala, naughtily. Adi Shankara stood stunned! He, the doyen of Hindu resurgence, advocate of Advaita philosophy, master orator-debater-commentator, was stunned by an untouchable! Suddenly it dawned on him. The Chandala was none other than Lord Shiva – the original Shankara – and the four dogs represented the four Vedas. Overwhelmed by the situation, Adi Shankaracharya burst out into a Shloka, popularly called Manisha Panchakam. Manisha literally means “of firm conviction”. Panchakam means “five”. This Shloka has five stanzas; it explains the non-dualistic nature of Atman, and re-affirms Shankara saying again and again, “One who looks at the creation from a non-dualistic viewpoint is my true teacher, be he a Brahmin or a Chandala. This is my firm conviction.”

Satyakāma Jābāla

In our childhood, we were told stories of Sita, the ever suffering; Draupadi, one with absolute faith; Savitri who won over Yama and so on.

Less often we were told the stories of Jābāla, Maitreyi and Shandili to mention a few. Thus, we missed out on some vital lessons.

Here is the story of **Satyakāma Jābāla** (सत्यकाम जाबाल), who first appears in the fourth prapāṭhaka/chapter of the ancient Vedic text, the Chāndogya Upanishad. He evolved to be a Vedic sage.

Jābāla had a son called Satyakama. As a boy, in order to become Brahmachārī, he went to a Spiritual Master and requested him to initiate him as his disciple. The Master said that it was necessary for him to know if his student was of a right mettle, for teaching could be imparted only to a high-born. So, he asked his lineage. Satyakam went to his mother and asked her who his father was. The confident mother told him that she had many paramours then, and so she was not sure. “Tell your teacher, You are Jabala’s son and that should suffice.” She was unashamed and unapologetic. She stood tall. How many mothers have the confidence to tell their children to be known by their name?

Witnessing his innocence and his desire to learn, the sage declares that the boy's honesty is the mark of a “Brāhmaṇa, true seeker of the knowledge of the Brahman” and accepts him as a student in his Ashram.

The sage sends Satyakāma to tend 400 cows, and told him to come back when they multiply into a thousand. The symbolic legend then presents Satyakāma’s conversation with a bull, a fire, a swan (*Haṃsa*, हंस) and a diver bird (*Madgu*, मद्गु), which respectively symbolise *Vāyu*, *Agni*, *Āditya* and *Prāṇa*. Satyakāma then learns from these creatures that the form of Brahman is in all cardinal directions (north, south, east, west), world-bodies (earth, atmosphere, sky and ocean), sources of light (fire, sun, moon, lightning), and in man (breath, eye, ear and mind). Satyakāma returns to his teacher with a thousand cows, and humbly learns the rest: the nature of Brahman, the Ultimate Reality.

Satyakāma graduates and becomes a celebrated sage, according to the Hindu tradition. A Vedic school is named after him, as is the influential ancient text Jābāla Upanishad, a treatise on Sannyāsa (a monk's monastic life).

Sage Shandili

Shandili was a sage. She had practised severe austerities and earned much merit. Once sage Galava and Garuda, Lord Vishnu's mount, were travelling together on a mission when they stopped near her ashram for a day. Sage Shandili welcomed the visitors and extended her hospitality to them.

Next morning, when they woke up to continue their journey, Garuda found his wings were severed from his body. Those massive and powerful wings lay inert by his side, and he was reduced to an immobile and powerless lump of flesh.

Sage Galava looked at him with concern. Sage asked Garuda, "Did you nurse any bad thought about this ashram?" "Oh no," replied Garuda. And then added, "I just thought that her place be blessed with the gods in heaven, with Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma."

Garuda felt that this thought has accorded her the highest praise. But when Garuda fell at Shandili's feet and apologised, she said, "I do not need to associate with any one, god or man, for my greatness. I am I derived from myself. All that I have achieved is due to my own strength, conduct and austerity. Do not insult me by thinking that I belong elsewhere. I belong where I am. Similarly, do not denigrate any woman."

She was her own measure. How many of us know or believe in our infinite potential?

Sphinx

The Egyptians believed that the Sphinx was a representation of their solar deity, Sun God. Historical records from the New Kingdom show that in Egyptian culture, the sphinx symbolised royalty and sacred status.

Sphinx is a mythological creature with a lion's body and a human head, an important image in Egyptian and Greek art and legend. The word sphinx was derived from Greek mythology.

With this backdrop, here is a legend from the Mahabharata. Pandava brothers, while travelling in the Himalayas rested at a place as they were all thirsty. Yudhishter, the eldest of the four went out in search of water. Instinctively, he could find a pond of water but to reach the pond, he had to cross a narrow passage. As he was proceeding towards this water point, he was stopped by an unknown voice.

The Sphinx was said to have terrorised the people by demanding the answer to a riddle, "What is it that has one voice and yet becomes four-footed and two-footed and three-footed? – and devouring a man each time the riddle was answered incorrectly." Eventually, Yudhishter being a man of great knowledge, gave the correct answer, "Man, who crawls on all four limbs in infancy, walks on both feet when an adult, and leans on a staff at old age." The Sphinx thereupon allowed him to pass.

From this tale apparently grew the legend that the sphinx was omniscient, and even today, the wisdom of the sphinx is proverbial.

Sri Aurobindo wrote in *Letters on Yoga*, "The Sphinx is a symbol of the eternal quest that can only be answered by the secret knowledge." 1

"To become ourselves by exceeding ourselves, – so we may turn the inspired phrases of a half-blind seer who knew not the self of which he spoke, – is the difficult and dangerous necessity, the cross surmounted by an invisible crown which is imposed on us, the riddle of the true nature of his being proposed to man by the dark Sphinx of the Inconscience below and from within and above by the luminous veiled Sphinx of the infinite Consciousness and eternal Wisdom confronting him as an inscrutable divine Maya. To exceed ego and be our true self, to be aware of our real being, to possess it, to possess a real delight of being, is therefore the

ultimate meaning of our life here; it is the concealed sense of our individual and terrestrial existence.” 2

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Satyavadi Harishchandra

The story of Harishchandra is a very popular story based on Indian mythology. It revolves around the great king Satyavadi Harishchandra of Ayodhya, who was known for his truthfulness and love for his subjects. Living such a pious life, the king had to face challenging difficulties, miseries and hardships along with his family with courage, patience and fortitude. This story is one of the best examples to teach children the importance of being honest and truthful.

Once upon a time, there was a very brave king called Harishchandra of Ayodhya. The king was known for his truthfulness and compassion. Under his rule, all of his subjects were extremely happy and satisfied with the king. Once all the gods decided to test the king, so they requested sage Vishwamitra to help them. One fine day the king went hunting in the nearby forest, where he suddenly heard a scream of a woman. The king immediately went to help the woman and ran into Vishwamitra's ashram. This disturbed sage Vishwamitra's meditation and he turned red in rage.

To cool down the sage's anger, Harishchandra said that he would donate his whole kingdom to sage Vishwamitra. The sage agreed and asked for some Dakshina (fee) before leaving. The king who gave away his whole kingdom had no possessions left to offer. The king begged sage Vishwamitra to give him a month to earn.

The king left the kingdom along with his family and went to Kashi. Harishchandra's wife's name was queen Shaivya or Taramati and their son Rohitashwa. The king tried hard to find a job to earn some money in Kashi, but he failed. Later because of his wife's request, he sold his son and then his wife to a for a paltry sum to a Brahmin, but still this was not enough. Queen Shaivya and her son, Rohitashwa, worked hard every day for the brahmin, who would trouble them a lot.

One day while plucking flowers and fruits in the garden, Rohitashwa got bitten by a snake and he died on the spot. Shaivya carried her son's body to the cremation ground and met her husband Harishchandra. The king was devastated to see his only son Rohitashwa's dead body. King Harishchandra then asked for a tax in order to perform cremation, knowing fully well that his wife had nothing to offer, not a

single penny; the only thing she had was her son who is no more. She said the only possession she had was the tattered attire she was wearing. Finally, the penniless woman also offered to part with the last piece of rag and the heartless ex-king was going to strip her naked when the gods intercepted and restored the pious king to his throne and all the former prosperity.

Even the Chandala showed his real form as Yama – God of Death and brought Rohitashwa back to life. The gods then told the family that all of this was planned to test them, and they had successfully cleared the test and displayed divine virtues even under extremely adverse circumstances. All the gods and Rishi Vishwamitra were extremely moved with Harishchandra. Vishwamitra was pleased to take them to Ayodhya Kingdom and made Rohitshwa the new King.

Children learn that the one who is always truthful, honest, caring and generous towards his subjects is loved and rewarded by God in some ways. God always helps and blesses those who possess such qualities. Thus, we all must learn these moral qualities from king Harishchandra and walk on the path of honesty.

Maitreyi and Katyayani

Maitreyi and Katyayani are the two wives of the sage and philosopher Yajnavalkya, as portrayed in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

Maitreyi was a brahmavadini and was interested in higher spiritual knowledge and theological discussions with her husband. She is also said to have written hymns, with about ten of them attributed to her in the Rig Veda.

After Yajnavalkya achieved success in the first three stages of his life – brahmacharya (as a student), grihastha (with his family) and vanaprastha (in retirement) – he wished to become a sannyasi (a renunciant) in his old age. He asked Maitreyi for permission, telling her that he wanted to divide his assets between her and Katyayani. Katyayani took her share and seemed to be happy with her possessions.

Alternatively, Maitreyi said that she was not interested in wealth, since it would not make her ‘immortal’, but wanted to learn about immortality: Then said Maitreyi: “If now, Sir, this whole earth filled with wealth were mine, would I be immortal thereby?”

“No”, said Yajnavalkya. “As the life of the rich, even so would your life be. Of immortality, however, there is no hope through wealth.”

Then said Maitreyi: “What should I do that will make me immortal? What do you know, Sir – indeed, tell me!”

Yajnavalkya replied to Maitreyi: “Ah! Lo, dear as you are to us, dear is what you say! Come sit down. I will explain to you. But while I am expounding, do seek to ponder thereon.”

In the dialogue which follows, Yajnavalkya explains his views on immortality in Atman (soul), Brahman (ultimate reality) and their equivalence. Maitreyi objects to parts of Yajnavalkya's explanation, and requests clarification.

Concluding his dialogue on the “inner self”, Yajnavalkya tells Maitreyi: One should indeed see, hear, understand and meditate over the

Self. O Maitreyi; indeed, he who has seen, heard, reflected and understood the Self – by him alone the whole world comes to be known.

After Yajnavalkya leaves and becomes a sannyasi, Maitreyi too becomes a sannyassini and leads a renunciate's life, being a seeker of ultimate knowledge and a lover of the Atman.

The Core Idea of the Story

How many wives know the companionship in a marriage is of that of being equals, even if one is a teacher and other the taught?

Narad Muni's Spiritual Ego

Once Rishi Narad saw a most sacred cave in the Himalayas. He decided to sit there in Samadhi to meditate on Lord Vishnu and immediately got into a trance. Remembrance of the Lord would have broken the spell of a curse pronounced by Daksha on Narad Muni, which did not permit him to stay at any one place for more than an hour.

When Indra Devta, the Lord of gods saw this situation he got apprehensive that Narad will take over his position as Lord of gods. Therefore, he summoned Kamadeva, the god of love and asked him to upset Narad's Samadhi.

Kamadeva gladly accepted this and set out to achieve this objective. Having reached the cave of Samadhi, he used all tricks in his bag he knew to entice Narad Muni, but in spite all the amorous displays employed by him, he could not distract Narad Muni. Having accepted the failure of his mission, Kamadeva prostrated before Narad Muni, clasping his feet he begged him to forgive him for this.

Narad did not lose his cool at Kamadeva's temerity and assured him by endearing words, whereupon Kamadeva departed. Narad Muni then called upon Shiva to narrate his story of conquering Kamadeva. Victory over Kamadeva meant gaining mastery over desires, passions and lust. Lord Shiva perceived that Narad had been overpowered by a sense of pride in narrating all this happening.

Narad Muni entered the city and having made inquiries about it, reached the King's palace. The King having paid him homage offered him a seat. He then called his daughter and requested the sage to foretell her future.

On seeing her beauty, the sage forgot all about his stature, his detachment and dispassion and got lost in thoughts. He was further astonished when he started reading her hand and horoscope with superb traits and characteristics including that the person who marries at her will, becomes immortal and will be adored by the whole creation. When Narad learnt of this, he kept to himself all this and did not disclose anything to the King. As time was running out, he prayed to Lord Vishnu to bless him.

Now the story takes a turn. Lord Vishnu tells Narad, “Now, listen to me; I shall do that alone which is good for you and nothing else. My words can never be untrue.” Saying so, Lord Vishnu disappeared. But Narad being under the spell of Maya, proceeded to the place of the swayamvar and sat there.

Narad was again lost in his thoughts, and thought to himself, whether or not the princess will choose him in the swayamvar because the Lord has bestowed upon him his charm and beauty, not knowing that there is another aspect of the Lord’s beauty which is a monkey’s face, which could only be known to the princess and no one else.

In the meanwhile, Lord Shiva came to know of this plan and dispatched two of his attendants who knew this secret, to the site of the swayamvar. These attendants sat near Narad and started passing taunting remarks, but Narad failed to understand.

When the princess saw Narad’s ugly face, she ignored him. Narad was filled with rage. Whereupon, the attendants said amused, “Just look at your face in the mirror.” Uttering these words, they ran away.

Narad went to a nearby pond and saw his reflection in water. Seeing his face – the face of a monkey, he wanted to curse the Lord for his stratagem. Accepting Narad’s curse, the Lord lifted his spell of Maya and then Narad realised the folly of his pride.

This episode has two lessons for a sadhak.

One: Always be conscious, living in the remembrance of the Supreme, living by oneself and in oneself.

Two: Ego and pride can unobtrusively take root in one’s consciousness, and one should always be vigilant of this malady.

The Highest Learning

Once Narada approached the sage Sanatkumara and requested him to show him the path of knowledge and teach him about the highest truth. “Tell me what you know, and then I will teach you what is beyond that,” thus said Sanatkumara in reply.

Then Narada told him with all humility, “I know the four Vedas and the epics, I have studied grammar, rituals, mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, psychology, the fine arts and various other secular subjects; but all this knowledge has not helped me to know the Self. I have heard from spiritual teachers like you that one who realises the Self goes beyond sorrow. I am lost in sorrow. Please teach me how to go beyond.”

After this there is a very long dialogue between Narada and Sanatkumara. Through this dialogue, Sanatkumara reveals all that Narada knows is mere names. To go beyond, one must know what is greater than a name. Then he reveals that speech is greater than name, mind is greater than speech, will is greater than mind, consciousness is greater than will, meditation is greater than consciousness, understanding is greater than meditation, power is greater than understanding, food is greater than power, water is greater than food, light or heat is greater than water, ether is greater than light, and Atman or the Spirit is greater than ether and is the substratum of everything else. Man is always impelled to do things on account of joy or the pleasure that he gets out of things that he does. No one acts or does anything unless motivated by some kind of pleasure or joy. But it is the Infinite that is the source of abiding joy because it is not subject to change. Therefore, one must seek to know the infinite.

With this Sanatkumara now teaches Narada the nature of the Infinite. “Where one realises the indivisible unity of life, sees nothing else, hears nothing else, knows nothing else – that is the Infinite. The infinite is beyond death, but the finite cannot escape death.”

At this point Narada raises a question: “On what does the Infinite depend, O venerable one?” To this Sanatkumara replies, “Dear Narada, the Infinite depends on its own glory, no not even that. In the world people think they can attain glory by having cows and horses, elephants and gold, family and servants, fields and mansions. But I do not call that glory, for here one thing depends on another.

But the Infinite is utterly independent. The Infinite is above and below, before and behind, to the right and to the left. I am all this. One who meditates on the Self and realises the Self, sees the Self everywhere and rejoices in the Self. Such a one lives in freedom and is at home wherever he goes. He discovers that everything is the cosmos – energy and space, fire and water, names and forms, birth and death, mind and will, word and deed, mantra and meditation – all come from the Self. He goes beyond decay and death, beyond separateness and sorrow.

But those who pursue the finite are blind to the Self and live in bondage. Therefore, O Narada, control your senses and purify the mind. In a pure mind there is a constant awareness of the Self. Where there is constant awareness of the Self, freedom ends bondage and joy ends sorrow.”

Thus, the sage Sanatkumara taught Narada to go beyond bondage, beyond sorrow, beyond darkness, to the light of the Self.

Part 2: Tales Told by the Mother

A Story of Initiation – by The Mother

Once upon a time there was a Mahatma who was a great ascetic and a great pandit. He was honoured by all, full of years and wisdom. His name was Junun. Many young boys, many young men used to come to him to receive initiation. They stayed in his hermitage, became pandits themselves, and then returned home after a long and studious retreat.

One day a young man came to him. His name was Yusuf Hussein. The Mahatma agreed to let him stay with him without even asking who he was. Four years went by, thus, until one morning Junun sent for Yusuf and, for the first time questioned him: “Why have you come here?” Without second thought, Yusuf answered, “To receive religious initiation.” Junun said nothing. He called a servant and asked him, “Have your prepared the box as I asked you?”

“Yes, Master, it is there, quite ready.”

“Bring it without further delay,” said Junun

With great care the servant placed the box before the Mahatma. He took it and gave it to Yusuf: “I have a friend who lives there on the banks of the river Neela. Go and take this box to him from me. But take good care, brother; don’t make any mistake on the way. Keep this box carefully with you and give it to the man whom it is for. When you come back, I shall give you the initiation.” Once again the Mahatma repeated his advice and described the route Yusuf has to follow to reach the river Neela. Yusuf bowed down at this Guru’s feet, took the box and started on his way.

The retreat where the Mahatma’s friend lived was quite far away, and in those days there were no cars or railways. So Yusuf walked. He walked the entire morning, then came the afternoon. The heat was intense and radiated everywhere. He felt tired. So he sat down in the shade of an old tree by the roadside to rest a little. The box was very small. It was not locked. Besides, Yusuf had not even paid attention to it. His Guru had told him to carry a box, and he started off without another word.

But now, during the afternoon rest, Yusuf began to think. His mind was free to wander with nothing to occupy it. It would be very rare indeed if on such occasions some foolish idea did not cross the mind. His eyes

fell on the box. He began to look at it. “A pretty little box! Why, it does not seem to be locked. And how light it is! Is it possible that there is anything inside? So light.... Perhaps it is empty?” Yusuf stretched out his hand as though to open it. Suddenly he thought better of it: “But no full or empty, whatever it is this box is not my concern. My Guru asked me to deliver it to his friend, nothing more. And that’s all that concerns me. I should not care about anything else.”

For some time, Yusuf sat quietly. But his mind would not remain quiet. The box was still there before his eyes. A pretty little box. “It seems quite empty,” he thought, “what harm would there be in opening an empty box” ... “If it had been locked, I would understand, there would be bad.... A box which is not even locked, it can’t be very serious. I’ll just open it for a moment and then shut it again.”

Yusuf’s thought turned round and round that box. It was impossible to detach himself from it, impossible to control this idea that had crept into him. “Let me see, only a quick glance, just a glance.” Once again he stretched out his hand, drew it back once more, then again sat still. All in vain. Finally, Yusuf made up his mind and gently, very gently, he opened the box. Hardly had he opened it than pfft! A little mouse jumped out and disappeared.

The poor mouse all stifled in its box did not waste a second a leaping to freedom!

Yusuf was bewildered. He opened his eyes wide and gazed and gazed. The box lay empty. Then his heart started throbbing sadly: “So, the Mahatma has sent only a mouse, a tiny little mouse. And I couldn’t even carry it safe and sound to the end. Indeed, I have committed a serious fault. What shall I do now?”

Yusuf was full of regrets. But there was nothing more to do now. In vain he went round the tree; in vain he looked up and down the road. The little mouse has actually fled. With trembling hand, Yusuf closed the lid and in dismay resumed his journey.

When he reached the river Neela and the house of the master’s friend, Yusuf handed the Mahatma’s present to him and waited silently in a corner because of the fault he has committed. This man was a great saint. He opened the box and immediately understood what had happened.

“Well Yusuf”, he said, turning to the young aspirant, “so you have lost the mouse. Mahatma Junun won’t give you the initiation, I am afraid, for in order to be worthy of the supreme knowledge one must have a perfect mastery over one’s mind.

“Your master clearly had some doubts about your will-power, which is why he resorted to his little trick, to put you to the test. And if you are not able to accomplish so insignificant a thing as to keep a little mouse in a box, how do you expect to keep great thoughts in your head, the true knowledge in your heart? Nothing is insignificant, Yusuf. Return to your master. Learn steadiness of character and perseverance. Be worthy of trust so as to become one day the true disciple of the great soul.”

Crestfallen, Yusuf returned to the Mahatma and confessed his fault. “Yusuf,” he said, “you have lost a wonderful opportunity. I gave you a worthless mouse to take care of and you couldn’t even do that! How then do you expect to keep the most precious of all treasures that divine Truth? For that you must have self-control. Go and learn. Learn to be master of your mind, for without that nothing great can be accomplished.”

Yusuf went away ashamed, head-down, and from then on he had only one thought: to become master of himself. For years and years, he made tireless efforts; he underwent a hard and difficult Tapasya, and finally succeeded in becoming master of his nature. Then, full of confidence, Yusuf went back to his Master. The Mahatma was overjoyed to see him again and find him ready. And this is how Yusuf received from the Mahatma Junun the great initiation.

Many, many years went by; Yusuf grew in wisdom and master. He became one of the greatest and most exceptional saints of Islam.

Moral of the Story

Mother speaks to the children. “So, this is to tell you that you must not be impatient, that you must understand that in order to really possess knowledge, whatever it may be, you must put it into practice, that is, master your nature so as to be able to express this knowledge in action. You must know that very persistent efforts, a steadfast endurance are necessary to master the least weakness, the least pettiness, the least meanness in one’s nature. What is the use of talking about Divine Love if one cannot love without egoism? What is the use of talking about

immortality, if one is stubbornly attached to the past and the present and if one does not want to give anything in order to receive everything?

You are still very young, but you must learn right away that to reach the goal you must know how to pay the price, and that to understand the supreme truths, you must put them into practice in your daily life”.

A Young Brahmacharin

A young Brahmacharin was clever and knew it. He wished to enhance his talents more and more so that everyone would admire him. So he travelled from land to land.

- With an arrow-maker, he learned to make arrows.
- Further on, he learnt how to build and sail ships.
- In another place, he learnt how to build houses.
- And in other places, he acquired various other skills.

In this way he visited 16 different countries. Then he returned home and proudly declared, “What man on earth is as skilful as I?” Lord Buddha saw him and wanted to teach him a nobler art than any he had learnt before. Assuming the appearance of an old Shramana, he presented himself before the young man with a begging bowl in his hand.

“Who are you?” asked the Brahmacharin.

“I am a man who is able to control his own body.”

“What do you mean?”

“The archer can aim his arrows,” the Buddha replied. “The pilot guides the ship, the architect supervises the construction of buildings, but the wise man controls himself.”

“In what way?”

“If he is praised, his mind remains unmoved; if he is blamed, his mind remains equally unmoved. He loves to follow the Right Law and live in peace.”

Children of goodwill, you too should learn to control yourselves, and if a tough bridle is needed to control your nature, do not complain.

Famous Man of Science: Isaac Newton

I shall tell you one story about a famous man of science, the Englishman, Isaac Newton.

Newton was born in 1642 and died in 1727. In the course of his long life he studied Nature; the universal force of attraction called gravitation; the effect of sun and moon on the tides; the light of sun and how its white rays break into seven colours of a rainbow and numerous other subjects.

Everyone marvelled at the wisdom of this man who was so skilled in reading the works and wonders of Nature. One day a lady spoke to Newton of his learning and knowledge and he replied, "Alas! I am only like a little child picking up pebbles on the shore of the great ocean of truth."

You will understand that the ocean of truth means the laws of Nature, which even the most learned men hardly know at all. A little child collects pebbles on the sea shore, but how vaster is the sea than the child thinks! And how much vaster still is the universe compared to our little thoughts!

And do we think less of Newton because he compared himself to a little child? Certainly not. We honour him for his modesty.

The Great King Solomon

You have heard of great Solomon who was the King of Israel many years ago.

There are many stories in the Bible and other books which tell of his glory and his majesty. I shall tell you a story about him.

He was very rich. He had a magnificent throne, his plates were made of gold, and in his palace silver was as common as stones in the city of Jerusalem. Merchants were constantly bringing him gold, silver, ivory, beautiful clothes, armour, spices, peacocks, horses, mules, monkeys and numerous other riches.

King Solomon built a splendid temple in honour of the God and his nation. But before the temple was built, while the timber for it was still growing in the form of cedar-trees on the mountains, Solomon had a dream in which God appeared to him and said,

“Ask of me what you wish me to give you.”

Solomon answered,

My father David was a just and truthful man, and now I have succeeded his throne. The work that lies before is great. I feel like a little child. I do not know how to go out and come in. I do not even know how to rule these people of whom I am the king. Therefore, my desire is to have knowledge, so that I may know good from evil.”

“Because you have not asked for long life or riches but have desired knowledge and a heart which can distinguish justice from injustice, I will give you this wise mind so that none shall surpass you in understanding; and also a long life and riches will be yours.”

You will notice the modest words spoken by the king, “I am but a little child.”

Do you think less of Solomon because he spoke humbly of himself?

On the contrary, it is real joy to see greatness that is modest.

Part 3: Stories for Children

Patience

The Arabian poet, Al Kosai, lived in the desert. One day, he came across a fine Naba tree (*a large tree with lots of green leaves*) and from its branches, he made a bow and some arrows.

At nightfall he set out to hunt wild asses. Soon he heard the hoofbeats of a moving herd. So he shot his first arrow. But he had bent the bow with such strength that the arrow, passing right through the body of one of the animals, dashed against a nearby rock. When he heard the sound of wood on stone, Al Kosai thought he had missed his mark. So then he shot his second arrow, and once more, the arrow passed through an ass and struck the rock.

Again Al Kosai thought he had missed his mark. In the same way he shot a third arrow, and a fourth, and a fifth, and each time he heard the same sound. When it happened for the fifth time, he broke his bow in rage.

At dawn he saw five donkeys in front of the rock.

If he had been more patient and waited until daybreak, he would have kept his peace of mind and his bow as well.

The Boy with Impetuous Nature

Once in a town in the North of France, I knew a boy who was frank by nature but impetuous and always liable to lose his temper.

I said to him one day, “Which do you think is more difficult for a strong boy like you, to give a blow for blow and let fly your fist in the face of a friend who insults you or at that moment to keep your fist in your pocket.”

“To keep it in my pocket,” he replied.

“And which do you think is more worthy of a brave boy like you, to do the easier or more difficult thing.”

“The more difficult thing,” he said after a moment’s hesitation.

“Well then, try to do it next time you get an opportunity.”

Sometime later, the young boy came to tell me, not without legitimate pride, that he had been able to do, “the more difficult thing.”

This is how the young boy narrated this incident to the Mother. “One of my work-mates, who is known for his bad temper, struck me in a moment of anger. Since he knows that normally I am not the one to forgive and that I have a strong arm, he was preparing to defend himself when I remembered what you had told me. It was harder for me than I thought, but I put my fist in my pocket. And as soon as I did that, I felt no anger in me, I only felt very sorry for my friend. So I held out my hand to him. That surprised him so much that he stood looking at me for a moment, open mouthed, without speaking. Then he seized my hand, shook it vigorously and said with emotion, “Now you can do what you like with me, I am your friend for ever.”

This boy had controlled his anger. But there are many other things that also need to be bridled.

Wild Horse

A wild horse can be tamed but one never puts a saddle on a tiger. Why is that? Because in a tiger there is wicked, cruel and incorrigible force, so we cannot expect anything good from him and have to destroy him to prevent him from doing harm.

But the wild horse, on the other hand, however unmanageable or skittish he may be to begin with, can be controlled with a little effort and patience. In time he learns to obey and even to love us, and in the end, he will of his own accord offer his mouth to the bit that is given to him.

In men too there are rebellious and unmanageable desires and impulses, but these things are rarely uncontrollable like the tiger. They are more often like the wild horse: to be broken in they need a bridle; and the best bridle is the one you put on them yourself, the one called self-control.

Moral of the Story

It should not be thought, however, that we have high regard for a training which weakens the character by depriving it of all its drive and vigour. When we put a bridle on a wild horse, we do not want the bit to tear his mouth and break his teeth. And if we want him to do his work well, we must tighten the reins to guide him, but we must not pull on them so hard that he can no longer move forward.

Unfortunately, there are only too many weak characters who can, like sheep, be driven by a mere bark. There are slavish and insensitive natures, lacking in spirit and more forbearing than they should be.